

## Grace is Greater – Life Group Leader Instructions

This leaders guide is designed to help you and your life group, understand and experience the grace of God. What is it? How does it come to us? In what sense does it cover our past? Why does it challenge us? How does it transform and renew us? What makes it brighten our future with God?

In *Hebrews 12:15* the author tells us: “See to it that NO ONE misses the grace of God.”

This too is our desire as well as supporting you in leading your Life Group.

### Leading Your Group

As you prepare to lead your group, through this series on God’s amazing grace, its’ normal to feel nervous or even under qualified, but remember: The primary qualification for leading this group discussion is simply a desire to more deeply experience God’s grace yourself.

Along the way, you may find that the grace of God works twofold: It convicts us of sin and reminds us of our complete salvation. It reveals hidden guilt and wounds and provides the cure.

The life-changing grace of God must disrupt a few things within our souls to truly take root. Don’t be surprised if your group members open up about new struggles through tears and describe raw pains below the surface. This is grace at work!

When someone in your group shares deep hurts, struggles to receive grace or resists sharing in depth, consider a few quick principles.

#### 1. EXPECT DIFFICULT PEOPLE

We know that everyone is sinful, but it still surprises us, doesn’t it? There will always be difficult people. Remember: Difficult people aren’t problems to fix, they’re people to love and pray for.

#### 2. RECOGNIZE STAGES OF MATURITY

You may have significant diversity in your group – old and young, married and unmarried, all different personality types and interests. Within a single group, you may also have different seasons of life and varying stages of maturity. Whether you’re dealing with the new believer or the struggling Christian or the quick learner, remember to give grace to each wherever he or she is at.

#### 3. EMBRACE THE COMPLEXITY

People are anything but straightforward. The same person in your group can be outgoing and silent, generous and critical, fruitful and foolish – all depending on the circumstances. This is not unusual; it’s human nature. Don’t rush to conclusions if someone is struggling; situations are often more complex than they seem.

#### 4. REMEMBER YOUR ROLE

As the leader of your Life Group, there’s a good chance you – like me – have a genuine desire to solve others’ problems or hold their lives together. Remember, you and I can’t change or fix anyone. Our role is to create an environment of grace where the Holy Spirit can change people.

## 5. START WITH GRACE

Several Christian authors describe the process of how people change...

Grace + Truth + Time (In relationships) = Change

We create an environment of grace and expect sinners like us to be present. But even when someone is missing the truth, the first word out of our mouths should likely be one of grace. It's a miracle of God every time someone admits sin or lets others into their suffering. We don't exist to judge one another; we exist to point one another to the grace of God. When we have given grace, we can speak God's truth to one another in love (Ephesians 4:15). But this takes time and patience. All these are necessary for true spiritual change.

### Life Group Meeting

When you gather with your group after a period of fellowship (good food) and settling in, each week will flow differently. As the weeks go by comfort and familiarity begins to provide space for trust and intimacy within the group, the goal is not to walk away completing the curriculum for the week. As the group leader be sensitive to the spiritual needs of your group. God might call you all to a time of prayer or a time of coming around a group member to offer support in time of need.

#### Opening Question

You may choose to alter the opening question to fit your group's dynamics. But keep it simple and lighthearted. Starting with, "What's your darkest sin?" or "Who can describe the basic theme of the book of Ephesians?" can be off-putting. Start instead with a question that's easy to answer. For a new or shy person in the group, speaking the first time is the hardest. But speaking up early on a simple question enables them to share more deeply later. If you create your own opening question, choose a simple, open-ended question that connects to the week's theme without getting too far ahead.

#### Scripture Reading

Take a few minutes to read the assigned Scriptures and passage – a portion from Ephesians 2. Don't worry about explaining too much at that point. The goal is to have the Biblical themes of grace in the background of the mind as you dive into the questions and group discussion.

#### Opening Prayer

After the opening question and Scripture reading, say a short prayer to commit your group time to the Lord. Consider the prayers as a start up to what to pray for but feel free to allow the Holy Spirit lead your prayer. Also consider having someone in the group open up your time in prayer. You don't have to lead every time. Encourage others to lead around you.

#### Content and Meaning

After reading the Scripture and engaging in the beginning group discussion, you will begin to help one another understand their content and meaning. Here, we are simply asking questions like, "What does it say?" and "What does it mean?" The questions under the heading Content and Meaning will help you reflect on the passage along these lines. Consider using the S.O.A.P method if useful.

- S - What Scripture?
- O - What Observation?
- A - What Application?
- P - What Prayer?

**Meditation and Application**

Once the group understands the content and meaning of the passage, you'll have a conversation that reaches a deeper level. The goal here is not information but transformation.

**Prayer**

Take a few minutes at the end of every meeting to pray. Encourage several members to pray aloud. Pray for pressing situations and pray for one another.

**Identify a Co-Leader**

From the beginning ask God to show you who in your group can potentially lead a group in the future. Part of what we desire as a Life Group is to make this experience available to others.

**Experiencing Grace Yourself**

One last reminder: As you lead your group through this study, don't forget to experience grace yourself! Often we really only learn something when we have the responsibility of organizing and teaching it. Think of this not as a burden but an opportunity: Go as deeply into God's grace as you can, and surely others will benefit as well.

Remember that the message of this study speaks directly to you as a leader. God's grace means that you don't have to be a perfect leader. You don't have to pull it together and get it right. You won't be a failure in God's eyes. Simply bring an expectant heart before the Lord and your group, and watch grace do the heavy lifting.

When you feel yourself discouraged by silence, overwhelmed with others' struggles, or disappointed by an "off night" in your personal life or group, remember: Grace always has the final word. Trust the Lord and enjoy the process.