

SMALL GROUPS

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

APRIL 2, 2017

THE ROAD THROUGH THE CROSS: A NEW ORIENTATION

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1. What stood out to you from this week's message?

2a. Discuss what you think people would say in response to the question: "What are the characteristics of someone considered a 'good' Christian?"

2b. Which characteristics from your list are external behaviours? Which are internal heart postures? Which characteristics and behaviours could be demonstrated outwardly but inwardly stem from something other than devotion to Jesus? For example, what reasons are there that someone might read the Bible – or engage in any other 'religious' behaviour – other than devotion to Jesus? In other words, what possible motives might someone have for engaging in 'spiritual or religious' behaviour?

2c. Share personal examples of times when you've engaged in the behaviours of a 'good Christian' but it was because you felt it was required or expected of you, and not because of a genuine desire for Jesus. What do you sometimes feel tempted to do out of obligation more than devotion?

3. Where do you currently have some type of influence (a form of authority and power) in the life of another human being (and all of us have influence in many different spheres). If you were

going to be tempted to use that influence for personal gain, where would it be? (examples might be: protect your reputation; adherence to your personal wishes as opposed to what is best for the family, the company, etc.).

4. Jesus said that His house was to be a 'house of prayer for all nations.' What are some practical examples of how you personally and as a group can intentionally seek out those who may be new or on the fringes of our church? What might it tangibly look like to be more welcoming and hospitable to people you don't currently know in our church? What are some ways, even subtle ways, that you are tempted to turn inward and focus on yourself instead of outward in generosity? (For example, how often are you conscious of and looking out for people who may be new or appear awkward or out of place?).

5. Discuss the following quote from John Eldredge:

"May I remind you that whenever you are watching Jesus, you are watching love. You can always hold that up as you encounter startling passages like this one: 'I am in this moment watching love in action.' But how in the world is this [cleansing of the Temple] love? It doesn't even seem polite. Jesus three years of public ministry are one long intervention. That's why He acts the way He does. Remember, Jesus is not strolling through the Israeli countryside offering poetry readings. He is on a mission to rescue a people who are so utterly deceived most of them don't even want to be rescued. His honesty and severity are measured out precisely according to the amount of delusion and self deception encasing His listener."

What stands out to you about this quote?

How have you experienced Jesus and His love in action in your own life on this most recent season? Can you think of a time when, in hindsight, you can see that God caused/allowed circumstances that – though disorienting at the time – you now realize were part of His great love for you? What (who?) helped you to see what Jesus was up to in the midst of the disorientation you felt?

6. Take some time to listen in prayer with the following question: "Jesus, what tangible step do you want me to take this coming week to put this teaching into practice?" Share with the group what comes to your mind about how to apply this message.