

Life Group Topic #18 - Grace is the Good Stuff

WELCOME: (15 minutes)

When did you feel most alive this week?

WORSHIP: (15 minutes)

Use whatever means possible to turn the group's attention to the wonder and majesty of our God- including music, prayer, meditation on the Psalms, and other art forms.

WORD APPLICATION: (45 minutes)

Briefly read or paraphrase the following sermon summary before moving to the heart of this section: the discussion around the application questions.

Ephesians 2:8-10

We think our lives are our own, but they really belong to God. -Greg Laurie

We are the ones who were dead in our transgressions and sins and although we had free will we didn't make the right judgment calls. But God was absolutely unwilling to leave things as they were and He intervened.

v.8a For it is by grace you have been saved through faith;

There are 3 foundational words to the Christian good news...GRACE, SAVED and FAITH.

GRACE... *is favour when I deserve punishment! It is not just that God did not need to take me to Heaven, but rather that I deserved judgment.*

SAVED...*is life from death; and a clear realization of being saved is a part of true salvation.*

FAITH...*is belief coupled with deep trust. It is the clear knowledge of your need of life and what Jesus is offering...forgiveness, revelation and power. Then you place your trust in it being true – trusting that God did what he said he did and can do what He says he will do. It is a position of risk and receiving.*

v.8b-9 and this [salvation] is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Salvation is not a partnership where God contributes grace and we contribute faith. God brings everything. We just trust that he can.

v.10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Forgiveness is just a beginning... Creation is paralleled with salvation in verse 8 (same verb tense in the Greek). Salvation is re-creation.

v.10b Created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Good works are indispensable to salvation...they cannot earn salvation but they are certainly the

product or evidence of salvation. Salvation and good works are like fire and heat. God brings the fire and the fire cannot help but give off heat – if it fails to give off heat, it is no longer burning.

An incredible picture...from dead in transgressions and sins, captivated by cravings of our sinful nature and objects of wrath to a progressive new creation that is known for good works...BUT GOD and BY GRACE. Our God is not only the God of resurrection but He is the God of re-creation. Resurrection from out of death and creation from out of nothing...that is our salvation!

God has recreated us into:

I am the salt of the earth and the light of the world --*Matthew 5:13*,

I can approach God with freedom and confidence --*Ephesians 3:12*

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me --*Philippians 4:13*

Word Application Questions:

Please keep in mind that these questions are meant as catalysts designed to get the group talking about life application.

What is significant about God's ownership of our lives?

How is my understanding of grace, faith and salvation impacted?

How does understanding salvation as an act of creation or creation as an act of salvation change things?

How have we experienced salvation/re-creation? within the past year?

What does 'good works' mean? What qualifies?

Are 'good works' good if we only do them because we 'have' to?

How are 'good works' evident in my life personally?

What 'good works' am I or are we called to now? this week? this month? year?

What does trusting God look like for me right now?

What do I trust God with? What do I need to be trusting God with?

How do the final three statements make me feel?

Do I believe them? What do they mean to me?

WITNESS: (15 minutes)

This section is a vision-casting time designed to get the group strategizing and making concrete plans towards reaching outward to a lost world. Relational outreach always has the goal of ultimately enfolded those we reach into the Life Group.

Do we want to save others? Why or why not?

Do we want to convince people they need saving? Is this our job?

How does Ephesians 2:8-10 inform our role in other people's salvation?

How are 'good works' connected to witnessing?