

Small Group Guide: Sola Fide - Faith Alone



Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by thanking God for His grace and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and deepen your understanding of justification by faith alone.

Icebreaker

Share a time when you had to completely depend on someone else because you couldn't do something on your own. How did that feel?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **Justification vs. Sanctification:** We are justified (made righteous before God) by grace through faith alone. Sanctification (becoming more like Christ) follows justification but doesn't cause it.
2. **Faith Alone Means:** Solely putting your trust in Christ and His sacrifice to get into heaven, recognizing there's nothing you can do to earn it.
3. **Historical Consistency:** The early church fathers (Clement of Rome, Origen, St. Basil, St. Jerome) all taught justification by faith alone, confirming this wasn't just a Reformation invention.

4. **Scripture is Clear:** Paul, the apostles, and Jesus himself consistently taught that salvation comes through believing in Christ, not through our works.
 5. **Works Follow Faith:** We don't work FOR salvation; we work BECAUSE OF salvation. Our good works vindicate (provide evidence of) our faith to others.
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Doctrine

1. **What does it mean that we are "justified by grace through faith alone"?** How would you explain this to someone unfamiliar with Christian terminology?
2. **Read Ephesians 2:8-10 together.** How does this passage balance the truth that we're saved by grace through faith with the expectation that we'll do good works?
3. **The pastor shared the story of his daughter saying "I need you."** How does this illustrate what God desires from us regarding salvation?

Examining Our Hearts

4. **Be honest: Do you sometimes feel like you need to earn God's favor or approval?** Where do you think those feelings come from?
5. **What "works" or religious activities might we be tempted to trust in instead of Christ alone?** (Examples: church attendance, giving, moral behavior, etc.)
6. **Read Romans 3:21-26 together.** What does it mean that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"? How should this level the playing field among believers?

Historical and Biblical Evidence

7. **Were you surprised to learn that early church fathers from the 1st-4th centuries taught justification by faith alone?** Why or why not?
8. **The pastor mentioned that Martin Luther discovered these truths by reading Scripture.** What does this teach us about the importance of reading the Bible for ourselves rather than just accepting what others tell us?
9. **Read Acts 8:34-38 (Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch).** What was the only requirement Philip gave for the man to be baptized? What does this tell us about salvation?

Addressing Objections

10. **James 2 says "faith without works is dead."** How does this fit with salvation by faith alone? (Hint: The pastor explained that James uses "justified" to mean "vindicated" or "proven genuine.")
 11. **How would you respond to someone who says, "If salvation is by faith alone, then it doesn't matter how we live"?**
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one or more of these applications to focus on this week:

1. Reflect on Your Foundation

- Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal any ways you might be trusting in your own goodness rather than Christ's righteousness alone.
- Journal about what you're truly trusting in for your salvation.

2. Share Your Faith Simply

- Practice explaining the gospel using the "faith alone" principle to someone this week (could be a believer or non-believer).
- Remember Philip's simple question: "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?"

3. Let Works Flow From Grace

- Identify one act of service or kindness you can do this week, NOT to earn God's favor, but as a response to the grace you've already received.
- Before doing it, consciously thank God that you're already accepted and loved.

4. Study the Evidence

- Read through Romans 3-4 on your own this week, noting every time Paul emphasizes faith over works.
- Look up one of the early church father quotes mentioned in the sermon and read it in context.

5. Examine Your "Boasting"

- Paul says salvation by grace leaves no room for boasting. What do you tend to take pride in spiritually?
 - Practice redirecting any spiritual pride toward gratitude for what Christ has done.
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Memory Verse

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Closing Reflection

Read together: "Can we acknowledge and be humble enough to say, I can't do it? I actually recognize I'm not good enough. I don't deserve heaven, but thank God Jesus is good enough to have died for not just my sin, but the sin of the world."

Question for Silent Reflection: Is there any area where you're still trying to "do it yourself" instead of fully trusting in Christ's finished work?

Closing Prayer

- Thank God for the gift of salvation through faith in Christ alone
 - Pray for humility to fully trust in Christ rather than our own efforts
 - Ask God to help each person live out their faith through good works that flow from gratitude
 - Pray for opportunities to share this good news with others
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For Next Week

- Continue reflecting on the Five Solas series
 - Share with the group how you applied this week's teaching
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Additional Resources

- **Further Study:** Read Martin Luther's "The Freedom of a Christian" or excerpts from his commentary on Galatians
- **Recommended Reading:** "The Gospel According to Jesus" by John MacArthur or "Knowing God" by J.I. Packer (chapters on grace and faith)

5-Day Devotional: Justified by Grace Through Faith Alone



Day 1: The Gift We Cannot Earn

Reading: Ephesians 2:8-10

Devotional:

Salvation is not a trophy we earn but a gift we receive. Paul makes this stunningly clear: we are saved by grace through faith, not by our own efforts. This truth liberates us from the exhausting treadmill of trying to be good enough for God. Like a child who says "I need you" to her father, we approach God empty-handed, acknowledging our complete dependence on Christ's finished work. Our good works don't earn salvation; they flow from it. We are God's workmanship, created for good works He prepared beforehand. Today, release any pride in your spiritual accomplishments and rest in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice alone.

Day 2: Faith That Justifies

Reading: Romans 3:21-26

Devotional:

Paul demolishes any notion that we can stand righteous before God through our own merit. All have sinned—there are no exceptions, no special cases. Yet God's righteousness is revealed apart from the law, accessible through faith in Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the gospel: we are justified freely by His grace. Justification means God declares us righteous not because we are, but because Christ's righteousness covers us. His blood becomes our propitiation, satisfying God's justice while demonstrating His love. When you stand before God, your answer will have nothing to do with why you deserve heaven and everything to do with what Christ accomplished. Rest in that truth today.

Day 3: Abraham's Example

Reading: Romans 4:1-8

Devotional:

Even Abraham, the father of faith, was not justified by works. If he had been, he could boast—but not before God. Scripture declares that Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. This reveals a fundamental principle: faith, not works, is what God honors. When we work, we expect wages as payment. But salvation operates on an entirely different economy—the economy of grace. To the one who does not work but believes, faith is counted as righteousness. This doesn't diminish good works; it properly positions them as the fruit, not the root, of salvation. Today, examine whether you're trusting in your spiritual resume or resting in God's promise.

Day 4: The Simplicity of Belief

Reading: John 3:16-18; Acts 8:34-38

Devotional:

The gospel is beautifully simple: believe in Jesus and receive eternal life. When Philip encountered the Ethiopian eunuch, he preached Jesus from the Scriptures. The man's response was immediate: "What hinders me from being baptized?" Philip's only requirement: "If you believe with all your heart, you may." No lengthy probation period, no list of qualifications, no works to complete first. Just faith. This simplicity offends our performance-driven hearts. We want to contribute something, to earn our place. But Jesus says the only work God requires is to believe in the One He sent. The condemned are those who refuse to believe, not those who fail to perform. Let this simplicity refresh your soul today.

Day 5: Faith Vindicated by Works

Reading: James 2:14-26

Devotional:

James doesn't contradict Paul; he complements him. When James says faith without works is dead, he's addressing false professors who claim faith but show no evidence of transformation. True saving faith always produces fruit. James uses "justified" differently than Paul—not to mean declared righteous before God, but vindicated or proven genuine before others. Abraham's faith was demonstrated when he offered Isaac; Rahab's faith was shown through her actions. Works don't earn salvation; they evidence it. If you've been genuinely saved by grace through faith, your life will reflect that reality. Today, consider: does your life vindicate the faith you profess? Not to earn God's favor, but to display the transformation He's already accomplished in you.