



MON 1-17

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Ephesians 2:8-9
- ✓ THOUGHT "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." [NIV] No one has earned God's favor! We are all given the same gift of grace. How should that shape the way we view others? Is there someone in your life you to whom you find it difficult to offer grace? Pray that God would remind you that we are all equal in God's sight!
- ✓ PRAYER Loving God, help me to see others through the lenses of your love and grace. Even when I am angry or upset, remind me that I can choose to see others as you do. Amen.

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TUES 1-18

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Romans 14:19
- ✓ THOUGHT "So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up." [NLT] Think for a moment of a past struggle with someone in your life. How might things have changed if you had the goal of achieving harmony above all else? How does grace play a part in building up relationships?
- ✓ PRAYER God, I know that peace and harmony are important to you. Help me to be able to recognize when I need to take a step back for the sake of harmony to adjust my behaviors. I am grateful that you forgive me and show me grace. Help me to do that for others. Amen.

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WED 1-19

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Ephesians 4:29
- ✓ THOUGHT "Don't let any foul words come out of your mouth. Only say what is helpful when it is needed for building up the community so that it benefits those who hear what you say." [CEB] This can be a tough one! Think about the communities you are a part of. Work, family, church, friend groups--how might this advice change your conversations?
- ✓ PRAYER Loving God, show me the relationships in my life that need my verbal support and encouragement. Transform my mind so that my words would reflect your love and grace in every situation. Amen.

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THURS 1-20

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Ephesians 4:32
- ✓ THOUGHT "Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, in the same way God forgave you in Christ." [CEB] What a comfort that simply because of our connection with Christ God doesn't see our failures! We have been forgiven, and we are told to offer forgiveness to the people around us in the same way. Compassion depends on our acknowledgment and gratitude for the grace we have received!
- ✓ PRAYER Gracious God, sometimes I move through life and forget to say "thank you" for the forgiveness you continually extend to me. I am grateful, and I want to be someone who offers that gift to others. Amen.

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FRI 1-21

- ✓ SCRIPTURE John 5:24
- ✓ THOUGHT "I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life." [NLT] Be glad today that we aren't condemned because of our failures! We can experience life without guilt or shame. Is there something you need to let go of today? God has already let it go!
- ✓ PRAYER Almighty God, sometimes my guilt creeps back in and when it does, I forget that you don't see my failures. Help me to feel secure because of your grace and experience freedom from those feelings so I can share grace with others feely. Amen.

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SAT 1-22

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Psalm 103:11-12
- ✓ THOUGHT "...because as high as heaven is above the earth, that's how large God's faithful love is for those who honor him. As far as east is from west—that's how far God has removed our sin from us." [CEB] God's faithful love for us is not measurable. Our finite minds cannot understand the depth of God's love for his children!
- ✓ PRAYER Infinite God, help me to love like you do! I am so grateful that your love is more than my mind can fathom. Though I can never fully understand, I want to grow in the way that I love those around me. Renew my mind as I experience your love daily. Amen.

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GROUP GUIDE

- ✓ **PRAYER** God, we acknowledge that you are already here. May our hearts be open to your presence and direction. Amen.

- ✓ **BIG IDEA** During this series, we could easily spend small group time debating the hot topics; however, since our goal is to build unity, the group discussion guides are centered around that concept. Unity in the church depends on grace. Grace is easier to give to others when we acknowledge that we have received it ourselves. When we keep that in mind, we are better equipped to build each other up!

- ✓ **DISCUSS**
 - Share with the group an example of a time when grace was given to you by someone else. What did that mean to you? How did it shape your relationship with that person?

 - Describe a time when you were a part of a merit-based relationship. How did that feel?

 - Read Romans 3:20-24 aloud. A picture of grace is painted for us in these verses. God deals with us based on who Jesus is rather than based on our own merit. Do you have difficulty fully accepting this idea?

 - Verse 23 says, "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard." [NLT] This verse seems to put us all in the same boat of needing grace. Why do you think we still tend to categorize other believers as better or worse than ourselves? In what ways has the Church in America displayed this tendency?

 - 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, "So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing." [NLT] What role does grace play in this process of building each other up? When believers inevitably disagree on an issue, what does grace look like in the heat of the moment?

- ✓ **Pray** Precious Jesus, we thank you for being the basis for our acceptance. We are grateful that we do not have to decide who is in and who is out because your sacrifice makes us all right and blameless in the eyes of God. Show us how to behave toward one another, always keeping in mind that we have each been shown the same grace. Amen.