

Small Group Guide: Empowerment of Grace

Key Takeaways

1. Grace is not passive — it is empowering. Salvation and transformation do not come from human willpower or moral effort. They come through grace received by faith. The same grace that saves us is the grace that sustains and changes us.
2. The law was designed to show us our need. The ministry of the law was never meant to make us righteous. It was meant to reveal that we cannot make ourselves righteous, so that we would turn to God who can.
3. Condemnation is a tool of the enemy. The voice that tells you that you are not enough, that you are failing, and that you cannot change is not the voice of God. Believers have been given spiritual weapons to cast down those thoughts and stand on the truth of God's grace.
4. God is not slack concerning His promises. It is God's will that every person come to repentance and walk in freedom. His grace is not limited by our stubbornness, our past, or the depth of our struggle.
5. Faith must be actively stirred. Contending in prayer for yourself and for others requires stirring up genuine belief that God is willing and able to move. Dead, rote prayer produces little expectation. Faith-filled prayer opens the door to grace.

Discussion Questions

Opening

- Take a few minutes to have group members share one word that describes how they typically respond when they feel like they have failed at something.

Section 1: The Limits of Willpower

Forrest said: "I have no power within me and of myself to live the Christian life. I cannot fulfill the Christian life. I cannot live the Christian life. It's not in and of me to do it."

1. How does our culture — including church culture — sometimes send the message that spiritual growth or freedom from sin is simply a matter of making better choices? What damage can that message do?
2. Have you ever been in a season where you genuinely wanted to change but felt powerless to do so? How did that experience shape your understanding of grace?

3. Forrest described a moment of temptation where he asked God, "How is it even possible for me to say no right now?" and then answered himself with "Your grace is sufficient." What does it look like practically to lean on grace in a moment of temptation rather than on personal resolve?

Section 2: The Ministry of the Law and Condemnation

The sermon referenced 2 Corinthians 3:7-9, which describes the law as a "ministry of condemnation" that was glorious but passing away, now surpassed by the far greater glory of the ministry of the Spirit and righteousness.

4. The sermon points out that many people define their Christianity by what they do not do rather than by their relationship with Christ. Why is morality without Jesus an insufficient foundation for faith?
5. Forrest described being "terrified of the gospel" because he was afraid he would fail it. Have you ever hesitated to fully commit to God out of fear of failure? What did that feel like?
6. How do you personally distinguish between the Holy Spirit's conviction — which leads to repentance and hope — and the enemy's condemnation — which leads to shame and defeat?

Section 3: God's Will to Save and Deliver

The sermon referenced 2 Peter 3:9, which describes God as patient and unwilling that any should perish, desiring that all come to repentance.

7. Forrest said that when praying for his father, God spoke to him and said he did not even believe what he was praying. Has there ever been a moment when you realized your prayers lacked genuine faith? What shifted for you?
8. He also said: "You can never doubt in your mind, in your heart, in ministry, that God wants them. That's His heart. He wants them." How does truly believing this change the way we pray for and interact with people who seem far from God?
9. Is there someone in your life — a family member, a friend, a coworker — for whom you have grown weary of praying? How does this sermon challenge you to re-engage in faith for that person?

Section 4: Failure, Identity, and Grace

Forrest referenced a business principle: the difference between those who succeed and those who do not is whether they interpret failure as data or as identity.

10. How have you allowed past failures — spiritually, relationally, or personally — to become part of how you define yourself? What would it look like to instead treat those failures as information that points you back to your need for God?
11. Landon shared that he struggled not with drugs or alcohol but with pornography, lust, and spiritual emptiness — and that Chad's Hope was not just for people in extreme crisis but for anyone who needed to go deeper with God. How does this broaden your understanding of who needs grace and who is welcome to pursue transformation?
12. Forrest said: "Life is literally designed and set up by God for us to know that it's not within us and us to know that we need Him in order to find the design and the purpose of life." How does reframing struggle and limitation as an invitation rather than a punishment change your perspective on your current circumstances?

Practical Applications

This week, choose one or more of the following:

- Identify a voice of condemnation. Write down one area of your life where you regularly hear a condemning voice — whether about your parenting, your faith, your past, or your worth. Spend time this week replacing that voice with a specific promise from Scripture and bring it before God in prayer.
- Stir up your faith for someone. Think of one person you have been praying for in a routine or faithless way. Set aside dedicated time this week to pray specifically and boldly, declaring that God's grace is sufficient and that it is His will for that person to come to repentance and freedom.
- Examine your definition of Christianity. Honestly assess whether your faith is rooted in relationship with Christ or in a list of things you do or do not do. Talk to God about any areas where you have been relying on your own morality rather than His grace.
- Share your story. Michael, Carl, and Landon each demonstrated the power of testimony. Consider sharing with one person this week — in your small group, your family, or your workplace — what God has done or is doing in your life. You do not need a dramatic story. You need an honest one.
- Support Chad's Hope. Pray about sponsoring a man in the program, contributing to the upcoming banquet, or simply committing to pray regularly for the ministry and the men walking through it.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together over these specific areas:

- That each group member would grow in genuine faith that God's grace is sufficient for their specific struggles
- That the voices of condemnation in your group would be silenced by the truth of God's Word
- For the men at Chad's Hope — that they would encounter God face to face and walk in lasting transformation

- For family members and friends who are far from God — that the Lord who is not slack concerning His promises would move powerfully in their lives

Scripture References from the Sermon

Ephesians 2:8 -- Salvation is by grace through faith, not by human effort; it is a gift from God.

2 Corinthians 3:7-9 -- Contrasts the ministry of the law, which brought condemnation and death, with the ministry of the Spirit, which brings righteousness and surpassing glory.

Matthew 1:21 -- The angel declares that Mary's son shall be named Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.

2 Peter 3:9 -- God is not slow in keeping His promises; He is patient, desiring that none should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Luke 15:11-32 -- The parable of the prodigal son, referenced by Michael in his testimony about running from his upbringing into worldly destruction.

2 Corinthians 12:9 -- God's grace is sufficient in weakness, alluded to repeatedly when Forrest declares "your grace is sufficient."

2 Corinthians 10:4 -- The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty for pulling down strongholds, referenced near the close of the sermon.

Isaiah 54:17 -- No weapon formed against us shall prosper; alluded to when addressing the condemning voice of the enemy.

Philippians 4:7 -- The peace of God that surpasses all understanding, referenced in Michael's testimony about experiencing God's presence for the first time.

