

LIFEGROUPS

COMMUNITY OF GRACE

Our purpose in life is to follow God; to live our lives in a way that brings glory to Him. Part of this involves living in a 'community of grace' – but what does this actually mean?

WARMING UP

1. What images/ideas does the phrase 'community of grace' convey to you (do they seem air-fairy and utopian or practical and real)?
2. Can there be grace without love? How are the two interlinked?

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read 1 Timothy 1:12-16

3. How does Paul describe himself before he knew God?
4. What was Jesus' response to Paul and why is this good news for us?
5. What do we learn about being a community of grace from this Bible passage?

Read John 13:36-38, 18:1-18, 18:25-27 and 21:15-19

6. What does it mean for Peter to deny Jesus and what does it mean for us to deny someone?
7. How does Jesus show grace to Peter after Peter's denial of Jesus?
8. What do we learn about being a community of grace from these Bible passages?

MOVING FORWARD

A community of grace is one where people:

- *Realise they are children of grace - accepted by God no matter what because Jesus willingly died for sinners to bring them to God*
- *Are willing to practice grace - supporting people in their struggles without judging and condemning but listening and encouraging them to keep pursuing God*
- *Are willing to experience grace - willing to be committed to and vulnerable with a group to share struggles and confess sins and support each other.*

Within a community of grace you can be reminded that you are child of grace (you are already accepted by God) and that the answer to your problems is not found in a group of people. However, through being in a community you can encourage and help each other find the solution in God.

LIFE TOGETHER

A community of grace takes time and commitment to a group.

What does a community of grace look like practically? What areas do you think the group you're committed to can help each other grow in grace? You may want to think about some of the following:

- *Understanding more about what the Bible says about grace*
- *Accountability*
- *Getting to know each other better - asking deeper questions*
- *Praying for each other*
- *Setting goals to help focus your walk with God and to be kept accountable to*

Come up with a plan to do this.

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Leaders Guides

These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read 1 Timothy 1:12-16

3. How does Paul describe himself before he knew God?
In short Paul describes himself as the worst of the worst person. He was so anti-Christianity that he went out of his way to destroy those who followed it
4. What was Jesus' response to Paul and why is this good news for us?
Jesus' showed grace to Paul - He brought Paul to know him. "This is a trustworthy saying" emphasises the importance of the following truth that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". He came to save those who hated him not to destroy them. If God can save someone like Paul who persecuted Christians surely he will have mercy and grace on everyone who comes to Him.
5. What do we learn about being a community of grace from this Bible passage? **One thing (there may be several) is that if Jesus' has mercy on us, "the worst of sinners", how much more should we be merciful and gracious with those around us - a thought that also echoes in the parable of the ungrateful servant (Matt18:21-35), although the context here is to do with prayer.**

Read John 13:36-38, 18:1-18, 18:25-27 and 21:15-19

6. What does it mean for Peter to deny Jesus and what does it mean for us to deny someone?
For Peter to deny Jesus is to disassociate himself with Jesus, His teaching and his cause. I've read somewhere that a threefold denial in Jewish culture is irrevocable and therefore Peter's act is a great betrayal of someone he loved.
7. How does Jesus show grace to Peter after Peter's denial of Jesus?
He reinstates him; He helps Peter to understand that he is still loved and accepted and that what's more will be used for God's glory by leading the church (feeding sheep). Jesus doesn't condemn Peter for his failing but helps him to move forward in his walk with Him.
8. What do we learn about being a community of grace from these Bible passages?
One thing (there may be others) is understanding that we all have weaknesses and we all need help. None of us are perfect, a community of grace is where imperfect people can feel safe to express their struggles and needs and know they will be given support.