

## ***Never Give Up, Even When You Are Overwhelmed – August 24 & 25, 2019***

### **Follow-up Bible Studies**

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#### **Day One: Matthew 25:31-46**

- Describe this future moment (31-32). What will Jesus do with the people (32-33)? What will he say to those on his right (34-36)? How would you sum up the “sheep’s” actions? What instruction does this offer for how to respond to the outflow of God’s grace? What will confuse the sheep (37-39)? How will Jesus clarify (40)?
- Next, Jesus will address the “goats.” What will he say (41-43)? Similar to the “sheep,” what confusion will they express (44)? How will he make things clear to them (45)? Describe how the “sheep” and the “goats” will experience eternity differently (46).
- Clearly, God wants us to love and care for the vulnerable. Does this call overwhelm or inspire you? Perhaps this reflection calls for repentance, or an examination of what motivates you to act. Read Hebrews 4:16. May you daily approach Jesus’ throne of grace to receive all you need to serve “the least of these.”

#### **Day Two: John 15:1-17**

- In this allegory, who is Jesus (1)? And God (1)? What does God do (2)? Why does he prune fruit-bearing branches (2)? What does this mean for believers (3-4, 16)? How do you know when you’ve failed to “remain in” Jesus? Imagine Jesus pulling you out of a swamp into a fruitful vineyard. What would this look like for you?
- How does Jesus reiterate his assertion that we must remain in him (5-8)? In what ways do you “bear much fruit”? When you try to be fruitful “apart from” Jesus, what happens? How do you sense God responds to your pursuit of deep connection to him?
- Continuing with the command to “remain in” him, what quality does Jesus then emphasize (9)? How can we remain in his love (10)? What is your response to this claim? Why does he tell us this (11)? How does Jesus want us to obey his command to love (12-13, 17)? How do we get to be Jesus’ friend (14-15)? When you feel overwhelmed, how is Jesus a good friend to you?

#### **Day Three: Galatians 1:6-10**

- What astonishes Paul (6-7)? Who calls you “to live in the grace of Christ”? Thank God for these people. What confuses and lures you toward “a different gospel” – one that overwhelms with rules and requirements? Pray for power to resist these temptations.
- Who does Paul want under God’s curse (8-9)? Why do you think he feels so strongly about this? How would you sum up the gospel Paul preaches? What departures from it persist today? What role is God calling you to play in denouncing gospels that are anything other than a testimony of God’s grace? How can you point people back toward the circle of grace Christ alone offers to us?
- With what posture does Paul assert there’s no other gospel besides Jesus’ (10)? Service to Christ is about radical love, not people-pleasing. While the latter overwhelms and always disappoints, the former flows out of us as God’s grace flows in. This week, how can you posture yourself as a “servant of Christ”?

#### **Day Four: Galatians 3:1-14**

- What is Paul’s claim about his readers (1)? Why does this frustrate him (1)? Summarize his attempt to remind them of the gospel of grace (2-5). How did you receive the Holy Spirit? In what ways do you forsake the grace he’s given you? Ask Jesus to lead you back into his circle of grace. What does the path look like?

- How does Paul use Abraham's story to show that trust, not works, is needed to remain faithful to God (6-9)? In what ways do you feel like a child of Abraham? May you experience a life of faith and grace, not works. Give thanks to God for this new identity.
- Who is under a curse, and why (10)? Why does the law fail to justify someone (11)? And why is it incompatible with faith (12)? Imagine Paul speaking these words to you in light of all the ways you strive to earn God's favor. How do you feel? What picture does Paul paint of how to get out of this overwhelming trap (13-14)? Allow Jesus to redeem you and fill you with his Spirit.

#### **Day Five: 1 John 4:7-21**

- Why should we love one another (7, 12)? What does a lack of love reveal about someone (8)? How does God show his love to the world (9-10)? What should flow out of this experience of grace (11)? Both in his gospel and here in this letter, John tells us to "love one another." Why do you think he was so focused on love?
- What indicates that God lives in us (13-16)? We receive the spirit, we testify about Jesus and we rely on his love. All of this begins and ends with an experience of God's grace. Ask the Lord for an impactful experience of it now. What is he testifying to your heart?
- Describe a life lived in love (16-18). "In this world," in what ways are you "like Jesus"? What fears distract you from the invitation to rest in Jesus' perfect love? Ask him to drive them out.
- What makes it possible to love (19)? What conveys a lack of love for God (20-21)? Enter in to his grace once again; may you love not out of coercion, but simply because he first loved you.