**Leader Copy | By Grace Not Works | January 13, 2016**

**Creational Text – Large Group**

 **Large group game – Celebrity names**

 **Ask who won, have them sit down.**

 **Ask last place finishers to come up and give them prizes.**

 **How many of you have had a job? What have you done?**

 **Why did you work?**

To get paid, earn money

 **How would you feel if you didn't get paid for the work you did?**

 **How would you feel if you got 100 times as much as what you earned?**

 **How do you get people to like you?**

Compliments, do favors, do nice things for them...

 **Any examples from your life?**

 As we can see we, as humans, like to get what we deserve. The question we are going to tackle tonight is: Does God work the same way? Is our relationship with God like a relationship with an employeer or a classmate?

**Creational Text – Small Group**

 Have you ever done something nice for someone and they did something nice back?

 Have you ever done something mean and had someone do something mean back to you?

 If you do something good for God do you expect him to do something good for you?

 If you do something wrong, what do you expect from God??

**Scriptural Text – Small Group**

**Romans 3:20**

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

**Galatians 3:10**

 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

**Isaiah 64:6**

 All of us have become like one who is unclean,

 and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;

 we all shrivel up like a leaf,

 and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

Do we live up to God's standards by doing good things?

 *No, we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. No one is rightous. Even the pharisses who "kept" the all God's laws were tainted by sin. We are like "flilty rags".*

Why doesn't doing good things help make us right with God?

 *Even our best good works are still tainted with sin. We serve for the glory of it or perhaps because we think God will give us safety, peace, or prosperity. Even our best stuff isn't perfect.*

**Galatians 3:3**

3 How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

**Galatians 2:16**

So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

**Galatians 2: 20-21**

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

 The bad stuff we do doesn't help us for sure, and the good stuff we do doesn't live up to God's standards, what hope do we have? Do we have any comfort?

 *Grace – unearned favor. We belong not to ourselves but our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood.*

 Who does salvation come from?

 *Not from ourselves, it is a gift from God through Jesus who died on the cross.*

 Should we feel proud we have gotten salvation? Why or why not?

 *No, because it not by our works or anything we have earned. It is by God's mercy.*

If we can take no pride in our ability to be saved, how might that change the way we view others? Could it change the way we view non-Christians?

 *In our weakness Christ had mercy on us. We should view others with mercy and grace. We can speak with non-Christians with grace and peace knowing that their lives are in the hands of God as much as ours are. We can't brag about ourselves, but can brag about how amazing God is and what he did for us. It changes the focus from us onto God.*

**Connections – Small Group**

* Why can't the good stuff we do make us right with God, or at least help make us right with him?
	+ *Because the righteousness which can pass God's examination must be perfect. Even the very best we do in this life is imperfect and stained with sin.*
* But doesn't God promise that the good stuff we do will be rewarded in this life and with heaven? How can we say the good we do doesn't earn anything?!
	+ *The rewards are indeed real, but they are NOT earned, they are a gift of grace.*
* Won't saying "The good stuff you do doesn't make you right with God" make people not care how that act and even do evil things?
	+ *No. It is impossible for those grafted into Christ by true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude. When we trust in Jesus and accept his forgiveness the Holy Spirit lives in us and propels us to do good things. We’ll talk more about this later in the year!*

 Prayer - Ask for any prayer requests and pray together.