



SEPTEMBER 29

THE GOSPEL OF GOD

GOD'S CHOICE & OUR CHOICE (PART 2)

GETTING STARTED

This weekend, we continued our study, *The Gospel of God*, and explored the Bible's teaching on predestination and free will. As we continue to study, discuss, and wrestle with this important, but secondary, issue, take a few moments to pause and reflect on the following passage.

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. **1 Corinthians 13:1-3, NIV***

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

If you were given the time and resources to learn a new skill or take up a new activity, what would it be and why?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In this weekend's message, Michael compared the Calvinist and Arminian positions on predestination and free will. Before we jump in and study, it's important to do a brief recap on the concept of primary and secondary issues we discussed last week.
 - a. How you would define what a primary issue is? Can you give an example or two?
 - b. How you would define what a secondary issue is? Can you give an example or two?
 - c. Being a secondary issue does not mean it is unimportant. Why do you think it's important to think through, discuss, and even wrestle with secondary issues?
2. Over the last three messages, we've seen how Romans 9 can be used to support both sides of the predestination and free will debate. Let's spend some time rereading portions of it for ourselves.
 - a. Read Romans 9:14-21 in both the NIV and The Message translations. How might this passage be used to support the doctrine of predestination?

- b. Now read Romans 9:30-33 in both the NIV and The Message translations. How might this passage be used to support the doctrine of free will?
- c. How does encountering passages that seem unclear, or even on the surface to be contradictory make you feel? Explain.
3. In the message, Michael walked us through the famous TULIP acronym to help us better understand Calvinism and Arminianism. Here's a quick review of the "Five Points of Calvinism."
- T** – Total Depravity
 - U** – Unconditional Election
 - L** – Limited Atonement
 - I** – Irresistible Grace
 - P** – Perseverance of the Saints
- a. What were one or two key insights or takeaways you gained from this comparison of Calvinism and Arminianism?
- b. What do you see as some of the strengths of each side of this debate?
- c. If you hold to or lean towards one of these viewpoints, what are one or two things you can appreciate about the other? What's one thing that you find hard to accept about the other?
4. In the message, Michael shared that one way to approach the issue of predestination and free will is to *Embrace The Mystery*.
- a. What do you think about this approach? Do you find it helpful? Unhelpful? Explain.
- b. How might *embracing the mystery* help us to grow in our *dependence* on God? How have you experienced this in your own life?
5. Michael closed the message by asking, *Which Truth ... Do You Need?*
- a. How would you answer this question? Why?
6. The Apostle Peter starts his second letter with a fascinating section in 2 Peter 1:3-11. Read it slowly and carefully two or three times.
- a. Underline or highlight any words or phrases that reveal God's choice or work in our salvation and growth process.
- b. Underline or highlight any words or phrases that show our responsibility in our salvation and growth process.
- c. Why do you think that Peter highlights both as important for our salvation and spiritual growth?
- d. How would you summarize the encouragement, challenge, and warning that Peter gives us in this powerful passage?

7. As we wrap up, reflect one more time on the weekend message and this study, then pray:
Holy Spirit, what is one step you are leading me to take as a result of this study?

a. Write down anything you sense the Spirit revealing to you and pray over it with your Life Group.



TOPICAL PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of each Life Group. Often those who are new to a Life Group are intimidated by praying aloud if they have never done it before. Others are so comfortable with prayer that they can take over the prayer time without meaning to. For these reasons, we suggest practicing topical prayer to help your group get comfortable praying together. Here are three basic guidelines:

- 1. Focus on a Single Topic/Request at a Time**
- 2. Pray Several Times Together**
- 3. Keep Requests/Prayers Short and Simple**