

Wasted Faith Discussion Guide

Chapter 7

Faith Without Fruit

1. Read Matthew 25:31-46 aloud. We are sure that the Bible teaches that salvation is by grace through faith, as is repeated numerous times in the Scriptures (i.e., John 6:47; Eph. 2:8-9, etc.). But this passage seems to say that people will be eternally damned or blessed according to their works. How do you explain this?
2. Read chapter 7 in **Wasted Faith** aloud: "Faith Without Fruit" (pp. 39-45).
3. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. Discuss the religious things one could do without love. It is obvious that there are degrees of compassion among Christians, some being driven by love in greater ways than others. Others may have a special gift of mercy. We are not all the same, yet there must be love in the true believer's life. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 speaks of the way this love works out practically. Take a quiet moment alone to reflect on verses 4-7, substituting your name in the place of the word *love*. Does the reading describe you? Share with the group what this exercise revealed.
4. The fruit of the believer is love for others, but also love for God. This love consists of both genuine affection toward God and obedience from the heart. Read John 14:21, 23-24 aloud. Suppose a close friend of yours is emotional toward God in worship, yet otherwise disinterested or consistently disobedient and rebellious. What should you say to such a person?
5. Read aloud Matthew 6:9-15 and 18:32-35, then 1 John 3:14-15, and 4:20. Can a person who is consistently unforgiving be a true Christian?
6. Read the following passages, noting not only the sinful actions listed, but also the word "deceived" wherever it appears: 1 Cor.6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; 6:7-8; Eph. 5:5-7; 1 John 3:7-12. As you read each passage, discuss its meaning.
7. How do the above passages relate to the person who has prayed the "sinner's prayer," walked an aisle, felt a feeling, etc., at a point he calls his conversion, yet lives out one of the sinful lifestyles described?
8. Read aloud 1 John 2:9-10. Is it possible to love the brethren yet have no interest in meeting with the church when physically possible (excluding shut-ins, etc.)? What about those who come on Sunday morning, but have no true desire to be among the believers at other times? Is a person necessarily to be considered a Christian just because he professes to be one and attends a weekly religious gathering held under the banner of Christianity? What about those who do not attend church at all (or rarely) but call themselves believers?

9. Consider the idea of greed. Read aloud Matthew 6:24. What does it mean to serve mammon? Does a person who serves mammon have eternal life? Read 1 John 2:15-17. What is "loving the world?" Please give a fuller definition based on these verses. If a person loves the world, does he truly love God?

10. Read Matthew 13:3-9 and 18-23 aloud. Describe each type of soil. The differences in the way the soils receive the seed indicate the various ways in which people respond to the gospel. Only the last soil is able to receive the seed of the Word *and bear fruit*. And only those who bear fruit are true believers. Have you ever personally illustrated any of the other soils at an earlier time in your life? Which soil do you find most characteristic of you now?

11. Read Matthew 5:20 aloud (Note: This is about *practical* righteousness, not *imputed* righteousness.). How will a true believer exceed the meticulous righteousness of the Pharisees? (compare and contrast with vv. 21-22, 27-28, 6:1-4, etc.).

12. If you have time, read chapter 8 in **Wasted Faith**: "Faith That Does Not Last" (pp. 47-50).

Before the next meeting: Read chapter 8 in **Wasted Faith**, "Faith That Does Not Last" (pp. 47-50).