

A person with a backpack looking out over a city and ocean. The person is seen from behind, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a brown beanie. They have a brown leather backpack on their back. The background shows a cityscape with buildings and a beach with blue water. The sky is clear and blue. There are decorative elements: a grid pattern in the top left, a dashed orange line curving around the right side, and a solid orange bar at the bottom with a wavy pattern.

WAY TRUTH LIFE

Discipleship as a Journey of Grace

**YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS
DISCUSSION GUIDE**

Written by Janary Suyat de Godoy & Shaun Bati

WAY

TRUTH

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INTRODUCTION

THE JOURNEY AWAITS

Welcome to the journey, friends! Let's start with a simple question. What ideas does the word "journey" evoke for you? There are no doubt a variety of answers to that question, but we imagine most responses fit into one of two categories.

For some, the idea of a journey brings to mind images of a desired destination. It may be a place, an achievement, or a particular life stage, but the journey's *destination* is the focus. For others, the idea of a journey brings to mind images of traveling, walking, and exploring—the journey is all about what happens *between* setting out and arriving.

As we explore the journey of grace that is discipleship, we invite you to help youth and young adults lean into this second understanding of a journey. The chapters in *Way, Truth, Life* are not markers along the road, merely showing us how far we've come and how much farther we have yet to go. We do not travel past marker number one, check it off, and leave it in the past, ready for the next marker. Our growth as disciples of Jesus Christ will come as we explore and wrestle with each aspect of the journey. There will be much to pick up along this journey, and there will also be much to lay down.

As with any journey, there are resources and guides to help along the way. Before you start out, we invite you to read the following section that explains how to prepare for each lesson and how best to use this leader's guide.

Happy journeying, friends!

Janary Suyat de Godoy and Shaun Bati

HOW TO PREPARE FOR EACH SESSION

STEP 1: COLLABORATE

This leader's guide is a companion resource to the book *Way, Truth, Life: Discipleship as a Journey of Grace*, by David A. Busic. Multiple resources have been created to help entire churches walk on this journey of grace together. Connect with your pastor to see if she/he is planning a whole-church emphasis on *Way, Truth, Life*. If so, make plans to coordinate these lessons with the weekly emphases for your church.

STEP 2: READ

Each session corresponds with one chapter from *Way, Truth, Life*. To prepare for the session, read the appropriate chapter and make notes of aspects that are especially important for your particular group to wrestle with or understand. Invite and encourage your group participants and volunteers to read along with you a chapter each week of *Way, Truth, Life*. If it is not possible for each person in your group to have a copy of the book, part of your weekly session prep should include creating a summary of the correlating chapter to share with the group at the beginning of the lesson.

STEP 3: PRAY

After you finish reading each week's chapter, reflect on the needs you see in your group that connect especially to that week's lesson. Make space to pray for your participants, asking God to prepare their hearts, to give you the words to share the lessons with grace and love, and to begin moving before the lesson even begins.

STEP 4: FILL IN THE LESSON OUTLINE

The beauty of this journey is that our youth and young adults have people like you walking alongside them. You know best what your group is dealing with, how they are growing, and the areas in their journey of grace where they are ready to be challenged to walk more closely with Jesus. In each week's lesson you will find an outline that we hope you approach as a starting point. Our intent is for you to fill the lesson out in ways that will allow the truth to connect personally in your specific context. We have offered suggestions and prompts that are intended to connect to a broad audience, but we hope you will tweak some of these to add your own personal takeaways from the book as well.

STEP 5: IDENTIFY YOUR DISCUSSION TRACK

In the effort to facilitate the distribution of this resource, we have created a combined resource for youth and young adults, but after each key teaching point, there will be a section for you to engage your group in more focused age-level discussion. Each section has a discussion track for early youth, youth, and young adults. Read through each set of questions to determine which set fits best with your group.

STEP 6: PLAN TO LEAD YOUR DISCUSSION

Leading a small group discussion can sometimes be incredibly easy, and other times it can be painfully difficult. With a little preparation, you can help make it an easier experience for everyone. Here are a few basic tips:

- *Don't skip the opening question.* We've included this question to help the group become comfortable with the idea of sharing their thoughts.
- *Assess your group.* Does your group have all talkers and your role will be to help keep them focused? Is your group quiet and unlikely to share their thoughts immediately? Do you have internal processors who need space to write or extra time to gather their thoughts? Do your best to prepare according to the particular dynamics of your context, whether that means sharing printouts of the questions you will ask; providing journals for participants to use if they would like to write or doodle during sessions; mentally identifying those who need to be specifically invited to share; or making a plan to share one by one around a circle with a caveat that skipping is always allowed. You know your group best, so plan ahead to make their discussion experience comfortable but enriching.
- *Prepare yourself.* Do you get uncomfortable with silence? Are you tempted to fill the gaps when waiting for a reply with an additional comment or further explanation? If that's you, acknowledge that in

yourself and be ready to feel a bit uncomfortable. Allow space for those in the group to think about and process what they have just heard. Allow space for them to formulate their own thoughts. Allow silence. Silence does not always mean non-participation. Often, it means contemplation. Don't make the mistake of missing out on a great discussion because you moved on too quickly.

- Another way to prepare yourself is to plan to take some notes when those in your group are sharing. If they offer a short answer, be ready to reply in a meaningful way, whether that's affirming their ideas or asking for clarification or simply acknowledging and thanking them for their willingness to share. As the leader, you are responsible for setting the tone that will make others feel comfortable opening up.
- *Set boundaries.* When your groups begin, remember to set some healthy boundaries. Establish expectations for making the discussion group a safe space. Give participants permission not to share if they are not comfortable. Ask the group to agree to be respectful and to hold in confidence personal stories told during your discussion time, not re-sharing other people's stories outside the group.

SESSION 1:

AMAZING GRACE

LESSON IN A SENTENCE

Grace is God's no-strings-attached gift of forgiveness, relationship, and kindness offered to us.

LEADER REFLECTION

Be prepared to share with your group your own personal story of God's grace and salvation. Take some time to reflect on the moments in your life where you can point to God's grace meeting you right where you were. Write those down to share.

LESSON OUTLINE

Opening Prayer: An Adaptation of a Prayer by John Wesley

Holy God of love, all we could ever want or desire finds its infinite and fullest expression in Christ Jesus, but what we most desire to receive is grace upon grace. Grace to pardon our sins, and overcome our injustices; to justify us and to sanctify our souls; and to bring about the holy change, the renewal of our hearts that will enable us to be transformed into your own blessed image, in which you created us. Father, work in us by the grace of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit—one God, now and forever. Amen.

Discussion Opener

Ask several people in the group to share about a time when someone was incredibly kind to them. After everyone has shared, as an introduction to the lesson's subject, share the definition of grace provided in the **Lesson in a Sentence** section.

Teach & Engage

Key Verse: Ephesians 2:8–10

Introduction

Share the story you have prepared about your own personal experience of God's grace and salvation. You can also share the story of John Newton, the writer of the hymn "Amazing Grace," which is shared in the book (pp. 23–24).

Highlight #1: Grace Is a Gift (Read Romans 8:35–39)

"Amazing Grace" is a well-known hymn. Sometimes we can become so familiar with a message that we no longer hear it. What would it look like to move "Amazing Grace" beyond a song that we sing and have a personal encounter with this grace that is truly amazing?

For our youth and young adults to rightly understand grace, they must understand that it is a gift. As recipients of this gift, we cannot repay the giver. To offer to do so cheapens the gift and converts it into a transaction. It would also reveal a misunderstanding of the seriousness of our own condition. Our weakness toward sin is not something we can fix on our own.

Just like in some of the stories that were shared in response to the opening question, where the kindness shown to us went beyond what we could do for ourselves, that's a mere glimpse at the amazing grace God gifts to us! God longs to have a deep and meaningful friendship with us, but sin destroyed the path between us, and humans have no way to rebuild it. Grace is God's restoration work, repairing the road, so we can journey together.

Discussion Track for Highlight #1

Early Youth

- Why do we like to receive gifts? What makes receiving a gift so wonderful?

- Have you ever received a gift you thought you didn't deserve? How did you respond?

Youth

- Have you ever received such a great gift from your family or a friend that you felt you didn't deserve it? What was the gift? Why did you feel you didn't deserve it?
- What does receiving this type of gift teach us about a God who gives us such a great gift even though we don't deserve it?

Young Adult

- Have you ever been part of a group project at school where everyone in the group received the same grade no matter their participation? Or have you worked at a job where tips or bonuses were evenly split among employees no matter how much or how little they worked? How did that make you feel?
- In Matthew 20:1–16 Jesus tells a story that feels like that. What do we learn from these examples about grace being a gift?

Highlight #2: Grace Is Personal (Read Acts 9:1–19)

For youth and young adults who grew up in the church, many will begin or have already begun a season of life where they are wrestling with identifying their faith as their own. How do they take the external rules, guidelines, and faith of their parents, grandparents, pastors, and mentors and fit them into their own identity? This wrestling makes it especially significant for youth and young adults to understand that grace is not earned by adherence to rules; rather, it is the gift of a restored and personal friendship with God. Saul had to learn the same thing on the road to Damascus, and God transformed this zealous defender of the law through an encounter with the *person* of Jesus.

Grace is also personal in that God reaches out and offers this gift directly to each of us individually. Dr. Busic put it this way: “grace comes to every person according to his or her particular need or capacity to receive it” (p. 32). Our situations are uniquely different; therefore, our stories cannot be the same even though we are all children of one Father. It is crucial for each young person to understand how personal God's grace is. Especially when we are young, the winds of the world can redirect our focus from the impact of God's grace in our lives as we search for our own personal identity. To understand grace personally is to have knowledge of the God who extends grace to us in the exact ways and moments we need.

Discussion Track for Highlight #2

Early Youth

- What is the most thoughtful gift you've ever received? What is the worst gift you've ever received? (These gifts do not have to be things.)
- What makes a gift thoughtful? What does that teach us about God's grace, which is so personal?

Youth

- What is the kindest thing someone could *do* for you? (*Have everyone share. Make sure the answers are about what someone would do, not about an object they would give.*)
- You don't have to say which answer it was, but how many heard someone else's answer and thought you would be embarrassed, annoyed, or even upset if someone did that for you?
- God created us uniquely, and we have all had different life experiences. What does it mean to think about God's grace being personal to you?

Young Adult

- It can be tempting to compare our lives with the lives of others, but God has made you uniquely you, God knows what has happened to you (the good and the bad), and God knows what is in your future. With all those unique factors, your life, your relationship with God, and your journey are not going to look exactly like anyone else's. What has grace looked like in *your* life?
- How has God's no-strings-attached gift of forgiveness, relationship, and kindness (i.e., grace) surprised you?

Highlight #3: Grace Is Costly (Read John 3:16)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us that, although grace is free, it doesn't come without a cost. Grace is not cheap because it cost the Father the separation, suffering, rejection, and death of his only Son. However, there is another cost as well. Grace provides the way for us to enter into friendship with God, but just like with any relationship, friendship with God means spending time with God and—because it is God—allowing God to shape us through that time together. To be clear, we are not paying for the grace we have

received. Rather, if we take seriously the costly grace God has given to us, we will take seriously the friendship with God that it provides.

Reflect on the words of Bonhoeffer that Dr. Busic quotes: “Cheap grace is grace without discipleship” (p. 32). It was costly for God to give the life of his Son, and our perfect response is to give our lives back to God. The world today provides us with shortcuts to every single thing we do, so many of us miss out on the richness of the long journey that leads to true success—be it spiritual, relational, financial, emotional, etc. Through the stories of the Bible (Joseph, Elisha, David, Isaiah, the twelve disciples, etc.) God is consistently teaching us that to journey with God requires a faith that involves laying down our lives wholly and entering into true relationship with God.

Discussion Track for Highlight #3

Early Youth

- Do you think your response to God’s gift of grace looks more like the way you responded to the most thoughtful gift you’ve ever received, or more like the way you responded to the worst gift you’ve ever received? How so?
- Think of a parent or teacher or friend who has never given up on you. Then imagine how much greater is God’s grace and love for us. How does that friendship with God change you?

Youth

- What are other types of gifts that carry with them some type of responsibility? *(Some ideas about possible answers might be a pet, a musical instrument, a piece of sports equipment, lessons in the arts or another area of interest.)*
- We don’t see the responsibility as a means of paying for that gift; the gift was still free, but we honor the giver and the gift by . . . *(taking care of the pet, practicing the instrument or the sport, developing our talents and interest through lessons, etc.).* What can we learn about our response to God’s grace from that?

Young Adult

- Have you ever considered the costliness of grace? What do you think of the Bonhoeffer quote “Cheap grace is grace without discipleship”? *(You may want to read the various quotes included from Bonhoeffer in the “Grace Is Costly” section on pages 32–33.)*

- As young adults, you often have more freedom than you had as a youth, but there is responsibility that comes along with that freedom. When we embrace freedom and abandon responsibility, we will eventually get hurt, and usually hurt others as well. What does the costliness of grace teach us about freedom in general, and especially freedom in Christ?

CONNECT

As you gather back together for the closing, sing the hymn “Amazing Grace” together and provide space for reflection.

JOURNEY TOGETHER

Invite the group to make a commitment to be their brother and sister’s keeper by checking on each through prayer, calls, texts, visits, and any other way possible as a demonstration and reminder of the grace of God.

CLOSING PRAYER

Invite everyone to pray the opening prayer together, or close with your own prayer.

SESSION 2:

SEEKING GRACE

LESSON IN A SENTENCE

“Through seeking (or prevenient) grace, God goes before us to make a way and draw us into relationship” (p. 35).

LEADER REFLECTION

Reflect about the moments that led to your salvation. Spend some time noting the ways God was drawing you to himself before you surrendered your life to Jesus. Perhaps it was through people God brought into your life or opportunities for you to hear the gospel for the first time or in new ways.

LESSON OUTLINE

Opening Prayer: An Adaptation of a Prayer by John Wesley

Holy God of love, all we could ever want or desire finds its infinite and fullest expression in Christ Jesus, but what we most desire to receive is grace upon grace. Grace to pardon our sins, and overcome our injustices; to justify us and to sanctify our souls; and to bring about the holy change, the renewal of our hearts that will enable us to be transformed into your own blessed image, in which you created us. Father, work in us by the grace of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit—one God, now and forever. Amen.

Discussion Opener

Option 1: Ask everyone to close their eyes and imagine what their whole life would be like if they could not see anything. *OR* if you have someone in your church or group who is blind, invite them to share (if they are comfortable) about how they have learned to navigate a world they cannot see.

Option 2: Prior to starting the lesson, set up a space in the room that provides a path for a person to walk from Point A to Point B. Between Points A and B, place simple (non-harmful) items that they will need to navigate around, such as chairs, a plant, a bucket, etc. After the opening prayer, ask for a volunteer who is willing to be blindfolded. Have the volunteer come over to Point A and put the blindfold on before giving instructions. Tell the person they are going to need to make it to Point B without being able to see. Reassure them that verbal help will be provided. As the volunteer begins walking toward Point B, encourage the rest of the group to shout directions or encouragement. From time to time, when needed, step beside the volunteer and gently guide them around an obstacle with a hand on their shoulder. You could also help by stepping in and completely removing an obstacle they are about to run into. Celebrate and cheer for the volunteer when they make it to Point B.

Teach & Engage

Key Verse: Acts 9:1–9

Introduction

Share what you have prepared in advance about the moments that led to your salvation. Share about the ways you can now see that God was at work in your life before you were even aware of it.

Highlight #1: Prevenient Grace (Read Luke 19:1–10)

In *Way, Truth, Life*, Dr. Busic states, “The grace of God does not begin at the moment of our salvation. It precedes even the awareness of our need for God. We do not naturally seek God; instead, God seeks us” (p. 39). It is far too common for people to feel they have to make themselves good enough before they can come to God. They think God only wants them if they are good enough or clean enough to come before him. Prevenient grace negates that way of thinking. God reaches out to us even before we acknowledge God’s presence in our lives.

This concept is especially crucial for youth and young adults to grasp. They already deal with many external voices that judge whether they are good enough, measure up, test high enough, are special enough, and on and on. God, or Christianity, can become just one more place where they think they don’t measure up. However, prevenient grace reminds us that God longs to be in relationship with us before we even give

a thought to God. We all make mistakes as we grow, we all mess up, and sometimes we mess up pretty bad, so make sure your youth or young adults know that the love of God doesn't change because of that. God is always reaching out to us.

Discussion Track for Highlight #1

Early Youth

- Follow-up on the opening activity:
- **Option 1:** Reflect on the help you would need, the guidance you would gain from your surroundings or others, to be able to navigate through the world without sight.
- **Option 2:** Make a list of the things the volunteer noticed that helped them get from Point A to Point B. Then draw a line and have the group add any other things to the list that helped the volunteer that the volunteer was unaware of.
- Physical blindness has nothing to do with sin, but spiritually speaking, sin blinds us to the consequences ahead and things in our path that can hurt us. In our illustration, prevenient grace is the helping hand, the verbal directions, the unseen removal of an obstacle.
- What does this teach us about our God who goes out and seeks after us?

Youth

- Follow-up on the opening activity:
- **Option 1:** Reflect on the help you would need, the guidance you would gain from your surroundings or others, to be able to navigate through the world without sight.
- **Option 2:** Make a list of the things the volunteer noticed that helped them get from Point A to Point B. Then draw a line and have the group add any other things to the list that helped the volunteer that the volunteer was unaware of.
- Physical blindness has nothing to do with sin, but spiritually speaking, sin blinds us to the consequences ahead and things in our path that can hurt us. In our illustration, prevenient grace is the helping hand, the verbal directions, the unseen removal of an obstacle.

- What does this teach us about the grace of God meeting us right where we are, without us needing to even be looking for God?

Young Adult

- Physical blindness has nothing to do with sin, but spiritually speaking, sin blinds us to the consequences ahead and things in our path that can hurt us. While we are blind to all of that, we cannot help ourselves. Have you ever been in a situation where you could not navigate the next steps by yourself and you got help from someone else?
- How did it feel to have someone step in and help you?
- Look back at your own life. Are there instances that didn't make sense or that were painful? Looking back now, where do you see God's grace working in these moments?

Highlight #2: Working Out What God Is Working In (Read Philippians 2:1–8, 12–13)

Prevenient grace is also the reminder that God does not force relationship and love on anyone. Love that is demanded or coerced is not really love, so God gives us free will and the ability to choose. Prevenient grace is the Holy Spirit going before, calling us to God, inviting us into friendship with Jesus—but we must make the choice to respond. Lesslie Newbigin said, “Faith is the hand that grasps the finished work of Christ and makes it my own.”

In the Philippians text in verses 12–13, there is this expectation that the follower of Christ must begin working out in the world the character that God is working in them. God's grace in us must work itself outward to our thoughts, words, and actions. God invites, God calls, God works in us, God makes it possible for us to respond—but we are responsible for responding.

Discussion Track for Highlight #2

Early Youth

- Think about a time when you were lost or separated from your parents or a group. How were you found?
- What helped you when you were lost?

- What role did those whom you were separated from have in finding you?
- What role did you have in being found?

Youth

- Have you ever had to rely on your most trusted friend to make it through a difficult situation or to get out of it?
- Did your friend's help mean you didn't have to do anything at all?
- What does this teach us about God's prevenient grace in our lives and how we ought to respond to it?

Young Adult

- In this section in *Way, Truth, Life*, Dr. Busic provides several examples from the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Saul to demonstrate what this "working out what God is working in us" looks like. Share that section of the book with the group (p. 44).
- What do you learn from these individuals' stories about God's role in how we come to faith?
- What do you learn from these stories about our own role in coming to faith?

CONNECT

Dr. Busic concludes chapter 2 by referencing the song “Reckless Love,” by Cory Asbury, and includes some of the lyrics. Either read the lyrics or listen to the song together. Invite everyone to reflect on the reckless love and grace of God in their lives. Provide an opportunity for people to respond to God’s grace and working out what God has been working in them.

JOURNEY TOGETHER

This week, invite participants to choose a friend and together select one scripture from the list below. In pairs, they should read the passage, take some notes, and share with each other what God has been speaking to them through that scripture. (You may assign scriptures to each pair or let them choose their own.)

Genesis 12:2

Genesis 28:10–22 and 32:22–32

Exodus 3:1–4:17

Acts 8

Acts 9:1–19

Acts 10

Acts 16

CLOSING PRAYER

Invite everyone to pray the opening prayer together, or close with your own prayer.

SESSION 3:

SAVING GRACE

LESSON IN A SENTENCE

“Through saving grace, Jesus rescues us from sin and leads us into the truth that makes us free” (p. 51).

LEADER REFLECTION

Reflect on what your life was like before you put your faith in Jesus—perhaps before you received salvation, or perhaps after you had been saved but before you learned how to fully trust Jesus. Write down the ways you needed to be rescued and how Jesus rescued you through saving grace. Be prepared to share your reflections.

LESSON OUTLINE

Opening Prayer: An Adaptation of a Prayer by John Wesley

Holy God of love, all we could ever want or desire finds its infinite and fullest expression in Christ Jesus, but what we most desire to receive is grace upon grace. Grace to pardon our sins and overcome our injustices; to justify us and to sanctify our souls; and to bring about the holy change, the renewal of our hearts that will enable us to be transformed into your own blessed image, in which you created us. Father, work in us by the grace of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit—one God, now and forever. Amen.

Discussion Opener

Have you ever started playing a sport, tried cooking a meal, or taken on any kind of project or responsibility—only to quickly discover that your confidence was greater than your talent? Invite a few students to share what happened.

Teach & Engage

Key Verse: Romans 3:23

Introduction

Share your previously prepared personal testimony with the group about the saving grace of Jesus. Give particular emphasis to your need for and the idea of being rescued. Help students understand as you begin the lesson that the depth of the brokenness between ourselves and God is not something we can overcome; we cannot be our own rescuers.

Highlight #1: Moralism vs. Sin (Read Romans 7:15–24 and Matthew 7:13–14)

Moralism looks around and says, “I might not be the most saintly person here, but I’m not nearly as bad as *that* person.” The truth is that there are many people who do good things even though they don’t believe in God. Just as with our examples of overconfidence from the opening question, this way of thinking reveals overconfidence in our own goodness and a simultaneous dismissal of the serious damage sin causes in us and in our relationship with God.

We were created out of love to share in perfect fellowship with God and others. In sin, we break from our friendship with God and neighbor. Augustine called this *incurvatus in se*, or a life turned inward on oneself, where we care about ourselves first. The brokenness this causes goes much deeper than even the hurt we feel when a friend betrays us. It breaks us off from who God created us to be and creates separation between ourselves and God. It creates distrust, jealousy, and power struggles between ourselves and our fellow humans. Can making sure our list of good choices is longer than our list of bad choices fix that brokenness?

Discussion Track for Highlight #1

Early Youth

- Sometimes we focus on the daily choices between doing something good or bad as the only way we think about sin. In this section, we’ve dug down into the root of those individual struggles and the depth of our broken relationship with God and others. Have you ever had a friend do something that really hurt you and completely betrayed your friendship?

- If the relationship was restored, how did that happen? If the relationship hasn't been restored, why not?
- How does this help us understand the brokenness that exists between ourselves and God?

Youth

- Sometimes our daily choices between doing something good or bad are the only way we think about sin. In this section, we've dug down into the root of those individual struggles, the depth of our broken relationship with God and others. Have you ever had a friend do something that really hurt you and completely betrayed your friendship?
- If the relationship was restored, how did that happen? If the relationship hasn't been restored, why not?
- How does this help us understand the brokenness that exists between ourselves and God?

Young Adult

- Have you had a broken relationship in your life now or in your past when someone hurt you tremendously?
- What did it take or what would it take to restore that relationship? Are there hurts that make the relationship impossible to restore?
- Would the other person providing you with a list of proofs as to why they are a good person be enough to restore the relationship? What does this teach us about moralism?
- How does this influence how you think about salvation?

Highlight #2: Saving Grace (Read Ephesians 2:1–10)

In *Way, Truth, Life*, Dr. Busic brings us to a direct point: “Here is the great struggle of our sinful nature: until our nature changes, we are going to love sin more than we love God because we are enslaved to sin—in bondage to its power. No amount of good intentions or hard work, no humanistic moralism, is going to liberate us completely” (p. 61). That is why we can't save ourselves.

Ever since Genesis 3:9, God the Father has been calling out to us, his wayward children, inviting us back, providing the means for restoration through God's saving grace. Grace awakens in us an understanding of

our need for a rescuer. As we talked about last week, God invites, God calls, God works in us, God makes it possible for us to respond—but it is our responsibility to respond. After we respond to God’s saving grace, the transformation begins. Ephesians 2:1–10 reminds us that first there is grace that saves, that leads to faith, and through that we are freed to do the good work God places in us.

This is the amazing gift of grace. God—the one most hurt by our rejection and betrayal—has taken not only the first step but also all the subsequent steps toward us to make it possible for us to respond and enter into restored friendship with God and neighbor.

Discussion Track for Highlight #2

Early Youth

- We don’t like the word “sin,” but what about the way we just talked about sin in terms of rebellion, broken relationship, and loving sin more than we love God? What does that stir up in you?
- Have you seen this to be true in your life and in the lives of others?
- What response does this great gift of God’s saving grace stir up in you?

Youth

- We don’t like the word “sin,” but what about the way we just talked about sin in terms of rebellion, broken relationship, and loving sin more than we love God? How does that make you feel?
- What would it look like to be one with God—to be friends with God?
- What response does this great gift of God’s saving grace stir up in you?

Young Adult

- We don’t like the word “sin,” but focus on the way we just talked about sin in terms of rebellion, broken relationship, and loving sin more than we love God. How does that make you feel?
- Reflecting back on moralism, publicly we can even act in ways that are expected of Christians, but it can stay at a superficial level of wanting to look good in front of other people. Saving grace is about true freedom and peace with God. How have you seen moralism keep you or others from experiencing that true freedom?
- What response does this great gift of God’s saving grace stir up in you?

CONNECT

Together, sing a song of response, such as “No Longer Slaves to Fear,” “Nothing but the Blood,” or “Blessed Assurance.” Invite the group to reflect on what they have heard today. Have you mostly trusted in moralism and being a good-enough person to get by? Do you sense a need to respond to God’s saving grace? Provide time and space for people to respond. Pray and celebrate the freedom we have in Christ through his life, death, and resurrection!

JOURNEY TOGETHER

Make a commitment together to spend time this week carefully reading, reflecting, and/or journaling on one or more of the following texts:

Genesis 3:1–13

Ephesians 2:1–10

1 Corinthians 15:1–10

2 Corinthians 5:13–21

CLOSING PRAYER

Invite everyone to pray the opening prayer together, or close with your own prayer.

SESSION 4:

SANCTIFYING GRACE

LESSON IN A SENTENCE

“Through sanctifying grace, the Holy Spirit empowers us to live a life fully consecrated to God” (p. 73).

LEADER REFLECTION

Many times in our lives, we want to do the right thing but end up putting our own desires first. Think of a situation around you or in your own life when you have observed that a person cannot do the right thing on their own strength but only through the Holy Spirit’s power. Be prepared to share this story.

LESSON OUTLINE

Opening Prayer: An Adaptation of a Prayer by John Wesley

Holy God of love, all we could ever want or desire finds its infinite and fullest expression in Christ Jesus, but what we most desire to receive is grace upon grace. Grace to pardon our sins and overcome our injustices; to justify us and to sanctify our souls; and to bring about the holy change, the renewal of our hearts that will enable us to be transformed into your own blessed image, in which you created us. Father, work in us by the grace of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit—one God, now and forever. Amen.

Discussion Opener

What are some of the selfish behaviors you have observed from toddlers that made you wonder where they learned it at such an early age?

Teach & Engage

Key Verse: 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24

Introduction

After the group has shared their observations in response to the opening question, share the story you have prepared about doing the right thing. Encourage them to understand that it is only through surrendering our lives to the Holy Spirit's work that we are able to overcome our selfish desires and become more like Jesus in all that we do.

Highlight #1: The Broken Image of God in Us (Read Psalm 51:5 and Romans 7:18)

Human beings are made in the image of God with reason and creative power to rule and make this world a better place, reflecting God's love and grace. However, when sin entered humanity through Adam and Eve's disobedience to God, the image of God in humanity was tarnished. Humanity did not stop being human, but our humanity was corrupted, and our tendency now is to be selfish and to rebel against God. As we talked about last week, Augustine called this a life turned inward on oneself.

Through jealousy, distrust, anger, self-centeredness, and superiority, we display the results of a broken relationship with God and others. Rather than living our lives outward toward God and others, our lives are focused inward on ourselves alone. So much of the pain and suffering in our world stems from this brokenness. This might be a new concept for some. There are many mistaken views for explaining the brokenness in our world. Help your group make the connection that many of the pains and hurts that we experience are direct results of this brokenness.

Discussion Track for Highlight #1

Early Youth

- Have you ever had an argument with your friends or someone at school? Maybe they did something you didn't like or hurt you in some way. How did that relationship being broken impact your mood, your attitude, how you treated them, or even how you treated others?

Youth

- Have you ever had an argument with your friends or someone at school? Maybe they did something you didn't like or they hurt you in some way. What emotions did their actions stir up in you? How did you react? Did you try to get back at them?
- The times we try to get even, when we try to hurt others like they hurt us, we are living out the results of the broken relationship we have with ourselves, with God, and with others.

Young Adult

- What are examples of the brokenness of relationships that you see?
- How can you see this idea of a life turned inward on oneself in those examples?

Highlight #2: *Becoming Like Jesus (Read Colossians 3:1 – 17)*

God is love, and his desire is to redeem us from our condition, restoring the brokenness of our relationship with ourselves, with God, and with one another. He brought salvation to us through Jesus so that we may have life through his death on the cross. Through faith in Jesus, our sins are forgiven, and we are given new life, but our journey does not stop there. We do not simply wait for the moment we die and think of our salvation as a ticket to eternity. Through your discussions, help the youth and/or young adults to understand that we can also experience a change here and now. The question for us is, “who is the Lord of my life? Should I still have it my way?”

When we become followers of Jesus, we are enabled by God's sanctifying grace through the Holy Spirit to start seeking God, and God gives us the desire to obey God and live faithfully within God's will. The Holy Spirit empowers followers of Jesus to put on the new self so the image of God can be restored within us.

Discussion Track for Highlight #2

Early Youth

- What is a sport, an activity, or a talent that you are completely committed to? What have you given all of yourself to?
- What have you needed to surrender in order to be so committed?
- What would you need to surrender to be able to honestly say that you are completely committed to God?

Youth

- Have you ever had to give one thing up in order to obtain something you wanted more? Maybe it was giving up free time to practice a sport or skill? Maybe it was giving up a sport to have time for a job? What is something you've given up, and what was it for?
- The decision wasn't about a single, isolated action or decision; it was based on what you valued most. When we ask the question, "Who is the Lord of my life?" we are making a choice about what we value. What does this teach us about sin?
- Sometimes we make sin out to be single, isolated actions or decisions, but those actions and decisions reflect what we value. Seeing sin in this light, are your actions reflecting a life turned inward on itself, or are you becoming like Jesus with your life focused outward on God and others?

Young Adult

- What has been the biggest shift in moving from being an adolescent to being a young adult? What are some things you have had to give up in order to grow into adulthood?
- The answer to that question reveals what we value about adulthood or what we value so much about our youth that we want to hang onto it. Either way, it is a question of values. Rather than thinking of sin as a single, isolated action or decision, we would get more to the root of the matter if we saw those actions or decisions as reflections of what we value most. Seeing sin in this light, do your actions reflect a life turned inward on itself, or are you becoming like Jesus with your life focused outward on God and others?

Highlight #3: Growing as the Body of Christ

(Read Romans 12:1–2 and 1 Corinthians 12:12–27)

What is the goal of discipleship? The goal of our spiritual growth is to become more like Jesus so we can reflect the love of Jesus to the world. However, this does not happen overnight! We can make the decision to surrender everything to Christ in a moment, but the growth and transformation that result from that decision will continue for the rest of our lives.

As part of the body of Christ, we do not grow alone. We need to walk with others on this journey. With Jesus as the head, we the members of his body have received different gifts to build one another up and

share the love of Christ with the world. When we die to ourselves and allow Christ to live in us, when our focus shifts from inward to outward, the result is self-giving love for God and neighbor. Our tendency to be selfish changes to self-giving; as we begin putting others first, we begin to look more and more like Jesus.

Discussion Track for Highlight #3

Early Youth

- Think of those toddlers and their selfish behaviors that we talked about in the opening question. That used to be you! How have you changed? How have you grown?
- What and who supported your growth?
- What does that teach you about what the journey of spiritual growth might look like?

Youth

- Think of those toddlers and their selfish behaviors that we talked about in the opening question. That used to be you! What's the biggest change you've experienced since being a toddler?
- All of those changes have obviously taken a few years. If you have a relationship with God, what are some of the biggest changes you've experienced in your spiritual life?
- How has journeying with others helped you in that journey?

Young Adult

- It is important to remember that becoming like Christ is a journey. The temptations we all experience do not always disappear overnight. (Remember that temptation itself is not sin, for even Christ was tempted.) What is a skill or ability you have worked to develop? How long did it take to get good at that skill?
- What should we learn about that for our spiritual growth?
- As young adults our brains can wrestle with abstract concepts in ways that they weren't able to before. Sometimes, because we are literally thinking differently, perhaps because of jobs or expanded independence, we think we don't need the church. However, Christ established the church because

he knew we needed to walk on this journey of grace together, to help each other up, and to encourage each other along.

CONNECT

Challenge the group to reflect on this question or to write their answers in their journals: Is Jesus the Lord of your life, or do you still want to do things your way? What does being like Christ mean to those around you?

JOURNEY TOGETHER

Let us make a commitment as a group to grow together, help each other when we feel discouraged, and pray for each other.

CLOSING PRAYER

Invite everyone to pray the opening prayer together, or close with your own prayer.

SESSION 5:

SUSTAINING GRACE

LESSON IN A SENTENCE

“Through sustaining grace, the Holy Spirit cooperates with us to enable a faithful and disciplined life given in service to God” (p. 73).

LEADER REFLECTION

What spiritual disciplines have helped you in your journey? How did the means of grace or accountability partners help you be reminded that God wants you to depend on his help? Be prepared to share your experience.

LESSON OUTLINE

Opening Prayer: An Adaptation of a Prayer by John Wesley

Holy God of love, all we could ever want or desire finds its infinite and fullest expression in Christ Jesus, but what we most desire to receive is grace upon grace. Grace to pardon our sins and overcome our injustices; to justify us and to sanctify our souls; and to bring about the holy change, the renewal of our hearts that will enable us to be transformed into your own blessed image, in which you created us. Father, work in us by the grace of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit—one God, now and forever. Amen.

Discussion Opener

Ask the group to describe the behaviors they observe from legalistic people and the behaviors they observe from rebellious people.

Teach & Engage

Key Verse: Jude 1:24–25

Introduction

Ask the group to imagine for a minute that they are tasked with creating something but are not given any examples, instructions, or any help at all. Connect their imaginations to how God does not ask us to live a holy life without any help. He has given us the power to live the life he requires of us. We do not strive to live a life of holiness in our own strength alone.

Highlight #1: Transforming Power (Read Acts 1:8 and Acts 2:42-47)

In *Way, Truth, Life* Dr. Busic wrote, “Because God is relentlessly committed to our holiness, making us more and more like Jesus, the Holy Spirit begins to probe, ‘Is everything mine? Does every part of you belong to me? Is there anything you are holding back?’” (p. 105). If we take these questions to heart, there is great potential for transformation as we embrace the truth that the Holy Spirit is the one who helps us become who God wants us to be—but only if we let him. We can observe this change in the lives of the disciples when the Holy Spirit came.

Help the group understand that the grace we have received is not only for the forgiveness of sins but also to empower us to live out a holy life. If we see this grace as only needed during salvation, we end up becoming legalistic and struggling to become holy on our own strength. If we go to the other extreme of not surrendering our lives to the transforming power that is available for us, we would think we do not need to discipline ourselves because God can just forgive us anyway, making grace so cheap that we can do whatever we want even if it breaks God’s heart.

Discussion Track for Highlight #1

Early Youth

- Have you ever been so excited to learn how to do something new that a friend or teacher or parent barely finished showing you how to do it before you jumped in and tried to do it yourself before you were ready? Share the story.

- Sometimes we do that with our faith. We surrender everything to God, thank God for the gift of salvation, and then dismiss God to see how good we can be.
- What does sustaining grace teach us about that attitude?

Youth

- Have you ever tried to show off to friends by doing a trick or performing some kind of talent before you were really ready? How did it go?
- What does that teach us about the purpose and need for sustaining grace in our lives?

Young Adult

- You are part of an age group that is sometimes called “young adults.” What is some aspect of being a young adult that you don’t feel ready for yet?
- What might help you feel more ready?
- Those answers are what the sustaining grace of God is like. They are like the Holy Spirit coming alongside us. What does that teach us about what our relationship with the Holy Spirit should be like?

Highlight #2: Partnership with the Holy Spirit

(Read Philippians 2:12–13 and 2 Peter 1:5–7)

The ability to choose to surrender our lives to the Holy Spirit’s work shows us that God is a relational God who does not see us as robots. In this relationship, we love and obey God and allow God to work in our lives. Help the group remember that the temptations around us will remain as we go on this journey of becoming more like Christ, but his grace is also available for us to help us grow and say no to temptation and yes to God. Our role is to make every effort to keep in step with the Spirit and position ourselves so we can remain on track and ready for the Holy Spirit to work in and through us.

Discussion Track for Highlight #2

Early Youth

- When is a time you worked together with several other people to do something greater than you could do on your own? (*Moving something that was really big, planning an event, serving the community, etc.*)
- How did it feel? What difference did the group make?

Youth

- Have you ever played Tug of War? Two teams are placed on opposite ends of a rope, everyone holds onto the rope, and on the count of three they start tugging. The goal is to pull the opposing team across the starting middle point first. Now, imagine there was a large boulder or tree branch tied in the middle of the rope that needed to be moved off a road. How should your strategy change from Tug of War in order to move the boulder?
- Sometimes we act as if the Holy Spirit is on the opposite team, pulling us in a direction we are resisting. However, if we have surrendered everything to God, as we talked about last week, then the model should look more like the second illustration of moving the boulder. The Holy Spirit wants to help us move those temptations and obstacles to our spiritual growth out of our lives, but we need to work *with* the Holy Spirit, not against. What might that look like?

Young Adult

- Reflect on this idea of a partnership with the Holy Spirit. What do you think is the Holy Spirit's biggest challenge to working in your life?
- How can you grow to depend more on the help of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Highlight #3: Means of Grace

(Read 2 Corinthians 13:5–9; Hebrews 10:22–35; Philippians 1:6)

Just as our physical bodies require regular checkups in order to know if we are healthy or need some adjustments to continue to function, we need the means of grace to help us be attuned to our spiritual health. Means of grace can be practices such as spiritual disciplines, sacraments, and participating in a community

of accountable relationships. All of these help us participate with and respond to the work that God has begun in us.

Guide the group to discuss the ways we love to have things instantly but how lasting growth always takes time and intentionality. Share with the group what you have prepared in advance about your experiences with practicing spiritual disciplines, being in an accountability group, and other means of grace.

The intent and desire for transformation happen for a moment, but growth does not happen overnight. Remember, God is faithful to complete what he has started in us.

Discussion Track for Highlight #3

Early Youth

- What do you need in your physical life to sustain you, to keep you alive?
- What do you need in your spiritual life to be sustained in your relationship with Jesus?

Youth

- How do you know that God hears you and answers you when you pray?
- How does this relate with how we work together with the Holy Spirit on this journey of grace?
- What practices are you engaging in to make space for God to speak to you and be at work in your life?

Young Adult

- Is your journey with God motivated by fear, or is it more like a walk with a dearly loved friend to whom you look for support every step of the way?
- How do you foster your relationship with God?
- What spiritual disciplines have you found to be meaningful for you?

CONNECT

What are some of the spiritual disciplines that would help us remember our need for the Holy Spirit? Help the group understand that accountability partners or spiritual disciplines are not extra rules but practices that help position us to hear and follow the Holy Spirit's leading.

JOURNEY TOGETHER

In the following days, ask God to show you an area of your life that you need to surrender. Be prepared to share with our group next meeting what the Holy Spirit is showing you.

CLOSING PRAYER

Invite everyone to pray the opening prayer together, or close with your own prayer.

SESSION 6:

SUFFICIENT GRACE

LESSON IN A SENTENCE

“Through sufficient grace, God’s power is made perfect in our weakness” (p. 73).

LEADER REFLECTION

Think of a difficult moment in your life when you felt like you had reached your limit and were ready to give up but the Lord provided the strength and grace you needed. Prepare to share this experience with your group.

LESSON OUTLINE

Opening Prayer: An Adaptation of a Prayer by John Wesley

Holy God of love, all we could ever want or desire finds its infinite and fullest expression in Christ Jesus, but what we most desire to receive is grace upon grace. Grace to pardon our sins and overcome our injustices; to justify us and to sanctify our souls; and to bring about the holy change, the renewal of our hearts that will enable us to be transformed into your own blessed image, in which you created us. Father, work in us by the grace of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit—one God, now and forever. Amen.

Discussion Opener

Think of a time in your life that was so difficult that you did not know how you were going to be able to move forward. Ask the group members to get into pairs and share their stories with each other. Afterward, ask for one or two volunteers who are willing to share their story with the whole group.

Teach & Engage

Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 12:9–10

Introduction

After the group has shared their stories, share the story you have prepared. Encourage the group to focus on the hope we have in the midst of suffering and difficulty.

Highlight #1: Troubles in this World

(Read John 16:33 and 2 Corinthians 11:23–27)

Last week we talked about sustaining grace, and it was exciting to reflect on the ways we can walk with God and grow in our faith. However, even amidst the excitement of growth, we can go through extremely difficult experiences. As we discussed back in session 4, we live in a broken world, and the reality is that becoming a follower of Jesus does not protect us from brokenness. Following Christ doesn't guarantee that we will be immune to troubles in this world. Many faithful Christians have experienced hardships, just like the apostle Paul, who experienced many trials.

Discussion Track for Highlight #1

Early Youth

- Think about the difficult time in your life that you shared in the opening discussion. How did that time affect your relationship with family and friends?
- How did it affect your relationship with God?

Youth

- What discourages you the most about the troubles you see in the world?
- Do you ever notice that your discouragement is beginning to affect your relationship with God?
- Remembering that the brokenness in our world breaks God's heart as well, what are ways you can practice sharing your discouragement with God?

Young Adult

- What discourages you the most about the troubles you see in the world?
- If God's grace is big enough to impact every part of our broken world, how does God's grace apply to what you just shared that is most discouraging to you?
- How do you see God calling the church to bring love, hope, and healing into the brokenness of our world?

Highlight #2: God Is at Work Even in the Midst of Hardships **(Read Romans 8:28)**

You can read in Scripture how many men and women of God experienced suffering. However, they also found God at work in the midst of these difficulties. Just as the Israelites in the wilderness received their daily manna (share the story from Exodus if your group isn't familiar with it), the Lord is faithful in giving us grace that is sufficient for our needs. We need to acknowledge that this might be easy to say when we are not going through anything particularly difficult. Nonetheless, we must hold onto this truth that God is always at work, even when it is hard to see it and when difficult times come.

Just as it says in Romans 8:28, God is working all things together for good. Sometimes this is misquoted to suggest (or directly say) that God *causes* bad things to happen, but that is not what Paul is saying! The truth of this verse is that our God, who can redeem all things, can take even our hardships and bring something good out of them if we surrender everything to God.

Discussion Track for Highlight #2

Early Youth

- Think again about the difficult time in your life that you shared in the opening discussion. Looking back, can you see the ways God was providing daily manna—sufficient grace—for you in the midst of that hard time?
- What (or who) are the examples of God providing sufficient grace for you during that time?

Youth

- Think again about the difficult time in your life that you shared in the opening discussion. Looking back, can you see the ways God was providing daily manna—sufficient grace—for you in the midst of that hard time?
- What (or who) are the examples of God providing sufficient grace for you during that time?

Young Adult

- Is there something difficult you are facing right now?
- Even in the midst of it, can you identify ways in which God is providing the strength and grace you need to face that situation?

Highlight #3: Rejoicing in Suffering (Read Romans 5:1–5)

In *Way, Truth, Life*, Dr. Busic wrote, “Sufficient grace does not eliminate all our fear and doubt. There is no getting around it: even in hope there is room for questions. It is possible to have faith even when there are more questions than answers. It is possible to grieve and maintain hope at the same time” (p. 154). Grief is real, sorrow is real, the struggle is real—but through the suffering and hardships we experience, we can also rejoice in the midst of them because God is forming endurance, character, and hope in us.

This can be a hard concept, especially for youth, to grasp, and young adults are just beginning to hold these kinds of truths in tension. Understanding the realities of your group, help them wrestle with understanding that while we grieve, while we struggle, we can still have hope. We have hope because our hope is not dependent on our own strength but is placed in the One who is strong when we are weak, the One who walks with us daily and who loves us enough to send his Son to rescue us.

Discussion Track for Highlight #3

Early Youth

- What would you pack if you were going on a journey? Whom would you take with you?
- As we have discussed this journey of grace, what do you think you need for your spiritual journey of growth in Christ?
- Whom will you invite on this journey who will help encourage you?

- Whom could you invite to this journey with you who has only experienced the prevenient (seeking) grace of God, and who might not even be aware of that yet?

Youth

- Do you feel that you are able to maintain hope during difficult times?
- If you answered yes, how would you explain that to someone who isn't journeying yet with Jesus?
- What are ways you think you could become more attuned to the provision of God's sufficient grace in your life?
- As we've talked about this journey of grace, what is a formative practice or truth you are carrying with you as you move forward in your journey?

Young Adult

- Throughout this conversation about the journey of grace, the concept of surrender has come up over and over again. This can be especially hard during a life stage when you feel you are having the opportunity to experience more independence and freedom. For you, what is the hardest part about surrendering to God?
- We are encouraged by our world to hide behind masks of confidence and control. Do you feel that admitting you don't have it all together and that you need help is a challenge? How do you hear the words in 2 Corinthians 12:9?
- God uses weak and imperfect people like you and me. How are you making yourself available to be used by God?
- The goal of this journey of grace is not for our benefit alone. We have been invited on a journey that is meant to be lived out before others—not to brag but so they can see the love and grace of God in our lives and through our actions. How are you sharing the grace of God with others?

CONNECT

There are people around us today who are feeling weak or in need of hope. We know that God's grace for the moment is sufficient. Who comes to your mind that we need to pray for?

JOURNEY TOGETHER

This week, take note of the times when you felt weak or not able to overcome and how the Lord has provided his sufficient grace to the situation. Be intentional in calling someone from our group and sharing this as a way of praising God for his provision.

CLOSING PRAYER

Invite everyone to pray the opening prayer together, or close with your own prayer.

