

# SHORT TAKES

## Short Takes Week 2

### Opening Prayer

God, help us to hear from you today. Help us to be transformed by your love and grace.

### Talk It Over

This week's talk sprouted out of the topic of entitlement — the feeling of not getting what we feel we deserve.

- How often do you find yourself struggling with the feeling of not getting what you deserve?
- Why do you think entitlement is or isn't a struggle for you?
- What sorts of environments, situations, or people trigger feelings of entitlement?

### Read Matthew 19:30 (NIV)

When it comes to forming lines, we all know the rules and we can get touchy when those rules are broken — especially when we think of ourselves as being at the front of the line. Structure, order, and systems have their purpose no doubt, but Jesus uses this short story to remind us that above structure, order, and systems God is loving and gracious.

- Have you ever struggled with the grace someone else was given? Share about that situation.

### Read Matthew 20:1-16 (NIV)

In this story, God is portrayed as the landowner and the workers — whether they've come early in the day or late in the day — are all of us who are invited into a relationship with Him. And just like the workers in the story, the danger for so many of followers of Jesus is that we start to think that as long as we behave a certain way, God has to deliver what we think we should get — not necessarily what He promised.

- Have you ever observed a good hearted and well intended person approach faith from a performance-based position? Without saying names, what are some of the dangers you observed?
- In what ways do you personally struggle with faith being a performance-based relationship?

**When we walk down the path of this performance-based approach to faith, there are a lot of poisons that show up. Three poisons include: judgment, complaining, and resentment.**

### Read Matthew 20:11 (NIV)

**Judgement:** Often time judgements are just expectations of how we personally think things ought to be. In turn, we often go around judging ourselves, others, and the world against the mold or scale we've created in our own heads. Going even further, one of the many problems with unmonitored judgments is that we can start to grade and rate ourselves against everyone else. If we are honest, knowing where, when, and how to draw the line on judgments can become a very slippery slope very quickly.

- In what ways do you find yourself judging others too harshly, quickly, or unkindly?

- Have you ever been judged too harshly, quickly, or unkindly? If so, how were you viewed and how do you wish you had been viewed?

### **Read Matthew 20:11-12 (NIV)**

**Complaining:** Complaining is often tied to being focused on our own expectations and wants. Complaining becomes more difficult when we start to consider how others may benefit or how we may serve others.

- What are some of the normal things you complain about and why do those things bug you so much?
- Considering your list of complaints, share other ways you can view some of those same irritations?

### **Read Matthew 20:12 (NIV)**

**Resentment:** The issue here is that the landowner is saying that the guys who showed up at the end of the day are worth as much as the guys who worked all day. We all want to be viewed as special and meaningful, but instead of focusing on how valuable we are to God, we get caught up in how valuable we are relative to other people. And when other people don't see our value or get better rewarded, we can resent it.

- How would you describe a resentful person?
- Have you ever consciously resented someone? If so, can you share what the fear, hurt, and anger was on your end?

### **Three antidotes to performance-based faith: Gratitude, service, and love.**

#### **Read James 1:17 (NIV)**

**Gratitude:** When we start to compare ourselves with other people, it's like we shut off the faucet of gratitude in our life. Comparison is the thief of joy.

- Do you find yourself comparing yourself to others regularly? Why or why not?
- What are some things in your life – not somebody else's life – that you can be thankful for? Write them down.

#### **Read Matthew 20:26-28 (MSG)**

**Service:** When we work to earn your compensation, we miss the point. But God invites us to humble ourselves and to serve others from a heart that says, "You have value. You belong. Let me be of service to you. Let me put you at the front of the line."

- Have you ever served to try and earn worth, value, or attention? Share about your motivation and what was the pay off.

#### **Read 1 John 3:1 (NIV)**

**Love:** Love is incredibly surprising because it flies in the face of our expectations. And this little parable from Matthew is really about the surprising power of love. God reaches down into our world and loves us more than we deserve and that ought to surprise us. God's gracious love is the very reason that we can even have a relationship with God. It's not because we've earned it or deserved it. God's love is the source of the great reversal — love is the reason that the last can be first in God's Kingdom.

- Share a time you were on the the receiving end of God's grace.
- When do you find yourself more open to the idea of God's free, endless, perfect love?
- What are some tips, tools, reminders you can implement in your daily life to help you live aware of God's love being a free and endless gift verse something we earn?

### **Closing Prayer**

God, thank you for your love and grace. Help us to live freely from the inside out. Help us to see the good around us and to be transformed by it.