

Step Up

Called to Serve

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Week 2

Ephesians 2:8; James 2:14-26

Our vision at E91 is to multiply Kingdom impact on the northside as people from E91 are reaching out to their neighbors and inviting them to church at an E91 worshiping and serving community in their own area. And so, this is not an either/or—this is a both/and. We are growing, reaching and serving in Castleton AND we are growing, reaching, and serving further north. But to do both locations well, we need more people to move from sitting to serving.

Goal #1: Raise up a Northside Launch Team of 100 people.

Goal #2: Raise up an additional 100 people to serve at our Castleton Campus.

1. What are some reasons you attend church or belong to a church?

Long gone are the days where comfort is the defining characteristic of Christianity. A comfortable faith where we just attend worship services periodically and then go about our business as usual. A comfortable Christianity where we just feel good as we participate in the familiar—familiar songs, familiar spaces, familiar faces. Long gone are the days where being a comfortable Christian was enough. Comfort can be dangerous. Not sinful in itself—but When comfort becomes our destination instead of a launching pad, we miss the heart of the Gospel.

The reality is this: God did not save us so we could sit. He saved us so we could serve.

Yet many Christians struggle with motivation. We know we should serve. We hear sermons about it. We even feel guilty sometimes. But Guilt is a terrible long-term motivator. Obligation burns out quickly.

2. When has there been times in your Christian life when you felt unmotivated to serve? What do you think may have been the reasons behind that?

So, what actually moves a believer from sitting to serving? The answer is found in the powerful combination of two passages: Ephesians 2:8–10 and James 2:14–26. Together, they show us that: God's grace transforms us and motivates us!

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (**Ephesians 2:8–9, ESV**)

This is one of the clearest statements of the Gospel in all of Scripture. Paul leaves no room for confusion:

- You are saved by grace
- Through faith
- Not by works...So no one can boast

Salvation is not something you achieve—it's something you receive. Grace means undeserved favor. You didn't earn it. You didn't contribute to it. You didn't clean yourself up enough to qualify for it. Charles Spurgeon once said, “Grace is the free favor of God to men undeserving and ill-deserving.” (Charles Spurgeon)

That's us. **We were spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1)**. Not sick. Not struggling. Dead. And dead people don't fix themselves. So, God intervened. He made us alive. He forgave our sins. He rescued us—not because we impressed Him, but because He is merciful.

3. **If salvation was based on works, how would you know if you qualified? What kind of things would be in your favor? What would count against you?**

Let's be honest: if salvation were based on our works, none of us would make it. The standard isn't “better than average.” The standard is perfection. And that's why grace is so necessary—and so glorious.

But notice v. 10. We are saved by grace...for a purpose. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (**Ephesians 2:10, ESV**). Here's where the shift happens: Verses 8–9 tell us what we are not saved by but verse 10 tells us what we are saved for--

You are not saved by good works, but you are absolutely saved for good works.

Paul calls us “God’s workmanship.” The Greek word is *poiēma*—where we get the word “poem.” It means a masterpiece, a work of art. Think about that: You are not an accident. You are not random. You are God’s intentional creation, recreated in Christ for a purpose. You are God’s *poiēma*—His poem, His masterpiece, His work of art.

And that purpose includes good works. Not occasional bursts of kindness when it’s convenient, but a lifestyle of serving others in a way that reflects Christ. God has already prepared these works in advance. That means your life is not a guessing game. God has already placed opportunities around you:

- People who need encouragement
- People whose needs that you can meet
- Doors you can walk through

The question isn’t, “Does God want me to serve?” The question is, “Will I step into what He’s already prepared?”

4. **How does knowing that you have been saved FOR good works help you be motivated to serve?**

Here’s the problem: many Christians stop at verse 9. They celebrate grace—and they should—but they never step into purpose. They’re saved, but stationary. It’s like buying a car, admiring how beautiful it is, and never driving it. God didn’t save you to admire grace from a distance. He saved you to move in it!

That leads us right to our second text: “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?” (**James 2:14, ESV**)

James comes in with what feels like a completely different tone. Paul says, “Not by works.” James says, “What good is faith without works?” Are they contradicting each other? Not at all. They’re addressing different problems. Paul confronts people who think they can earn salvation through works. James confronts people who think they can have salvation without transformation.

James is saying: if your faith doesn't produce action, it's not genuine faith. He gives a practical example: "If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?" (**James 2:15-16, ESV**). Faith that only talks but never acts is useless. It's like saying, "I'll pray for you," and never lifting a finger to help when you can help. Now prayer is important—but it's not an excuse for inaction.

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can..." (John Wesley). That's the heartbeat of real faith. James isn't saying works save you. He's saying Real faith shows up.

5. What is an example of when you have seen real faith show up?

James then shows the contrast between a dead faith and a living faith in vv. 17-20. V. 17, he writes, "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (**James 2:17, ESV**)

Dead faith is:

- Intellectual but not transformational
- Verbal but not visible
- Claimed but not demonstrated

You can believe all the right things on paper and still lack real, living faith. James even says demons believe—and they shudder. So, belief alone isn't enough.

Living faith moves:

- It serves
- It sacrifices
- It steps in

Works are not the root of salvation—they are the fruit of salvation. If there's no fruit, something's wrong with the root. If we're not saved by works, but we are saved for works, and real faith produces works, then what motivates us? It is NOT guilt, pressure, or trying to prove ourselves. It IS grace that motivates us!

When you truly understand what God has done for you, it changes everything. Tim Keller once wrote, “The gospel is this: we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.” (Tim Keller)

That kind of grace doesn’t make you lazy—it makes you alive. It creates gratitude. It fuels love. When someone does something incredible for you—sacrificial, undeserved—it moves you. That’s what grace does. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:14, “The love of Christ compels us” (**2 Corinthians 5:14, ESV**). Christ’s love changes us, compels us, motivates us. You are not just saved—you are changed.

6. How has the grace of God through faith in Jesus changed you? How has it moved you?

You don’t serve to become a Christian. You serve because you ARE a Christian. When grace takes root in your heart, service becomes the natural outcome.

Transformation leads to Motivation:

- Serving your neighbor instead of ignoring them
- Meeting needs instead of just noticing them
- Volunteering when it’s inconvenient
- Giving generously when it costs you

It means moving from comfort to calling. Church is not like a theater—they come in, sit down, enjoy the show, and leave without ever interacting. But the church is not a theater; it’s a training ground. We gather to scatter. We are equipped here so we can serve out there. Jesus didn’t say, “Stay in your seats.” He said, “Go into all the world.” Every believer is called to serve. Ephesians 4 says leaders equip the saints for the work of ministry. That means you are the minister. If the church is going to reach the world, it won’t happen through a handful of leaders—it will happen through an army of believers activated by grace.

James gives examples like Abraham and Rahab—people whose faith was proven through action. Their faith wasn’t theoretical. It was lived. And the same is true today. Living faith looks like: A single mom serving others even when she’s exhausted; a businessman using his resources to bless others; a student standing up for truth and helping a hurting friend.

Motivation: ordinary people doing extraordinary things because they've been transformed by grace. Imagine standing before God and saying, "Thank you for saving me—but I mostly just stayed comfortable." That's not the life we're called to. You are saved by grace—but that grace is meant to move you.

7. Are you motivated by God's grace? What next step will you take to go from comfort to calling?

Here's the challenge:

- Remember the grace that saved you. Go back to the Gospel daily. Let it humble you. Let it amaze you.
- Recognize the opportunities around you. Ask God to open your eyes. The needs are everywhere.
- Respond in faith-filled action.
- Don't overthink it. Start small. Start now.
- Refuse to stay seated. Comfort is easy—but calling is better.

Church, it's time. Time to move beyond: Good intentions, Comfortable Christianity, Passive faith. You have been: Saved by grace, Shaped for purpose, Called to action.