

Small Group Discussion Guide

for leaders (see below for participants' guide)

Gathering Time

- Make sure newcomers are welcomed and engaged in conversation
- Offer a snack and drink if the setting is right (i.e. a home)
- Arrange seating so everyone in the group can see each other

Getting Acquainted

- **What is one takeaway from your last small group meeting? How are you putting it into practice in your life?**
- **On this 499th anniversary of the launch of the Protestant Reformation (October 31, 1517 – October 31, 2016), we are focusing on one of the key ideas at the center of this historic movement—Grace. Share an experience in your life when you were dependent on someone showing you grace in order to keep you from trouble.**

Bible Exploration

- **Read Romans 1:17. What is the gospel, and how does it reveal the righteousness of God? What does it mean that the righteous will live by faith?**
- **How is your personal relationship with God at the moment?**
- **According to the reformer, Martin Luther (1483-1546), a person can have a right relationship with God by grace alone. In other words, no one could ever earn or deserve a right relationship with God because we are sinful. It is only God's grace that allows us access to him. Do you agree with Martin Luther? Why or why not?**
- **What is grace? How would you define it in your own words?**
 - To jumpstart your thinking, consider these popular definitions of grace.
 - Grace is doing good for someone when there is no compelling reason to do so and every reason not to.
 - Grace is getting what we do not deserve.
 - Grace is good will toward those who deserve ill will.
 - Grace is God's redeeming kindness toward those who deserve his wrath.
 - Grace is the love of God shown to the unlovely.
 - Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense
 - Grace is the solution to just about everything.

THE REFORMATION

Sermon | October 29/30, 2016 | Christ Church
Mike Woodruff

- **Do you like receiving grace? If not, what are the reasons it's hard for you to accept grace?**
 - Some barriers might be:
 - I don't want grace because I believe I need to earn everything I get.
 - I don't deserve grace because of some things I've done.
 - I don't need grace because I pretty much do what's right.
- **Author Philip Yancey says Jesus saw grace everywhere, yet he never analyzed or defined grace, and he almost never used the word. Instead, he communicated grace through stories we know as parables. Read Matthew 20:1-16. How did Jesus communicate grace in this parable? Does this story challenge your thinking about what grace is or how God gives it? Explain.**
- **Mike shared that he didn't really understand grace until he received it from friends after confessing an ongoing struggle. Where do you need grace in your life today? Are you willing to be vulnerable enough to receive grace from others? From God?**
- **In what specific ways can you both give and receive grace this week?**

Prayer

- Invite the group to participate in a time of "conversational" prayer. Each person may pray as often as he or she wants, but only 1-2 short sentences on one topic at a time. This lowers the barrier of participation for people unaccustomed to praying with others.

Wrap-Up

- Be sure to end the formal conversation on time.
- Thank newcomers for joining you, and invite everyone to the next meeting.
- Encourage people to linger for a few minutes, and do your best to have a personal interaction with each individual before he or she leaves.

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