

# Small group optional guide: The Nature of Grace: Unmerited and Free

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

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

Rediscover the wonderful grace of God—read these verses as if you have never read them before. Always keep reading, thinking, and thanking about grace; we are all responsible for our own amazement. Grace is the gift of God: lavish, free, and impossible to earn.

**Sola Gratia—grace alone!** Our salvation is entirely by grace: utterly undeserved, not the result of anything we do, but solely by God. He rescues us because of His mercy, not our works. Paul is emphatic—this is grace alone.

The backdrop is stark: “you were dead in the trespasses and sins.” Without Christ, everyone—regardless of background or goodness—is spiritually dead, separated from God, “by nature children of wrath,” “having no hope and without God in the world.” Without grace, we are utterly hopeless.

“But God!” While we were still dead, He stepped in because of His mercy and love—completely independent of anything in us. Jesus died for us at our worst, when we had nothing to offer, no righteousness of our own. Christ died for sinners.

➤ 1 Timothy 1:15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

➤ This is what separates Christianity from religion. Ephesians declares:

- 1) It is by grace you have been saved
- 2) This is not from yourselves
- 3) It is the gift of God
- 4) Not by works

The story of Jean Valjean in *Les Miserable* captures this grace. A hardened criminal, he is shown kindness by Bishop Myriel, who later covers his theft with mercy and gives even more. He tells him, "Jean Valjean, my brother, you belong no longer to evil, but to good. It is your soul that I am buying for you... and I give it to God". This is a glimpse of God's outrageous grace toward us.

We have offended God, yet instead of punishment, He saves us through Jesus. Grace transforms us—not to earn salvation, but because we are saved. All holiness and right living must flow from grace; none of it saves us.

➤ **Have you received this free gift? Grace alone changes us.**

➤ “May I urge any who have no good thing about them... to firmly believe that our gracious God is able and willing to take them without anything to recommend them” (C H Spurgeon)

If you feel you're not doing enough, remember: we weren't saved by anything we do. If we were saved as sinners, we are saved now.

...continued...

(...continued) “when you wake tomorrow he will still be your righteousness... You have to earn nothing... bask in the brilliant sunlight of this reality...” (Terry Virgo) Why did God do this? Because of His mercy, love, grace, kindness, and gift.

➤ “oh that you would believe it!... Let Jesus be your all in all and let free grace be the one line in which you live and move!” (C H Spurgeons)

Accept the gift of grace—again or for the first time.

## Discussion Questions

Q) Where in your life do you still feel like you have to “earn” God's approval—and what does that reveal about what you really believe about grace?

Q) When you fail or struggle spiritually, what is your instinctive response—draw closer to God or pull away—and why?

Q) If you truly believed, deep down, that you are fully accepted and loved by God right now (not after you improve), what would actually change in how you live this week?

**Worship songs from Sunday:** This is our God / You have won me / Worthy / Living Hope / At the Cross

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

1) Check out the Easter program, which opportunities will you invite people to:

**Maundy Thursday:** we will be having a service here between 8-8:45pm / **Good Friday service:** in the High Street at 11:30am / **Easter Sunday:** baptisms & a great opportunity to invite friends and family / **Prayer Central:** In the evening of Easter Sunday we will have a night of worship, thanksgiving and praise as we celebrate the death of resurrection of Jesus.

**2) A finance and generosity letter** has been sent out to all JCC members and we hope it has reached you by now. There are 4 questions in the letter to help facilitate discussion and prayer when we seek God about our generosity toward him in our church giving. This Sunday was an ideal message to have as a platform to consider our financial giving, giving out of the grace we have received, not obligation or to earn God's favour. Chat through the letter, have general conversation around the questions and most importantly pray and ask God if he wants you to address any matter related to your financial giving.

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

The Zambia and Uganda Charity Meal is on Saturday, 11 April tickets are £22.50 for a 3-course buffet from the Gurkha restaurant;£5 from each ticket and all proceeds of the gift auction going towards 2 of our Jubilee Initiatives. Get tickets via the QR code on the leaflet or contact Nicolas Castiglione, Laurance Evans or Rob Baker.