

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. What is the *general* understanding of the Christian world about those who call themselves Calvinists? (5-6)
Some in your group will probably identify themselves as Calvinists, some won't, and others might not have a clue what it means at all. Feel out the group so you know the best way to present this study.
2. Read Romans 12:1-2. Why do you think Paul tells us that our renewing starts with the mind and not the heart? (6-7)
If we are to glorify God and have our hearts joyful in Him, then we must start by taking in His Word and learning Who He is and what He has done. This requires using our minds – learning. If we start with our hearts, our emotions can take us in any number of directions, many of which will not glorify God.
3. Read Isaiah 6:1-8 and Revelation 5-6. What do these passages teach about God (Who He is and what He has done)? (6-10)
Highlight in your text those things Dr. Ryken mentions and add others you find. See what else the group finds.
4. What does the passage teach about the reactions of those who saw even a glimpse of God?
Do the same here. Ask the group: Why did they all fall on their faces when they saw the Lord?
5. Isaiah's reaction is one of confessing his sin and recognizing his impending death as a result. Was this a reaction of the mind or the heart? (See Isaiah 6:6.) (10-14)
Both. When Isaiah saw God he immediately *knew* he was in the presence of pure holiness, Who cannot tolerate sin in any way. His emotions show the fear he had for his life. Both of these responses moved him to confess his sin. This is why proper worship will *always* start with confession of sin, because we recognize we have no right to barge into God's holy presence as if we were pure of heart.
6. Read again Isaiah 6:6-7. Where do you see the grace of God in what happens? (14-16)
Help the group to understand the following words:
Justice – This would have meant Isaiah would have gotten **all** he deserved, which would have been death.
Mercy – This would have meant Isaiah's sins were forgiven but there were still consequences for his sin.
Grace – This was Isaiah getting what he did not deserve – forgiveness and absolution on the basis of the finished work of the Lamb of God, Who was slain before the foundation of the world.

7. After God extended His grace to Isaiah (6:8) what did He do next? What was Isaiah's response? How long did it take Isaiah to make his decision? Why? (16-21)
 Once God cleansed Isaiah of his sin, He commissioned him for the work He wanted him to do. Isaiah, having been humbled by the grace extended to him, immediately agreed to do the bidding of his Lord. His task would be difficult, and he desired to know how long he had to continue doing this work (v.11). Isaiah probably didn't fully understand God's answer, but we can assume he heard something similar to what the apostle Paul wrote: *And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.* (Galatians 6:9)
8. How, by God's grace, can we keep going when the world seems to be crashing in on us? (16-21)
 We keep going by submitting to His good and perfect will. This we do through constant prayer. God already knows what we need, but He wants us to ask anyway. God doesn't ask us to understand His mind, He calls on us to act in our humanity, which is to live dependently upon Him to supply all our needs; *according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being....* (Ephesians 3:16)
9. What is legalism, and why is God so opposed to it? (21-30)
 Legalism is man's attempt to reach God by trying to win His favor. True Christianity is the work of God's Holy Spirit, from beginning to end, working to make us more like Jesus. Our Christian growth comes as we learn to live our lives satisfied, or content, in Who God is, what He has done, and what He has us do. This is how we glorify Him.
 Take the group through the five points of Calvinism as explained by Dr. Ryken, showing how our Christian growth comes as a result of each point.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATION

A change of mind – If we are to be renewed by having our minds changed, then start with the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate yourself on each trait? Open a concordance and look up every reference to each. What do you learn about how that fruit represents the Christian life? Take those you rated lowest and make a plan, *now*, how you, by the enabling and transforming work of the Holy Spirit, and by this time next year, can rate yourself even one point higher. This is a way to help you measure your spiritual growth. For each gain, give all the glory to God, as He works in you to will and to do of His good pleasure.

For Further Study

What is Grace? Sean Michael Lucas. P&R Publishing, 2011.
The Doctrines of Grace: Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel. James M. Boice and Philip G. Ryken. Crossway, 2002.

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