



sunrise ***discipleship*** series

By Luke Miller

HOW TO USE THIS *DEVOTIONAL COMPANION*

These readings invite you to spend time with God and receive His grace. After hearing the sermon, work through the three lessons for the week before your group meets. Give yourself room to linger; an honest response matters more than filling every line.

PREPARE A SACRED SPACE

Find, or make, a quiet place where you can read and reflect: a comfortable chair, a corner of your home, or the back porch. Bring your Bible, this companion, and a pen. Grab coffee or tea if you like. Put your phone on silent and set it aside; if you read Scripture on your phone, turn on Do Not Disturb.

Keep a separate piece of paper nearby. When a reminder interrupts you (*"Don't forget to get milk!"*) jot it down. You can return to it later and gently bring your attention back to God.

BEGIN WITH PRAYER AND READ SLOWLY

Take a few quiet breaths. Pray, "God, help me be present with You. Open my heart to what You want me to notice." Read the Scripture passage slowly, then read it again. Notice a word, action, or phrase that draws your attention.

ENTER THE PASSAGE IMAGINATIVELY

When the passage tells a story, picture the scene. What might you see or hear? Consider the different people present. In Mark 10, for example, read from the perspective of a parent, a child, a disciple, and then notice Jesus' words and actions. What changes as you consider each perspective?

Let your imagination help you pay attention, while keeping the words of Scripture as your guide. Hold imagined details and feelings as possibilities, not facts the passage states. With a psalm or letter, attend to the speaker's words, images, and emotions rather than trying to create a scene.

REFLECT HONESTLY AND CARRY ONE RESPONSE WITH YOU

Stay with a question that touches your life. Write a few honest sentences, or sit quietly before answering. Name what you notice, what you resist, and where you need grace. You do not need a polished answer. Questions you cannot resolve can become part of your group conversation.

Close with a simple prayer and choose one small response to practice that day. Take the time you need with the reflections, let the reading and questions open a deeper conversation with God, and leave room to listen.

Amazing Grace Weekly Workbook

Week 1:I Bring Nothing

Lesson 1: Come Like a Child

Mark 10:13–16

Opening Reflection

Most of us spend our lives learning how to become more capable. We learn to take responsibility, solve problems, work hard, manage our lives, and stand on our own two feet. In many ways, that kind of maturity is good and necessary. But when we bring that same mindset into our relationship with God, it can quietly distort our understanding of grace.

Instead of coming to God with need, trust, and honesty, we may come with a spiritual resume. We may try to prove that we are faithful enough, mature enough, knowledgeable enough, or useful enough. We may begin to think that God's love is connected to how well we are doing spiritually.

In Mark 10, Jesus challenges that way of thinking by placing children at the center of the conversation. Children come with need. They come with dependence. They come without power, status, or accomplishment. Jesus says the kingdom belongs to people like them.

Scripture Reading

- Read Mark 10:13–16 slowly.
- As you read, notice the different people in the scene.
- Notice the parents bringing the children.
- Notice the disciples rebuking them.
- Notice Jesus' strong response.
- Notice how Jesus receives and blesses the children.

Teaching

This short moment in Mark's Gospel may seem simple at first, but it reveals something foundational about the kingdom of God. People are bringing children to Jesus so that He might touch them and bless them. The parents seem to believe that Jesus will welcome their children, but the disciples respond very differently. They see the children as interruptions, distractions, or perhaps as people who are not important enough to receive Jesus' attention.

In the culture of Jesus' day, children were loved by their families, but they did not carry the kind of status or influence that adults did. They were not powerful, wealthy, impressive, or socially significant. They had no accomplishments to offer and no position to leverage.

That is what makes Jesus' response so important. He does not merely tolerate the children. He welcomes them and uses them as a picture of how the kingdom is received. Jesus says, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." The kingdom is not achieved by strength, maturity, religious status, or personal importance. It is received with dependence and trust.

Reflect

1. What part of this story stands out to you most today?
2. Why do you think the disciples tried to stop the children from coming to Jesus?
3. What does Jesus' response show us about His heart?
4. Why do you think dependence can feel uncomfortable or weak for many adults?
5. Where do you feel pressure to come to God with something to prove?

Teaching

Jesus is not saying that spiritual maturity is childish. He is saying that true maturity begins with childlike trust. Children receive what they cannot earn. They depend on others for what they cannot provide for themselves. They come with open hands.

This is the posture grace requires. Grace cannot be earned, controlled, or negotiated. It can only be received. That is why grace can be so uncomfortable. We often prefer achievement because achievement lets us feel in control. If we earn something, we can claim it. If we deserve something, we can feel secure in our right to it. But grace humbles us because it tells us we bring nothing that makes God owe us.

The good news is that Jesus welcomes those who come with nothing. He takes the children in His arms, lays His hands on them, and blesses them. The ones the disciples thought should be kept away are brought close. The ones with no status are honored. The ones with nothing to offer are blessed.

Reflect

6. What do you think it means to receive the kingdom like a child?

7. Where do you struggle to receive instead of achieve?

8. Do you tend to approach God more like someone trying to impress Him or someone learning to trust Him? Why?

9. How might your relationship with God change if you truly believed His grace could not be earned?

10. Complete this sentence:
“Jesus, I come to You today with empty hands because...”

Practice

Take two quiet minutes today and sit with your hands open as a sign of receiving.
Pray slowly:

“Jesus, I bring nothing. I receive Your grace.”

Do not rush to add more words. Let the posture of open hands remind you that grace is received, not achieved.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, I confess that I often want to come to You with something in my hands. I want to prove that I am strong, faithful, useful, or deserving. Teach me to come like a child. Help me receive Your grace without pretending, striving, or performing. Thank You that You welcome those who come with need. Amen.

Lesson 2: Nothing to Prove

Luke 18:9–14

Opening Reflection

It is possible to pray and still be performing. It is possible to do religious things while quietly using them to prove our worth. We may compare ourselves to others, list our accomplishments, or find comfort in the thought that we are doing better than someone else.

Jesus tells a parable about two men who go to the temple to pray. One comes with a spiritual resume. The other comes with empty hands. One points to his accomplishments. The other asks for mercy. This parable helps us see the difference between approaching God with something to prove and approaching God with nothing to hide.

Scripture Reading

- Read Luke 18:9–14 slowly.
- As you read, notice the two men.
- Notice how the Pharisee prays.
- Notice how the tax collector prays.
- Notice what Jesus says at the end.
- Then read verse 13 again slowly.

Teaching

Jesus tells this parable to people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt. That introduction is important. The problem is not simply that the Pharisee prayed. The problem is that his confidence was in himself.

The Pharisee's prayer is full of comparison. He thanks God that he is not like other people. He lists his religious practices. He fasts. He gives. He avoids certain sins. On the outside, his life looks spiritually serious. But his prayer reveals that he is using his religious life as evidence that he deserves to stand before God.

The tax collector stands far off. He does not compare himself favorably to anyone. He does not present achievements. He does not make excuses. He simply says, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Jesus says this man, rather than the other, went home justified. That would have shocked many listeners. The one who brought nothing but need received mercy.

Reflect

1. What stands out to you about the Pharisee's prayer?
2. What stands out to you about the tax collector's prayer?
3. Why do you think comparison can become part of religious life?
4. Where are you tempted to feel better about yourself by comparing yourself to someone else?
5. What would an honest prayer for mercy sound like from you today?

Teaching

The Pharisee did many things that were outwardly good. Prayer, fasting, and giving were not the problem. The problem was that these good things had become a basis for pride. He had turned spiritual practices into a spiritual resume.

That danger is still real. We can turn church attendance, Bible knowledge, serving, leadership, generosity, morality, or ministry involvement into ways of proving ourselves. We may not say it out loud, but we can begin to feel that these things make us more acceptable to God or more deserving than others. The tax collector shows us a different posture. He comes honestly. He comes humbly. He comes dependent on mercy. He brings nothing that would obligate God to receive him. And yet Jesus says he goes home justified.

Grace begins where self justification ends.

Reflect

6. Where are you most tempted to justify yourself before God or others?
7. What spiritual things could become a source of pride if you are not careful?
8. Why is it hard to come to God with nothing to prove?
9. What does this parable teach you about grace?
10. Complete this sentence: “God, be merciful to me in...”

Practice

Pray the tax collector’s prayer slowly three times today: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

After each time, pause and let yourself receive mercy without explaining, defending, or performing.

Closing Prayer

God, be merciful to me. Forgive me for the ways I compare, perform, and try to justify myself. Free me from the need to prove that I am better than others or worthy on my own. Teach me to come before You honestly, humbly, and dependently. Thank You that grace meets me when I bring nothing but my need. Amen.

Lesson 3: Quieted by Grace

Psalm 131

Opening Reflection

Dependence can feel uncomfortable because it reminds us that we are not in control. Many of us carry more than we were meant to carry. We try to manage outcomes, control what others think, solve every problem, and hold ourselves together. Even spiritually, we may feel pressure to have the right answers, the right emotions, the right progress, and the right image.

Psalm 131 gives us a different picture. It is a short psalm, but it describes a soul that has stopped striving. It gives us the image of a child resting with its mother. This is not immaturity. It is trust. It is the quiet strength of a heart learning to rest in God.

Scripture Reading

- Read **Psalm 131** slowly.
- Read it once all the way through.
- Then read it a second time and notice the movement of the psalm.
- Notice what the psalmist refuses.
- Notice how the psalmist describes the soul.
- Notice the final invitation to hope in the Lord.

Teaching

Psalm 131 begins with humility. “O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high.” The psalmist is rejecting prideful self reliance. He is refusing to live as though he must understand, control, or carry everything

Then he says, “I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.” This does not mean he is avoiding responsibility or refusing to think deeply. It means he is recognizing his limits. There are things only God can carry. There are mysteries we cannot solve. There are outcomes we cannot control. There are burdens we were never meant to hold as though we were God.

Grace invites us into that kind of humility. We do not bring control to God. We bring trust. We do not have to pretend we are unlimited. We can be honest about our weakness, our questions, our need, and our dependence.

Reflect

1. What word or phrase stands out to you from Psalm 131?
2. What does it mean to have a heart that is not lifted up?
3. What are some things you are trying to carry, control, or understand that may be “too great” for you?
4. Where do you need to admit your limits before God?
5. How does humility prepare us to receive grace?

Teaching

The center of the psalm is the image of a calm and quiet soul. The psalmist says, “like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.” This is a picture of settled trust. The child is not frantic, striving, or demanding control. The child is resting in the presence of one who is safe.

This connects beautifully with Jesus welcoming the children in Mark 10. The kingdom is received by those who come in dependence. Psalm 131 helps us imagine what that dependence can feel like. It is not panic. It is not passivity. It is not weakness in the way the world often defines weakness. It is the quiet strength of trusting the One who holds us.

The psalm ends with a call: “O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.” Dependence is not hopelessness. It is placing our hope in the Lord rather than in our ability to control, perform, or prove ourselves.

Reflect

6. What do you think it means to have a “calmed and quieted” soul?
7. What makes your soul feel restless, anxious, or pressured to perform?
8. How does the image of a child resting with its mother help you understand grace?
9. Where is God inviting you to stop striving and rest in His care?
10. Complete this sentence: “Lord, I want to hope in You instead of...”

Practice

Find a quiet place for three minutes.

Sit still and slowly pray: “Lord, quiet my soul in Your grace.”

Each time your mind races toward control, performance, or worry, gently return to that prayer.

Closing Prayer

Lord, my soul is often restless. I try to carry too much, control too much, and prove too much. Teach me the humility of Psalm 131. Quiet my soul in Your presence. Help me come to You like a child, not with pride or performance, but with trust. My hope is in You. Amen.

Week 2: I Cannot Earn It

Lesson 1: You Must Be Born Again

John 3:1–18

Opening Reflection

Some people assume that being close to God means knowing the right things, doing the right things, and being seen as a good person. Those things can matter, but they can also hide a deeper need. A person can know Scripture, attend church, serve faithfully, live morally, and still need the renewing work of God's grace.

Nicodemus reminds us that grace is not only for people who look far from God. Grace is also for people who look religious, responsible, and respectable. Jesus does not tell Nicodemus to try harder. He tells him that he must be born again. That means the Christian life does not begin with what we achieve for God. It begins with what only God can do in us.

Scripture Reading

- Read John 3:1–18 slowly.
- As you read, notice who Nicodemus is.
- Notice how he approaches Jesus.
- Notice what Jesus says to him.
- Notice how Nicodemus responds.
- Notice how the conversation leads to God's love revealed in the Son.

Teaching

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. He was not spiritually careless. He would have been known as someone serious about Scripture, obedience, holiness, and the life of faith. He was respected, educated, and morally committed. If people in his community were making a list of those who seemed closest to God, Nicodemus probably would have been near the top. That is what makes Jesus' words so surprising. Jesus does not begin by praising Nicodemus for his religious commitment. He does not tell him that he is almost there. He says, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." This would have been deeply unsettling. Jesus is saying that religious knowledge, moral effort, and public respect are not enough to bring someone into the kingdom.

The phrase “born again” can also carry the meaning “born from above.” Jesus is not simply telling Nicodemus to become more sincere or more disciplined. He is saying that Nicodemus needs new life from God. Birth is not something we accomplish for ourselves. It is something we receive. In the same way, spiritual life is not something we manufacture through effort. It is a gift of grace.

Reflect

1. What stands out to you most about Nicodemus?
2. Why do you think Jesus speaks so directly to him?
3. What are some things people today may assume make someone close to God?
4. Where do you see the difference between knowing about God and truly knowing God?
5. Have you ever relied on religious activity, knowledge, morality, or reputation to feel spiritually secure?

Teaching

This passage is especially important for people who have been around faith for a long time. Familiarity with spiritual things can be a gift, but it can also become a substitute for surrender. We can know the language of faith without letting grace reach the deeper places of the heart. We can serve, attend, lead, study, and still resist the humbling truth that we need to be made new. Jesus is not attacking Nicodemus. He is lovingly disrupting him. Nicodemus comes with respect for Jesus, but Jesus pushes the conversation beneath polite religion. He moves from admiration to transformation. He is showing Nicodemus that grace is not an improvement project. Grace is not God helping us become a slightly better version of our old selves. Grace gives us life from above.

That is both humbling and hopeful. It is humbling because it tells us our best effort cannot save us. It is hopeful because it tells us we do not have to save ourselves.

Reflect

6. Why is it hard to admit that our best effort is not enough?
7. Where are you most tempted to trust in what you know or what you do spiritually?
8. How does John 3:16 sound different when you hear it as part of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus?
9. What would it look like to let Jesus move past polite religion and speak to the deeper places in you?
10. Complete this sentence: "Jesus, I may know the right words, but I still need You to..."

Practice

Take two quiet minutes today and ask God this question:

"Where am I relying on religious familiarity instead of receiving Your grace?"

Write down whatever comes to mind. Do not try to fix it immediately. Simply name it honestly before God.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, I confess that I often want to rely on what I know, what I do, or how I appear to others. Thank You for loving me enough to speak to the deeper places in me. Help me stop trusting in religious performance and receive the life that only You can give. Make me new by Your grace. Amen.

Lesson 2: A New Heart and a New Spirit

Ezekiel 36:24–28

Opening Reflection

Many people think the goal of faith is simply to become a better person. We want to make better choices, develop better habits, control our weaknesses, and improve the parts of ourselves that frustrate us. Growth matters, but Jesus shows Nicodemus that our deepest need is not merely improvement. We need new birth.

Ezekiel 36 helps us understand what Jesus was talking about. Long before Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, God promised that He would cleanse His people, give them a new heart, and put His Spirit within them. Grace is not only God forgiving what we have done. Grace is God renewing who we are from the inside out.

Scripture Reading

- Read Ezekiel 36:24–28 slowly.
- As you read, notice what God promises to do.
- Notice the repeated phrase, “I will.”
- Notice the images of cleansing, a new heart, a new spirit, and God’s Spirit within His people.
- Then read verses 26–27 again.

Teaching

Ezekiel spoke to people who needed more than outward religious reform. God’s people had turned away from Him, and their problem was not only external behavior. Their hearts needed to be changed. That is why God promises to give them a new heart and a new spirit.

This matters because we often try to change ourselves from the outside in. We try harder. We make promises. We build routines. We manage appearances. Sometimes those things help for a while, but they cannot deal with the deepest condition of the heart. We need God to do what only God can do.

God says, “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean.” He says, “I will give you a new heart.” He says, “I will put my Spirit within you.” The emphasis is on God’s action. Grace begins with God’s initiative, not our achievement.

This helps us understand why Jesus expected Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, to understand new birth. The promise of new life from above was already present in the Scriptures. Nicodemus did not need more religious status. He needed the cleansing and renewing work of God.

Reflect

1. What stands out to you from Ezekiel 36:24–28?
2. Why do you think God promises a new heart and not just better behavior?
3. Where have you tried to change yourself from the outside in?
4. What is the difference between self improvement and spiritual renewal?
5. Where do you need God to do what only He can do?

Teaching

God also says, “I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” A heart of stone is hard, resistant, unresponsive, and closed. A heart of flesh is alive, tender, responsive, and open to God.

That image is deeply personal. There are places in us that can become hard over time. Disappointment can make us hard. Sin can make us hard. Religious routine can make us hard. Control, fear, bitterness, and self protection can make us hard. We may still know the right words and do the right things, while parts of our hearts remain resistant to God.

Grace does not only forgive the hard heart. Grace softens it. Grace makes us alive to God again. The Spirit does not merely help us look spiritual on the outside. The Spirit renews us from within.

This is the gift Jesus is pointing Nicodemus toward. New birth is not earned. A new heart is not achieved. It is received from the God who says, “I will.”

Reflect

6. Where do you sense hardness, resistance, or spiritual dullness in your heart?
7. What has contributed to that hardness?
8. How does it feel to know that God can give you a heart that is tender and responsive to Him?
9. What would a renewed heart look like in your relationship with God?
10. Complete this sentence:
“Spirit of God, soften my heart toward...”

Practice

Pray this prayer slowly three times today:

“Spirit of God, make new what I cannot change on my own.”

After each time, pause and name one area where you need God’s renewing work.

Do not rush. Let the prayer remind you that grace is received, not achieved.

Closing Prayer

Spirit of God, I need more than improvement. I need renewal. I need You to soften what has become hard, cleanse what has become stained, and awaken what has become dull. Thank You that grace does not leave me to change myself by my own strength. Make new what only You can make new. Amen.

Lesson 3: Saved by His Mercy

Titus 3:3–7

Opening Reflection

It is easy to forget how much of the Christian life rests on mercy. We may speak about grace, but still slip into thinking that God saved us because we were wise enough, moral enough, sincere enough, or spiritually interested enough. Titus 3 reminds us that salvation is not rooted in our works, our goodness, or our effort. It is rooted in God's mercy.

This passage also helps us see that grace does not leave us unchanged. God saves us “by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” We are not saved by works, but we are renewed by grace into a new kind of life.

Scripture Reading

- Read Titus 3:3–7 slowly.
- As you read, notice the contrast between who we were and what God has done.
- Pay attention to the words mercy, washing, regeneration, renewal, Spirit, grace, and heirs.
- Then read verses 4–5 again.

Teaching

Paul begins by reminding believers what they once were. He uses honest language: foolish, disobedient, led astray, enslaved to passions and pleasures, passing days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. This is not meant to bury believers in shame. It is meant to remind them that their salvation was not based on their superiority to others.

Then Paul writes, “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us.” Those words shift the focus from human failure to divine mercy. God's goodness appeared. God's loving kindness appeared. God saved us.

Paul is clear about the basis of salvation: “not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy.” That sentence is central to grace. Even our best works cannot become the foundation of our salvation. We are saved because God is merciful.

This connects directly with Nicodemus. Religious effort cannot produce new birth. Moral achievement cannot save. We need mercy.

Reflect

1. What words or phrases stand out to you from Titus 3:3–7?
2. Why do you think Paul reminds believers what they once were?
3. What does this passage say salvation is not based on?
4. What does this passage say salvation is based on?
5. Where are you tempted to forget that you are saved by mercy?

Teaching

Paul says that God saves us “by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” This language connects beautifully with Jesus’ words about new birth and Ezekiel’s promise of cleansing and a new heart. Grace is not only a legal declaration. It is also a life giving renewal. Regeneration means new life. Renewal means God is making us new by the Spirit. We are not saved because we have renewed ourselves. We are renewed because God has poured out His Spirit through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Then Paul says that we are justified by His grace and become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. That means grace gives us both a new standing and a new future. We are declared right with God, brought into His family, and given hope.

This is why we cannot earn it. The whole passage is centered on what God has done. His goodness appeared. His mercy saved. His Spirit renewed. His grace justified. His promise gave hope. We receive what only God can give.

Reflect

6. What does it mean that God saves us through renewal by the Holy Spirit?
7. How does this passage connect with Jesus' words about being born again?
8. Where do you need to receive mercy instead of trying to prove yourself?
9. How does being an heir of eternal life change the way you think about your identity?
10. Complete this sentence:
"Because God saved me by mercy, I no longer have to..."

Practice

Write the phrase "not because of works, but according to His mercy" somewhere you will see it today.

Each time you notice it, pause and pray:

"God, thank You that I am saved by Your mercy, not my effort."

At the end of the day, write down one way God's mercy gives you freedom.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for saving me, not because of works done by me in righteousness, but according to Your mercy. Thank You for the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Thank You that Your grace gives me a new standing and a new future. Help me stop trying to earn what You freely give. Amen.

Week 3: I Don't Deserve It

Lesson 1: When Grace Feels Unfair

Matthew 20:1-16

Opening Reflection

Most of us care deeply about fairness. We notice when someone gets more than we think they deserve. We notice when someone works less but receives the same reward. We notice when we feel overlooked, under-appreciated, or treated as though our sacrifice does not matter.

Fairness is not always wrong. In many areas of life, effort and reward matter. But grace does not operate on a merit system. Grace is not God giving people what they have earned. Grace is God giving what He delights to give. That can feel beautiful when we are the ones receiving it, but uncomfortable when someone else receives generosity we think they do not deserve.

Scripture Reading

- Read Matthew 20:1–16 slowly.
- As you read, pay attention to the different groups of workers.
- Notice when each group is hired.
- Notice what each group receives.
- Notice how the first workers respond.
- After reading the passage once, read verses 13–15 again.

Teaching

In Jesus' day, day laborers often gathered in public places early in the morning, hoping someone would hire them. These workers lived with daily uncertainty. If they were not hired, they may not have enough money to provide for their families that day. A denarius was considered a normal wage for a full day of work.

In the parable, the first group agrees to work for a denarius. Later, the landowner goes out again and again, hiring more workers throughout the day. Some are hired early, some around noon, some in the afternoon, and some near the end of the workday. The later it became, the more desperate those workers likely felt. They were still standing there because no one had hired them. The crisis comes at the end of the day. The workers hired last are paid first, and they receive a full day's wage. When the first workers see this, they assume they will receive more. But they receive exactly what they agreed to receive. Their complaint reveals the issue. They are not angry because they were treated unfairly. They are angry because others were treated generously.

Reflect

1. What part of the parable stands out to you most today?
2. Why do you think the first workers expected more?
3. Why did the generosity shown to the last workers feel unfair to the first workers?
4. When have you seen comparison change the way someone experienced something good?
5. Where are you most tempted to think, “I deserve more than they do”?

Teaching

The first workers were content with their wage until they saw what someone else received. Nothing about their situation actually changed. They were still paid what they had been promised. But comparison changed how they saw it.

This is one of the dangers of comparison. It can turn gratitude into resentment. It can make something good feel small because someone else received something good too. It can make us feel cheated, even when we have been treated with kindness.

Jesus is pressing on something deep in the human heart. Many of us are comfortable with grace when we are the ones who need it. But when grace is given generously to someone else, especially someone we think has not worked as hard, sacrificed as much, or been as faithful, we may begin to feel offended.

The parable invites us to ask an honest question: Do I really want God to be gracious, or do I only want Him to be gracious in ways that still make me feel more deserving than others?

Reflect

6. Where do you most often compare yourself to others?
7. What kinds of situations make you feel like you deserve more?
8. How does comparison affect your ability to be grateful?
9. Have you ever struggled to celebrate something good that happened to someone else? Why?
10. Complete this sentence:
“When I compare myself to others, I usually begin to feel...”

Practice

Today, notice one moment where comparison shows up. It may happen in your family, work, church, finances, friendships, or spiritual life.

When you notice it, pause and name one way God has been generous to you.

Pray:

“God, help me see Your generosity without measuring it against someone else’s life.”

Closing Prayer

Father, I confess that comparison can easily shape my heart. I can receive Your goodness and still feel resentment when someone else receives goodness too. Teach me to recognize Your generosity without keeping score. Help me become grateful for grace, even when it disrupts my sense of fairness. Amen.

Lesson 2: When God Is Gracious to Them

Jonah 4:1–11

Opening Reflection

It is one thing to believe God is gracious. It is another thing to rejoice when God is gracious to people we struggle to love. Sometimes grace becomes uncomfortable when it reaches people we think should know better, people who have caused harm, people who have not worked as hard, or people whose stories feel unfair to us.

Jonah knew that God was gracious. That was actually part of his problem. He did not want God's mercy to reach Nineveh. He wanted judgment for them and mercy for himself. Jonah 4 invites us to look honestly at the places where we may love the idea of grace but resent its generosity when it reaches someone else.

Scripture Reading

- Read Jonah 4:1–11 slowly.
- As you read, notice Jonah's emotions.
- Notice what Jonah says about God's character.
- Notice how God responds to Jonah.
- Notice what Jonah cares about and what God cares about.

Teaching

The book of Jonah does not end with the great fish. It ends with Jonah angry about grace. God had sent Jonah to Nineveh, a city known for wickedness and violence. Jonah eventually preached there, and the people responded with repentance. Instead of rejoicing, Jonah became angry. Jonah's prayer in chapter 4 is surprising. He says that he knew God was "gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." Those are beautiful words, but Jonah speaks them as a complaint. He is upset because God's mercy has reached people he did not want forgiven.

This shows us something deeply human. We often want God's grace for ourselves, but justice for others. We want God to be patient with our weakness, but strict with someone else's failure. We want our story to be interpreted with compassion, but their story to be judged without mercy. God gently confronts Jonah with a question: "Do you do well to be angry?" That question invites Jonah, and us, to examine the heart.

Reflect

1. What stands out to you about Jonah's reaction to Nineveh's repentance?
2. Why do you think Jonah was angry that God showed mercy?
3. Have you ever struggled to celebrate God's grace in someone else's life?
4. Who are the kinds of people that are hardest for you to want mercy for?
5. How would you answer God's question: "Do you do well to be angry?"

Teaching

God uses a plant to expose Jonah's heart. Jonah is glad when the plant gives him shade, but angry when it dies. He cares deeply about the plant because it benefits him. But God cares about the people of Nineveh because they are made in His image and in need of mercy.

The point is not that Jonah's disappointment over the plant was meaningless. The point is that Jonah's compassion was too small. He cared about what gave him comfort, but he did not share God's heart for people who needed grace.

This connects with the workers in Matthew 20. The first workers resented the landowner's generosity because it made others equal to them. Jonah resented God's mercy because it reached people he thought should be condemned. Both stories expose the same problem: grace offends us when we believe we deserve better than others.

God's grace is larger than our categories. It reaches people we would overlook, avoid, judge, or resent. If we want to grow in grace, we must let God expand our hearts.

Reflect

6. Where might your compassion be too small?
7. Are there people you find easier to judge than to pray for?
8. What does Jonah reveal about the danger of wanting mercy for ourselves but judgment for others?
9. How might God be inviting you to care about someone you would rather avoid?
10. Complete this sentence:
“God, help me care about...”

Practice

Think of one person or group of people you struggle to want grace for.

Pray for them today. Ask God to show mercy, bring repentance, healing, restoration, and truth.

Then pray:

“God, give me a heart that is shaped by Your mercy, not my resentment.”

Closing Prayer

God, You are gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. I confess that sometimes I love those words when they are about me, but struggle when they are about someone else. Forgive me for wanting mercy for myself and judgment for others. Stretch my compassion. Give me a heart that rejoices when grace reaches anyone. Amen.

Lesson 3: The Humility That Receives Grace

Philippians 2:1–11

Opening Reflection

Comparison grows in the soil of pride. It teaches us to measure ourselves against others, protect our status, defend our importance, and quietly ask whether we are getting what we deserve. Grace works in the opposite direction. Grace humbles us. It teaches us to receive rather than compete, to serve rather than grasp, and to rejoice in God's goodness even when it lifts someone else.

Philippians 2 gives us one of the clearest pictures of humility in the New Testament. Paul points us to Jesus, who did not cling to status but humbled Himself for our sake. If we want to become people who understand grace, we must learn the humility of Christ.

Scripture Reading

- Read Philippians 2:1–11 slowly.
- As you read, notice what Paul says about selfish ambition and conceit.
- Notice what he says about looking to the interests of others.
- Notice the humility of Jesus.
- Read verses 5–8 again.

Teaching

Paul begins by calling believers to unity, humility, and love. He says, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” This does not mean pretending we have no value. It means we stop organizing our relationships around competition, status, and self importance.

Selfish ambition asks, “How do I get ahead?” Conceit asks, “How do I prove I matter?” Comparison asks, “Why did they get that?” But humility asks a different question: “How can I love, serve, and honor others because of the grace I have received?”

This kind of humility is not natural to us. That is why Paul points us to Jesus. Jesus had every right to glory, honor, and status. Yet He did not use His position for selfish gain. He humbled Himself. He took the form of a servant. He gave Himself for us.

The grace we receive from Jesus is rooted in His humility.

Reflect

1. What phrase from Philippians 2:1–11 stands out to you most?
2. Where do you see selfish ambition, conceit, or comparison show up in your heart?
3. What is the difference between humility and thinking poorly of yourself?
4. How does the humility of Jesus challenge the way you think about what you deserve?
5. Where might God be inviting you to look to someone else's interests this week?

Teaching

Jesus shows us that true greatness is not found in grasping, comparing, or demanding. It is found in humble love. He did not hold tightly to His rights. He moved toward us in grace. He lowered Himself to lift us up.

This is the opposite of the spirit we see in the first workers in Matthew 20. They were angry because others had been made equal to them. But Jesus willingly comes down to make us His own. He does not resent giving grace. He embodies it.

When we remember the humility of Jesus, comparison begins to lose its grip. We no longer need to prove that we deserve more. We do not have to measure our worth against someone else's blessing. We can rest in the grace of Christ and become people who celebrate grace wherever it appears.

Grace does not only change how we see God. It changes how we see ourselves and others.

Reflect

6. How does Jesus' humility help free us from comparison?
7. Where are you tempted to grasp for recognition, fairness, or status?
8. What would it look like to practice humility in one relationship this week?
9. Who could you intentionally encourage, honor, or serve?
10. Complete this sentence: "Because Jesus humbled Himself for me, I can..."

Practice

Choose one person you are tempted to compare yourself with, resent, or overlook.

This week, intentionally encourage them, serve them, or celebrate something good in their life.

Do it quietly and sincerely, not as a performance. Let it become a practice of humility and grace.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, thank You for humbling Yourself for me. Thank You that You did not grasp for status, but moved toward me in grace. Forgive me for the ways I compare, compete, resent, and demand more. Form Your humility in me. Teach me to receive grace with gratitude and extend grace with joy. Amen.

Week 4: You Are Invited

Lesson 1: Come Home

Luke 15:11–32

Opening Reflection

The word home carries deep emotional meaning. For some people, home brings thoughts of safety, warmth, belonging, and acceptance. For others, home may bring up disappointment, tension, distance, or pain. That is part of what makes Jesus' story in Luke 15 so powerful. He is not simply telling a story about geography. He is telling a story about relationship, identity, belonging, and grace.

In this parable, one son leaves home openly. The other son stays home outwardly. But both are distant from the father in different ways. The younger son is far away in rebellion. The older son is close by but resentful. The father moves toward both.

This lesson invites us to consider where we are in the story and how the Father may be inviting us home.

Scripture Reading

- Read **Luke 15:11–32** slowly.
- As you read, pay attention to the father.
- Notice how he responds to the younger son.
- Notice how he responds to the older son.
- Notice where each son is distant from the father.

Teaching

The younger son's request would have been shocking in Jesus' world. In a culture built around family honor, inheritance was normally received after the father's death. For the younger son to ask for his share early was deeply dishonoring. It was almost as if he wanted the father's possessions more than he wanted the father himself.

That is one way sin works. It wants God's gifts without God's presence. It wants freedom without trust. It wants blessing without relationship. The younger son goes to a distant country, but the distance is more than physical. It represents separation, rebellion, and the belief that life will be better apart from the father.

But the father's response is just as shocking. When the son returns, the father does not wait coldly for him to crawl back in shame. Jesus says the father sees him while he is still a long way off, feels compassion, runs, embraces him, and kisses him. The son planned to return as a hired servant, but the father restores him as a son.

Reflect

1. What part of the younger son's story feels most familiar or challenging to you?
2. Why do you think people sometimes want God's gifts without God's presence?
3. What does the father's response show you about grace?
4. Where do you need to hear, "You are not beyond return"?
5. Complete this sentence: "Father, I am coming home from..."

Teaching

The older son shows us another kind of distance. He never leaves the property, but his heart is far from the father's heart. When he hears music and dancing, he becomes angry and refuses to go in. His brother has returned. His father is rejoicing. The house is filled with celebration. But the older son stands outside.

His words reveal how he sees his relationship with the father. He says, "These many years I have served you." He sees himself more like a slave than a son. He has been near the father's house, but he has not enjoyed the father's heart. He resents grace because he thinks in terms of service, fairness, and reward.

The father goes out to him too. That matters. The father runs toward the rebellious son, and he goes out to plead with the resentful son. Grace moves toward both kinds of lostness.

The question is not whether the Father has grace. The question is whether we will receive it.

Reflect

6. What part of the older son's story feels most familiar or challenging to you?
7. How can someone be outwardly close to God but inwardly distant from His heart?
8. Where do resentment, comparison, or entitlement show up in you?
9. What would it look like for you to come inside the celebration?
10. Which invitation do you most need today: come home, or come inside?

Practice

Take a few quiet minutes today and ask: "Father, where am I in this story?"

Do not rush the answer. You may relate to the younger son, the older son, or both. Name honestly where you have drifted, resisted, resented, or tried to control grace.

Then pray:

"Father, help me receive Your heart."

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for moving toward both sons. Thank You for running toward those who return and going out to those who refuse. I bring You my rebellion and my resentment, my shame and my pride. Help me come home. Help me come inside. Help me receive Your grace honestly. Amen.

Lesson 2: Return to the Lord

Isaiah 55:1–7

Opening Reflection

Sometimes we do not realize how far we have wandered until we notice what we have been chasing. We spend our energy, attention, time, and desire on things that promise life but cannot truly satisfy. We may not call it running from God, but our hearts can drift toward lesser things. Isaiah 55 gives a beautiful invitation from God. It is an invitation to the thirsty, the empty, the restless, and the unsatisfied. God does not simply tell His people to try harder. He calls them to come, listen, receive, seek, and return.

This passage helps us see that grace is not only God welcoming us after we return. Grace is also God calling us back before we even know how thirsty we are.

Scripture Reading

- Read Isaiah 55:1–7 slowly.
- As you read, notice the invitations.
- Look for words like come, listen, seek, and return.
- Then read verses 6–7 again.

Teaching

Isaiah begins with an invitation: “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.” This is not an invitation for people who have everything together. It is an invitation for the thirsty. It is for people who know something is missing, who have spent themselves trying to find life, and who are ready to receive what only God can give.

The passage asks a searching question: “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?” That question exposes the human heart. We often spend ourselves on things that cannot carry the weight of our souls. Approval, success, comfort, control, pleasure, image, achievement, and even religious performance can become things we chase for life. But they cannot satisfy us the way God can.

This connects with the younger son in Luke 15. He spent everything in the distant country, only to discover that what looked like freedom eventually left him empty. Isaiah reminds us that God sees our thirst and still invites us to come.

Reflect

1. What words or phrases stand out to you from Isaiah 55:1–7?
2. What are some things people spend themselves on that cannot truly satisfy?
3. Where have you been looking for life, security, or satisfaction apart from God?
4. What might God be inviting you to stop chasing?
5. How does it feel to know that God invites the thirsty to come?

Teaching

Isaiah 55 does not only say, “Come.” It also says, “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.” Then comes the invitation to return: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him.”

Notice the promise attached to return. God does not say, “Return, and I might tolerate you.” He says there is compassion. He says there is pardon. The invitation is honest about sin, but it is also full of mercy.

This is grace. God does not pretend our wandering is harmless. He calls us to leave behind the ways and thoughts that lead us away from Him. But He also promises compassion to those who return. The goal is not shame. The goal is homecoming.

Like the father in Luke 15, God’s heart is full of mercy toward those who return.

Reflect

6. Where do you need to “seek the Lord” right now?
7. Is there a way, habit, thought pattern, or desire you need to forsake because it is leading you away from God?
8. What does Isaiah 55:7 teach you about God’s heart toward those who return?
9. Do you find it easy or difficult to believe that God has compassion for you? Why?
10. Complete this sentence: “Lord, I am returning to You from...”

Practice

Pray Isaiah 55:6–7 slowly.

Then write down one thing you sense God inviting you to leave behind.

After that, write one word from the passage that describes God’s heart toward those who return.

For example:

Compassion.

Pardon.

Near.

Mercy.

Carry that word with you today.

Closing Prayer

Lord, I confess that I often spend myself on what cannot satisfy. I chase lesser things and wonder why my soul feels empty. Thank You for inviting the thirsty to come. Thank You for calling wanderers to return. Help me forsake what leads me away from You and receive Your compassion again. Amen.

Lesson 3: No Longer a Slave, But a Child

Romans 8:14–17

Opening Reflection

One of the saddest parts of Luke 15 is that the older son lived near the father but did not seem to enjoy being a son. His words sound more like slavery than belonging. He says, “All these years I have served you.” He has been in the house, but he has not rested in the father’s love.

Many people relate to God this way. They serve, obey, try hard, and stay busy, but deep down they feel like God’s acceptance depends on their performance. They live like servants trying to earn approval rather than children who are already loved.

Romans 8 speaks directly to this fear. In Christ, we do not receive a spirit of slavery that leads us back into fear. We receive the Spirit of adoption as sons and daughters of God.

Scripture Reading

- Read Romans 8:14–17 slowly.
- As you read, pay attention to the contrast between slavery and adoption.
- Then read verse 15 again: Notice the words fear, adoption, and Father.

Teaching

Paul says that those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. Then he says, “You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear.” That phrase is important. Fear can shape the way we relate to God. We may fear that we are not doing enough. We may fear disappointing Him. We may fear being rejected. We may fear that we are only as loved as our most recent performance.

That kind of fear can make our relationship with God feel like slavery. We may obey, but without joy. We may serve, but with resentment. We may do the right things, but feel like we are always trying to prove that we belong.

The gospel gives us something different. Paul says we have received “the Spirit of adoption.” Adoption means belonging. It means we are not merely workers in the house. We are children in the family. We do not come before God as slaves trying to earn a place. We come as children who have been brought near by grace.

Reflect

1. What stands out to you from Romans 8:14–17?
2. What is the difference between serving God from fear and following God as a beloved child?
3. Where do you sometimes relate to God like a servant trying to earn approval?
4. How does the older son in Luke 15 help you understand the danger of a slavery mindset?
5. What would change if you lived more deeply from the truth that you are God's child?

Teaching

Paul says that by the Spirit we cry, “Abba! Father!” This is deeply personal language. It does not describe a distant or cold relationship. It describes nearness, trust, and belonging. The Spirit helps us know God not merely as authority, but as Father.

This does not make obedience less important. Children of God are still called to follow, trust, and obey Him. But obedience flows from belonging, not fear. We do not obey so that God will finally call us His children. We obey because, by grace, He already has.

This speaks to the older brother heart in us. The older son thought in terms of fairness, service, and reward. But the father said, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.” He was invited to stop living like a slave and receive the joy of sonship.

Grace invites us to do the same.

Reflect

6. What does the phrase “Abba! Father!” stir in you?
7. Is it easy or difficult for you to approach God as Father? Why?
8. Where has fear shaped your obedience or service?
9. What would it look like to serve God this week from love rather than fear?
10. Complete this sentence:
“Because I am God’s child, I do not have to...”

Practice

Sit quietly for two or three minutes

Then ask:

“What would it look like to live today from belonging instead of fear?”

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that in Christ I am not a slave trying to earn a place in Your house. I am Your child by grace. Forgive me for the ways I serve from fear, resentment, or the need to prove myself. Teach me to receive the Spirit of adoption. Help me live from belonging, not fear. Amen.

Week 5: I Am Not Condemned

Lesson 1: John 8:2–11

Neither Do I Condemn You

Opening Reflection

Most people know what it feels like to be ashamed. Sometimes shame comes from something public, a moment when others saw our weakness or failure. Other times shame stays hidden deep inside. It attaches itself not only to what we have done, but to who we believe we are. Shame whispers, “This is what defines you. This is who you really are. If people knew the truth, they would reject you.”

In John 8, a woman is brought before Jesus in a moment of public shame. She is exposed, accused, and placed in the center of a religious confrontation. But Jesus does something different from everyone else in the scene. He does not excuse sin, and He does not crush the sinner. He tells the truth, removes condemnation, and calls her into freedom.

Scripture Reading

- Read **John 8:2–11** slowly.
- As you read, notice the different people in the scene.
- Notice the woman standing in the middle.
- Notice the religious leaders pressing Jesus.
- Notice Jesus bending down and writing on the ground.
- Notice what Jesus says to the accusers.
- Notice what Jesus says to the woman.

Teaching

This scene takes place in the temple courts, a public and religious space. The woman is not brought privately for care, restoration, or compassion. She is brought publicly and made to stand before the group. The religious leaders say she was caught in adultery, but the law addressed both the man and the woman. The absence of the man raises questions about the motives of the accusers. It seems clear that the woman is being used as a trap rather than treated with justice. The leaders are trying to place Jesus in an impossible position. If He dismisses the charge, they can accuse Him of disregarding the Law of Moses. If He agrees to stone her, He risks conflict with Roman authority. But Jesus refuses to be trapped by their categories. He does not minimize her sin, and He does not join their hypocrisy.

Instead, Jesus slows the moment down. He bends down and writes on the ground. We are not told exactly what He wrote, but His action changes the atmosphere. The accusers want speed, pressure, exposure, and judgment. Jesus creates space for truth.

Reflect

1. What part of this scene stands out to you most?
2. What do you notice about the way the religious leaders treat the woman?
3. Why do you think shame becomes so powerful when it is connected to public exposure?
4. What do you notice about the way Jesus slows down the moment?
5. Where do you need Jesus to slow down the noise of accusation in your life?

Teaching

When the leaders keep questioning Jesus, He says, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” Jesus does not say sin does not matter. He exposes the hypocrisy of people who want judgment without humility. One by one, the accusers leave.

Eventually, only Jesus and the woman remain. This is the most powerful moment in the passage. The only person qualified to condemn her is the one who chooses to speak grace and truth to her. Jesus asks, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She says, “No one, Lord.” Jesus replies, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

Those two statements belong together. “Neither do I condemn you” removes shame. “Go, and from now on sin no more” calls her into freedom. Grace does not define her by her sin, but it also loves her too much to leave her trapped in it.

Reflect

6. What does this passage show you about the difference between conviction and condemnation?
7. Why is it important that Jesus says both, “Neither do I condemn you,” and “sin no more”?
8. Do you tend to struggle more with receiving grace for your own sin or extending grace to others in their sin? Why?
9. What would it mean for you to stand honestly before Jesus without hiding or defending yourself?
10. Complete this sentence: “Jesus, I need to hear You say...”

Practice

Take a few quiet minutes today and imagine yourself standing before Jesus after all the accusations have gone quiet.

Bring your sin, shame, regret, or hidden struggle honestly before Him.
Then sit quietly with His words: “Neither do I condemn you.”

Do not rush to explain, excuse, or fix everything. Simply receive His mercy. Then ask Him what freedom looks like today.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, You know the truth about me, and still You move toward me with grace. Thank You that You do not ignore my sin, but You also do not define me by it. Help me receive Your mercy without hiding. Help me hear Your call to freedom without fear. Teach me to walk away from shame and into new life. Amen.

Lesson 2: Romans 8:1–4

No Condemnation in Christ

Opening Reflection

Condemnation is more than the awareness that we have done something wrong. Condemnation feels final. It tells us there is no way forward. It says we are guilty, rejected, disqualified, and stuck. It does not lead us toward repentance and life. It drives us deeper into fear, hiding, and shame.

Romans 8 begins with one of the clearest declarations of grace in the New Testament: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” This does not mean sin is ignored. It means that in Christ, condemnation no longer has the final word. Jesus has carried what we could not carry, so grace can call us into life.

Scripture Reading

- Read Romans 8:1–4 slowly.
- Then read Romans 7:21–25 for context.
- After reading both passages, return to Romans 8:1 and read it again slowly.
- Pay attention to the words now, no condemnation, and in Christ Jesus.

Teaching

Romans 8:1 begins with the word “therefore.” That means Paul is building on what he has already said. In Romans 7, Paul describes the deep frustration of wanting to do what is right but still experiencing the pull of sin. He cries out, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” Then he answers, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” That leads directly into Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Paul is not saying that sin is unreal. He is not pretending that struggle does not exist. He is declaring that Jesus has changed our standing before God. For those who are in Christ, condemnation is no longer the verdict.

This matters because many people confuse conviction with condemnation. Conviction is the gracious work of God that tells the truth and leads us toward repentance, healing, and freedom. Condemnation crushes us under guilt and tells us there is no hope. The Holy Spirit convicts. Shame condemns. The gospel announces that condemnation has been answered in Christ.

Reflect

1. What words or phrases stand out to you from Romans 8:1–4?
2. What is the difference between feeling convicted and feeling condemned?
3. Where do you most often feel accused, disqualified, or stuck?
4. How does Romans 8:1 speak to the shame people carry?
5. What does it mean to you that there is “now” no condemnation in Christ?

Teaching

Paul says that God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. The law could reveal sin, name sin, and show what righteousness requires, but it could not make us new. God sent His Son to deal with sin at its deepest level. Jesus did not come merely to give advice or moral encouragement. He came to bear sin and break its condemning power.

That means grace is not denial. God does not say, “Your sin does not matter.” God says, “Your sin has been dealt with in Christ.” That is why grace is both honest and freeing. It tells the truth about sin, but it does not leave us under condemnation.

Romans 8 also points us toward a new way of life. The goal is not only that we would be forgiven, but that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us as we walk according to the Spirit. Grace removes condemnation and begins transformation. We are not freed so we can remain trapped. We are freed so we can walk in newness of life.

Reflect

6. Why is it important to know that grace is not denial, but forgiveness through Christ?
7. Where have you been living as though condemnation still has power over you?
8. What would change if you believed your standing before God was secure in Christ?
9. Where do you need the Spirit to help you walk in freedom?
10. Complete this sentence: “Because there is no condemnation in Christ, I no longer have to...”

Practice

- Write Romans 8:1 slowly in your journal: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- Then write one accusation or shame statement you often hear in your mind. Under it, write: “In Christ, this does not have the final word.”
- Pray and ask God to help you receive the truth of His grace more deeply.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Thank You that my sin has been dealt with through Your Son. Help me recognize the difference between Your conviction and the enemy’s condemnation. Teach me to walk by the Spirit in freedom, honesty, and grace. Amen.

Lesson 3, 1 John 1:5–2:2

Walking in the Light

Opening Reflection

Shame often teaches us to hide. We hide from God, from others, and sometimes even from ourselves. We manage our image, soften the truth, avoid confession, or focus on the failures of others so we do not have to face our own.

But grace invites us into the light. That can sound frightening at first because we assume light means exposure and rejection. But in Scripture, walking in the light is not about being humiliated. It is about coming honestly before God so that sin can be confessed, forgiven, cleansed, and healed.

Grace gives us courage to stop hiding.

Scripture Reading

- Read 1 John 1:5–2:2 slowly.
- As you read, notice the contrast between darkness and light.
- Notice what John says about confession.
- Notice what God promises when we confess our sins.
- Notice how Jesus is described in 2:1–2.

Teaching

John says, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” This means God is completely holy, pure, and true. Nothing is hidden from Him. At first, that can feel intimidating. If God is light, then He sees everything. He sees our actions, motives, thoughts, wounds, defenses, and patterns. He sees the truth we try to avoid.

But John does not use this truth to drive us into despair. He uses it to invite us into honest fellowship with God. Walking in the light means we stop pretending. We stop saying we have no sin. We stop hiding in the darkness of denial, image management, and self protection.

Then comes the promise: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Grace does not require us to hide. Grace makes honesty possible.

Reflect

1. What stands out to you from 1 John 1:5–2:2?
2. Why do people often hide when they feel guilt or shame?
3. What is the difference between being exposed by shame and walking in the light with God?
4. What makes confession difficult for you?
5. Where might God be inviting you to stop pretending and come into the light?

Teaching

John is realistic about sin. He says that if we claim we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. Grace does not ask us to pretend we are fine. But John also tells us that when we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

That word advocate is deeply comforting. It means Jesus stands for us. When we come into the light, we do not stand alone. We do not stand before God with shame as our only voice. Jesus is our advocate. He is the righteous one who has given Himself for our sins.

This is why confession is not hopeless. We confess not because we are trying to earn forgiveness, but because forgiveness has been made available through Christ. We bring sin into the light because Jesus is there with mercy, cleansing, and advocacy.

Grace does not leave us in darkness. Grace brings us into the light where we can be forgiven and made clean.

Reflect

6. What does it mean to you that Jesus is your advocate?
7. How does that change the way you think about confession?
8. Where do you need cleansing, not just forgiveness?
9. Is there a pattern of hiding, denial, or image management that God is inviting you to leave behind?
10. Complete this sentence: "Jesus, I want to walk in the light with You by..."

Practice

Take a piece of paper and write down something you have been carrying with guilt, shame, or secrecy.

Pray over it honestly. Confess it to God.

Then write across the paper: "Forgiven and cleansed in Christ."

You may keep it as a reminder, or tear it up as a symbol that shame does not get the final word.

Closing Prayer

God of light, You see me completely, and still You invite me to come near. Forgive me for hiding, pretending, and managing my image. Thank You that when I confess my sin, You are faithful and just to forgive and cleanse me. Jesus, thank You for being my advocate. Help me walk in the light without fear. Amen.

Week 6, I Can Give It Away

Lesson 1: Forgiven People Forgive

Matthew 18:21–35

Opening Reflection

Most people like the idea of forgiveness until they are asked to practice it in a real relationship. Forgiveness sounds beautiful in theory, but it becomes much harder when the wound is personal, the offense is repeated, or the other person does not seem sorry. We naturally want justice, vindication, or at least some assurance that the person who hurt us understands what they did. This final week brings the Amazing Grace journey to a relational conclusion. Grace is not only something we receive from God. Grace is something that begins to flow through us toward others. Jesus teaches that grace received but not extended has not yet been fully understood.

Scripture Reading

- Read Matthew 18:21–35 slowly.
- As you read, notice Peter's question.
- Notice the size of the first servant's debt.
- Notice what the king does for him.
- Notice how the forgiven servant treats the person who owes him.
- Notice the emotional contrast between the mercy he receives and the mercy he refuses to give.

Teaching

Peter asks Jesus how many times he should forgive someone who sins against him. Peter probably thinks he is being generous when he suggests seven times. But Jesus answers, “seventy seven times,” or “seventy times seven,” depending on the translation. Either way, Jesus is not giving Peter a new number to track. He is destroying the idea of keeping score.

Then Jesus tells a parable about a servant who owes a king an impossible debt. The amount, ten thousand talents, would have sounded absurdly massive to the original audience. It was not merely a large personal debt. It was unpayable. The servant asks for patience and promises to repay what he could never repay. But the king responds with compassion that goes far beyond the request. He cancels the debt entirely.

That is the picture of grace. We do not earn it, repay it, or negotiate it into existence. It is given at great cost to the king.

Reflect

1. What part of this parable stands out to you most?
2. Why do you think Peter wanted a number for forgiveness?
3. What does the unpayable debt help us understand about our need for God's grace?
4. What is surprising about the difference between what the servant asks for and what the king gives?
5. Where do you need to remember the size of the grace God has shown you?

Teaching

After receiving mercy, the servant finds another servant who owes him a much smaller amount. Instead of extending the mercy he has just received, he grabs him, threatens him, and has him thrown into prison. The emotional force of the story comes from the gap between what he received and what he refused to give.

Jesus is not saying the second debt was imaginary. The second servant really did owe something. Forgiveness does not mean pretending the hurt did not happen. It does not mean calling evil good. It does not always mean immediate trust, restored closeness, or removing wise boundaries. But forgiveness does mean releasing the debt. It means surrendering revenge. It means refusing to hold the person in emotional prison. It means letting the grace we have received from God begin to reshape the way we respond to those who have wronged us.

Forgiveness is costly. But it is also one of the clearest ways grace becomes visible in our lives.

Reflect

6. Where do you see yourself in this parable, the one needing mercy, the one struggling to give mercy, or both?

7. Why is forgiveness costly?

8. How would you describe the difference between forgiveness and pretending nothing happened?

9. Is there someone you have been keeping in emotional prison?

10. Complete this sentence: “Because God has forgiven me, He is inviting me to...”

Practice

Take a few quiet minutes today and pray: “God, help me understand the mercy I have received.”

Then name one person you are struggling to forgive. You do not have to force a feeling or rush a process. Simply begin by telling God honestly what they owe you and asking Him to help you release the debt to Him.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for forgiving the debt I could never repay. I confess that I sometimes want mercy for myself and justice for others. Teach me to understand Your grace more deeply. Give me courage, wisdom, and humility to begin releasing what I have been holding. Make me a person who gives grace away. Amen.

Lesson 2: Forgiving as God Forgave You

Ephesians 4:29–32

Opening Reflection

Forgiveness is not only about one dramatic moment. Sometimes forgiveness is part of the daily life of Christian community. It shapes how we speak, how we respond, how we handle anger, and how we treat people when we are hurt.

Ephesians 4 gives a practical picture of what grace looks like in relationships. Paul does not speak about forgiveness as an abstract idea. He connects it to our words, our anger, our bitterness, and our willingness to be tenderhearted toward one another. Grace changes the atmosphere of our relationships.

Scripture Reading

- Read Ephesians 4:29–32 slowly.
- As you read, notice the words Paul tells believers to put away.
- Then notice the words he tells them to practice.
- Read verse 32 again slowly.

Teaching

Paul begins with our words. He says, “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up.” That matters because unforgiveness often shows up in speech. We may replay the offense, speak harshly about the person, use sarcasm, gossip, withdraw, or use our words to punish.

Then Paul says to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice. These words describe what happens when hurt is left untouched by grace. Bitterness settles in. Anger grows. Slander spreads. Malice begins to desire harm rather than healing.

Grace does not ignore these things. Grace brings them into the light and calls us to a different way of living. Paul says, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.” This is not weakness. It is the strength of people whose relationships are being shaped by the mercy of God.

Reflect

1. What word or phrase stands out to you most from Ephesians 4:29–32?
2. How does unforgiveness often show up in speech?
3. Which of Paul’s words feels most personally challenging: bitterness, anger, slander, malice, kindness, tenderheartedness, or forgiveness?
4. What kind of relational atmosphere do your words usually create?
5. Where might God be inviting you to speak with more grace?

Teaching

Paul grounds forgiveness in the gospel. He says we forgive one another “as God in Christ forgave you.” That phrase is important. We do not forgive because the hurt does not matter. We forgive because God has forgiven us in Christ. The grace we extend is rooted in the grace we have received.

This keeps forgiveness from becoming shallow. God did not forgive us by pretending sin was no big deal. He forgave us through Christ. The cross shows both the seriousness of sin and the depth of mercy. Forgiveness is not cheap. Someone absorbs the cost.

When we forgive, we are not saying the wrong did not matter. We are saying that we are releasing the debt to God. We are refusing to let bitterness become the organizing force of our lives. We are choosing to treat others from the grace we have received, not merely from the pain we have experienced.

Reflect

6. What does it mean to forgive “as God in Christ forgave you”?
7. Why is it important to remember that forgiveness is rooted in the gospel?
8. Where has bitterness begun to shape your heart, words, or reactions?
9. What would kindness or tenderheartedness look like in one difficult relationship?
10. Complete this sentence: “God, help me put away...”
11. Then complete this sentence: “God, help me put on...”

Practice

Before the day ends, think about one relationship where your words have been shaped by hurt, frustration, bitterness, or resentment.

Pray over that relationship.

Then choose one grace shaped response. It may be silence instead of criticism, a prayer instead of a complaint, a gentle word instead of sarcasm, or an honest step toward reconciliation.

Closing Prayer

God, thank You for forgiving me in Christ. Forgive me for the ways bitterness and anger shape my words and relationships. Help me put away what does not reflect Your grace. Make me kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving. Teach me to speak and live as someone who has received mercy. Amen.

Lesson 3: Put On Grace

Colossians 3:12–17

Opening Reflection

Grace is not only something God gives to us. It becomes something we wear. It becomes visible in the way we carry ourselves, respond to others, and participate in community. Colossians 3 describes this as putting on a new way of life.

Forgiveness is part of that new life, but it is surrounded by compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, love, peace, gratitude, and worship. In other words, grace does not remain an idea. It becomes a whole new way of being with people.

Scripture Reading

- Read Colossians 3:12–17 slowly.
- As you read, notice the clothing language: “put on.”
- Pay attention to the character qualities Paul names.
- Then read verses 13–14 again.

Teaching

Paul tells believers to “put on” compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. This image suggests intentionality. We do not drift into grace shaped relationships by accident. We must choose, again and again, to live out of the new identity we have received in Christ.

These qualities are especially important when relationships are difficult. Compassion helps us see people as more than their worst moment. Kindness keeps us from becoming cruel. Humility reminds us that we are also people in need of grace. Meekness keeps strength from becoming harsh. Patience helps us endure the slow work of relational healing.

Then Paul says we are to bear with one another and forgive each other. That phrase, “bearing with one another,” is deeply practical. Christian community requires patience with real people. People disappoint, misunderstand, frustrate, and wound one another. Grace does not make relationships perfect, but it gives us a way to keep moving toward one another with humility and love.

Reflect

1. Which quality in Colossians 3:12 feels most needed in your life right now?
2. Why do you think Paul connects forgiveness with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience?
3. What does it look like to “bear with” someone in a grace shaped way?
4. Where do you need to put on humility before you can move toward forgiveness?
5. How might remembering your identity in Christ help you give grace away?

Teaching

Paul says, “as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” This echoes the heart of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 18. Forgiveness is not optional for people who have been forgiven. It is part of the new life we put on in Christ.

But Paul does not stop with forgiveness. He says, “Above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Love holds the whole life of grace together. Without love, forgiveness can become cold duty. With love, forgiveness becomes part of God’s restoring work in us.

Paul also tells us to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts and to be thankful. That is a fitting place to end the Amazing Grace journey. We began with empty hands. We saw that we cannot earn grace, do not deserve more than others, are invited home, and are not condemned. Now we are called to live as people who give grace away.

Grace is not complete when it is only received. Grace is meant to flow through us.

Reflect

6. What does it mean to forgive as the Lord has forgiven you?
7. Where is God inviting you to let the peace of Christ rule instead of resentment?
8. How does gratitude help you become a person who gives grace away?
9. What is one concrete step you can take this week to ask for forgiveness, extend forgiveness, or release bitterness?
10. Complete this sentence: "This week, I can give grace away by..."

Practice

Write down three categories:

1. People I need to forgive.
2. People I need to ask for forgiveness.
3. Places where I need to receive God's forgiveness.

Sit with the list prayerfully. Do not pressure yourself to fix everything immediately. Ask God to show you one honest next step.

Then pray:

"God, because You have forgiven me, help me become a person who gives grace away."

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the grace I have received through Jesus. Help me put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and love. Let the peace of Christ rule in my heart. Free me from bitterness and resentment. Give me courage to ask for forgiveness where I have caused hurt, and strength to forgive where I have been hurt. Make me a person who gives grace away. Amen.

A Closing Note:

As we come to the end of this Amazing Grace journey, my hope is that grace has become more than a word we sing, study, or define. Over these weeks, we have seen that grace begins when we come to Jesus with empty hands. We cannot earn it through religious effort, we do not deserve more than others, we are invited home by the heart of the Father, and we are not condemned by the One who knows the whole truth about us. Grace meets us in our need, humbles our pride, confronts our sin, removes our shame, and welcomes us into the life we could never create for ourselves.

My prayer is that this workbook has helped you slow down long enough to receive grace honestly and personally. But grace is never meant to stop with us. The grace we receive from Jesus is meant to reshape the way we live, pray, confess, forgive, serve, and love. If we have truly been welcomed, forgiven, and made new by grace, then we are called to become people who give grace away. May we leave this series not simply knowing more about grace, but living more deeply from grace, walking more freely in grace, and extending more generously the grace we have received in Christ.

I am also grateful for the way we have walked through this journey together as Sunrise. For some of you, this may have been your first time in a small group. For others, this may have been your first time leading one. Along the way, God has shown that He has placed amazing gifts within this church family. The challenge now is to continue on as a community. Do not let the momentum slow down. Keep enjoying life together. Share meals. Go to the park. Have a barbecue. Open God's Word together. Pray for one another. Invite others into the conversation. Let your community group become a place where people experience the same kind of grace that Christ has shown to us.

Our final lesson reminded us that grace is not complete when it is only received. Grace is meant to be given away. That means this journey does not end with us looking inward, but with a renewed desire to move outward. Our world is hungry for the kind of grace Jesus gives, grace that tells the truth, removes shame, welcomes the lost, forgives the undeserving, and creates a new way of life. As we seek to build God's kingdom here in our community, may Sunrise be known as a people who carry that grace into our homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and relationships. We have received amazing grace. Now, by God's help, may we give it away.

It has been a joy for me to write this series, but it has been an even greater joy to journey through it together with you.

Pastor Luke Miller,