

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

“A Severe Warning”
(Galatians 5:2-12)
Michael Franzese
May 3, 2009



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Seeker Small Group Training
www.therockuniversity.org/calendar

Fresh Encounter Conference
www.visionsandiego.com/freshencounter

MINISTRY PRAYER REQUESTS

Reaching the Lost: Pray for God to help you identify people in your community, workplace, family and/or social circles that you can develop deeper relationships with, centered on love and trust, that you can share your testimony, love of Jesus and the good news with.

Current Small Group Leaders/Small Groups: Pray that our current leaders are encouraged and spiritually fed. Pray for their wisdom and discernment. Pray for protective against spiritual attack. Pray that God expand their love for their small group members and community. Pray that the Lord use them to facilitate discussions that He desires to be addressed. Pray that their words be glorifying and honoring to Him.

Small Group Staff: Pray that God gives us the favor and wisdom as we develop the Small Group team. Ask Him to order our steps in every decision we make.

The Rock Body: Pray that the Rock Army grows deeper and deeper in the stewardship of their lives in Christ.

MEMORY VERSE

I say then: Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. (Gal. 5:16)

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – SEVERE WARNING

Michael Franzese was once the target of multiple City, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies with one goal – bring down the man they considered one of the biggest money earners for organized crime since Al Capone. In the late 80's and early 90's, Michael was dubbed by Tom Brokaw as "The Prince of the Mafia," and was organized crime's youngest and most financially powerful superstars. He was the son

of legendary Colombo Family underboss John "Sonny" Franzese, and his criminal Empire spanned multiple businesses, gambling operations, movie production, white collar crime, and enough volume to earn \$6-8 million dollars a week at the height of his career, landing him at #18 on Fortune Magazine's "Fifty Most Wealthy and Powerful Mafia Bosses." Becoming a sworn, made member at the age of 24, he avoided the traditional Mafia domains in favor of the enormously lucrative edges of the legitimate business world. The smart, sophisticated Franzese was long considered an heir apparent to the family's vast power. His ability to make money, which according to the fed's was more than anyone since Al Capone, won his fame, respect, and rock-star status among mob watchers, but the envy of others in that life.

Yet at every turn in his life, Michael heard the voice of God *severely warning* him to turn away from becoming the "Prince of the Mafia." His father begged him to continue his education at Hofstra and become a doctor, but Michael wanted to put all his efforts to attempting to free his father who was serving a fifty year sentence for a crime he didn't commit (he was guilty of many, many other crimes, by his own admission, but the authorities couldn't prove his guilt in these). At the apex of his career Michael earned millions a week and used his wits and charm to keep the likes of John Gotti from encroaching on his operations. He escaped 5 major indictments and seemed invincible. That was before he met Cammy. Camille Garcia, a beautiful dancer from Anaheim – he saw her getting out of the swimming pool and asked to be introduced. Cammy knew nothing other than he was the producer. He fell in love with her, doggedly pursued her and eventually they married. Once again during the courtship Michael faced a *severe warning*, to give up his life of crime or give up on their marriage. Eventually through the power of prayer and love, Cammy convinced him to take the rap on a racketeering charge and eventually through God's providence, Michael managed to become the only high ranking official of the Mafia to ever quit the mob, refuse government protection and live to tell about it. While serving his sentence God opened up the pages of Scripture where he found the stories of the Apostle Paul. Paul, once a murderer of Christians, became Michael's inspiration for forgiveness and restoration. Maybe as you heard this story you can identify with Michael on some level. One thing's for sure if we want Christ to save us, then we must let go of the idea that we can save ourselves—even a little. Paul *severely warned* the people of the Church of Galatia, that at one time they come to Christ by faith, but now they wanted to be their own boss and return to the law, where they felt they could earn their salvation. Now the Galatians are faced with a choice, would they stay where they are comfortable in the law or trust God that in a new life of grace for salvation.

Getting Started

Why do you think both non-Christians and Christians often times have a hard time believing that God accepts them unconditionally in Christ?

Digging Deeper:

Read Galatians 5:2-12

1. Try to imagine Paul's mood when he wrote this section of Scripture. What do you think he was feeling? Was he overreacting? What was at stake?
2. Read vv.2-4. In your own words explain the consequences of trying to be justified by law?
3. Paul's severe warning probably took the Galatians by surprise. They understood that faith in Christ was necessary for their salvation; they simply wondered whether it was sufficient. Why does any attempt to earn God's acceptance destroy justification by faith?

4. Read In verse 2-4 Paul gave severe warnings to those who desired to be circumcised. now he says, ‘neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value” (v.6). How could both views be true?
5. How can a vivid understanding of Jesus’ crucifixion guard us from thinking we must earn God’s favor?
6. In verses 10-12 Paul makes some severe statements about those who are giving the Galatians trouble. What do you think about Paul’s harshness? Was his behavior justified? How far are you willing to go for those in your life who are making the wrong spiritual decisions? Please explain.

Bringing it Home

Paul & Michael have both been overwhelmed by God’s grace. In response to Jesus’ forgiveness Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:10: for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. The word for “workmanship” in the original language is the word “masterpiece,” or a work of art that has priceless value. Both these men understand their worth which is based upon the high price that the master has paid for them. The rest of the verse goes on to say that God has redeemed us to do good work. After hearing these stories what do you think God is calling you to do for Him?