

Renewing The Vows

Two prophets, one audience:

Zechariah 1, Ezra 5:1-2, 6:14, James 4:7-10, Romans 10:16-21

Haggai: God's concern for his **house**.

Zechariah: God's concern for our **hearts**.

- We can't know the **will** of God, without knowing the **Word** of God.
- We can't be in the **will** of God, without obeying the **Word** of God.

A picture that's worth a thousand words:

Zechariah 3, Ephesians 6:10-18, Exodus 28:36-38, Hebrews 4:16, John 15:1-17

- ▶ Satan sees our sin and **accuses us**.
- ▶ God sees our sin and **chooses us**.
- ▶ It is only **grace** and **mercy** that gives us **access** to God.

God's thoughts on religion:

Zechariah 7:1-10, Mark 12:28-31, 1 Samuel 2:30, 15:22-23

- ▶ Being religious can't erase our **past sins**.
- ▶ Being religious can't erase our **current sins**.
- ▶ So, instead of getting **religious**, get **right** with God.

Beware of the progression of rejection:

Zechariah 7:11-14, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Proverbs 1:24-28, John 9:31, Isaiah 59:2

Refusing → **Justifying** → **Stopping** → **Hardening**

Obey because your **prayers** and **eternity** depend on it.

Growth Group Homework

For the week of May 27, 2012

This is our final week of the Spring Quarter. Along with an abbreviated study, you will take some time to reflect on your group experience and then have communion together. You will also fill out Feedback Forms about your group experience and your plans for the fall. Growth Groups will take a summer break and resume the week of September 16. Thanks for being part of your Growth Group and have a great summer!

MY STORY

1. Summer is just around the corner! Do you have any special plans, activities or prayer requests for the next few months?

2. Looking back at this weekend's teaching from "*Renewing The Vows*," was there a particular point, comment or verse that caught your attention, challenged you or confused you?

DIGGING DEEPER & TAKING IT HOME

1. This weekend Chris talked about God's thoughts on religion. Jesus also had a lot to say about religion when he addressed the Pharisees, a group of religious leaders of his day. They often placed their cultural teachings and man-made rules on equal footing with the teachings of the Bible. As you read the passages below, identify what they did that looked religious on the outside, but in reality fell far short of what God wanted.

Matthew 23:1-4

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: [2] "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. [3] So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. [4] They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. [NIV]

Matthew 23:23-24

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. [24] You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. [NIV]

Matthew 23:25-26

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. [26] Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. [NIV]

Matthew 23:27-28

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. [28] In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. [NIV]

Can you think of any motivations or issues that caused them to miss what God was really calling them to do?

Jesus was also concerned about their hypocrisy – they said one thing but did something completely different. How could these passages expand or change your understanding of what hypocrisy looks like and how you can avoid it in your own life.

As you look at your own life, is there an area where you might be slipping into hypocrisy? If so, what is your first step to correct it?

REMEMBERING HOW GOD HAS WORKED

Looking back at this past quarter and year, how has your Growth Group experience affirmed, encouraged and/or challenged you in your connection and influence with others, and with what it means to follow Christ?

We heard this weekend that it's grace and mercy that gives us access to God. This grace and mercy is made available to us because of the sacrifice Jesus made. That's why Jesus told the disciples at the Last Supper to repeatedly come together and take Communion. It would remind them of his total commitment of grace and mercy to us as revealed in his life, death and resurrection.

This week, your Growth Group will conclude by doing as the disciples did by taking Communion together. To prepare for this, read the following verses and reflect on Jesus' commitment and work in your life as you follow him.

Psalm 103:8-14

The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
[9] He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
[10] he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
[11] For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
[12] as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
[13] As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;
[14] for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust. [NIV]

Romans 5:7-11

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. [8] But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[9] Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! [10] For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! [11] Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. [NIV]

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." [26] For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. [NIV]