



Living from the Inside Out

Ice Breaker: Try something new and rather than using 'feeling words,' describe how you're feeling today as a picture that is in your mind's eye.

Say it out loud: *"Jesus came to bring me freedom."*

Reflect and journal:

What does that declaration do in your heart? Do you rejoice that Jesus wants you to be free, or do you find yourself balking at that statement?

Read: Matthew 5:20; Matthew 23:25-28; Matthew 6:33; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9

Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, not as a salvation message, but as a discipleship message. He intended it to help us to grow. He challenges us to make sure we live according to HIS standards, not by what the world, or even the church says we need to be and do. In this part of His message (Matthew 5:20), Jesus is warning us about the destruction of legalism.

Remember that your right standing (righteousness) before God is achieved from the inside out, not from the outside in.

Consider these Lies of Legalism in your own life:

- Lie #1: Your good deeds make up for your bad deeds.

Ask yourself honestly:

Have you fell for this lie?

How many good deeds do you need to do in order to make up for something bad that you have done?

- Lie #2: God's love towards you fluctuates depending on your faithfulness.

Ask yourself, be honest, share (if comfortable):

Have you fell for this lie?

Do you think that God loves you less when you don't have a 'Perfect 10' day?

Has anyone ever affirmed your belief in this lie with their criticism of you or their demands of you?

- Lie #3: If you really love God, you must live by religious rules that are not in the Bible.

Ask yourself and then discuss:

Have you fell for this lie?

What extra rules do you make yourself live by that God isn't asking you to live by?

What extra rules have you lived by that others have imposed on you?

Where have you experienced destruction when living by those extra rules?

- Lie #4: Your outside image is more important than your inside condition.

Ask yourself and let's get real (or uncomfortable!) 😊:

Have you fell for this lie?

The Pharisees looked really good on the outside, but Jesus said they were full of dead man's bones. That's a strong statement! Do you recognize any dead parts inside yourself that you've masked by a 'put-together' outside?

What do you think would bring that deadness back to life?

Take aways:

- Christianity is not about all the rules. It is about freedom. The Bible without the spirit is death.
- WHO You are is not about "ME", it's about Jesus and HIS righteousness. When God sees you, He sees Jesus' righteousness. Even if you don't feel righteous, He proclaims who you are! And your feelings do not change that!
- YOU CANNOT BE RIGHTEOUS BY YOUR OWN OBEDIENCE. In the same way, YOU CANNOT KEEP YOUR SALVATION by your OWN OBEDIENCE. Your salvation is dependent on Jesus alone. ON HIS GRACE... alone. You cannot do enough to earn it, and you cannot do enough to lose it.

Reflect:

Be awed by these truths.

Choose today to check your pride at the door.

Allow the TRUTH of God's Word to go beyond you, into the deep places to change you and make you whole in HIM. Doing so will lead to a gratitude that will then lead to an outpouring of life to the full (John 10:10).

Respond:

"Yes Lord, I believe, please help my unbelief."

Let HIM fill you with the ability to believe HIS declaration of WHO you are and let HIM convince you by giving you HIS thoughts!

Pray and live changed:

God, please help me to recognize where my pride has distracted me from Your gift of freedom. Please help me to surrender the checklist that I judge myself and others with. Please help me to release both my silent and my outward legalism and instead, embrace the hope you have given me through Your grace. Please help me to focus less on ME and more on YOU. Help me to come closer to You and embrace and experience the FREEDOM You came to give me. Please help me to reflect and give grace freely to those around me. In the name of Jesus!

Amen