

**BELIEVE THE IMPOSSIBLE| Impossible Salvation | Week 4 | Dec 21 & 22**

Isaiah 53:1-6; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Matthew 5:20; Isaiah 55:9

Mark 10:18; Matthew 1:21; Ephesians 2:8-10

These study guides are designed for individual or group study but highly encouraged to be experienced in community with a small group or other friends on the journey with Jesus.

Context: We live in a climate of success. We strive for success as a quality of life and a measure of competence. We desire to do things well. And that is a good desire.

- What would be the opposite desire? Would it be to strive to not be successful?
- Now consider the motivation: Why do you want to do things well?

The Free Poinsettia: Pastor Dan opened his message with the story of The Free Poinsettia. “This flower is too pretty to just take home for free. I couldn't do that with a clear conscience.” “Here!” she said, shooting out her hand...I looked down at the crumpled paper she had stuffed into my hand. It was a ten dollar bill.” Read Ephesians 2:8-9.

- What parts of the story especially connected with you?
- How do you feel about not paying for something given to you of great value? How would you have responded to the preacher's offer to, “Come, take it for free, right now, it's yours.”
- What is your resistance? Embarrassment? Does that come from pride? Does that come from “not earning”? What is the narrative you would be telling yourself in this situation?

The free gift barrier: Pastor Dan gives us a cultural spin on our skepticism, “ Did I do well enough to earn that bonus? Have I accumulated enough in my account to pay for all these things I just bought? In every sphere where there IS a big pay-off, it's almost always because we put in something big ourselves.”

- Where have you received a surprising gift? What was your first response?
- How did you rationalize it? What was your narrative?

Pastor Dan goes on to say, “ We go through life anxiously assessing our looks and social media likes, our grades and our accolades. Some of us conclude that our point total is pretty high compared to a lot of people. Others of us conclude that our score is disappointingly low.”

- How do you escape the comparative narrative? Or is it a source of security?
- What are the dangers of playing the comparison game?

The punishment that brought us peace: Read Isaiah 53:1-6. Centuries ago, God set the true view for ourselves. “...all like sheep have gone astray”.

- How do you describe your “security” with God?
- Be honest, do you think of things you have done? Further, do you think of doing more than someone else?



A probing comparison: Read Matthew 5:20. In the context of what we have been considering, what does this passage mean?

- Place yourself in the sandals of a Pharisee, when you heard Jesus say this, what went through your mind and heart?
- Now place yourself in the sandals of the average listener on the hill that day, when you heard Jesus say this, what went through your mind and heart?
- Now how about you? Right here and right now, what is going through your mind and heart when you hear Jesus say this?

IMPOSSIBLE gift: Jesus is saying we can't, " [do] enough good deeds, go to enough religious services, put enough in the offering plate to take the Poinsettia home." The Pharisees life was defined by doing good. It was a dedication to all they knew to be righteous and holy. How could you do more?

- Hearing it this way what stirs in you? What emotions? What actions? What thoughts?

Jesus—God saves: Read Matthew 1:21. The story of Christmas can be simplified to "we sin but God saves." Pastor Dan clarifies, " Jesus has done all the work necessary for our salvation. It is His gift, freely given."

- Have you personally received this free gift? If so share with your group your story.
- If you have never received the free gift of Jesus, or have done so through this message, please let us know (ehaskins@christchurch.us) so we can celebrate and partner with you to help you to take the next steps.

Practice of the Week: Reflect on the IMPOSSIBLE

Memorize Ephesians 2:4-10 this week. Keep it in front of you on your drive home or before you go to bed each day. Through this spiritual practice allow God's Word and the reality of the free gift of salvation through Jesus to shape and transform your heart and mind.

We'd love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts, questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you or your small group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these study guides in your lives.

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