

life groups' study guide



Life Groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for spiritual growth, caring for one another, and reaching out to others.

Baggage: The Sins We Commit

Baggage: The Sins We Commit

Ezekiel 18

Background

Read Ezekiel 18:1-18

The full context for this week's sermon shows that Israel had been living by a saying that seemed wise, but was not in accordance with God's word. We see in 18:2 that Israel had been repeating a saying, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." A modern retelling might be "The father's bit into a lemon, and the kids mouth's puckered." But regardless of the wording, God's response was to command them to stop saying it, as it was not true.

God then presents a hypothetical scenario. A righteous man has a son who is wicked and a grandson who is righteous. By the saying in verse 2, then the grandson would be responsible for the sins of the son. But God makes it very clear in our sermon verses this is not the case, but that rather each man is held accountable to be judged by his own actions and not those of his father: The righteous man for his righteousness, the wicked son for his wickedness, and the righteous grandson for his righteousness.

Let's look at this more closely.

The Bad: Man's Opinion

"Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?"

Read verses 19 – 24

Here we see God calling Israel out for their incorrect judgments. They have lived by a human proverb and not by God's word.

[Q] What are the wrong assumptions Israel is making?

Read John 9:1-3

The book of Ezekiel was written 600 years before the events in John. Yet, the disciples were asking questions based on the same presumption as the people of Ezekiel's era. They were assuming that first the man's condition was because someone sinned, but second that it was possible his condition was due to his parents' sin, and not his own.

[Q] How does Jesus respond to the disciples' question?

[Q] How is Jesus' response similar to that of God's in Ezekiel?

The question as asked by the disciples was not exactly the same as those in Ezekiel, yet the thoughts and assumptions were much the same. How do these same assumptions show up in our modern minds? Are we doing the same thing that ancient Israel and the disciples did?

[Q] In what areas do we judge people based on the actions of their parents?

[Q] Where do we as a people or church punish children for their parents' sin?

[Q] Do we have a desire to see people pay for the sins of their parents? If so, why?

The Worse: Man Accuses God

"The way of the Lord is not just."

Read verses 25-29

Here we see God call Israel out for accusing Him of being unjust. God responds by stating that it is Israel, in fact, that lacks understanding and justice. He exposed their flawed logic, and called them to account.

[Q] Why would Israel have this perspective? What do they have to gain out of this injustice?

[Q] Do we ever hold the opinion that God is unjust?

One of the fundamental issues here is the war between what we can perceive, by our own, flawed understanding, and the reality of the world. It is easy to say God is just in all situations, but it is harder to actually believe it when confronted with a situation that is hard to justify by human standards. As an example, let's jump back a couple hundred years.

Read Joshua 7:24-26

Here, we see Achan's entire family punished for his sin; stealing from the plunder of Jericho. This is a difficult scenario to reconcile with God's justice. But we know God is just, so how do we reconcile this with God's explanation of his Justice in Ezekiel?

The Right: God is Judge

"Therefore, I will judge you..."

Read verses 30-32

Here God tells Israel that judgment is His, not theirs, and that they are to leave judgment to him.

[Q] According to verse 30, how will the Lord judge us?

[Q] What does God promise in response to people turning from their sin?

Read Matthew 25:33-46

Here we see a picture of what God's judgment will look like.

[Q] How are people judged?

[Q] In what specific ways do you see the promises made in Ezekiel 18 fulfilled in Matthew 25?

Application

Where do you see the Lord as unjust? Confess this, and repent. When we hold that the Lord is unjust, we are putting our own understanding and judgment above his own. This is also a sin that must be confessed and turned from.

Once you're right with God, examine your heart. What flaws in your understanding of the world does your opinion about justice reveal?