

“Great Grace”

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God’s Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they’ve had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today’s truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week’s message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)

Message Outline

GREAT GRACE

Jonah 3:1-10

God's character does not change:

He recognizes and condemns sin.

He delights in showing mercy.

He gives unmerited grace.

His compassion changes His conduct.

Therefore God chooses to...

1. Send flawed servants. (vs. 1-4)

In spite of previous failures.

In spite of current flaws.

2. Save flawed people. (vs. 5-10)

Judgment comes to the unrepentant.

Mercy comes to the repentant.

Inward (believed)

Articulated (called)

Outward (put on)

Message Summary

Last week we studied Jonah's rescue from the belly of the fish. We learned that the belly of the fish is not a happy place to live but it's a great place to learn. Jonah was rescued from drowning in the depths of the sea, from the belly of the fish, and from drowning in his own pride. But just as important, Jonah learned about the beauty of his God. As a result, Jonah praised God for His great rescue. We are like Jonah. Apart from God's grace we are bound for disaster like Jonah. But in Jesus Christ we can be rescued. Remembering this marvelous rescue by Jesus should never get old to any believer!

Chapter 3 of Jonah displays God's gracious heart for the nations. It displayed for us the truth that He is the God of second chances. Not only was Jonah given another opportunity to obey God and deliver His message but God gave Nineveh and opportunity to repent and be delivered from the judgment that was coming their way. As the chapter closes we see God's amazing grace at work, not only in Jonah's life but also in the lives of the Ninevites.

We learned from this part of the story of Jonah that God's character does not change. While He will judge sin He really delights in showing mercy and grace to those who repent. The result is the fact that God not only desires to save flawed people but He uses them to accomplish His purposes in the world. As you prepare to meet with your community group examine your heart to see if you are living a repentant life in light of His grace. Are you allowing Him to use you to share His message of hope to those far from Him? Are you in need of His grace today?

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Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help make application of God’s Word to your Head (What God wants me to know), to your Heart (What God wants me to desire/value), and to your Hands (What God wants me to do).

1. Why is it so easy to talk about the sin of others without dealing with your own sin? What does this demonstrate about your daily need to be reminded of the Gospel of Jesus?
2. What do people generally prefer their enemies to receive; mercy or judgment? According to Romans 12:19-21, who is responsible to bring judgment? What are Christians called to do for their enemies? What is the most loving thing you can do for your enemy?
3. It was said during the message, “God’s readiness to have compassion on a wicked but repentant people and to withhold threatened destruction showed Israel that her coming judgment at God’s hand was not because of His unwillingness to forgive but because of her impenitence.” In what ways have you been like Israel? Nineveh? How has your understanding of God’s grace in your life affected your worship over time? Have you grown more or less sensitive to your sin? Why?
4. Jonah 3:1 says, “the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time...” Since becoming a Christian how has God given you a “second” opportunity to serve Him?
5. Some have said that Jonah preached a “graceless message” to Nineveh yet God still used it and the Ninevites repented. In chapter 4 it becomes apparent that Jonah still had major flaws after Nineveh’s repentance, yet God still used him. What does this say about God’s willingness to use flawed people? What “good” reasons have you used to not obey/serve God? How does living in light of God’s grace through the Gospel change these reasons from “valid” to “invalid”?
6. What does repentance look like in your life; was it a “one-time” event or do you find yourself “repenting” regularly? What does your need for repentance indicate about your righteousness? How does the Gospel address this?
7. How does the unchanging character of God affect your worship of Him? Which attribute expressed during the message affects you the most? How does it affect the way you express your faith to others?

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Respond . . .

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church...

Weekly Prayer Focus

- **Church:**
Annual Meeting on December 7, 2014.
 - Elders as they prepare 2015 budget.
 - Celebrating all God did in 2014.
 - Wisdom & excitement as we look to 2015.
- **Local:**
The physical community in which your small group meets.
 - Growing relationships with neighbors.
 - Opportunities to serve this community.
 - Gospel conversation opportunities.
- **Global:**
Pastor Abraham and his congregation at Sala Evangelica in Buena Vista, Guatemala
 - Building needs.
 - Local evangelism.
 - Financial needs.