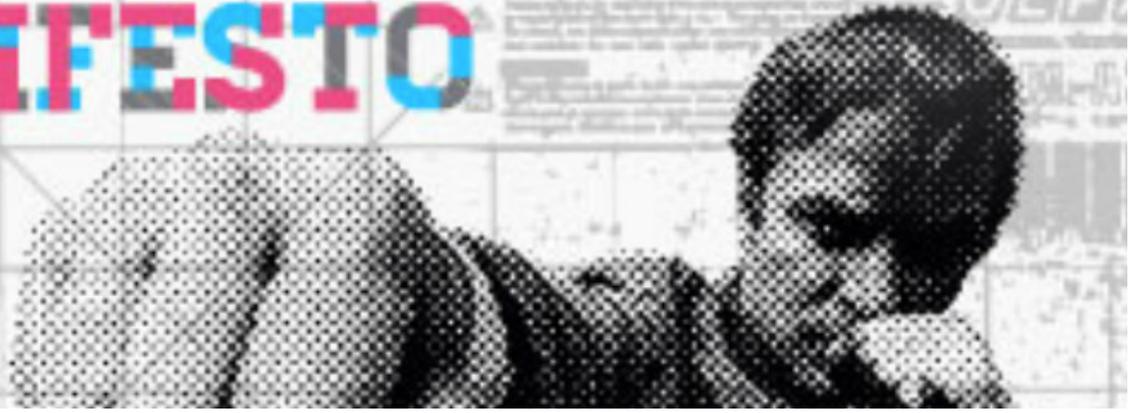


MANIFESTO



The Main Concept – Romans 1:16-17

Pray as you begin your group. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak into your group through God's Word and through each other. Read the passage and take a few minutes to quietly consider what it has to say to you and your group.

In this passage, Paul says that he is “not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes”. Other places in Paul's letters he talks about the gospel being “an offense”, “foolishness”, and a “stumbling block” to its hearers. If it's good news (i.e. “gospel”), why would anyone take offense, or consider it foolish or a stumbling block? It's because the message cuts across our natural human values. We want to look good, take credit, and earn things by our own merit. We like to believe that anyone can find their own way if they're strong enough and persistent enough. Those are human values, but not Christian values. Unfortunately, the church in America has been guilty of adopting many of these values while losing sight of the real gospel message. Let's return our focus to the real gospel message, and why Paul was not ashamed of it.

Discussion Questions:

What stood out to you from Mel's message this week? How did God speak to you through her sermon?

- Mel spoke about 4 aspects of the gospel message that are offensive to most people (paraphrasing here): 1) You can't earn salvation because you're not good enough to overcome sin no matter how hard you try, 2) Someone else had to suffer and die for your sake because you really are that bad, 3) only Jesus saves, nobody else, and 4) Jesus looks weak when you read the Biblical accounts of his death.
 - Of those 4, which have you found most challenging to accept personally? Why?
 - Which do you feel least comfortable defending when you talk with other people?
- How do we reconcile the need to share a gospel message that most people find offensive with our desire to keep our friends by not offending them? Is there a balance, and if so what does it “look” like?
- To reach people you need to understand them, and understand why they would take offense at the gospel message.
 - How can you better understand people (and avoid making them your pet “project”) in order to share the gospel message with them?
- The gospel is the power of salvation for “everyone who believes”; they are the recipients of God's salvation. The same phrase could also be translated, “everyone who has been persuaded to trust”.
 - Is there someone who you would have a hard time accepting as part of that “everyone”? Why?
 - Of these two translations, “believe” and “persuaded to trust”, one sounds like it comes from the mind while the other sounds like it comes from the heart, but to God they are one and the same. How does that affect the way you think about Paul's statement?
- In 1:17 Paul says “the righteous shall live by faith”. This can also be translated: “He who by faith is righteous, shall live.” That means you are either righteous by trusting God to provide your righteousness for you, or you find it somewhere else, like your own effort
 - Do you trust Jesus to be your righteousness or are you looking to something else to make you feel okay?

