



What is Living in Grace?

Living in Grace is a grace-based, Christ-centered, series grounded in the Scriptures. The purpose of Living in Grace is to demonstrate that all of the Christian life is lived in the grace of God in Christ. The goal of Living in Grace is to provide discipleship training which leads to being more effectively equipped for life and ministry. The motto of Mission to the World is: ***Grasping God's Grace Personally to Give God's Grace Globally***. Our desire is to enhance the ability of those going through the Living in Grace DVD series to grasp God's grace in their personal lives so that they will be enabled to more effectively fulfill the role God desires for them in His kingdom and through the local church.

There are two main components of the Living in Grace series:

1. messages on grace and
2. small group discussion on the messages.

The Living in Grace series includes eleven 35-minute messages, small group discussion questions and supplemental reading for each topic. The format allows for a one and one half hour session which would include one lecture and small group discussion.

The Purpose of Small Groups

The purpose of small groups is to aid in the discovery of areas of one's life and ministry to which the message of grace may be applied, resulting in new freedom and joy in Christ.

The small group discussions are not designed to be venues for further teaching but to be a guided discussion leading to further understanding and application of the messages to the personal lives of the participants. The group discussions, therefore, are to be a means of cultivating a more complete understanding of oneself as well as the Gospel.

Small group discussion leaders are therefore important components of the Living in Grace experience.



Small Group Leader's Guidelines

1. Pray for those in your group.
2. The group leader is not in the role of a counselor.
"Think of me as a fellow patient in the same hospital who, having been admitted a little earlier, could give some advice." C.S. Lewis
3. Your effectiveness is by the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.
4. Be approachable, gain their trust
5. Engage in careful listening
6. Help them understand themselves and God better
7. Help them to see the issues in their own lives
8. Don't expect to deal with every issue
9. You want to lead people to:
 - a. Christ
 - b. The Scriptures
 - c. Repentance
 - d. Real faith
 - e. Renewed obedience
10. Encourage people to talk about themselves.
11. Issues of confidentiality
 - a. What is shared in the group stays in the group
 - b. Do not share with others what is said in the group without the permission of the people involved.
 - c. If something is brought up that you feel the pastoral leadership should know about, ask the person to share it with their pastor themselves.
12. Ask group members to speak in the first person.
This is not a discussion about what others need but about how this message has affected those in the group.
13. Encourage everyone to participate.
14. Don't be afraid of silence. Some people formulate their thinking as they talk; others think silently and then talk.

Ask the Lord to give you a genuine respect and love for those you in your group.

Ask yourself the questions:

1. What are the characteristics of a good listener?
2. How do you know someone is listening to you?



Ask Good Questions

1. **Questions are provided for each DVD message but these will sometimes need follow-up questions to keep the discussion on track or to encourage greater clarity.**
 - a. Good questions don't just solicit information, they help interpret information.
 - b. Good questions help make connections.
 - c. Good questions help the participants make their own discoveries.

2. **Why the emphasis on discovery?**

We want the Holy Spirit to begin (or continue) to expose what is beneath the surface, the deeper, honest emotions, so that the Gospel can permeate those emotions and bring about growth (transformation) from within.

3. **Some sample follow-up questions:**
 - a. What do you learn about yourself in this?
 - b. What does this reveal about your understanding of God's love?
 - c. What do you not believe about the Gospel?
 - d. What do you trust in?
 - e. What is going on here that Jesus would like to change?
 - f. What are you avoiding in the way you respond (react)?
 - g. What are you looking for this (idol) to supply that is a substitute for Christ?

A Summary of Ground Rules for Small Groups

1. You will want everyone to participate.

2. What is shared in the group stays in the group.

3. Speak in the first person, and continuously draw the group back to this ground rule when you hear them use "those" or "they." For example, if a participant responds to a question with, "Christians have a tendency to..." follow that statement up with, "What is your tendency in that situation?" This simple question will draw the discussion back around to the first person.

On the following pages we have listed goals for each session of the Living in Grace DVD series.



Sessions 1 & 2

What is the Gospel: The Message of Grace

Goals

1. To understand the centrality of the Gospel not only for conversion but also for the ongoing life of the Christian.
2. To grow in confidence in the Gospel's ability to impact daily life
3. To rejoice in the security that the Gospel brings to our relationship with God

The goal is for us to see the Gospel as central to our ongoing Christian life as well as for our conversion. The reality of the truth of the Gospel has ramifications for our daily lives beyond our initial coming to Christ.



Session 3

The Love of God: The Foundation of Grace

Goals

1. To understand the importance of God's love for the believer as the motivation and power for living the Christian life
2. To have confidence in the completeness of God's love for the believer
3. To rejoice in and worship the God who has extended that sort of love to His people

The first three messages are foundational. Do all you can in this small group to have each person interact with the questions. This will help lay a foundation for the rest of the series.

Suggestions for small group discussion questions:

Question #2: Are there areas of your life that demonstrate a failure to believe in God's love for you "in Christ?" How does this failure express itself in your thoughts, words and actions?

Suggestion: You might want to think of an example from your own life that isn't too spectacular since mundane examples can often help bring the truth home in more practical ways. Think through what example you might share before the meeting.

Don't skip over the last part of this group of questions (#2). After someone shares, ask them "what does it sound like when you demonstrate a failure to believe in a particular area? In other words, what words come out of your mouth or what thoughts ring in your head?"

Question #5: How is it possible that these two statements are true—and true for you?

Suggestion: The intent of this question is to bring all of the discussion around to the work of Christ on the cross. His work is the only reason all of this is true.

Question #6: As you reflect upon God's love for you, what difference can your experience of God's love make in your daily life?

Suggestion: Don't let the group get off with very general answers here. Direct them to take a couple of the very specific examples such as our tendency to complain or worry, or in our relationship to our spouse.

Do your best to get through all 7 groups of questions.



Session 4

Surrender: The Response of Grace

Goals

1. To understand that trusting in Christ requires a deliberate giving up on confidence in self
2. To realize that surrender is practiced in specific situations and crises of everyday life
3. To rejoice in the freedom and confidence that trust in Christ provides

It is helpful for those in the group to see that surrender and trust are ongoing responses practiced daily in the concrete situations of our lives. As a discussion group leader you may want to have a situation in your own life to share with the group to facilitate the discussion.

The purpose of this small group discussion is to help us understand the necessity of a change in our lives, a change from dependence on self to dependence on God. This is the idea of surrender.

Suggestions for small group discussion questions:

Question #2: Every day there are moments of choice in our lives between trusting God and trusting ourselves (a “crisis of faith”). Read the example below (the scenario of Dan and Rebecca traveling down the interstate) and discuss the following questions: (reference small group questions page for “Surrender: The Response of Grace.”)

Suggestion: This question is designed for discussion purposes to illustrate a real life situation where a choice between surrender and trust in self is presented. Help the participants to go below the surface behaviors to what heart attitudes could be driving the particular responses presented.

Question #3: Think of a situation in your own life where you faced the choice of trusting God or trusting self. Describe the situation to the group, and then answer the questions from #2 above in relation to your own crisis of faith.

Suggestion: This question seeks to take the application from a theoretical situation to a real life circumstance in the life of a group participant. This may require the group leader to be prepared to share a situation in his or her life to stimulate discussion. Be careful not to make the discussion group leader's life the center of the discussion.



Session 5

Humility: The Reflection of Grace

Goals

1. To understand humility as the key heart response toward God of those touched by the Gospel
2. To see humility toward others as a natural reflection of the work of God's grace in a life transformed by Christ
3. To pursue humility as a fundamental value by which we live the Christian life

Suggestions for small group discussion questions

The reality of humility can often best be seen in how we respond to others as suggested in question #4. This question is designed to help each person see the relationship between the Gospel and their attitude toward others.

Question #4:

Consider the following areas in your own life where you may not be practicing humility. Discuss your responses to the following questions:

- a. When I boast about my accomplishments, why do I feel the need to draw attention to myself?
- b. When I look down on someone else, why do I feel the need to be superior?
- c. When I am overly sensitive to criticism, why am I so hurt by criticism from others?
- d. When I am more concerned with being right than being humble, why do I feel the need to be right?



Session 6

Repentance: The Posture of Grace

Goals

1. To understand that repentance is at the heart of the response of faith in the Gospel of Christ
2. To see that repentance is the door to change in the Christian life
3. To love repentance as the means of receiving all that Christ is for us

Suggestions for small group discussion questions

There are several reasons why this small group has typically been the most difficult one. The approach that Living in Grace takes in explaining repentance is often very different from the way people view repentance, and making this message practical in one's life is a real challenge. We have developed the series of questions you find in this small group to give people a chance to interact with the idea of repentance as described in the message, and to move them towards practical application of the message.

As you move through this small group, keep these points in mind:

- Repentance is often defined in man-centered terms (e.g. "I'm going to do better" or "I am going to change").
- Repentance is more than a one-time act done at conversion.
- Some tend to define repentance in terms of an act. In Living in Grace we define it as a posture that produces action.
- Repentance needs to be seen in contrast to rationalization or victimization.
- Repentance is a gift from God, not something that we can produce on our own.
- Repentance is the door to change.
- The definition of repentance given in the message:
"Repentance is a broken heart, broken over how it has broken the heart of God."
- Remind your group of the 3-fold formula: 1) there is a problem, 2) I am the problem, and 3) I need God's help.
- Remind your group of the 90-10 rule.

In question #6 we ask the participants to discuss the idea that repentance is a door to change. We suggest that you be prepared to share an example from your own life to help the group with this question. Remember that examples can be very simple things. Sometimes it is in the mundane that we need to see the application. Before you conclude this small group, go over the journaling Assignment on Repentance with them.



Session 7

The Holy Spirit: The Agent of Grace

Goals

1. To understand the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in living the Christian life
2. To see the Holy Spirit as the means by which God communicates His grace to us
3. To learn to rely on the Holy Spirit's work in producing growth in the Christian life

This session can be very valuable in coming to a greater confidence in the Holy Spirit's transforming work.



Session 8

The Love of Others: The Sign of Grace

Goals

1. To understand that the love of others is the chief reflection and evidence of our experience of God's love
2. To see that loving others is a way of growing in our understanding of God's love for us
3. To begin to practice loving others as a way of demonstrating our trust in God's love for us

This session seeks to demonstrate the connection between our confidence in God's love for us and our ability to love others. In question #3 a., the idea of taking the risk of loving others based on our confidence in God's love for us is emphasized. The love of others assignment can help a person work through their hesitations in this area. The love of others is most often seen in the area of being willing to forgive. This is why forgiveness is emphasized in question #3 b.



Session 9

Putting Away Sin: The Discipline of Grace

Goals

1. To understand that a true work of God's grace does not create a laxness toward sin in the Christian life
2. To see laxness toward sin as a rejection of God's grace in our lives
3. To pursue growing in our confidence in God's grace as the means by which we put away sin

Laxness toward sin is often the result of seeing sin only as outward behavior and not seeing it as a substitute for Christ in our hearts. The emphasis in the questions is therefore designed to help individuals see that not dealing with our heart issues could result in not dealing with those things in our hearts that may have become substitutes for Christ.



Session 10

Prayer: The Language of Grace

Goals

1. To understand prayer as an opportunity to access God guaranteed by Christ
2. To see prayer as the practice of the resurrection of Christ and prayerlessness as the denial of the resurrection of Christ
3. To appreciate the necessity of prayer as the means by which God accomplishes His kingdom purposes in us and in this world
4. To love prayer as the means of access to the joy of fellowship with the living God

Prayer can be seen as evidence of whether or not we trust Christ. Change in our prayer life can often be the result of just praying more. Consider spending a significant time in this session actually praying as a way of encouraging prayer.



Session 11

Good Works: The Life of Grace

Goals

1. To understand the role of God's grace as a superior motivation to obedience in contrast to guilt, fear, legalism or duty
2. To learn to rely on God's grace as our security in the pursuit of doing good and not on our performance or success
3. To see God's grace create in us a life of intentional joyful service toward God and others

This small group discussion seeks to clarify for the participants that confidence in God's grace more effectively motivates us to live the Christian life than fear, guilt or duty.

Question #4: How can our understanding of the gospel enable us to overcome the discouragement that comes from failures in the Christian life?

Question #5: What, in this talk, has encouraged you to live a more bold and intentional life of service to God and to others?

Suggestion: These questions are designed to point out that confidence in Christ's love for us is both the antidote for discouragement as well as the motivation to live a more bold and intentional Christian life.



Session 12
A Final Meeting

The last discussion is to help the participants form some concrete steps that they can take away from this series. It can also help the group assume a positive role in helping each other continue to practice what they have learned. This could include, when appropriate, continuing to meet together in order to pray and encourage each other.