

**WAY**  
**TRUTH**  
**LIFE**

Discipleship as a Journey of Grace

# **SERMON OUTLINES**

Written by Jeff Stark

# HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

These sermon outlines, written by Dr. Jeff Stark, are meant to be a companion resource for David A. Busic's book *Way, Truth, Life: Discipleship as a Journey of Grace*. If you are a pastor planning to use this resource with your congregation, there are numerous ways you can get the most out of this download for your context, and the materials are flexible to fit your needs. Busic's book has six chapters, an introduction, and an afterword. These sermon outlines follow the six main chapters of the book to help you lead your congregation through a robust and meaningful preaching series about discipleship and grace.

# SERMON 1

## THE COMPELLING INVITATION

### SERMON TEXT

John 1:35–42

### SERMON OBJECTIVE

The objective of this sermon is to set the stage for the journey upon which you are embarking with your congregation. It will be important throughout this sermon to introduce your faith community to *discipleship as a journey of grace*. Many of our parishioners come front-loaded with assumptions about what Christian faith is. This sermon is an opportunity to shift the paradigm to emphasize a meaningful definition of grace derived from *Way, Truth, Life*. You will also want to emphasize the language of “journey.” People need to understand that the journey of grace begins *now*—where they are and how they are. However, it doesn’t end there. This sermon will explore the journey.

### SERMON FORM

Situation, Complication, Resolution, Celebration

## Situation

- Read John 1:35-42
- Start with a story of someone whose Christian life you found especially compelling.
  - What is (was) it about their Christian faith that stood out?
  - Discuss how grace was evidenced in their life and what that word “grace” means. (There are ample descriptions in *Way, Truth, Life* and the small group discussion guide.)
  - Help your congregation understand that what made this person’s life so compelling was that they followed Jesus daily. They didn’t just wear the name “Christian.” They were on a journey.
- Explain why “journey” language is so important.
  - Jesus was an itinerant preacher, prophet, and healer—he didn’t stay in one place. He moved from place to place and life to life.
  - Discuss how his early disciples didn’t wait for “the next time” that he would show up in their town. Instead they followed him wherever he went.
- Of course, this following must start somewhere. It begins with an invitation.
  - Explore the early stories of the disciples in our passage from John today.
  - Discuss how the journey of grace begins with an invitation to “come and see.”
  - Grace embodied in Jesus is so compelling that it’s not forced into our lives. It simply invites us along for the journey.

## Complication

- Trouble is coming—but don’t worry! It’s a good trouble.
  - Following Jesus begins at the point of invitation. It’s a simple “come and see.”
  - Jesus understands that no person follows him long without being confronted by the need to make a series of decisions. Following Jesus isn’t an extended spectator sport.
- There is a moment when “come and see” becomes “follow me.”
  - These sound similar, but they are different.
  - “Come and see” is about becoming acquainted with the journey. It’s about getting close enough to explore, even as a person is trying to decide if it is for them.
  - But eventually a decision is required.

- Before you make the decision, there are a few things you must know.
  - Your decision is made possible through the extension of God’s grace.
  - This grace is *personal* but not *private*. It will meet you in your uniqueness. It will challenge you on a deeply personal level.
  - This grace is also costly.
    - At this point you will want to explore some of the potential costs.
- Following Jesus into the journey of grace is costly and will require courage.

## Resolution

- This journey is deeply compelling and personally costly, but if you heed the call, it will transform you powerfully.
- It starts with “come and see” and moves to the challenge of “follow me” but is evidenced in the promise of Jesus that “you will be”—made radically different.
- Those who take seriously the journey of grace will be thoroughly transformed.
- It is often said that Jesus loves us enough to meet us where we are—but he also loves us too much to leave us there.
  - This is a good opportunity to point back to the person you shared about at the beginning of the sermon. What was it about their life, the way God had transformed them, that you found compelling? Their love for others, their kindness, their strength in trial? Share the difference that a life of following Jesus made for that person.
  - Remind your audience that when Peter and Andrew were called Jesus said, “I will send you out to fish for people” (Matt. 4:19). This simple call transformed how they saw themselves and gave them purpose.

## Celebration

- “I will send you out to fish for people!” This statement from Jesus points to a beautiful truth of the journey of grace: follow Jesus long enough, and you will be called and commissioned.

- It starts with “come and see,” moves to “follow me,” promises “you will be,” and then commissions with “go and do.”
  - Earlier we said that this work is personal but not private.
  - The journey of grace is compelling not only for us but *through* us, *to* others.
  - We are afforded the opportunity to join Jesus in partnership in his mission.
- This is a great opportunity to celebrate the ways in which this journey will fill our lives with meaning and purpose.

# SERMON 2

## SNEAKY GRACE

### SERMON TEXT

Acts 10

### SERMON OBJECTIVE

The objective of this sermon is to explore what could be one of the most exciting and intriguing claims of Wesleyan theology: prevenient grace. Dr. Busic in *Way, Truth, Life* calls it “seeking grace.” As Wesleyans, we believe that grace is at work long before we understand what grace even is. This claim is transformative to the way we understand discipleship and evangelism. This sermon explores the opportunities we have as Christians to discern grace at work in the lives of those around us every day. We will probe the idea that, if we believe in prevenient grace, we also believe that discipleship precedes conversion and that Christians are called to be present in the lives of those around us discerning that work of grace.

### SERMON FORM

Narrate, Investigate, Extrapolate, Mandate, Celebrate

## Narrate

- Paradigm shifts often arrive best through stories. Here is an opportunity for you as the preacher to share a story.
  - Search back through your ministry. Find a person the Lord brings to mind—someone who came to faith, someone of whose journey you had intimate knowledge. With their permission (or without naming the individual), tell their story.
  - Don't tell the story only of their conversion. Tell the story of all the ways the Lord was active and at work in the life of this person.
  - Talk about the grace that was at work in the person's life through relationships, "God moments" that they didn't understand at the time.
  - Discuss the ways in which Christians had been intersecting this person's life, leading that person, even before they realized what was happening.
  - Talk about the efficacy of this "seeking grace." Discuss all the subtle ways grace was sneaking up on them and setting the stage for their transformation.

## Investigate

- Explore with your congregation what "seeking grace," or "prevenient grace," is all about.
- This is an opportunity to celebrate the compelling theological claim that we believe God is already at work, even before we know God is at work.
- We believe that God is wooing, even before a person arrives at the point of conversion.
- We believe that we don't wake up desiring God on our own one day but that God has been activating a desire in us before we knew or understood who God was.
- We believe that Christians don't take Jesus to nonbelievers—Jesus is already there.
- This means that discipleship precedes conversion.



## Extrapolate

- It is now time to make your way into the biblical text for the day: Acts 10. You won't be able to parse out every nuance of this text in one sermon. Utilizing the rich information in *Way, Truth, Life* and the four evidences of prevenient grace in the small group discussion guide, extrapolate out seeking grace in the Acts 10 story, focusing on Cornelius.
- You will need to set the stage for the story. The question you want to answer: Where do you see prevenient/seeking grace at work in the story? If you have small groups and Sunday school classes using the discussion guide in their meetings, then those groups will be exploring these four points in those settings as well.
  - **Crossroads:** The unique place of life Cornelius was in was perhaps a setup for grace to have its way with him.
  - **Curiosity:** Anyone who begins to turn toward God is already under the allure of grace. This pull is often demonstrated through curiosity. As a pastor, this is one of my favorite examples of God's prevenient grace. People ask questions. They show up in spaces they wouldn't ordinarily. They hang out longer than they used to. Unfortunately, well-meaning Christians sometimes sabotage these moments, feeling pressured to "get someone saved." But the beauty of prevenient grace is knowing that God is already doing the work.
  - **Companionship:** Cornelius's life would have constantly bumped up against the lives of the people of God. He was highly esteemed among the Jews, so he was no foreigner to people of faith. Notably, when prevenient grace led him to a revelatory moment, his first act of obedience was to seek the companionship of Peter, a Jewish Christian he'd never met.
  - **Conviction:** Conviction is the grace that begins to align our lives to the kingdom of God before we've made that kingdom our home. This is why discipleship is so important. Discipleship doesn't begin at the point of conversion. Discipleship happens all along the journey of grace, nurturing, fostering, and fueling the work that God is already up to in a person's life.

## Gospel Mandate

- This portion of the sermon shifts attention from Cornelius to the responsibility of Peter.
- Prevenient grace works in two ways.
  - It works on the person the Lord is drawing to God's self, and it works through the person who is called and commissioned—sent to stand with the person who is searching.
  - Explore the intricate role that Peter played in Cornelius's story and why the kingdom mandate sends each of us out, open and discerning of the work of God in the world.

## Celebrate

- This final portion of the sermon is a time for celebration.
- We can celebrate what takes place in Cornelius's life and family and what happened in the life of the person you shared about at the beginning of the message.
- This might be a great time to celebrate baptisms.
- This could also be a good time to consider an altar call for those who are noticing the movement of seeking or prevenient grace in their lives and looking for a way to respond.

# SERMON 3

## DIFFERENT STORIES, SAME NEED

### SERMON TEXT

Luke 18:35–19:10

### SERMON OBJECTIVE

The objective of this sermon is a deep dive into the nature of salvation. Too often our people have been shaped by a transactional theology that means they understand the cross solely in terms of a debt paid and a ticket to a destination purchased. Though we will never deny the efficacy of Jesus on the cross for the sins of the world or the eternity of life with Christ, our people must understand that salvation means so much more. Salvation is about present liberation from sin and making us whole. Throughout this sermon, we will seek to invite our listeners to imagine a holistic salvation that transforms us thoroughly.

### SERMON FORM

Trouble in the World, Trouble in the Text, Grace in the Text, Grace in the World (from Wilson's *The Four Pages of the Sermon*)

## Trouble in the World

- Sin levels the playing field. Sin is the reminder that in our brokenness, no matter our material condition, we are all one.
- Sin is destructive. Sin is opting for a life less than what we were created for.
- Sin is rebelliousness. Sin is a breach of trust. Sin is a break in relationship.
- Set the stage by naming sin in the world. Utilizing Busic's definition of sin in *Way, Truth, Life* (rebellion, enslavement, estrangement), help the congregation recognize the common ground of humanity.
- It isn't necessary to list or rank sins. Instead, story is a powerful tool. Pick a couple meaningful stories, situations you've witnessed, difficult times you've walked through with others as a result of sin. Help people get a sense of the way sin left folks broken and beat up alongside the roads of life.
  - Be sensitive here. Don't use anyone in your current congregation if you haven't asked their permission.
  - Don't share real names (you can use a pseudonym if you need to use a name), and don't be overly specific with details.
  - Alternatively, you could ask one or two people who have experienced a radical life change as a result of Jesus to share their stories about how sin damaged their lives—but this should be wholly voluntary and without pressure.

## Trouble in the Text

- Do some exegetical work on the stories of the blind beggar and Zacchaeus. This sermon mixes the details of Mark's version and Luke's version of the story about the blind beggar. (In the Mark 10 version of this story the blind beggar has a name—Bartimaeus—but Luke doesn't provide a name; in Mark's version the man throws off his cloak when Jesus summons him; that doesn't happen in Luke.) But Luke is up to something in the way he situates the Zacchaeus story directly after the blind beggar story. Be cognizant of the narrative flow.
- Spend some time discussing the conditions of both these characters.

- Discuss how they are different in social station, how their perceptions are different and how perceptions of *them* differ, and how they are different according to the Law of Moses.
- Next, discuss how they are similar.
- Discuss the ways in which their brokenness has damaged their sense of self, has damaged their relationships with others, has damaged their perception of others.
  - Give the context of each man's brokenness.
  - Set the stage for a meaningful understanding of all the different ways in which sin perverts, corrupts, isolates, alienates, and undermines a meaningful life.

### *Grace in the Text*

- Here it is time to focus on Jesus. In both stories, Jesus is the answer to the needs of each man, even though their needs are radically different.
- Here is an opportunity to have some fun with the visual imagery of the text. Make the stories come alive.
  - One man throws off his cloak; the other is found cowering in a tree.
  - Jesus makes time for both of these men.
  - Both of these men are completely dependent on the grace of Jesus.
  - Both of these men hear the same word for salvation.
- Salvation is to be understood holistically.
  - Pick three or four of the ways in which salvation is recognized in the lives of the men in the stories.
    - Saving grace lifts us from our misery.
    - Saving grace removes the blinders.
    - Saving grace restores us to our community.
    - Saving grace calls us out of hiding and slips into our homes.
    - Saving grace convicts and liberates.
    - Saving grace restores and commissions.

## *Grace in the World*

- One of the creative options you have in this section is, if you have one or two people who were willing to share their story (or have you share it for them), perhaps you could share the information at the beginning (during **Trouble in the Text**) and then have them come up and share their stories now (or you can share on their behalf or even read their written testimony for them). The point is to share about God's saving grace.
- People need to hear stories of transformation. Stories of transformation fuel passion for evangelism and discipleship.
- Stories help us move beyond abstract talk of "getting saved" and instead talk about what it looks like when it happens.

# SERMON 4

## NAVIGATING THE GAP

### SERMON TEXT

Acts 1:6–14; 2:17

### SERMON OBJECTIVE

As Wesleyans, we believe in the beautiful optimism of grace, otherwise known as sanctification. We believe God can work in the lives of believers through the power of the Holy Spirit in such definitive ways that we are no longer held captive to the residue and baggage of our lives. We are set free to love God with all ourselves and our neighbors as ourselves. It's the objective of this sermon to proclaim the good news of heart change while at the same time helping our congregations understand the work we must do to cultivate the soil of our hearts in preparation of the deep work of the Spirit. There is no magic wand in sanctifying grace. God's work in us happens as we work with God to name and confess the elements of our past, present, and future that hinder the Journey of Grace.

### SERMON FORM

Lowry Loop: Oops, Ugh, Aha, Whee, Yeah (from Lowry's *The Homiletical Plot*)

## *Oops: Upsetting the Equilibrium*

- Set the drama for the sermon by starting with Peter addressing the masses after Pentecost. Build up this moment by emphasizing his holy courage and bravado of faith. Pull people in. Make them feel the tension of the moment, the people leaning forward, the clear explanation of the story of God . . .
- Just before you get to the good stuff, stop. “Wait a minute. Isn’t this the same guy who, just two months before, announced, ‘I’m going fishing?’” (See John 21.) This wasn’t a nice trip with some buddies for the weekend. Peter returning to fishing was the moment Peter hit the default button.
- There is a tension for many of us between what we believe God has for us and what we feel capable of. In that tension are our defaults. Each of us has deeply embedded assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, and actions that can, if we aren’t spiritually aware, show up and subvert the work God wants to do through us.

## *Ugh: Analyzing the Discrepancy*

- For Peter, that default is fishing. Let’s go back to John 21. After enduring the agony of his betrayal of Jesus, the despair of the crucifixion, and the inexplicable reality of the resurrection, Peter has apparently had enough! He goes fishing in John 21, and he takes others with him.
  - Fishing is Peter’s default, his comfort zone, his backup plan, his reset button.
  - Fishing is Peter saying, “I’ve had enough, I don’t know what to do, so I’m going to go back to what I know how to do, and that’s fish.”
- So how on earth do we go from the man tossing nets from the boat in John to the man boldly proclaiming the gospel of Jesus to a massive crowd outside in Acts?

## *Aha: Disclosing the Clue to Resolution*

- The answer lies in what happens on that fishing trip. What happens is, Jesus shows up.
- Jesus makes a promise and then puts the disciples in timeout.
  - After pulling Peter from the fishing boat—yet again—Jesus starts to reveal his plans. These plans are more than the disciples are capable of. They’ve proved that already. Jesus also understands that their inability won’t hinder them from trying. They need the promise of the Spirit of God. They need the work of God in their lives to make possible what would be impossible otherwise.



- They need sanctifying grace. Using *Way, Truth, Life*, explain what sanctifying grace is to help them understand the need, the promise, and the profound gift from God that sanctifying grace really is.

## **Whee: Experiencing the Gospel**

- But don't rush off. Remember, the disciples are in timeout. This timeout is the gap between "going fishing" and "bold proclamation." What we do in the gap matters.
- For the disciples, that gap is the upper room. In the gap, we wrestle with our past, present, and future, which sets the stage for the work of God in our lives.

- **Coming to Terms with the Past**

- The past has often left a mark. From the past we amass baggage, residue, wounds, and default settings. An honest movement toward sanctifying grace means recognizing and consecrating (turning over to God) where we've been and what got us there so we don't remain stuck there. The fruit of sanctification is evident when a person no longer blames everyone and everything else for their own sin. It's not that they aren't aware of the conditions that might have contributed; it's simply that they recognize their responsibility to own their own role.

- **Coming to Terms with the Present**

- This is a loaded part of self-reflection that means looking at our shame, guilt, ego, and arrogance. It's reckoning with our preferences and demands, our prejudices and biases. It's owning our fears and self-deceit. Coming to terms with our present means identifying our reluctance to embrace the fullness of God's work in our lives and surrendering that reluctance. It means renouncing our allegiances to ideologies, political platforms, and idolatries that run counter to God's kingdom at work in our lives.

- **Coming to Terms with our Future**

- For many of us, when we became Jesus followers, we sought to hand over our stories to Jesus for the sake of redemption. Unfortunately, we kept the pen—you know, just in case we wanted to write a few of our own chapters. The work in the gap means we hand over the pen to Jesus, and he scripts our story and every line that follows. Coming to terms with the future means we are willing to enter the kind of relationship with God where we take our cues from him. It's a posture of malleability, willingly formed and transformed in an ongoing manner. Jesus becomes not only Redeemer of our story but also Lord of what comes next.

## *Yeah: Anticipating the Consequences*

- The gap was a space of radical consecration (a surrendering of themselves, a period of self-reflection, a moment of discovery). The costly work of sacrifice and self-denial is done in the gap.
- However, the gap sets the stage for some of the deepest work of the Spirit in our lives. Talk about the difference the Spirit makes when it works deep in our lives.
- As you prepare to end this service, consider using this as an opportunity for a time of consecration at the altar. Invite people into the process of grappling with the past, present, and future in anticipation of the work of the Spirit breaking through our defaults.

# SERMON 5

## LET'S PRACTICE TOGETHER

### SERMON TEXT

Acts 2:42–47

### SERMON OBJECTIVE

Growth in the grace of God is essential. Many of us have journeys marked by moments when grace found its way into our lives in significant ways. We point back to those moments. We celebrate those moments. However, we must find a way to live between these significant moments. John Wesley understood the importance of what we've come to call the “means of grace.” This sermon explores the necessity of consistent Christian practice to nurture and nourish the grace we live into daily. The practice of faith through consistent means of grace doesn't limit the efficacy of grace; it simply means we are responsible to cooperate with God's grace throughout our lives.

### SERMON FORM

Intro, 3 Points, Celebration

## Intro

- As pastors we can all tell the stories of the people we've met along life's journey who have reflected the seed planted among the rocks that sprang up but quickly withered.
  - There is an initial excitement. There is the feeling of joy when we first encounter the transforming grace of God.
  - There are epic moments. There are powerful emotions. There are bold commitments and declarations.
  - Then there is a disappearance.
- If people have failed to dig roots through steady, consistent practices of faith, they will often disappear when the emotions of faith and the novelty of grace wear off.

## Point 1: No Reductions

- What sustains the grace at work in our lives? This can be tricky because to some this will feel like works righteousness. They need to understand there is a difference between working to try to earn grace and working the grace God has afforded us.
- Too often, we have reduced the practice of faith to that "one thing."
  - For some it's an experience: discuss how experiences of God are good, but we can't become addicted to experiences. We can't hop from one worship experience or altar call to the next, waiting to 'feel' God. There will come a time when we face a situation where we don't 'feel' God, and when that happens, it's tempting to wonder if any of it was real.
  - For some it's behaviors: sure, we received grace as a gift, but now we need to put into place all the rules and behaviors. Grace was a freeing gift. Our rules become our constraints on sinfulness, which often leads to legalism. Legalism can't sustain a meaningful journey of grace.
  - For some it's about knowledge: we sustain our faith and grace by having the right knowledge. We spend our lives learning, defending, and arguing propositional truths. It's about the right interpretation of the Bible, the right theological doctrines. Right knowledge without a right heart will leave us wanting.
  - For others it's about being super-spiritual: we believe that if we just get alone, read our Bible enough, pray enough, and volunteer for enough ministries, that will do it. We attack our spirituality with the same vigor soldiers attack their training. We become obsessive about our quiet time. We beat ourselves up for perceived failures of discipline. Soon we'll become defeated.

- There's nothing wrong with any of these. Experiences are good. Rules can be used to create helpful boundaries, we need to know what we believe, and spiritual disciplines play an important role. But none of these alone is sufficient.

### **Point 2: Means of Grace**

- Reflect on Dr. Busic's content about the means of grace in *Way, Truth, Life*. Take a few moments to discuss the nature and practice of the means of grace as part of taking part intentionally in meaningful relationships.
  - Help the congregation understand the extent to which these means of grace habituate our faith and form our character.
  - Engaging in means of grace isn't only personal devotional time—it's also helping the needy and living accountably in spiritual friendships.
  - Means of grace are evidenced in our Wesleyan tradition and rooted in Scripture.

### **Point 3: The Practice of Nurturing Grace in Acts 2**

- Turn to today's text. We will utilize Acts 2:42–47 to understand how, from their most formative moments, the members of the early church instituted consistent communal practices that were necessary to shape and sustain their lives in Christ.
- They are together.
- They experience God together.
- They meet regularly together.
- They are vulnerable together.
- They practice the faith together.
- They learn together.
- They witness together.

## Celebration

- Transition to Communion as a communal practice of sustaining grace.
- Present Communion as a call to regular remembrance of and participation in the grace of God that has claimed our lives.
  - It's done collectively, reminding us that together as a community we are dependent on the grace of God.
  - It's an act of receiving. We don't *take* the elements but must *receive* them, remembering that all of life is a gift.
- After we finish at the Table, we turn toward the world with the gift of grace still fresh on our lips.

# SERMON 6

## CLAY AND THORNS

### SERMON TEXT

2 Corinthians 12:6–10

### SERMON OBJECTIVE

There is a real opportunity this week to take the congregation deeper into the work of grace than, potentially, many have ever been. Many of the people who fill up our churches have experienced heartache, heartbreak, brokenness, and anguish at levels that don't easily go away. It lingers. It lasts. It's there. Grace meets us there amid the unresolved places in our lives. The objective this week will be to affirm those who require an understanding of grace that takes seriously the fragility of our jars of clay and lasting thorns, left in place to display the strength of God in our weakness. Because we are preachers who care deeply for our people, there will be a temptation for some kind of resolve at the end of the message. Instead, at times, we simply need to linger in the presence of the Lord, allowing ourselves to be comforted by grace, strengthened in our weakness, and endowed with resilience to carry on in the difficulty.

### SERMON FORM

Situation, Complication, Resolution, Celebration

## Situation

- Remind people of the journey we've taken thus far. This journey of grace has been all-encompassing for us over the last several weeks.
  - We've come to recognize it is a journey.
  - It's an invitation to get close to Jesus, to walk with him, grow, be transformed, and be commissioned to serve him in this world.
  - We've talked about the grace that goes before us, making a way for us.
  - We've talked about the saving grace of God that holistically changes us.
  - We've talked about the sanctifying grace of God that empowers us to live faithfully, even when our best efforts and good intentions seemingly fail us.
  - We've talked about sustaining grace, the grace that keeps us moving forward on the path we've been called to so that our life of faith isn't a sprint but a marathon.
- And we've celebrated, a lot! And we should! Grace gives us much to celebrate.
  - It's the gift of God's favor toward us.
  - It's the gift that changes everything.
  - Paul suggests in Philippians that we shine like stars and in Romans that we are more than conquerors.
  - Paul has a lot to say about how grace enables us to overcome, to rise above sin, to transform us into the new creation.
  - Grace makes all things new.

## Complication

- Except when it doesn't. Hold up—I know what you're thinking: *I thought we were celebrating?* Yes.
- Scriptures are profound in that they provide correctives to excess. If we aren't careful, we can translate grace into a form of spiritual invincibility, or turn suffering in this world into something trivial—or, worse yet, start to assume that if we're living in grace then whatever suffering we encounter, we can just pray it away.



- But what happens when that doesn't work?
  - Life is about rough and tumble. Rarely is it black and white. Sometimes life leaves an enduring mark.
  - Sometimes that jar of clay that Paul suggests holds glory, gets cracked. It's fragile.
  - Sometimes we end up like Paul, with a thorn that we can't pray away.
- Move to Paul's thorn from the 2 Corinthians passage. Do the exegetical work necessary and consult with *Way, Truth, Life* for guidance on the thorn in the flesh.
- Paul seemed to beg God for the removal of the thorn. But what happens when the thorn doesn't go away?
  - When the mental health crisis persists?
  - When the person we prayed for dies?
  - When we still lose our job?
  - What happens then?

## Resolution

- What happens then is grace that isn't merely a fix-it for every issue. Instead, grace is found—discovered amid the fragile, cracked jars and persistent thorns. Paul discusses the strength of God made perfect in our weakness.
- What does grace do and not do?
  - Grace *doesn't* remove the memories.
  - Grace *doesn't* exempt us from the damage.
  - Grace *doesn't* extract the sorrow.
  - Grace *doesn't* resolve our fragility.
  - [Deep breath!]
  - Grace *does* reframe our stories.
  - Grace *does* work in the cracks.
  - Grace *does* deepen intimacy.
  - Grace *does* reveal its source.

## Celebration

- You have an opportunity now to shepherd your people through the struggles, trials, persistent difficulties, and disappointments they have faced. Affirm grace for them in the mix. Take this time to speak grace into their lives.
- Conclude the sermon with a time of quiet reflection and prayer (perhaps giving them the freedom to remain in their seats). Then have a single, subtle, prayerful worship song that affirms the faithfulness and efficacy of God's grace amid the complexity and brokenness of life.