

# Small Group Guide

Grace for the Journey

August 23, 2026

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## Overview

This guide is designed to help your group reflect on the sermon's central message: that God's grace -- unearned, unmerited, and unconditional -- is available for every stage and season of life. Use the questions and applications below to move from hearing the message to living it out together.

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## Key Takeaways

- **Grace defined:** Justice is getting what we deserve. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. Grace is getting what we do not deserve. God's grace is His undeserved, unmerited, unearned favor freely given to us through Jesus Christ.
  - **We stand in grace:** Romans 5:1-2 describes grace not as something that leaves us crumpled or crawling, but as something we stand in with confidence.
  - **Grace covers every dimension of life:** God's grace is for our hearts (giving us new life), for the road (sustaining us through daily challenges), for our relationships (enabling us to extend kindness even to difficult people), and for the journey home (carrying us through the end of life).
  - **Clogged filters block grace:** Just as a dirty furnace filter blocks airflow, past hurts, misunderstandings about God, pride, and false expectations can block our ability to receive God's grace.
  - **Grace teaches us:** Titus 2:11-14 reminds us that grace is not passive. It actively instructs us to say no to ungodliness and to live self-controlled, upright lives.
  - **Grace is meant to be given away:** What we receive from God, we are called to extend to others -- even those who are difficult to love.
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# Discussion Questions

## **Opening (Choose one to get the conversation started)**

1. When you hear the word "grace," what is the first thing that comes to mind? Has that association been mostly positive or complicated?
2. The sermon opened with the image of a clogged furnace filter. What is one thing from your background or experience that has made it harder for you to freely receive God's grace?

## **Grace for Your Heart**

3. The sermon drew a distinction between justice, mercy, and grace. In your own words, how would you explain the difference to someone who had never heard those definitions before?
4. Ephesians 2 describes our condition apart from Christ as spiritually dead. How does understanding the seriousness of that condition change the way you respond to the offer of grace?
5. The sermon stated that we do not Sunday school, Bible study, or pray our way into grace -- we receive it as a free gift. Is there any part of you that still tends to think you need to earn God's favor? Where does that tendency come from?

## **Grace for the Road**

6. Hebrews 4:16 invites us to approach God's throne of grace with confidence in our time of need. How bold and consistent is your prayer life when you are going through a hard season? What gets in the way?
7. The sermon mentioned two extremes that can clog our hearts: expecting God to give us everything we ask for like a wish list, or giving up on prayer after a disappointment. Have you experienced either of those extremes? How did it affect your faith?
8. James 4:6 says God gives more grace to the humble. What does humility look like practically when you are in the middle of a difficult circumstance?

## **Grace for Difficult People**

9. The sermon challenged us to extend grace not just to people we like, but to those who frustrate or hurt us. Who is the hardest type of person for you to extend grace to, and why?
10. Luke 6:35 calls us to love enemies, do good, and lend without expecting anything in return. The sermon acknowledged this is next-level, growth-requiring work. Where are you on that journey right now?

11. The sermon raised the question of whether, in close-knit communities, we allow people to grow and change or whether we define them by who they were years ago. Have you ever been on either side of that dynamic? What did it feel like?

## Grace to Get Home

12. The sermon described the final seasons of life as often being the hardest, and quoted an older friend who said the enemy fought hardest for his soul in those years. How does the promise of ongoing grace change the way you think about aging, loss, and the end of life?

13. The phrase from "Amazing Grace" -- "'Tis grace has brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead me home" -- was highlighted in the sermon. Looking back on your own life so far, where have you seen grace carry you through something you could not have navigated on your own?

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## Practical Applications

Choose one or two of the following to commit to as a group or as individuals before your next meeting.

**1. Identify your clog.** Spend time this week in honest reflection. Write down one specific thing -- a past experience, a false belief, a disappointment, or a habit of pride -- that tends to block you from freely receiving God's grace. Bring it to God in prayer and ask Him to help you replace it with the truth of His Word.

**2. Approach the throne with confidence.** Pick one area of your life right now where you have been trying to gut it out on your own. Commit to bringing that specific need to God in prayer each day this week, with the boldness that Hebrews 4:16 describes.

**3. Extend grace to one difficult person.** Name one person in your life who is hard to love. Choose one concrete action this week -- a kind word, a withheld criticism, a genuine act of service -- that reflects the grace God has shown you. It does not require ignoring harm or removing boundaries. It simply means choosing kindness where you would naturally choose distance.

**4. Prepare your heart for communion.** If your church is celebrating communion soon, use the coming days to intentionally prepare. Reflect on what Christ's broken body and shed blood accomplished for you. Let that reflection deepen your gratitude and your willingness to stand -- not crouch -- in the grace God has given.

**5. Share your story.** Think of one person in your life who seems to be living with a clogged filter -- someone who struggles to believe they are truly forgiven or truly loved by God. Pray for an opportunity this week to share, in a natural and genuine way, what grace has meant to your own journey.

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## Closing Prayer Prompt

Close your group time by praying together using this simple structure. Invite each person to contribute one line if they are comfortable doing so.

- **Receive:** "God, thank you for the grace you have given me in ..."
  - **Release:** "God, help me let go of what clogs my heart, specifically ..."
  - **Request:** "God, I need your grace this week for ..."
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## Memory Verse for the Week

Romans 5:1-2 -- Reflect on the truth that through faith we have peace with God and access into the grace in which we now stand. Let the image of standing -- not crouching, not crawling -- shape how you carry yourself through this week.