

Small Group Guide: Understanding Grace and Overcoming Shame

Based on Luke 15:11-32 (The Prodigal Son)

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together asking God to help you understand His grace more deeply and to reveal any areas where shame may be keeping you from experiencing His full love.

Ice Breaker

Share a time when you felt the comfort of "going home" - whether literally to your parents' house or metaphorically to a safe place. What made that place feel safe?

Key Scripture

Luke 15:20 - "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

Main Takeaways

1. **Grace is God's unmerited favor** - We cannot earn it; it's freely given
 2. **Shame keeps us from the Father** - The enemy uses shame to prevent us from returning to God
 3. **The Father's posture is always welcoming** - God runs to us with open arms, not crossed arms
 4. **Three gifts of restoration:**
 - The Robe (Righteousness)
 - The Ring (Authority)
 - The Sandals (Sonship/Daughtership)
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Cycle

1. The pastor described a cycle: **Sin** → **Shame** → **Rejection** → **Running Away**. Have you experienced this cycle in your own life? Share an example if you're comfortable.
2. Why do you think the prodigal son stayed with the pigs instead of immediately going home? What kept him there?
3. Read Genesis 3:8-10. How does this passage show that shame has been Satan's strategy from the beginning? Why is it so effective?

Changing Our Perspective

4. The pastor emphasized changing our mental picture of how God sees us. How do you typically picture God when you've messed up? Is He standing with crossed arms or with open arms?
5. Read Isaiah 61:10 and 2 Timothy 1:7. What do these verses tell us about how God views us as believers?
6. What's the difference between serving God **to be** His child versus serving Him **because you are** His child? How does this shift in perspective change your motivation?

The Three Gifts

7. **The Robe (Righteousness):** How does understanding that you're clothed in Christ's righteousness change how you approach God after you've sinned?
8. **The Ring (Authority):** The pastor said we should "walk in authority" as believers. What does that look like practically in your daily life? Where do you struggle to walk in that authority?
9. **The Sandals (Family Member, not Servant):** How does knowing you're adopted as God's child (not hired as His servant) impact your relationship with Him?

Personal Application

10. Is there an area of your life right now where shame is keeping you from fully experiencing God's grace? (You don't have to share specifics, but acknowledge if this is true for you.)
11. The pastor shared about asking God, "Are You proud of me?" Have you ever asked God that question? What do you think His answer would be?
12. Read Ephesians 2:8-9. How does this passage reinforce that we cannot boast in our salvation or our standing with God?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Replace Shame with Truth

- When you mess up this week, immediately remind yourself: "I am clothed in righteousness. God's arms are open. I am His son/daughter."
- Write down one of these truths and put it somewhere you'll see daily

Option 2: Walk in Authority

- Identify one area where you've been walking timidly instead of in the authority Christ has given you
- Take one bold step of faith in that area this week

Option 3: Serve from Sonship

- Do one act of service this week, but do it with the mindset "I GET to do this" rather than "I HAVE to do this"
- Reflect on how this changes your attitude

Option 4: Study Grace

- Read one chapter per day from the book of Ephesians (6 chapters for 6 days)
- Journal about what you learn about grace

Memory Verse

Ephesians 2:8-9 - "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

Going Deeper

For Further Reflection:

1. Research the significance of the robe, ring, and sandals in ancient Jewish culture. How does this deepen your understanding of the father's response?
2. Read the entire context of Luke 15 (the lost sheep, lost coin, and prodigal son). What is the common theme? Who was Jesus speaking to, and why did He tell these parables?

3. Study other examples of grace in the Old Testament (Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc.). How does this show that grace isn't just a New Testament concept?
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Closing Reflection

Silent Reflection (2-3 minutes): Ask the group to sit quietly and consider:

- Where is shame showing up in my life right now?
- What would it look like to fully accept God's grace in that area?
- What is one thing I need to hear from my Heavenly Father today?

Group Prayer:

- Pray for anyone struggling with shame
 - Thank God for His grace that we don't deserve but freely receive
 - Ask God to help each person walk in the righteousness, authority, and sonship/daughtership He's given them
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Leader Notes

- Be sensitive that discussions about shame can be deeply personal
 - Create a safe environment where people can be honest without fear of judgment
 - Remind the group of confidentiality
 - Have tissues available - this topic often brings up emotions
 - If someone shares about ongoing sin or dangerous situations, follow up with them privately after the group
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Next Steps: Encourage group members to share one insight from tonight's discussion with someone outside the group this week - a way to practice "grace living."