

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides
April 21st

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. If you could do any task or skill and know that you wouldn't fail, what would it be?

Bible Study Questions

1. Perfectionism is when you have an extremely high standard for yourself and overly critical self examinations.
 - Can you relate to that in your life?
 - Are there any specific areas of your life (self image, walk with God, work, family) that you are more perfectionist than others?
2. The gospel of perfectionism is that we can ourselves worthy to God. Naphtali Matta puts it this way, "*I thought grace got you in the door and then after that you have to prove yourself.*" Have you ever thought that way about your walk with God?
3. How does being a perfectionist relate to our identity?
4. Perfectionism has a cost. One is condemnation. How have you dealt with condemnation in your life?
5. Read Luke 15:22-32
 - How does the older brother have a perfectionist mindset?
 - How does his good works place him in a place of judgment over both the younger brother and the father?
 - How does the father respond? What does this teach you about the heart of God?
6. Read Romans 8:1-4. What do these verses teach about dealing with condemnation?

7. Pastor Michael said that "Jesus is perfect, so we don't have to be." Why is that true and how does that statement impact you?
8. In the prodigal son, the Father offers himself as the reward. How does deepening our walk with God bring us freedom from the slavery of perfectionism?

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Freedom: From the Need to Be Perfect

Last week we talked about the need to control the world around us. Today we are getting into the need to control ourselves. Psychologists define it as a personality disposition characterized by extremely high standards and overly critical self evaluations. Perfectionists often do excellent work, but have a low output due to the time that it takes to perfect a project. They tend to care about the respect of others and feel shame when they can't reach the standard that they have set for themselves.

I. The Promise of Perfectionism

- **Makes you worthy of God:** Perfectionism teaches that if you can correct all of your flaws, then you can be worthy of God. Many Christians have already embraced Jesus as their savior, but they continue to seek to earn God's love through their actions.
- **Earns the admiration of others:** The promise is that by doing perfect work, work that is far better than others, one may not receive the love of others but will earn their respect.

II. The Cost of Perfectionism

- **A continuing voice of condemnation:** The reality is that we aren't perfect. We have a sin nature that will continually cause us to mess up. The result is that the enemy constantly reminds us that we aren't worthy and have failed in our pursuit of perfection. A cycle begins in which we try harder and then fail falling deeper into condemnation.
- **A spirit of judgmentalism:** One of the best examples of this comes from the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. Upon the younger brother's return, the father throws a celebration. The older brother is the one who has pursued perfection and we find him sulking outside. He is angry of

the unfairness that his unworthy brother receives a reward while he doesn't. Perfectionism causes us to judge those who don't reach our standard as well as judging God because of his kindness to undeserving people.

III. The Freedom of the Gospel

- **Jesus is perfect, so we don't have to be:** Hebrews 7:6 tells us that Jesus was without sin. He was the one person who got it right and through faith he gives us his righteousness.
- **There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus:** Romans 8:1-4 declares the good news that because of the work of Jesus, there is no condemnation. It was all poured out on Jesus so that we could be free.
- **Communion with God transforms our hearts:** Going back to the story of the prodigal son, the father tells the son that he didn't need a party. He has always had the greatest reward of all, access to the Father and all that he possesses. When we draw close to the Father, we begin to share in his heart, a heart that rejoices when lost people return to him. When we share in his heart, we replace a heart of judgmentalism. Jesus told his followers in Matthew 5:48 that they should be perfect. One of the purposes in this statement is to reveal how unable we are to do this on our own. But one of God's goal is to transform us through the power of the Holy Spirit. He does a work of making us perfect, not so that we can make ourselves worthy, but as a response to his incredible love. This is a process that takes time. We find freedom then as we deepen our relationship with Jesus and rest in our relationship with the Father