

Kensington Goes To The Movies

Week 4: The Greatest Showman

BOTTOM LINE

Through the grace and love of God, our identity as a child of God is secure forever.

GOAL OF THE GROUP

The goal of this week's group is to uncover God's grace for our lives and understand that it leads to living out our true identities. We ask "Does anyone love me for who I am?" and reveal that God's love is unconditional.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 15:11-24 | Galatians 4:7

Note: Scenes from the movie "The Greatest Showman" were described in the Weekend service comparing the life of PT Barnum to the story Jesus tells in Luke 15. Barnum had big dreams his entire life. Even though he grew up in abject poverty, he never stopped working to achieve his dreams and change his identity. However, the more fame and fortune he acquired, the more he realized that there was a deep hole that nothing could fill. In Luke 15, Jesus tells the story of a young man desperate to get away from his home and go out and make it on his own.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** Think about a time when you wished you were someone else.
 - a. Have you ever compared yourself to what others had, or where they lived and found yourself wanting to be like them instead of you? How?
 - b. Have you ever taken a huge risk, only to experience massive failure and humiliation? How?
2. **Read Luke 15:11-13 and Discuss:** The younger son was so desperate to escape his family and pursue his dream, that he demanded his inheritance from his father, while his father was still alive! This was the equivalent of telling his dad to "drop dead". You could imagine how hurtful this would be.
 - a. What do the son's actions tell about his attitudes toward his father's wealth? What about his attitude toward his father or his own life?
 - b. In "The Greatest Showman" Barnum is reminded through a traumatic moment that he is "lower class" and doesn't belong among the wealthy elite. As an adult about to marry, he is told again that he "has nothing and is nothing". The seeds of shame and insecurity are sown deeply into his soul. Has there been a time in your life when you pursued something you thought would give you more peace, comfort or happiness to avoid the feelings of guilt and shame? Share with the group how you felt.
3. **Read Luke 15:14-16 and Discuss:** Very quickly, the son's great risk backfires as he blows through all of his inheritance. And then something out of his control has devastating effects on his ability to survive on his own.
 - a. We aren't told what the younger son's plan was to continue to live in the far off country, but as a teenage Jewish boy looking for work in a predominantly Gentile area, his prospects were very bleak. This was rock bottom for the son. Whatever plan he had to rebound after running out of money was dashed when the famine hit. What do you do when you hit rock bottom? Where do you turn?
 - b. As Barnum had success and found himself suddenly wealthy, he began to find that no matter how big the house, no matter how loud the applause, there was still a hole inside of him that nothing could fill. He continued to splash his money around and ultimately took a risk that backfired leading him to hit rock bottom. Why is success and wealth so seductive? How does it lead to greater risk?
 - c. Both men felt the painful string of failure and the crushing pain they had caused their families on the path to their supposed dreams. When the veneer of who you were trying to be is stripped away, who will love you for who you really are?

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4. **Read Luke 15:17-24 and Discuss:** The son had no promise of how his father was going to react. Did the son permanently burn the bridge? Would his rock bottom repentance be enough? All he wanted was a job in the fields of his father's estate. The son was prepared to appeal to his father's mercy, when he is stunningly offered GRACE. The father forgives his son and restores him to his true identity as a son.
- a. What would you do if you were the parent? Can a son who leaves his family and disgraces them with bad behavior be forgiven and restored if he turns from a bad path?
 - b. What do you think the father did while his son was away?
 - c. The father saw the son returning while he was still a long way off. Do you think this was by chance?
 - d. Barnum finally realizes his true identity as husband and father is more than enough for true joy and fulfillment for the rest of his life. His repentance is accepted after returning home, and his wife and children demonstrate their unconditional love for him. He is a changed man.
 - i. Has there been a time in your life when God was trying to grab your attention and show you a change He wanted for your life? What did this look like?
 - ii. How has God used an area where you have had shame, hurt, or pain to impact others?
 - iii. Through the grace and love of God, our identity as a child of God is secure forever. If you focus your eyes on this truth, how would your life look different?

From the very beginning, mankind is drawn to the wrong things. But God can satisfy our soul. Many of us waste years of energy searching for the answer, yet we have the opportunity to make changes in our lives now that will bring lasting satisfaction.

If we look past the love and grace of God, we run the risk of wasting a lot of time, and missing out on the joy and security that comes with our identity as a child of God.



TRY THIS

Jesus told a story that had a shocking turn to illustrate the grace found in Jesus Christ only. That hole that each of us feels in our heart, that no ovation or bank balance can ever fill, is only able to be filled with the love and grace of Jesus. What we need most in our weakness is God's grace, not more strength or a dramatic deliverance. This is backwards from how the world operates. We like to show off our strength and act like we have it all together. But this is the opposite of God. His power is made perfect in weakness. This week spend time in prayer talking to God about His grace. Ask Him to reveal His power to you through your weakness. Have you ever allowed yourself to receive God's unconditional grace? What is one step you can take in this direction?