

Small Group Guide: Grace — You Can't Earn It

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

Icebreaker Question: Share about a time you received a gift that you didn't deserve or expect. How did it make you feel?

Key Sermon Takeaways

Main Point

Grace is God's unmerited favor, love, and help given freely to undeserving people. It's the opposite of the "earn and receive" system we experience in everyday life. Grace cannot be earned, deserved, or merited—it's a gift from God through Jesus Christ.

Three Dimensions of Grace

1. **Unmerited** - Not worthy of it
2. **Undeserved** - Haven't done good things to get it
3. **Unearned** - Can't do enough good things to obtain it

Key Scripture References

- **John 3:16** - God's love demonstrated through Jesus
- **Romans 10:13** - Everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved
- **1 John 1:9** - Confession brings forgiveness and purification
- **Ephesians 2:8-9** - Salvation by grace through faith, not works
- **Romans 8:38-39** - Nothing can separate us from God's love

Discussion Questions

Understanding Grace (15-20 minutes)

1. **The pastor mentioned that grace is difficult to accept because it's the opposite of how we live our lives.** What examples from your own life make accepting grace challenging?
2. **Read Ephesians 2:8-9 together.** Why do you think God designed salvation to be a gift rather than something we earn? What does this reveal about God's character?
3. **The sermon defined grace as "God's Riches At Christ's Expense."** How does understanding what Jesus did on the cross change the way you view grace?

Personal Reflection (20-25 minutes)

4. **The pastor shared that sometimes his feelings supersede God's truth.** Can you relate? Share a time when you've felt:

- Unworthy of God's love
- Like you needed to "earn back" God's favor after sinning
- Too guilty to approach God in prayer or worship

5. **The "checkbox Christianity" struggle:** Have you ever felt like you needed to check off spiritual boxes (prayer, Bible reading, church attendance) to earn God's approval? How does grace change this perspective?

6. **Read Romans 8:38-39.** What are some things that make you *feel* separated from God's love, even though this passage says nothing can separate you?

Applying Grace (20-25 minutes)

7. **The pastor used the example of his sons avoiding him when they've messed up.** When you struggle or sin, is your instinct to run *to* God or *away* from God? Why?
8. **Read Hebrews 4:16.** What would it look like practically to "approach God's throne of grace with confidence" in your daily life?
9. **The father-son analogy:** The pastor shared that he loves his sons not for their achievements but simply because they're his children. How does viewing God as your Father (rather than as a judge or boss) change your relationship with Him?
10. **The pastor said, "You don't have to keep trying to deserve this... you're my child and you've already got it."** What would change in your life this week if you truly believed and lived this truth?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Grace Journal

- Each day, write down one way you experienced God's grace
- Note times when you felt unworthy and practice speaking God's truth over those feelings
- Record Bible verses about grace that resonate with you

Option 2: Run to God, Not Away

- When you mess up this week, immediately go to God in prayer instead of avoiding Him
- Practice confessing quickly and receiving His forgiveness (1 John 1:9)
- Share your experience with an accountability partner

Option 3: Reframe Your Spiritual Disciplines

- Before praying or reading the Bible, remind yourself: "I'm not doing this to earn God's love; I already have it"
- Focus on these activities as relationship-building, not box-checking
- Notice how this shift in mindset affects your experience

Option 4: Extend Grace

- Identify someone in your life who doesn't "deserve" your kindness
- Extend unmerited favor to them this week
- Reflect on how showing grace helps you understand receiving grace

Memory Verse

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) *"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."*

Prayer:

- Hearts that truly understand and accept God's grace
- Freedom from feelings of unworthiness and shame
- Courage to run to God instead of away from Him when we struggle
- Ability to extend grace to others as we've received it from God
- Anyone in the group who wants to accept Christ or recommit their life to Him

For Group Leaders

Tips for Facilitating Discussion:

- Create a safe space where people can be honest about their struggles with grace
- Be prepared to share your own struggles with accepting grace
- Don't rush through questions—let silence sit if people need time to think
- If someone shares about feeling unworthy, gently redirect them to Scripture's truth
- Be sensitive to those who may be wrestling with serious guilt or shame

Follow-Up:

- Check in with group members during the week about their chosen application
- Consider pairing people up for accountability
- If someone indicated they wanted to accept Christ or had questions, follow up personally

Closing Thought

"You get grace not because you feel it, but because God decided it—and His decision trumps your feelings."

End with prayer, allowing space for anyone who wants to pray aloud.