

# Sermon Discussion Guide

## Grace Is Greater

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*“In Christ we are set free by the blood of his death, and so we have forgiveness of sins.  
How rich is God’s grace, which he has given to us so fully and freely.” Ephesians 1:7-8 (NCV)*

There are certain words that we think we understand because we use them a lot, but our understanding may be incomplete. “Grace” is one of those words. “Grace” is used hundreds of times in the Bible and many people understand the concept of grace, but they don’t actually experience it sufficiently in their lives. Grace is like love in the sense that a person has to experience it to fully understand it. Jesus never talked about the word “grace,” but nearly every Bible story about Jesus depicts some aspect of God’s grace and its ability to overcome our past and write a new story for our lives. One of the best ways to learn more about grace is by considering contemporary peoples’ real life situations, and that is what we’ll do in this discussion.

### **OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

1. Hearing a story about a person doing something terrible but then accepting God’s grace and experiencing a totally new life can create a longing for such a transformation in our own lives. How can such a story of grace be healing for us and effective in experiencing God’s grace in our own lives?

*“Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law.  
Instead, you live under the freedom of God’s grace.” Romans 6:14 (NLT)*

2. When we try to hide our sins, we hide them from others but not from God and ourselves. What can help us to heal and live under God’s grace rather than to continue hiding our sins?

*“And don’t sin by letting anger control you. Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry,  
for anger gives a foothold to the devil.” Ephesians 4:26-27 (NLT)*

3. It is sinful to let anger control us; therefore, when we are angry because of what has been done to us, how can we find peace to prevent the devil’s foothold?

*“Do not be bitter or angry or mad. Never shout angrily or say things to hurt others. Never do anything evil. Be kind and loving to each other, and forgive each other just as God forgave you in Christ” Ephesians 4:31-32 (NCV)*

4. Share an example of how forgiving as God forgave could rewrite your life’s story in a more positive way.
5. If you have experienced God’s grace by being forgiven by someone you hurt, could you share your story with your group?

### **Diving Deeper (optional)**

*“Two criminals were led out with Jesus to be put to death (and) the soldiers crucified Jesus and the criminals.  
... Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, because they don’t know what they are doing.” Luke 23:32-34 (NCV)*

1. Jesus doesn’t specifically mention “grace” or God’s love, but how can this story change the way people respond about what they’ve done or what has been done to them?

*“Jesus met a man with an advanced case of leprosy ... Jesus reached out and touched him (and) said  
“Be healed!” And instantly the leprosy disappeared.” Luke 5:12-13 (NLT)*

2. Because of his power, Jesus could have healed the leper without touching him. What did Jesus teach us about grace by his physical contact with the man?
3. When people have hurt feelings or embarrassment, what kinds of efforts do they typically make to heal their wounds on their own without experiencing God’s grace?

### **REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.**



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## Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

### Suggestions for This Week's Study

- Icebreaker: Name major life milestones that people might have read about or seen movies about but then experienced in a very different way.
- Goals: Help group members realize that grace must be experienced to be truly understood, and that grace is best experienced through stories.
- Pray: Lord, thank you that your grace is greater than any medical diagnosis, failure, or relapse. Father, thank you that your grace carries us through all our difficulties great or small. Jesus, redeem us with your grace when we face persisting circumstances. (Pause and name them silently or aloud.) Holy Spirit, give us the courage to share our stories of overcoming sins and hurts through your grace. Lord, we pray that anyone who doesn't yet have a story of the greatness of your grace will be able to experience it.

### Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God's five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn't. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

### Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We've designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as "I need to spend more time in prayer." It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.