

Unshakeable: Practical Teaching

Small Group Discussion*

Opening questions (try to get everyone involved in discussion):

- Think of one particularly close relationship you have. What role does confidence in the other person play in your relationship? What is an example of how this trust plays out?
- Why does a thriving relationship require deep trust?
- What are one or two factors that have been most instrumental in growing your relationship with God?

Introduction

- On Sunday, we began a new sermon series called “Unshakeable.” We’re examining how we can have the kind of growing faith in God that enables us to weather storms with steadfastness. We described this kind of faith as “confidence in God—confidence that God is personal, that he is good, that he cares about you, and that you can trust his promises.” What do you think of this definition?
- Discuss: How can you see this thread of “confidence in God,” or the lack thereof, running throughout the story of the Bible?
- Andy Stanley talks about “five faith catalysts,” or experiences that God typically uses to grow people’s confidence in him. The catalyst that we’re discussing this week is Practical Teaching.

Read Matthew 7:24-29, which is Jesus’ concluding illustration in the Sermon on the Mount. Then discuss the following.

- Why do you think Jesus concluded his sermon with this parable?
- On Sunday we saw that in Jesus’ metaphor of the house that withstands storms, two kinds of people are represented, and they show us two components that make our lives like the steadfast house. One of those components is hearing the words of Jesus. In our day, that would mean sitting under the teaching of Jesus in the Bible.
 - What does this strong exhortation say about Jesus’ view of his own teaching?
 - Could you make a case for the rest of the Bible’s teachings being included in what Jesus says about his own words?
- The other component that Jesus referenced—and the one that makes the crucial difference in weathering storms—is putting them into practice.
 - How does acting upon biblical teaching produce growth in our faith?
 - Pastor Josh said, “When God’s word intersects with your life, you grow.” Has there been a season of your life when biblical teaching was leaping off the page at you, provoking growth in your faith?
 - Have you ever applied a specific teaching of Scripture that, looking back, prepared you for an unexpected storm? ^[1]_[SEP]
 - Can you think of a difficult time you have faced that could have been avoided if you had applied the principles of Scripture? ^[1]_[SEP]

*This sermon series has been based on the “Five Faith Catalysts” in *Deep and Wide*, by Andy Stanley. Portions of this study guide have also been adapted from small group materials published by North Point Ministries.

- Pastor Josh mentioned Paul’s encouragement to the leaders of the church at Ephesus as a crucial example of how we apply God’s word. **Read Acts 20:28-32** to see for yourself, then discuss.
 - How can “God and the word of his grace”—in other words, the message of the gospel—guard you and sustain you in storms?
 - How does this grace help you and motivate you to put other biblical teachings into practice?
- *“Unapplied truth is like paint. It doesn’t do anybody any good until it is applied.”* We can be the most learned of believers, but if our knowledge doesn’t move us toward application, then our faith will wither. The Bible challenges us to respond to God’s truth in many different ways: love your enemies, show forgiveness, and practice generosity. What have been the most difficult truths from the Bible for you to apply?
- This week, identify one area of your life where you think God wants you to apply his word. If you are comfortable, share that with your group and ask them to keep you accountable.

Sharing and prayer:

- Share about any needs that you have, and pray for one another. In addition, pray for one another to be faithful in the areas of application discussed above.