

John 1:14-18 Sermon-Based Discussion Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To help us see how we all tend to relate to God based on our performance instead of grace. When we do this, we lose the core message of Christianity (grace) and the joy of the Christian life. Seeing the results of relating to God by performance versus relating by grace moves us to trust more fully in grace.

Sermon Refresher: We all take grace for granted. Even if we know and accept intellectually that we need grace, we all tend toward relating to God based on performance. Our “fitbit” culture moves us to constantly be measuring our performance to gain a sense of worth and acceptance. Our own hearts are offended at the idea that we can’t do anything to earn God’s approval, and so we naturally resist the idea of grace. But when we really begin to grasp the grace of God, it sets us free from performing and pretending into the acceptance, joy, and confidence that God wants us to have.

Discussion

1. We heard in the sermon that we live in a “FitBit” culture where we are constantly measured by our performance. In your social circle, how do people keep score?
2. How about for you personally . . . which of those do you most often measure yourself by or feel most tempted to perform in?
3. How do you feel about yourself when you are measuring up? How about when you aren’t?

Let’s read John 1:14-18 out loud together.

This passage shows us that Jesus came to show us the full expression of God’s grace—that God wants us to relate to Him completely on the basis of grace. But between our “FitBit” culture and just our personal pride, we all tend to relate to God on the basis of our performance. Let’s think for a minute about what that looks like and how that affects our relationship with God.

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4. In what ways do you feel like you have to perform and measure up to be accepted by God?

Let's think through some ways that relating to God based on performing affects us.

5. When we don't feel like we measure up, many of us fall into pretending and hiding. Have you ever found your self hiding from God or others or not telling the whole truth in order to look good?
6. Others of us, when we don't measure up, fall into despair. We feel like we will never measure up so why even try! Can any of you share about a time you felt depressed about your relationship with God or condemned by God because you didn't measure up?
7. Another way performance affects us is by comparison. If we think that God repays us according to our performance, when others get blessings that we don't, we will compare ourselves and fall into the trap of feeling God has been unfair to us. Share a time that you felt like God was unfair with you.
8. Today in our society, we tend to have high expectations and a strong sense of rights. In contrast, what do the following verses say about our right to demand anything from God? Let's look up Job 41:11 and Romans 11:35 together.
9. How is demanding that God do something for us based on our performance actually ugly and offensive to God?
10. Let's look at the following verses. What do they teach us about trying to mix grace and performance as a basis for our relationship with God?

- Romans 11:6
- Galatians 5:2-6

We have seen how relating to God by performance doesn't work and has terrible results in our lives. It leads us toward pretending and hiding at times, despair and condemnation at other times, and ugly pride and demanding towards God. Our passage for today points us to a much better way . . . towards God's grace. Let's think for a few minutes now about what it means to relate to God based on grace and what that will look like in our lives.

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11. In the sermon, Keith gave several definitions of grace:
 - Getting what you don't deserve.
 - Unconditional acceptance given to an undeserving person by an unobligated giver.
 - G.R.A.C.E. – God's Riches At Christ's Expense.
 - What sticks out to you from these definitions?
 - How do these definitions help you understand what it means to relate to God on the basis of grace?

12. What do these verses teach us about what it looks like to relate to God by grace?
 - Romans 8:1
 - 1 John 1:8-9
 - Hebrews 4:16

13. As you begin to grasp what it means to relate to God by grace, how will that change your relationship with God for the better?

Sharing and Prayer Time

Today, we realized many ways in which we fall into relating to God by performance, and we've seen how that negatively affects our relationship with God. For our sharing time tonight, let's share one way we want to turn away from performing and trust in grace instead. Let's take turns sharing that now.

For our prayer time, let's take those things to God. What I'd like for us to do is start by having some time to pray about how performance doesn't work. So first, let's pray prayers of turning from our performance. Then after a few minutes of prayer, we'll pray about how much better it is to trust in grace. Whoever wants to can pray thanking God for His grace or praying that we will grasp and live out His grace more fully. Let's start with turning away from our performance.

Let's take some time now to thank God for His grace and ask His help to trust more fully in His grace.