

SESSION 1: God Calls us to Serve // YOU WERE MADE FOR THIS!

TO GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED...

Take a moment and think about a time in your life when you tried on something new, a new shirt or a dress or a nice pair of shoes. In particular, try to recall a time when the thing you were trying on fit perfectly. **How does it feel to wear something that seems like it was made just for you?**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Read **Ephesians 2:8-9**. These verses are often used to summarize the wonderful truth of the Gospel: that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. It is entirely a gift and “not a result of works.” **How is this truth a comfort to you?**

- 2) But the Bible does talk a great deal about our works. In fact, immediately after his ringing declaration of the Gospel in Ephesians 2:8-9 that we are saved by grace and not by works, Paul goes on to talk about “good works.” Read **Ephesians 2:10**. **What does this verse tell us about the works we do?**

- 3) Can you think of times when God arranged circumstances so that you were in the right place at the right time to do a “good work”?

- 4) We are called to do these “good works” not only in special and memorable ways, but also in everyday life. Martin Luther, the 16th century church reformer, stressed that our everyday life consists of the *vocations* to which God calls us. At one point, he even went so far as to say, “God himself is milking the cows through the vocation of the milkmaid.”¹ His point is that God gives us our vocations – *whatever they may be!* – as places to serve Him by serving others.

Vocá·tion: where God places us in ordinary, everyday life to love and serve our neighbors on His behalf

Considering your own vocations, what “good works” have you done in the past week for your family? For your others at work? For others in your community?

¹ *Commentary on Genesis*, WA 44,6; cited by Gustav Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, (Evansville, IN: Ballast Press, 1999, pg 9)



- 5) The Apostle James emphasizes the close ties between our faith in Jesus and our works in his name. **Read James 2:14-26. Why does James say that faith without works is dead?**

What is the difference between Christians who believe in God and demons who believe in God?

- 6) How does Jesus tie faith and “good works” together in the following passages?

Matthew 7:21

Matthew 25:31-46

Luke 10:25-37

- 7) The word “serving” is often used for the “good works” that we do as followers of Jesus, imitating His own life of service. On the night of His Last Supper with His twelve disciples, He took on a task usually performed by the lowliest of servants: washing the road dust off His disciples’ dirty feet. **Read John 13:1-17**. In verses 12-17, note the different ways He emphasized the point He wanted His disciples to learn from His actions.

KEEP THIS IN MIND!

As we begin to recognize the importance of demonstrating our faith through our “good works” [**James 2:18**], we must always keep a proper perspective on our works. The Apostle Paul emphasizes that we are justified by grace through faith *apart from works* [**Ephesians 2:8-9**] precisely because we, as sinful human beings, all too easily fall into the trap of self-righteousness. We need the constant reminder that our “good works” do NOT earn God’s favor, but they flow out of those who believe and are connected to His power [**John 15:5**]. Because God has so humbly and graciously served us in Jesus Christ, we are invited and empowered to serve others. These “good works” are the necessary, tell-tale signs, the “fruits” of faith!

CLOSING IN PRAYER

Remember to thank God for His gift of salvation by grace through faith and the privilege of serving others in His name and by His power.

You can easily begin to serve one another by praying for each other’s needs.

