



LifeGroup Discussion Guide

Grace or Works?

Remember this page is designed to begin a discussion with your LifeGroup. It is not comprehensive. Allow the following questions to spur on deeper and further conversation, study, and discussion.

One of the more messy thematic contributions in the Old Testament is the idea of “retributive theology”. I say “*idea*” because it doesn’t always work. The law helped quell the advance of evil by leveling the punishment with the crime - “*an eye FOR an eye.*” But this idea of retribution is contrary to grace and mercy. Go around and share some examples of how you’ve seen people “*reaping what they sow*” or “*getting what they deserve*”?

Our passage for the rebalancing of “*works*” and “*grace*” starts by revealing our ability (or inability as it may be). **READ: Ephesians 2:1-3.** What do you make of man’s moral inability? How does this make you feel? Have some volunteers read and then relate these other passages: **John 6:44 & John 8:34.** **READ: Romans 9:16** - Paul rests salvation upon God’s mercy. What does **Ephesians 2:4** teach us about God’s mercy?

Our inability also contributes to the need for grace. What is something someone has done for you that was an unexpected blessing, completely unearned and even undeserving? **READ: Ephesians 2:5 & 8.** Why do you think Paul makes such an emphasis on salvation by “*grace*”? We examined the dangers of getting “*works*” and “*grace*” unbalanced. Why do you think it is hard for some people to accept grace? Why are we more accustomed to earning rewards - to works? A works-based righteousness leads to “*legalism*”. Why is legalism dangerous, and can you give any modern examples for how the church can fall prey to the error of legalism?

Paul ends this section in Ephesians 2 with an encouragement to do “good works”. **READ: James 2:14-26.** What does James mean that “*faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead*” [**James 2:16**]? James declares that Abraham’s faith and his actions were working together. How do we know that James isn’t featuring some sort of legalism to his readers? How would you give a thoughtful answer to James’ opening question about actionless-faith in **verse 14**, “*Can such faith save him*”? Why or why not?

Turn back once more to **Ephesians 2:10**. What relief does it bring you to know that God has prepared our good works for us? How are you reassured in serving God by knowing you are “*God’s workmanship*”? Go around and share some examples for how you are seeking to fulfill our 3rd application from Sunday: Balance “*good works*” with God’s “*good work*”?