

[CON]VENIENCE

— A White's Chapel Sermon Series —

[Con]venience: Faith is Inconvenient

OPENING PRAYER

Invite a member of the group to lead prayer.

Read James 1:22-27

“But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act – they will be blessed in their doing. If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”

Kyle graduated Summa Cum Laude from one of the most prestigious colleges in the nation. Kyle was highly recruited by some of the top Fortune 500 companies in the world. Kyle accepted a job offer from the company at the top of his list. Kyle had researched the corporate culture and he could clearly articulate the mission and vision of the corporation. Kyle even knew the corporate handbook backward and forward. Kyle understood his role and responsibilities. Kyle showed up to work every day on time, and he read every email, participated in meetings, and returned every phone call. During lunch breaks, Kyle was often passing on gossip to his co-workers about future projects and about other people at the company. Kyle thought this was a great strategy to create the appearance that he was “in-the-know,” while at the same time casting a poor light on his competitors.

One day, Kyle was called into his manager’s office and was informed that he would be placed on a performance improvement plan. Kyle was shocked. “Why?” he asked. The manager informed Kyle that while Kyle was highly knowledgeable, he was not producing any fruit. Secondly, the manager had received complaints that Kyle was spreading lies. Kyle thought that he was a good employee, but he never actually did the work and he was creating a difficult work environment for others due to gossip. Kyle had deceived himself. How often do we deceive ourselves when it comes to our faith? Have we convinced ourselves that we are faithful Christians simply because we know the Bible, we understand the mission and the vision of the church, and we come to worship? Is our faith nothing more than intellectually assenting to Creedal statements of belief? It seems that the early Christian community had to wrestle with these same questions. Were they going to just be hearers of the word or were they going to put their faith into action by helping the widows and orphans? They had a choice to make: live a convenient faith that only requires hearing the word and intellectually assenting; or an inconvenient faith that requires hearing and doing the Word. It means hearing the sermon, the song, or the Bible study on Sunday and living it throughout the week. It’s inconvenient because it requires us to repent, to be intentional in applying the Gospel in our pursuit of personal (change in us), and social, holiness (change in the world). Inconvenient faith requires us to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ that builds up the community rather than gossip or hurtful speech that tears down. So, let’s be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, providing water to the thirsty, visiting the prisoner and the sick, and addressing all other needs in the world while verbally sharing the Good News.

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Share where you've seen God at work in your life this week.

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What are your highs and lows for this week?

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How have we deceived ourselves into safe, convenient faith?

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What does this mean in relation to Paul's admonition about the faithful's "itching ears" searching for what they want to hear? (2 Tim, 4:3)

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Share some ways that we can put our faith into action daily. How can we do this in our personal devotional lives? How can we do this socially?

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What was your most important take-away from the sermon or podcast?

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PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Please answer these during your personal devotional time at the end of the day or do it as a couple or family.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, "what made you happy today?"

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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