

PRE-EVENT DEVOTION

INTRO:

*Discuss with your group what it means to fall short of a goal?
Can you think of anyone who famously fell short of a goal?*

Even in our own lives, we often miss the mark; maybe you've underperformed in athletics or music, fallen short of your parents' expectations, or unintentionally damaged a relationship with a friend. It probably happens all the time!

Or maybe someone else has done that to you. It's almost always easier to see how someone else has fallen short than it is to look at our own lives and see how we have missed the mark.

DEVOTION:

The first pre-event devotion talks about how we, as Christians, fit into the mold of both a **sinner** and a **saint**. We are sinners because we are incapable of fulfilling God's Law and we are in a daily battle with our sinful desires and temptations. We are saints because we have faith in Jesus Christ and His righteousness covers us.

Recognizing that we are both sinner and saint can transform our relationships with other people. Paul reminds us of our mold as a sinner in Romans 3:23:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

It's pretty rough if we only look at this verse. It points out that because of our sinfulness, we literally fall short of God's glory. But instead of stopping here, Paul starts and ends with the righteousness of God that is **given** to us when we believe in Jesus, even though we are sinners!

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's

righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Even though we miss the mark, Jesus did not, so through our faith, God counts Jesus' righteousness as if it was ours! We are sinners, seen by God as saints.

So how does that truth transform our relationships with others? Just like we are in a constant battle with sin, so are our friends, families, teammates, teachers, Pastors, youth leaders, etc. When someone else falls short, we might want to fit them into the mold of sinner. But just as Jesus' blood covers us, His blood covers our neighbor, too – He sees them as saints! When we remember that God forgives us and sees us as saints, it becomes easier to forgive and love our neighbors just as Christ forgives and loves us. Even though we all fall short, because of our faith in Jesus we can treat others the way God treats us - as saints!

DISCUSS:

- What does it mean to fit the mold of both a sinner and a saint?
- How does the sinner/saint paradox show up in our everyday life?
- What makes us saints in God's eyes?
- How can knowing that all Christians are **sinners&saints** change our relationships with others?

