

Small Group Guide: Sola Gratia - Grace Alone



Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by thanking God for His grace and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and help you understand more deeply what it means to be saved by grace alone.

Ice Breaker

Share a time when someone showed you mercy or grace—when you deserved consequences but received kindness instead. How did that make you feel?

Key Takeaways

1. We Can Never Be Good Enough

- Nothing we do can earn salvation or reach God on our own merit
- The measuring stick is Christ's righteousness, not our own
- Our worth comes from Jesus' worthiness, not our performance

2. Grace Means Unmerited Favor

- Grace is receiving what we don't deserve (salvation, heaven, relationship with God)

- Mercy is not receiving what we do deserve (judgment, wrath)
- Both come from God's character, not our actions

3. This Has Always Been God's Plan

- The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) affirmed salvation by grace, not works
- Early church fathers like John Chrysostom and Augustine taught grace alone
- Martin Luther recovered this biblical truth, not invented it

4. The Enemy Uses Truth Against Us

- Satan reminds us of our unworthiness (which is true)
- But he leaves out Christ's worthiness (which is greater)
- Our response: "You're right, but I know Jesus, and He is enough"

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Sermon

1. **Martin Luther's Story:** What struck you most about Martin Luther's struggle to find peace with God? Have you ever felt similar anxiety about whether you're "good enough" for God?
2. **The Five Solas:** Before this sermon, were you familiar with the Reformation and the five solas? Why do you think these truths needed to be "re-discovered" in church history?
3. **Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council:** What does Peter's statement—"Why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"—teach us about adding requirements to the gospel?

Personal Reflection

4. **Self-Effort vs. Grace:** In what areas of your spiritual life are you still trying to "earn" God's favor? (Examples: prayer quotas, good deeds, religious activities, moral performance)
5. **Shame and Guilt:** The sermon mentioned that the devil uses our shame and guilt to make us feel unworthy. What specific sins or failures does the enemy regularly bring

up to discourage you? How can understanding grace alone help you respond differently?

6. **The Measuring Stick:** The pastor said, "The measuring stick was never you or me. It was Jesus." How does shifting your focus from your performance to Christ's perfection change your daily spiritual experience?

Going Deeper

7. **Ephesians 2:8-10:** Read this passage together. Paul says we're "created in Christ Jesus for good works." If we're not saved BY good works, what role DO good works play in the Christian life?
8. **Living Out Grace:** The sermon acknowledges that "knowing that theology doesn't mean that we live it." Why is it so hard to truly believe and live as though we're saved by grace alone? What pulls us back toward performance-based faith?
9. **Grace for Others:** If God has shown us grace we didn't deserve, how should that impact the way we treat others who fail or sin? Are there people in your life you're withholding grace from?

Application

10. **Martin Luther's Response:** Luther said when the devil accuses you, tell him: "I admit that I deserve death and hell. What of it? For I know one who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ." Practice saying this out loud together. How does this confession feel? Is it freeing? Difficult? Why?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one or more of the following to practice this week:

1. Identify Your "Works Righteousness"

- Journal about areas where you're trying to earn God's love
- For each one, write: "I cannot earn this. Jesus has already given it by grace."
- Pray specifically, thanking God for His grace in those areas

2. Combat the Accuser

- When you feel shame or guilt this week, practice Luther's response

- Write down the accusation, then write: "But I know Jesus, and He is enough"
- Share your experience with an accountability partner

3. Extend Grace

- Identify someone who has wronged you or disappointed you
- Instead of holding their failure against them, consciously extend grace
- Reflect: How does showing grace help you understand God's grace better?

4. Memorize Scripture

- Memorize Ephesians 2:8-9 this week
- When you doubt your salvation or worthiness, recite it aloud
- Share with the group next week how this affected your thought patterns

5. Study the Reformation

- Read more about Martin Luther or the five solas
- Share what you learn with your group or family
- Discuss: Why is it important to know church history?

Prayer Requests & Closing

Share and Pray:

- Where do you most need to experience God's grace this week?
- What burden of "not being good enough" do you need to lay down?
- Who in your life needs to hear about grace alone?

Closing Prayer Focus:

- Thank God for His grace that saves us
 - Ask for freedom from performance-based faith
 - Pray for deeper understanding of Christ's worthiness
 - Request boldness to share the gospel of grace with others
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5-Day Devotional: Grace Alone - Finding Peace in Christ's Sufficiency



Day 1: The Weight We Cannot Carry

Reading: Romans 3:21-26

Devotional:

Martin Luther spent years torturing himself—fasting, sleep deprivation, self-flagellation—desperately trying to earn God's favor. Like him, we often exhaust ourselves trying to be "good enough." But Paul declares a revolutionary truth: righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ, not through our efforts. The measuring stick was never your worthiness, but Christ's perfection. God knew you could never climb high enough to reach Him, so He descended to reach you. Today, release the burden of self-salvation. Stop punishing yourself for past failures. Christ's sacrifice is sufficient. His righteousness covers every inadequacy. When guilt whispers you're unworthy, remember—you're right, but Jesus is worthy, and that changes everything.

Reflection Question: What burdens are you carrying that Christ has already taken to the cross?

Day 2: Grace Over Performance

Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

Devotional:

"By grace you have been saved through faith... not of works, lest anyone should boast." These verses dismantle every religious performance system. Paul emphasizes we were dead—not sick, not struggling, but spiritually dead. Dead people cannot earn their resurrection. God made us alive not because we deserved it, but because He is rich in mercy and great in love. We are His workmanship, created for good works, but not saved by them. Good works flow from salvation; they don't produce it. This distinction liberates us from the exhausting treadmill of religious performance. You can rest in Christ's finished work. Your value isn't determined by your productivity for God, but by His grace toward you.

Reflection Question: Are you trying to earn something Christ has already freely given?

Day 3: The Enemy's Truth and God's Greater Truth

Reading: Romans 8:31-39

Devotional:

The devil has a powerful weapon: truth. He accurately points out your failures, your unworthiness, your sins. He's right—you're not good enough. But Satan's truth is incomplete. He omits the greater truth: Christ is good enough. When accusations come, don't deny your failings; acknowledge them, then point to Jesus. "I admit I deserve judgment, but I know the One who suffered on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ." Nothing can separate you from God's love—not your past, your present struggles, or your future failures. The enemy may have facts about your sin, but God has the final word about your salvation. Christ's righteousness outweighs your unrighteousness infinitely.

Reflection Question: What accusations do you need to counter with the truth of Christ's sufficiency?

Day 4: From Jerusalem to Today

Reading: Acts 15:6-11

Devotional: The first church council faced a critical question: What must Gentiles do to be saved? Some wanted to add requirements—rituals, rules, religious performances. But Peter stood and declared the liberating truth: God gave them the Holy Spirit just as He did to us, "purifying their hearts by faith." Why burden new believers with laws even the apostles couldn't keep? "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved." This wasn't Martin Luther's novel idea; it was the apostles' original teaching. Grace alone has always been God's method. Religious systems may add requirements, but God's standard remains unchanged: faith in Christ. Nothing more, nothing less.

Reflection Question: What religious requirements have you added to simple faith in Jesus?

Day 5: Living from Grace, Not for Grace

Reading: Titus 2:11-14

Devotional:

Grace doesn't just save us; it trains us. Understanding you're saved by grace alone doesn't lead to laziness—it leads to gratitude-fueled obedience. When you truly grasp that Christ's goodness, not yours, secures your salvation, you're freed to pursue holiness from love, not fear. You don't obey to earn God's favor; you obey because you already have it. This distinction transforms everything. Your good works become worship, not wages. Your service flows from security, not insecurity. Christ redeemed you from lawlessness to make you His own, eager to do good. You were prepared beforehand for good works—not saved by them, but saved for them. Live from the grace you've received, not for the grace you're trying to earn.

Reflection Question: How would your spiritual life change if you truly believed you have nothing left to prove to God?

Closing Prayer: Father, thank You that salvation depends on Jesus' goodness, not mine. Help me rest in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. When the enemy accuses, remind me that I am covered by grace alone. Train me to live from Your acceptance, not for it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

