

Is Your Religion Worthless?

Keith Simon | James 1:26-27

Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To consider ways God might be calling us to serve the needy and vulnerable.

Icebreaker: What do you like about Spring?

Discussion:

Read:

[James 1:26-27](#)

²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

[Isaiah 1:11-17](#)

¹¹ "The multitude of your sacrifices—
what are they to me?" says the Lord.

"I have more than enough of burnt offerings,
of rams and the fat of fattened animals;
I have no pleasure
in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.

¹² When you come to appear before me,
who has asked this of you,
this trampling of my courts?

¹³ Stop bringing meaningless offerings!
Your incense is detestable to me.

New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.

¹⁴ Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals
I hate with all my being.

They have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.

THE **crossing** **small groups**

¹⁵ When you spread out your hands in prayer,
I hide my eyes from you;
even when you offer many prayers,
I am not listening.

Your hands are full of blood!

¹⁶ Wash and make yourselves clean.
Take your evil deeds out of my sight;
stop doing wrong.

¹⁷ Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed.

Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow.

1. What do you find sobering about these passages?
2. Of all the issues that show a life changed by God that one could focus on, why do you think attention is put on caring for the fatherless and the widow in these two passages?

Read:

[Galatians 4:3-7](#)

³ So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. ⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "*Abba, Father.*" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

3. In what ways can it be said that God has adopted us?
4. In what ways can you connect emotionally from your own life to having been adopted by God when you were in need?
5. In Keith's sermon, he talked about Ernie & Cheryl Johnson's adoption of a Romanian boy with Muscular Dystrophy. Ernie said about how faith in Christ leads us to care for orphans and widows without wanting pats on the back. He said, "We're getting a heck of a lot more out of it than they are." What do we get out of it?

THE **crossing** **small groups**

6. Keith gave two errors when hard teaching of the Bible feels overwhelming: thinking we can do nothing or feeling like we need to do everything. He also said we need to sometimes do for one what we wish we could do for all. But, how might God be calling us to care for the needy and vulnerable in Mid-Missouri?

Sharing and Prayer:

Have each person pray for the staff and ministries that are caring for the needy and vulnerable in Columbia:

- Love Columbia
- In2Action
- Great Circle
- City of Refuge
- Coyote Hill

You could also pray for For Columbia our upcoming service day with other churches in Columbia serving various needs in our community on Saturday, April 29. Today is the last day to sign up! You can sign up online on the Crossing's website under events.