



**“The Vine”
— Go Deep—
Small Group Plan**

Dear Small Group,

Grace has often been defined with the acrostic:

G od's
R iches
A t
C hrist's
E xpense

On Sunday, Gordon added three definitions that led to a greater appreciation of grace.

Justice is getting what we deserve.

Mercy is not getting what we deserve.

Grace is getting what we don't deserve.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Think of a time in your life when you felt very alive to God.
- How did it feel? Why did you feel this way? What was happening in your life at the time?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

SATAN'S WORK AGAINST US

Ephesians 2:1-3

¹ As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

- What does Paul mean when he describes people as “dead?”
- How does “sin” (v. 1) kill?
- Is Paul describing a specific sin in verse 1 or a way of life? Explain.

- Paul mentions three negative forces that work against us:
 - the world (v. 2)
 - the flesh (NIV translates this “sinful nature”) (v. 3)
 - the devil (v. 2)
- Where do you see these at work in our culture?
- How are they weapons used to attack a person of faith?
- Are these haphazard, accidental acts of evil, or is there a plan behind them? Explain.

GOD’S WORK FOR US

Ephesians 2:4-6

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

- Paul uses three verbs to describe what God has done for us:
 - “made us alive” (v. 5)
 - “raised us up” (v. 6)
 - “seated us” (v. 6)
- What does it mean to be made alive? What is actually brought to life in us? What would this look like in our day-to-day lives?
- How would our lives be different if God withheld his grace and left us to ourselves?

GOD’S WORK THROUGH US

Ephesians 2:7-10

⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- Paul’s transition phrase “in order that” (v. 7) introduces why God has chosen to work in our lives. What does God want to express through us?
- Why does Paul take such great care to show that our salvation is by God’s grace rather than our works?
- With this in mind, what is the relationship between God’s grace and our works?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- How important is it to face the dark reality of our life without God?

- Is it possible to appreciate the wonders of God's grace (v. 5) without facing the seriousness of his wrath (v. 3)? Explain.
- Reflect on this trio of words and definitions:
 - Justice is getting what we deserve.***
What is it that we deserve?
 - Mercy is not getting what we deserve.***
Why does God withhold his wrath from those in Christ?
 - Grace is getting what we don't deserve.***
Why does God go beyond mercy to offering a relationship?
- Think of some of the good works that God has prepared for you to do:
 - ... in your family.
 - ... in your neighborhood.
 - ... at your school/work.
 - ... in our church.
 - ... in our country.
 - ... in our world.
- Close by praying for a heart that is alive to God. Thank God for his grace that made us alive, raised us up and seated us with Jesus.