

Launch – Read 2 Corinthians 3:1-6. Discuss what it means to be, “*epistles...known and read by all men.*” How important is our witness to people around us? What does our witness say to others?

Eric Liddel was to run the 100m race for Great Britain at the 1924 Paris Olympics until he found out the qualifying heat for the race was on a Sunday. Participating would violate his dedication to resting on the Sabbath, while not participating would violate the trust of his teammates and the hopes of his country. Many thought his refusal to run was an act of legalism, while others saw it as a courageous act of devotion. It came across as either an insult or a beautiful testimony.

- In 2 Corinthians 3, we are called to be living epistles. Meaning, that people, looking upon our lives, see and hear the Gospel being lived out, live, and in person.
- Our devotion to Christ will mystify some and earn the respect of others. It also sparks debate among Christians, some of whom see adherence to principles as legalism and some of whom see it as uncompromising commitment.
- The real question, from any point of view, is motive. Was the action done out of love or obligation? Commitment to God or captivity to the Law? Personal devotion or the expectations of others?
- If inspired by the Holy Spirit, it gives life. If done for the sake of the law, it kills. And in most cases, the motives behind our acts of devotion are eventually revealed by how much joy and fulfillment we receive from them.

Explore – Discuss from the following passages how we can be living epistles, living in freedom and fulfillment, or how these truths may lead to a legalistic lifestyle.

Matthew 28:19 – Go therefore and make disciples...

Luke 6:38 – Give, and it will be given to you...

Mark 12:28-31 – Love the Lord with all your heart...

Hebrews 10:25 – Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves...

2 Timothy 2:15 – Study to show yourself approved unto God...

Apply – What passage sticks out to you that causes you to lean toward legalism? What steps can you take to turn your obedience into joy? **Remember, the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life!**

- **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.** How can this verse help you take the steps that are necessary to live your life out of the Spirit that gives life!
- **“Prayer, faith, (and obedience), flourish in a climate of joy and gratitude.”** – Chris Tiegreen (*Praying in Faith Devotional*, April 16, 2024)

Prayer – Commit to God to be a living epistle, joyful, faithful, prayerful, hopeful, and delightful!