youthESource Bible Study

**Pay It Forward**

by Emily Phoenix

Topic: Good Works   
Movie: Pay it Forward

Purpose: To understand the purpose of good works, but more importantly, to understand God’s grace and the fruits of faith.

Materials needed: Whiteboard/newsprint, markers, Simplified version of this discussion guide, pens/pencils, TV/projector/DVD player, “Pay it Forward” movie

Watch and discuss the following movie clips:

**Expectations - Watch (Chapter 3) ”Possible” – 4 minutes 20 seconds**

1. Leader: What does the *world* expect of you? What do you believe is your purpose/contribution while in this world?

*(These are open ended questions with no right or wrong answer, but rather the opportunity for students to think about these ideas. Accept all answers)*

1. Do you agree with the response given in the movie? Why or why not?
2. There’s no reference to God in this movie, but as Christians, what do you think God expects of us? Read the following passages and list out ideas.
   1. Matthew 22:36-38
   2. Ephesians 5:1
   3. *(these are just a few examples to start the conversation)*

**Perfect World? - Watch (Chapter 10) ”That’s the Idea” – (33:03-36:20) 3 minutes 17 seconds**

1. Leader - Summarize the assignment: Think of an idea to change the world and put it into action. Pay it Forward concept: Help 3 people and instead of returning the favor, they pay it forward and help 3 people themselves.
2. Leader: We are going to look at the rules for ‘Pay it Forward’ and look at each one from the Christian perspective. Think about how these rules may be similar/different from the Christian faith.
3. **Rules** (Write on whiteboard/notepad)
   1. **It has to be something that really helps people.**
      1. What does it mean to help someone? Definition of “help”?
      2. Define good works *- a work done by a Christian that proceeds from faith, is in conformity with God’s will, and is motivated by love of or gratitude to God.* (Read James 2:14-17)
   2. **Something they can’t do themselves.** 
      1. We have been given the free gift of salvation. (Read Acts 4:11-13)
         1. Nothing we can do can earn us salvation; we can’t save ourselves. (Read Ephesians 2:8-9)
      2. Leader: If we aren’t saved by works, what is their purpose?
   3. **I do it for them; they do it for other people.** 
      1. Why do you serve others? Discuss the following, more than one answer might be included in response.
         1. *To help others in need*
         2. *To feel good about myself*
         3. *To receive recognition/honor*
         4. *To serve as Christ served us*
         5. *As a reflection of the faith given to me*
      2. Read Galatians 5:4-6; How do we express our faith?
      3. Christ died for us, so now through the faith given to us, we thank God by serving others.
   4. Questions /Thoughts to discuss
      1. How are the humanitarian efforts of a non-Christian philanthropist different from the service of a Christian? (Answer: *God looks at the heart, not the act.)*
      2. When we sin, adversaries judge us based upon how we make up for it (good works) versus laying it on Christ.
      3. Emphasize that we are saved by grace alone, it is nothing we do, but what God does for us. The purpose of good works is to express our faith, but the amount or what we do has no say in our salvation.

**Watch (Chapter 25)”Save My Life” – (1:23:50 – 1:25:50); 2 minutes**

1. Leader: How are we saved?
   1. Read Ephesians 2:8-10
2. Leader: What can we gain from helping others?
   1. Read Romans 3:23-28
3. Leader: What does ‘Pay it forward’ mean from the Christian perspective?
   1. Read Matthew 28:18-20
   2. Read Ephesians 6:7
4. Leader: Is it necessary to do good works? Why or why not?

Say: It is necessary to do good works; it is not necessary for salvation (Use Scripture and small catechism for further discussion if you so choose.)

**Watch (Chapter 33)”Forgiveness” 4 min 36 seconds**

1. Leader : What does it mean to forgive? Why do we do it?
2. Leader: We are forgiven without having to give anything in return. Good works does not bring forgiveness of sins or salvation. It is the fruit of our faith.
3. Leader: We talk about 3 Solas; Scripture alone, Grace alone, Sola Fide (faith alone); Faith is not a human work but is a gift of God, our works do not contribute to our salvation; Sola = “alone”
4. Leader: “If the promise of salvation depended on our works it would not be sure. If forgiveness of sins were to be given because of our works, when would we know that we had received it?” Do you agree with this statement, why or why not?
5. If doing good works is based solely on the Law, (something we have to do), then the purpose of the Gospel is fruitless. We should always lean towards the Gospel message and remember what Christ has done for us. Our good works are simply a reflection and witness to Him.

**Closing prayer**

References:

*The Book of Concord* - Augsburg Confession (p. 60, 67-70)  
 - The Apology of the Augsburg Confessions (p. 225 -226)   
Called to Believe, Teach & Confess: An Introduction to Doctrinal Theology, Mueller

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