

Grace and Works

Goal: To help us understand that our works are not in opposition to God's grace but works should be the evidence of living in His grace.

We don't mature by accident. Personal effort plays a critical role in growing in faith. And while we don't want to see our efforts as somehow earning God's favor, we must realize that it takes real effort to cooperate with his grace.

Openers:

- Share about a gift you received that took real effort or practice to learn how to use.
Examples: A guitar (or other musical instrument), a hockey stick/baseball bat/basketball (or other piece of sports equipment), a tool kit.
- The genuine Christian life requires much hard work. Agree or disagree? Why?

Scripture:

1 Corinthians 15:9-10 New International Version (NIV)

9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Digging Deeper: Observation & Interpretation

- How did Paul go from being a persecutor to an apostle?
- For Paul, what is the role of God's grace in his hard work?
- What do you think Paul means when he talks about God's grace?
- Quote: "Grace is not opposed to our efforts, it is opposed to earning." What is the difference between earning and effort?
- How would you explain the relationship between grace and works to a friend?

It is helpful to see our works flowing out of our experience of God's grace; we don't work our way into the kingdom, into his love, BUT once the kingdom has gotten into us & God's grace has touched our lives, good works can't help but follow. If no real works follow, one has to wonder whether we've truly embraced God's grace and rule in our lives

Applications

- Do you tend to overemphasize grace or personal effort in your life? How so?
- What consequences have you seen in the overemphasis of grace or personal effort? (in your life, in others' lives, and/or in the church)
- What good works do you think God has for you to do in light of His grace in your life?

Pray Together

Partner off and pray for each other in light of your responses to the application questions.