

DEEPLY DEFINED

Opening Engagement

MAIN IDEA:

We can see and experience the holiness of God through his grace and mercy. In turn, we as Christians are required to offer grace and mercy to those around us.

PRE-READING:

Members should read chapters 11-15 before group time

OPENING ENGAGEMENT:

What are the definitions of grace and mercy?

How are they different, and how are they the same?

Grace in Hebrew is a picture of bending down to help; a kindness from a superior to an inferior. It shows steadfast love and undeserved favor given for no reason other than the givers character. In Greek, grace is that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, or charm.

Mercy is undeserved favor shown out of compassion from a superior to an inferior, with an element of withholding what is deserved; compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm; mercy, compassion, active pity, with the sense of goodness in general, especially piety.

The difference in grace and mercy is found in the element of withholding something negative that is deserved. Mercy goes beyond grace in that it withholds punishment. Grace is extending favor, mercy is withholding punishment.

Discuss

Read Luke 6:36. Ask, Is there a choice in this command? Explain and discuss. In our society today, many treat the practice of extending mercy as an option. Why must we do this? Have the learners read Matthew 5:7 and Micah 6:8 to help make this point. Discuss, why must we be merciful from the heart, and not just in practice?

Read Hebrews 4:16. Discuss what it means to receive mercy and find grace. Remind them that grace is offered because of who God is, not because who we are. We cannot earn grace, just like we cannot earn our salvation. Both are a free gift, and should be cherished as such.

Have someone read Titus 2:11-12. If we say no to ungodliness, what are we saying yes too? How does grace help us live "self-controlled, upright and godly lives"?

Have someone read Romans 6:14-16. Again, when we say no to ungodliness, we are saying yes to righteous living.

Grace is important for us to understand so that we can live in it freely and thankfully!



Session 3
Mercy and Grace

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On a whiteboard, write the words “Cheap Grace” and “Costly Grace”. Ask the group to define what each one means.

For discussion purposes, you can re-read Bonhoeffer's description that are found in his book *Cost of Discipleship* here: “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

Bonhoeffer describes costly grace as “the gospel which must be sought again and again. The gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it allows us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: ye were bought at a price” and what has cost God much can't be cheap for us.”

As a group, write down under each appropriate column things that fall under both categories. Discuss why growing and mature Christians strive for costly grace, and would never accept living in cheap grace.

Wrap It Up

End with reading Romans 6:1-4. A few weeks ago, we used this verse to understand more about holiness. Today we are reading it to understand grace. We are to live new lives in Christ once we have asked him to be our Lord and Savior. We are required to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly (Micah 6:8). All of this is living in grace! Just as Christ died and rose again, we are to die to ourselves and live in the freedom and grace that he offers us. We cannot hoard that grace within ourselves, we must extend it to others the way Christ extended it to us.

Closing Prayer

Thank the Lord for offering us grace and mercy, and ask him to help us be able to offer it from the depths of our being to others through his power and grace.

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