

This group is meant to facilitate discussion and meaningful conversations. The information below is derived from this week's outline.

Weekly Discussion Theme: Release

- **Leader shares:** Release is about letting go of the need for approval, validation, or acceptance from others and learning to trust God with our worth and value. It is natural to want to feel seen, appreciated, and affirmed, but when we depend on those things to feel secure, our peace can start to depend on something we cannot control. Sometimes the approval we are looking for is not only from other people. It can also show up as comparison, pride, pressure to achieve, or the feeling that we should be doing more than we are. We may find ourselves trying to prove that we are enough, that we matter, that we are doing okay, or that our life has value. God invites us to release the pressure of proving ourselves and remember that our identity and value are already secure in Him. Release does not mean we stop valuing relationships, encouragement, or achievement. It means those things do not get to decide our worth, value, or peace.
- **Group shares:** Is there a person, relationship, or area of your life where you feel pressure to prove your value to others or even to yourself? How does that affect you?
- **Acknowledge:** THANK YOU for sharing!

Verse: Galatians 1:10 (NIV) – “Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

- **Leader shares:** Paul reminds us that the desire for approval can become more important than we realize. Wanting encouragement and acceptance is normal, but our sense of security does not have to depend on whether others give it to us. Sometimes we look for value in praise, achievement, relationships, being needed, being noticed, or simply feeling like we are holding things together. The form may be different for each of us, but the pressure underneath can feel very similar. God offers a steady source of love and acceptance that is not based on someone else's opinion, our circumstances, or what we accomplish. We may not always receive the affirmation or recognition we hoped for, and even when we do, it may not bring the lasting peace we expected. We can still move forward, trusting that God sees us fully and knows our hearts.
- **Group shares:** Have you ever received the approval, recognition, or outcome you hoped for and realized it did not bring the peace you expected?
- **Acknowledge:** THANK YOU for sharing!

Parable: I want to read a short parable called *The Man, the Boy, and the Donkey*. Versions of the story date back to at least the 13th century.

- Print out to read to the group: [The Man, the Boy, and the Donkey – Aesop's Fable & Moral](#)
- This story is an exaggerated example of what can happen when we give other people's opinions too much influence. The man and his son became so focused on pleasing

everyone that they ended up carrying the donkey themselves. The point is not to ignore advice or encouragement, but to notice when approval or criticism starts directing our choices or affecting our peace.

- What thoughts come to mind after hearing this parable?

10 Ways to Practice Release

1. Notice whose approval feels especially important to you and consider why.
2. Pray honestly about the validation, acceptance, or recognition you feel you need.
3. Remind yourself that another person's opinion, your circumstances, or what you accomplish does not determine your God-given worth or value.
4. Read Scripture that reminds you of your identity and value in God.
5. Notice when you are comparing yourself, changing yourself, or putting pressure on yourself just to feel worthy or accepted.
6. Practice making healthy decisions without needing everyone to agree, affirm, or be impressed.
7. Accept that some people may not be able to give you the affirmation you hoped for.
8. Set healthy boundaries in relationships or situations where you feel pressure to keep proving yourself.
9. Receive encouragement and celebrate progress with gratitude without depending on it for your confidence.
10. Give your need for approval and the pressure to prove yourself to God and ask Him to help you rest in His love.

Prompt Question: Which of these ways to practice release speaks to you the most, and is there another one you would add?

Acknowledge: THANK YOU for sharing!

- **Leader shares:** Release does not mean we stop caring what people think or stop hoping, growing, or setting goals. It means their opinions and our circumstances no longer have to control our peace. We may still want to be seen, appreciated, and affirmed, and that is human. But sometimes the person we are trying hardest to prove ourselves to is ourselves. For some of us that may mean reaching for the next accomplishment. For

others, it may mean trying to survive the day, hold everything together, compare ourselves to where we think we should be, or wonder whether we are doing enough. The bar can keep moving no matter how hard we try to reach it. Release is realizing that none of us has to prove our value before we are allowed to have peace. God sees us fully, knows our hearts, and understands our whole story. We can place the pressure to prove ourselves in His hands and begin to trust that our worth and value are not something we have to earn over and over again. Maybe the freedom is realizing we were never meant to chase the bar in the first place.

- **Leader shares:** An email will be sent shortly containing today's outline, along with a request to share resources discussed today. Additionally, you'll find essential links for joining the group, as well as links to join our Facebook group or follow us on social media to stay connected.
- **Closing:** As we conclude our group meeting, I encourage everyone to share any additional thoughts on your mind, or to request prayer.
- **Stay connected:** imperfectpaths.com

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