

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

WHEN FAITH GETS LOST
THE SLIDE INTO SELFISHNESS
JANUARY 24-30, 2016



SERMON OUTLINE

When Faith Gets Lost
The Slide into Selfishness

2Kings 20:1-19

Php 2:3-4
2 Kings 20:19

Identifying and Avoiding the Threats to our faith that Lead us into selfishness

1. Identifying the Indicators of a sliding Spiritual Life
 - a. First response to problems is a Self-Fix
 - b. The attitude of Entitlement – ‘But, God, you owe me’
 - c. Taking Credit for God’s declared Blessing – ‘I will provide if you pursue me’
 - d. The end result – Tunnel Vision
2. Avoiding the Erosion of your Spiritual Foundations Php 2:1

Conclusion: What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

MAIN POINT

Our spiritual growth must result in actions that involve living selflessly for the needs of others

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. How does our society encourage us to focus on ourselves and our self-interests as we go about our day-to-day lives?

Leader: *It is natural for us to look to our own needs for living (food, water, shelter, security, etc). However, our society, advertising, media and the sin nature propel us towards selfishness in excess, as if we are the only people on the planet who matter. From the world’s perspective- as long as we don’t interfere with the freedoms and self-interests of others- this is perfectly acceptable behavior.*

2. Agree or disagree: Loving God includes making strategic decisions to put other people’s needs ahead of our own. Why?

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Leader: *This is an expected and required outcome of following Jesus- that our life is focused on other people, even if our own needs and wellbeing come second to the needs of others. However, it is very difficult to see in ourselves where we miss the mark on this, and also difficult to put it into practice. As a follow-up question (if it does not come up) ask, "How are we reminded of this on a daily basis?"*

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 15:1-11

3. Technically Saul perfectly executes what has been asked of him- the destruction of the Amalekites. However, he displeases the Lord. What did he do in this passage that was right, and what was wrong?

Leader: *Like Hezekiah (from Sunday's sermon) Saul was happy to be the man of the hour when it came to having victory in battle. He destroyed the Amalekite threat but only acted in ways that made him look good in the eyes of others. He did not obey the full command of the Lord.*

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 15:12-23

4. What does this passage reveal about the heart of Saul that led to God's displeasure with his actions? List the things you see the passage revealing about Saul's heart?

Leader: *Saul was guilty of going about the appearances of living for God, but his motivation was completely about himself. He kept back plunder for himself (vs. 9) and allowed his men to do likewise. They were not operating from a pure "Let's do this for the Lord" attitude, but rather an attitude that said let's practice our spirituality in a manner that works for our personal agenda. Get rid of the Amalekites... good for us. Keeping the plunder for ourselves... that works for us too, after all we risked our lives fighting the Amalekites. Keeping their king alive, great, we can humiliate him as we go along. As we will see later in the passage this indicates that Saul's true motives were selfishness disguised as faithfulness. Keep an eye on vs. 15,17-20*

5. What does 15:22-23 tell us about what God finds pleasing in how we live out our spiritual lives, and what we do that is sometimes just for appearances?

6. In what ways are you tempted in your day-to-day life to take the easy road of sacrifice and avoid the difficult road of obedience? Is that fulfilling or perhaps short-changing the benefits of life in Christ?

Leader: *Sacrifice (religious duty or rituals) is the easy way of posturing ourselves to look spiritual and not make the real sacrifice of putting into action Jesus' commands and*

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teaching about selfless living. This was the road the Pharisees chose to take when they put spiritual posturing ahead of spiritual practice (Matthew 6:1-18)

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 15:24--30

7. Discuss 1 Samuel 15:24,25 & 30. What does this tell us about Saul's self-focused tunnel vision? In what way does this hinder your own growth as you manage your own spiritual life?

Leader: *Saul was concerned with looking good for the people (vs. 24) and bowing to peer pressure. He was also concerned with being seen with God's anointed prophet (vs. 25) and he was very concerned with saving face and outward appearances (vs. 30), as well as posturing himself so that he was honored by his spiritual behavior (even though God was not). He requested Samuel to join him because it made him look good in the eyes of the people and was not too concerned- even in repentance, about looking good in the eyes of God. [You could close this section off by referring to 15:32-35 and commenting on the bad taste Saul's self-centered spirituality left on Samuel].*

> READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

8. Take a look at the "if" statements of vs. 1. How do you work out living these attributes in your own life?

Leader: *The essence of this passage is that our lives ought to be focused on other people, and not just ourselves. The implication here is that WHEN we remember what we HAVE in Christ, we are ready to meet the challenge of putting others first. We need to remember we ARE joined with Christ and ARE loved by Jesus and actually HAVE the presence of the Holy Spirit living in us. When we forget, we have no power to act and no motivation to (outside of making our own lives more livable). When we remember who we ARE, then we have both the motivation and the power to make radical other focused choices in our lives.*

9. What is the connection between vs. 1 and what Paul is asking them to do in verse 2-4. How do they compel us to rid our lives of self-centeredness?

Leader: *If we focus on the example of Jesus we owe it to one another to be in agreement and pursuit of this simple truth- that this is the bottom line application of loving God and loving our neighbors and something we constantly need to remind one another of it above all else we value in our pursuit of God.*

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DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

10. Of the questions about what we have in Christ in Philippians 2:1, which is the easiest for you to forget? Of the commands of Philippians 2:2-4 which is the biggest challenge for you personally? What is one way the group could help you as an individual.

11. Philippians 2:2 implies that we must work together to live out these attributes. Reread the qualities of vs. 1-4, how might your group put this into practice as a group?

Leader: *There is both a personal and communal command implied in this passage. We are to hold to these qualities as individuals and also practice them in community. This could mean a bunch of things from sponsoring a foster child together to serving at the Mustard Seed. It might also mean that we are committing to each find one thing a day for the coming week that reminds us to live like this and sharing it via email with the group.*

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer as a group, asking God to help us focus on others, and see people the way he sees them, and to have a heart for people in need. Ask him to open your eyes to how we get in our own way and make excuses to keep the needs of others at arm's length.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - How are you doing with living out Phil. 2:1-4?
 - What is getting in the way of you focusing on the needs of others this week?
 - How might your life improve if you took time to deliberately focus on someone else?
- A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- A challenge to memorize James 1:27

SPOTLIGHT ON SERVANT LEADERSHIP

**** Psst-** this is a repeat from last week, but so aptly applies that its worth another look!

Don't neglect vs. 5-11**

Imitating Christ's Humility

⁵ *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

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- ⁶ *Who, being in very nature^[a] God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*
- ⁷ *rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*
- ⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*
- ⁹ *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,*
- ¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*
- ¹¹ *and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

Leaders, if we take this passage seriously and strive to 'have the same mindset as Christ Jesus,' how would this impact every aspect of our lives? Our growth groups? Our marriages? Our children? Our church? Our workplaces?