



Introduction to the *Escape Room* Sermon Series

Beginning the month of April and going through June, we will begin a new sermon series called “Escape Room.” Whether you believe in Jesus or not, everyone feels trapped, has felt trapped, or is in a relationship with someone who is trapped. The traps of past failures, anxiety, or comparison confine us, like being caught in a dark room. Jesus is with us in the room, has a purpose for us in the struggle, and the power to help us escape. Through this series, we will look at each of these traps – and more! – to see how the work and Person of Jesus speaks to us in the struggles.

Each week, we’ll look at a passage from the Bible related to the topic of the weekend sermon. Our goal in reading the Bible is not only to know more about the Bible and God, but also to have a relationship with God and do what He teaches in His Word. Each of these discussion guides will take you through a passage and help you to know what God is revealing through His Word.

How to Use This Discussion Guide

- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text’s theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That’s okay! You don’t have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God’s Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
3. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what David said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, “That’s a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we’re studying?”
4. **Encourage participation, but don’t let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don’t allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
5. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, “What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?”

We pray that you will hear God speak through His Word and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His story.

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Topic: Condemnation and Past Failures

Sermon Date: April 27-28, 2019

Theme: Despite our failures, we are met with the grace of Jesus in the gospel.

- **Think of a time in your life when you have experienced failure. How did this affect your posture toward God? How did this affect your relationship with others?**
- **When you make a bad choice or fail at something, what is your emotional reaction? What do your thoughts tell you at that time?**

Ask a volunteer to read Romans 8:1-4.

- **How would you define condemnation, and what does it have to do with a person's relationship with God?**
- **Why is there no condemnation for people in Christ Jesus? What does that mean?**

Leader's Note: A person under condemnation is one who has been pronounced guilty and sentenced to punishment. Because of the fallen state of humanity, we all enter this world as those guilty of sin and deserving of death. We do not have the ability in and of ourselves to have a relationship with God and receive the eternal life and grace He offers. When we fail or make a bad choice, we can experience this condemnation more profoundly. We sense we are bad, or at least make bad choices. That sense of guilt can either lead us to seek Christ and His forgiveness or can lead us to hide ourselves from Him and from others.

- **How does the truth of Romans 8:1-2—in Christ we have no condemnation—impact your life both today and for eternity?**

Leader's Note: In the Book of Romans, Paul sought to answer a basic question: How can people be righteous before God? Here he answered that in Christ we have no condemnation. We do not need to fear rejection from God. The focus here is not solely on the end of life. No condemnation means we have no reason to live with guilt in the present. To be in Christ means to be alive through Him. As Christians our lives are determined in Christ.

- **Verse 2 compares “the law of the Spirit of life” with the “law of sin and death.” What characterizes each of these ways of living?**
- **As a Christian, your life is defined by the law of the Spirit. In what ways are we tempted to live under the law of sin and death even after we become Christians?**

Leader's Note: Paul added a new dimension to the definition of life in Christ Jesus with the Spirit's law. The law of the Spirit is responsible for breaking the hold of the law of sin and of death. This law enslaved and led to death. The Spirit is freeing and life-giving. The former life relied on rules. Life in Christ relies on relationship.

- **What makes Jesus' work on the cross so significant?**

Leader's Note: God condemned sin in that He broke its power by sending His own Son. Having perfectly fulfilled the law, Jesus was uniquely qualified to serve as a sin offering. He could voluntarily take on Himself the penalty for sin and offer forgiveness to us. Christ's accomplishment is even more impressive because He submitted to sin's domain. Jesus took on Himself the same weakness we have in the flesh. He

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was subject to the full reality of temptation. He knows what we face. To be in flesh like ours underscores this truth and means the divine Jesus Christ took on a body that was like ours in every way, yet He remained sinless.

- **Read verse 4 again. Jesus' death on the cross makes us righteous in God's eyes. What part do we play in securing that righteousness?**

Leader's Note: To be righteous means to live in obedience to God and His law. Verse 4 underscores the purpose of God's condemning sin, or breaking its power. Jesus' death fulfilled the law's requirement that we be righteous, that we live in obedience to the law. We couldn't do that, but Jesus did it for us. Having fulfilled perfectly the overarching requirement, Jesus imparts His righteousness to believers. In this way the requirement of the law is accomplished in us. We now fulfill the law by having faith in Christ. We accept His gracious gift and rely on Him rather than our own strength to try to please God. That is the basic difference between living according to the flesh and living according to the Spirit.

- **From verses 1-4, how would you explain the gospel to someone who feels they are not "good enough" for God?**
- **Is there a sin in your life that causes you to question if God sees you as righteous? How can you incorporate the truth of this lesson into your life to help combat those feelings this week?**
- **Do you have current or past failures that you need to submit to God? How does this passage encourage you to admit your failures before Him? What does today's text tell you about how He will respond?**
- **The gospel is the ultimate response of grace to the failure of mankind. Who do you know that has faced failure and needs to hear the response of the gospel? How will you pursue that person this week?**

Close in prayer, asking that the reality of God's gift of grace through faith in Christ will reach the depths of praise and gratitude in our hearts.

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Topic: Religion Rather than Relationship

Sermon Date: May 4-5, 2019

Theme: Nothing compares to the fulfillment we can experience in knowing Christ.

- **What are different motives people have for religious activities like attending church? Which of these are appropriate and which are inappropriate?**
- **Why is it often easier to find security and meaning in religious practices than in Christ alone?**

Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 3:1-6.

Leader's Note: For a long time in Paul's life, he was a legalist. He believed that his good works in keeping the Old Testament law would assure him a place in God's kingdom. After his conversion, Paul understood God's grace for the first time and made faith in Jesus Christ the hallmark of his ministry.

- **Why is Paul so concerned about "those dogs"? What or who were the "dogs"—the false teachings—that threatened the people in Paul's day?**

Leader's Note: In Philippians 3:1-6, Paul warned his readers against false teachers who were boasting about their achievements in the flesh. Possibly these false teachers were Judaizers who were bragging about their circumcision. Just like stray dogs, Paul's false-teaching opponents snapped at his heels and followed him from place to place, "barking" their false doctrines. Anyone who adds anything to the gospel as a requirement for salvation is a false teacher. Neither circumcision nor any other religious practice can save a person from his sins. Only faith in Jesus Christ can do that. In response, Paul gave his testimony about his previous confidence in his own heredity and achievements.

- **What was Paul's resume? Could someone find fault with his devotion to God?**
- **What does "confidence in the flesh" mean (v. 4)?**
- **In his "profit and loss" system (vv. 4-8), how does Paul ultimately figure the worth of his religious credentials? What is the secret to success?**

Leader's Note: Paul indicated that before becoming a Christian, he was blameless in his practice of following the law as a Jewish man. He listed credentials that, in the minds of some, indicated he was obedient to the law of the Old Testament. Yet Paul used his spiritual resume to point out that these credentials did not matter.

- **Name some things people do to "get right" with God. How does culture today influence the mentality that we must "do good" to be in good standing with God?**
- **In what kinds of works and credentials have you placed your confidence in the past? Why did you put your trust in these things?**
- **How would you describe a true believer who rests in Christ's grace?**

Leader's Note: Who we are in Christ is not based on what we do. Paul had once believed he could only earn God's grace through his own efforts. But an entirely new way of thinking took over Paul's life, and he

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dedicated himself to serving Christ no matter the cost. The chief persecutor of the church became one of the greatest champions of the cross of Christ the world has ever seen.

Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 3:7-8.

Leader's Note: Looking back on his legalistic lifestyle in Judaism, Paul realized it meant absolutely nothing in comparison to knowing God as a follower of Christ. Salvation is not about what we can do for God, but what God has already done for us in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. A right relationship with God comes at His initiative through faith in Christ. We do not have to be perfect in this life; we can put the past behind us.

- **What do you consider to be one of your best accomplishments or qualifications?**
- **How does it feel to consider the accomplishment or qualification you stated as “animal excrement” compared to knowing Christ?**

Leader's Note: When God looks at those who have trusted in His Son for salvation, He sees them as having Christ's righteousness, not their own. Knowing Christ begins with faith, but is more. It involves a growing and personal relationship with Him that shapes our entire outlook on life. We become spiritually stagnant when we let things like our good works fool us into thinking we don't need to grow in Christ. We also become spiritually stagnant when we assume we can't mature in our faith because of our past failures.

- **What accomplishments and/or failures do you need to forget to focus on Jesus? How can doing so help you better serve Him?**
- **Paul desired to know Christ better, above all else. How does your desire in this area compare to Paul's?**
- **How can you continually get to “know” Christ better and have greater fellowship with Him? How can our group support one another in this pursuit?**

Close in prayer, asking that God would help us let go of both past accomplishments and failures. Pray also for an increased desire to know Christ more.

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Topic: Guest Speaker – Mike Moses from Lake Forest Church
Sermon Date: May 11-12, 2019

Because we have a guest speaker this week, there is no Life Group Discussion Guide. Ideas you could do for this week in your group meeting include:

- A social gathering
- A time for taking prayer requests and praying for each other
- A time to share communion (see the communion guide under the resources tab on www.fhcgroupleaders.org)
- Using a video from Right Now Media
- Sharing what God has been teaching you over the past weeks

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Topic: Anxiety

Sermon Date: May 18-19, 2019

Theme: The antidote to anxiety and worry is a faith in God's love for His people and His sovereignty over their lives.

- **What are some things you worry most about?**
- **Do you consider worry a sin? Explain your answer.**

Leader's Note: The presence or absence of worry is often a reflection of our faith in God. As believers, we aspire to a single focus on God and loyalty toward Him. In this passage, Jesus taught that worry is unproductive. Not only is it unproductive, it's the opposite of faith in God.

- **What does the fact that so many of us struggle with worry say about our culture? What does it say about our faith? Instead of beating ourselves up over this struggle, how should we respond?**

Ask a volunteer to read Luke 12:22-26.

- **According to these verses, what are the specific reasons and examples Jesus gives us for not worrying about the basic needs of life?**
- **What's required for us to take seriously Jesus' instruction not to worry about the necessities of life?**

Leader's Note: In verse 23, Jesus states, "For life is more than food and the body more than clothing." Is the only source for fulfillment and meaning to our lives what we eat and what we wear? Of course not. Jesus is establishing the fact that worry is illogical for the child of God. If God is the Creator of the world, including us, then will He not also provide for our needs?

- **When we worry, what are we saying about our view of God and our relationship with Him?**
- **How has worry hindered your faith and negatively impacted your relationship with God? What eventually helped you overcome that worry?**

Ask another volunteer to read Luke 12:27-30.

- **What additional reasons for not worrying do you take away from these verses?**
- **What is main problem with worry in the life of a Christian?**

Leader's Note: Faith calls for trust in a loving and personal God at work in the world. Worry shows a lack of faith. Jesus' teaching by no means ignores the reality of poverty and hunger among the people of the earth. However, Jesus' clear teaching for believers is to trust God above all. If the Lord faithfully provides for the needs of mere creatures and even plants, how much more will He provide for us—His children?

- **Is it practical to depend on God for vital necessities like food and clothing? Why do you think He expects us to?**
- **Trusting God with everything is easier said than done. What spiritual disciplines—such as prayer, worship, study, fasting, and so forth—have you found (or might you find) helpful for fighting worry?**
- **Why do praising God and giving thanks to Him undermine worry?**

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Ask another volunteer to read Luke 12:31-34.

- **Practically speaking, what does it mean to “seek His kingdom”?**
- **How have you seen Jesus’ statement in verse 31 proven true in your life?**
- **In what practical ways does overcoming our fears allow us to exhibit our faith?**

Leader’s Note: Jesus encourages us to rest in our positions in God’s kingdom (vv. 29-34) instead of being consumed by worry and fear. First, remember that God loves as a Father loves. We should not think of God as far away and unapproachable or even as a king who is not accessible. As our Father, God loves and cares for us. Second, God is personal; we have a personal relationship with Him. Finally, as both God and Father, He knows that we need the basics of life. Christians never have to worry about whether God knows or cares about their needs. Instead of worrying, believers can seek the kingdom of God and trust Him. We can focus on living out His mission. If His will is our priority, we will be less concerned about material matters and more committed to eternal relationships.

- **How would your life be different if you lived the way Jesus sets forth in this passage?**
- **What are some examples of actions that show a person is seeking first God’s kingdom?**
- **What are some ways to keep the work of Christ central to your thinking as you try to seek His kingdom first?**

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Topic: Performance

Sermon Date: May 25-26, 2019

Theme: God's love for us is not impacted by our performance for Him.

- **Describe a recent time when your performance didn't measure up to the standard you set for yourself. What thoughts and feelings accompanied that occasion?**
- **What actions did you take to express those thoughts or feelings?**
- **In what kinds of situations are you most likely to feel like you have to perform for God to approve of you?**
- **Does that need for performance-approval bleed into other areas of your life (i.e., parenting, work, friendships, etc.)? If so, what does that indicate about the way you view God's love?**

Leader's Note: A firm belief in God's unchanging love is essential for us to move forward spiritually. Until we truly believe God loves us, apart from our performance, our spiritual lives will be stagnant. We'll constantly be trying to prove ourselves to God. Fortunately, Jesus helps us see that we are free from this lie because of what He has done on our behalf.

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 5:17-22.

- **What did Jesus mean by saying He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets?**

Leader's Note: Jesus' use of "the Law and the Prophets" referred to two key sections of the Old Testament. During His ministry, Jesus was accused of preaching a new religion, because His teaching often contradicted the common beliefs of His day. Jesus loved the Law and the Prophets—He created them, and He came to keep them perfectly and bring God's covenant promises to fruition.

- **Why wasn't the way the scribes and Pharisees obeyed the law sufficient?**
- **What was Jesus trying to communicate when He said we must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees? How did this teaching raise people's expectation of righteousness?**

Leader's Note: In verse 20, Jesus said that the kingdom belongs to those whose righteousness outshines that of the scribes and Pharisees. The scribes were the keepers of Scripture (in this case the Old Testament), and the Pharisees were the teachers of the Law and were considered to be the pillars of righteousness in Jewish communities. But their righteousness was largely external and superficial—Jesus demands something deeper.

- **How does Jesus' interpretation of murder (v. 21) show what kind of righteousness He is looking for?**
- **Is that interpretation encouraging or discouraging to you? Why? Is it possible for you to achieve that level of righteousness?**

Leader's Note: At first, this passage might seem like bad news—that no matter how hard we try, we will never live up to God's standard of righteousness. But remember that Jesus has fulfilled the Law perfectly. Because He has, the burden of performance is lifted from us.

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Ask another volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

- In what sense are you a new creation right now?
- Have you ever considered that you have become the righteousness of Christ—the kind of righteousness that He described in Matthew 5? How does knowing that make you feel?
- How does believing that we have the righteousness of Christ combat the lie that the better we perform, the more God will love us?
- Why might God want you to know, today, that you don't have to perform to earn His love? How would knowing that change the way you relate to Him and others?

Leader's Note: God is not the kind of father who is always looking for his children to earn his affection. Nor is he like the employer who constantly demands the bigger and better work. He has fully given His love and approval to us, not because of our merit, but based on the sacrifice of Jesus. When we stop believing the lie of performance, we move deeper into the great life of joy that God has for us.

- Does knowing you don't have to earn God's approval affect your behavior? How so?
- How can you best live in the freedom of God's love? What specifically does the knowledge of His love free you to do?

Pray and thank God that His love for you is not dependent on your performance for Him. Ask Him for the faith to believe what He says to be true about you in Christ.

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Topic: Disappointment

Sermon Date: June 1-2, 2019

Theme: Our pride produces disappointment in our relationships with both God and other people. We need God to humble us so that we might find satisfaction in Him.

- **What is the best experience you have ever had in a restaurant? What made it such a great experience? The food? The service? The environment?**
- **Share about the worst service you have ever received at a restaurant. How did you respond to receiving poor service?**

Ask for a volunteer to read 2 Kings 5:1-7.

- **Put yourself in Naaman's place. How would you feel knowing you held a position of power and authority and yet suffered from a skin disease you could do nothing about?**
- **Have you ever felt frustrated that there was something in your life you couldn't control or fix? How can those times be beneficial in our relationship with God?**

Leader's Note: Control is really an illusion. We can pursue our wildest dreams, and maybe even see them come to pass, and yet we are reminded time and time again that we are not in true control of our lives. In those times, we can either choose to be frustrated, or we can choose to press further into faith in the God who is in control.

- **How did the king of Israel respond to Naaman's letter and gift (v. 7)? How might Naaman have been disappointed with this response?**
- **Why are we sometimes disappointed with the way other people respond to our requests? What might our disappointment reveal about our hearts (see Romans 12:3)?**

Leader's Note: Naaman was an important person. He was a successful commander of the army of the king of Syria who posed a great threat to Israel if the king did not comply with his request. Like Naaman, we all struggle with thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. We are often tempted to place unrealistic expectations on others because we have an unrealistic view of ourselves. Paul challenged the church at Rome to "think with sober judgement . . . according to the measure of faith God has assigned" because he knew that our pride keeps us from seeing how desperately we need God's grace.

- **Compare and contrast Naaman and the servant girl. How are they alike/different?**
- **What must this girl have believed about God in order to tell Naaman how he could be helped? How do her actions remind you of what Jesus did for us in the gospel?**

Leader's Note: Let's not forget the fact that this girl was a slave, taken from her homeland forcibly. She could have been bitter about her circumstances, but instead she chose the path of love. In contrast to Naaman who was focused on his own self-importance, her faith in God enabled her to seek the good of those who had not sought good for her. She reminds us of Jesus who, though He was crucified at the hands of men, willingly allowed it to happen to Himself because He loved them despite their sin.

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Ask for another volunteer to read 2 Kings 5:8-14.

- **What does Naaman's response to Elisha (vv. 11-12) reveal about his opinion of himself? How might such an opinion produce disappointment in our relationships with others? In our relationship with God?**
- **Why does an opinion like that keep us from God's healing and intimacy in our own lives?**

Leader's Note: Naaman was still under the spell of his own self-importance. Rather than having an attitude of humility and need, he was filled up with his own pride. When we come to God, there is only one way for us to do so—acknowledging our need. When we do, we will find a God ready to listen and come to our aid.

- **Why do you think God required Naaman to receive healing by dipping in the Jordan River? What might God have been seeking to teach Naaman?**
- **What are some ways you can remind yourself of your own need before God?**

Leader's Note: When we are full of ourselves, the temptation is to constantly be looking for some task from the Lord that fits with our sense of self-importance. However, when we seek satisfaction in anything other than the Lord, we will always be disappointed because God made us for a relationship with Himself. By requiring Naaman to dip in the Jordan, God helped Naaman see that his own pride had kept him from finding true satisfaction in the Lord.

- **How might acknowledging your need for Christ and what He has done for you on the cross help you overcome your greatest disappointments?**
- **What are some practical ways you could remind yourself of the power of the cross this week?**

Close in prayer, asking God to help us see ourselves as we really are: sinners in desperate need of His grace daily. Pray God would humble us so that we would both seek Him and help those around us seek Him.

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Topic: Comparison

Sermon Date: June 8-9, 2019

Theme: We fight off comparison and jealousy by considering others as better than ourselves and giving in to God's jealousy for our love.

- **What is the best news a friend or family member shared with you recently? What made this news so good in their eyes?**
- **How did you respond to the good news of your friend? Are you always happy for other people when they share good news with you? Why or why not?**

Leader's Note: While we would like to think that we are always happy for our friends when they receive good news, this is not always the case. If we are honest, we often struggle with feelings of jealousy, particularly when those closest to us receive blessings we think we deserve. This is nothing new to relationships; in fact, it was the root of the first crime in the Bible, when Cain wanted the approval that Abel had from God. Jealousy, if left unchecked, hinders both our relationship with God and others. If we hope to overcome the jealousy that corrupts our hearts we must be excited for the success of others, consider others as actually better than ourselves, and give in to God's jealousy for us.

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 20:8-15

- **Why didn't the workers in this parable appreciate the generosity of their employer? Where was their focus?**
- **Why is it tempting to compare what we get from God with what someone else gets? What happens when we do?**
- **Instead of jealousy, what is the more God-honoring way we should respond to the success of others? Do you find that type of response challenging? If so, explain.**

Leader's Note: Instead of marveling at the generosity of the master, the workers were too busy looking at each other to notice. When we start coveting the gifts God gives to others, we start complaining. Instead of being grateful for what God has given us, we grumble about what God has given someone else. The healthier, more God-honoring response is to be excited for the successes of others, not threatened by them. Anytime we think we are not getting something we deserve, we should remember that we deserve to pay the penalty for our sins, and yet, God demonstrated His love for us by sending Jesus to die for us while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8). God's love is most profoundly displayed in the grace He offers us through the death of His Son. That grace should radically change the way we love others. God is generous by nature, and we should be excited when we see His generosity at work in the lives of others.

. Ask another volunteer to read Philippians 2:3.

- **In a section of his letter to the Philippians about unity and humility in the church, Paul challenged his readers to "in humility consider others better than yourselves." Why is it hard to consider others as more important than yourself?**
- **What do we show we believe about God when we are willing to put others first?**

Leader's Note: It's never easy to think of someone else's needs and desires ahead of your own, especially when you live in close proximity with those people. We feel like we have to look out for our own needs, or

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no one will. But if we truly believe God can and does care for our needs, one of the ways we show that belief is by putting others first. If you find it a challenge to take this approach to relationships, remember that they have a soul and are dearly loved by God. Therefore, they should be dearly loved by you. You are not more valuable than anyone else in God's eyes. All are of equal, and great, value.

. Ask another volunteer to read Exodus 20:4-6.

- **In contrast to the jealousy we bring into relationships, the Ten Commandments remind us that our God is a jealous God. In what sense do you think God is “jealous”? How is that different from the way a human might be jealous?**
- **What are some ways being mindful of God's jealousy for you could positively impact your relationships with others?**

Leader's Note: A basic thrust of this Second Commandment is that we should allow no substitutes for God in our lives; nothing should take the Lord's place. Idol worship is forbidden in this passage because the Lord is a jealous God. The Hebrew word translated “jealous” also could be translated “zealous.” The word in this context does not denote a negative quality such as pettiness. Rather the word conveys the fact that God expects complete loyalty from His people. When you remember how dearly loved you are by God (so much so that He made the ultimate sacrifice to be in a relationship with you), it should motivate you to be committed to that relationship. When your relationship with God matters most of all, then all the relationships in your life shift into godly perspective.

- **What causes you to lose sight of the generosity and grace of God in your life? How can we maintain our focus on God's grace when we feel like life is unfair?**
- **How do we demonstrate faith in the gospel when we delight in the successes of others? What are some practical measures we could take to respond joyfully to the grace of God in the lives of those around us?**
- **What do you need to do in response to God's jealousy for you? How can our group motivate each other to give Him the love and priority He is due?**

Thank God for His unmerited love and kindness. Pray that He would help us let go of our jealousy by remembering His promises and savoring His grace.

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Topic: Purposelessness

Sermon Date: June 15-16, 2019

Theme: Because life with Christ in heaven is waiting for those who trust in Him, our purpose on earth should be to know Him and make Him known.

- **It has been said, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” What do people mean when they use that quote?**
- **What is the difference between having good intentions and living intentionally?**

Leader’s Note: Not carrying out good intentions is not what separates us from God for eternity; choosing not to trust in Christ is the only thing that does that. However, it is true that good intentions mean nothing without action to accompany them. There are Christians with good intentions, and there are Christians who live intentionally. Good intentions will never change the world. Good intentions will never take the gospel to relationships. Intentional living, though, is a focused and determined choice to live with eternity in mind. This perspective affects everything about us.

Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 73:23-28.

Leader’s Note: Godly and intentional living didn’t always come easily for Asaph, the writer of Psalm 73. He had envied the prosperity and ease of life the wicked seemed to enjoy (vv. 3-4). His own struggles seemed a troubling contrast to their seemingly trouble-free lives (vv. 12-14). He almost lost faith in God and stopped pursuing the path of righteousness (v. 2), until He was confronted with God’s perspective and truth (vv. 17-20).

- **What important truths did Asaph understand about his life when he turned back to God (vv. 24-28)? What did Asaph need to get straight before he began to intentionally live for the Lord and tell others about Him (v. 28)?**
- **What questions, hangups, or circumstances have served as obstacles between you and godly, intentional living?**
- **What would it look like for you to “enter the sanctuary of God” to find out the truth about those questions, hangups, and circumstances?**

Leader’s Note: No matter what we go through in this life, good or bad, God is with us. He guides us through life, and then takes us to heaven to live with Him forever. This eternal perspective is foundational if we are going to live intentionally for God and His glory alone. There is nothing on earth that compares to living in His presence, now and forever. When He is our refuge, we can’t help but tell others about Him.

Ask another volunteer to read Philippians 3:10-11.

- **What similarities do you see between Paul’s words here and Asaph’s conclusion in Psalm 73?**
- **Does Paul’s goal here sound possible? Why or why not?**
- **What things do you do to get to know Jesus better?**

Leader’s Note: Demonstrating the lack of importance of earthly things, Paul expressed what life truly meant to him. He desired resurrection from the dead, so he pursued the only way that promised resurrection. The Damascus road experience transformed him. He discovered that Judaism with its traditions, regulations, and rituals could not guarantee resurrection. Only the resurrected One could. This

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changed Paul's aim in life. He wanted to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. To know Christ meant much more than knowing about Him in his mind. Knowledge is a relational term of intimacy. Paul wanted the closest possible personal relationship with Christ. That relationship prompted clear intentionality in the way he lived each day.

Ask another volunteer to read Philippians 1:20-30.

Leader's Note: Paul wrote the book of Philippians from prison in Rome where he was awaiting trial for preaching the gospel. Paul was unsure of his fate and was aware that at any moment he could be sentenced to death. Paul, however, did not use his circumstances as an opportunity to try and win the sympathy of the church at Philippi. Instead, Paul used his grave circumstances as an opportunity to encourage the Christians in Philippi to live boldly for the sake of the gospel.

- **Which of the two options before Paul does he say is better? Why?**
- **What does it look like to “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”?**
- **Why aren't good intentions enough to carry this out? From the three passages we have studied today, what do you need to do to carry it out?**

Leader's Note: As Christians, we know exactly why we exist—to glorify God. When we focus on living for Christ and His glory, death doesn't seem so daunting. In Christ, our future is secure; He has saved us from sin and promises to take us to be with Him forever when we die. Paul did not fear the possibility of death. Instead, he used it as motivation to make the most of the time God had given him, intentionally living to proclaim the gospel and encourage churches in their pursuit of Christ. The more we focus on Christ, the more we will take advantage of the opportunities God has set before us to spread His fame and build His church.

- **From today's passages, what is your purpose in life? What would it look like for you to intentionally carry that purpose out?**
- **How have you seen that being a part of a small group of believers like this helps you to live more intentionally than if you were simply trying to do it on your own?**

Thank God for being your ever-present help and refuge. Invite Him to impress the truths of who He is and who you are in Him that you might better live intentionally to tell others about Him and bring Him glory.