

# Small group optional guide: GRACE THAT EMPOWERS, LIVING IN FREEDOM

## UP; we grow in our love for Jesus through the word & worship

**WORD:** The Nature of Grace: Unmerited and Free' Ephesians 2:4-10

This week centres on the reality that grace is not only what saves, but what sustains and strengthens daily life. Many arrive carrying unseen burdens—pressures, disappointments, fears, or ongoing struggles. Into that reality comes a clear and personal truth: God's grace meets people exactly where they are, not where they wish they were.

Titus 2:11–12 reveals that grace is both saving and shaping: "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us..." Grace is not passive. It actively trains, forms, and matures. It is not just the doorway into faith but the pathway of transformation. Saving grace initiates relationship with God; empowering grace sustains that relationship and produces growth over time. This becomes deeply personal in 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Weakness is not an obstacle to God's work—it is often the very place where His power is most clearly revealed. The "thorn" represents ongoing struggles that may not be removed, despite sincere prayer. Yet the promise is not necessarily removal, but sufficiency. God's grace is fully adequate, meeting every need in the midst of limitation.

This reframes how weakness is viewed. Instead of disqualifying, it becomes a platform for God's strength. What feels like a barrier can become a testimony. The focus shifts from personal ability to divine empowerment. Grace does not merely help people endure; it enables them to continue participating in God's purposes, even in difficulty.

There is also a spiritual battle at work. The enemy's aim is to keep attention fixed on problems while distancing hearts from grace. The lie suggests that freedom is for others, not for those with ongoing struggles. But lasting freedom is not achieved through willpower alone—it is lived through dependence on grace. Trying harder without relying on grace leads to exhaustion; receiving grace leads to transformation.

So what does empowering grace actually look like in daily life? Galatians 5:22–25 provides the answer through the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are not qualities to manufacture through effort but are produced by the Holy Spirit in a surrendered life.

This requires active surrender, not passivity. Surrender acknowledges, "I cannot produce this on my own," and invites the Spirit to work. As one remains connected to God, like a branch to a vine, the Spirit produces what is needed in each situation: Love in difficult relationships / Joy that is not dependent on circumstances...

(...continued) Peace in uncertainty / Patience in delay / Kindness and goodness toward others / Faithfulness to keep going / Gentleness in response / Self-control in temptation

Each aspect of this fruit is an expression of grace at work. This is how grace becomes visible—through transformed responses in real-life situations.

Importantly, this transformation flows from the finished work of the cross. The cross remains the foundation, but life is not lived in ongoing defeat or shame. Instead, life is lived from the victory secured there. The power of sin has been broken, and the Spirit now empowers a new way of living. As Galatians 5:25 says, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

This is the invitation: not to strive, but to walk daily in step with the Spirit, drawing on grace moment by moment. The same grace that saved is now actively empowering, equipping, and sustaining.

The result is freedom—not the absence of challenges, but the presence of God's power within them. Grace is sufficient today, in every situation, and for every need.

### Discussion Questions

- Where do you most feel your "thorn" right now, and how does 2 Corinthians 12:9 challenge the way you view that struggle?
- Which fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22–23 do you most need this week, and what would it look like to actively surrender in that area?
- What is the difference between trying harder in your own strength and living by empowering grace in a practical, everyday situation?...continued...

**Worship songs from Sunday:** 10,000 reasons / Firm foundation / Cornerstone / Who you say I am / No longer slaves

## IN; we connect and learn to love one another

- 1) The Members night is this Sunday evening 7:30pm, please come along.
- 2) The four weeks of well being starts the week of 27<sup>th</sup> April, please help honour the stream leaders by signing up through the website calendar.

## OUT; we reach out to show people outside of JCC that God loves them



Alpha starts this Wednesday 7:45pm, a short 6 week version of Alpha so a brilliant step for anyone wanting to consider the Christian faith. At the JCC café Wednesdays 15<sup>th</sup> April to 20<sup>th</sup> May

- Who will you invite today?
- Message 3 people and pray they say yes!

# Four weeks of Wellbeing

Psalm 23 "The Lord is my shepherd...

He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul."

Pause and notice where life feels stretched or fragile, and invite God into real areas of need:

## What are the four streams?



Tuesdays  
Couch to 5k



Wednesdays



2 Tuesdays  
Prayer  
2 Mondays  
Bible study



3 Tuesdays  
CAP money  
course

Why?

God desires us to flourish and experience deeper peace, joy and wholeness in life.

How?

Pause and pray. Ask God to draw you to one stream. Sign up and commit.  
One faithful step over four weeks.

When?

27 April - 24 May Small Groups will pause to allow four weeks to focus and grow.

Four areas of life

Pick one to work on

Pray - Choose one area - Commit for four weeks

## Sign Up

Go to our website

[www.jcceg.co.uk/calendar](http://www.jcceg.co.uk/calendar)

find each of the 4 streams under

"Featured Events"