

# Series Title: 'Grace Abounds'

**Primary Aim:** To help us develop a Biblical perspective on God's grace and what it means for our daily lives. The first 4 sessions focus on Grace as God's unmerited favour and pick up on the bad news, the good news and some of the dangers of misunderstanding grace. Then in the final 2 sessions we focus on Grace as God's Divine Assistance and pick up on how Grace assists and strengthens us for all that we face in our everyday lives.

## Part I: Grace as God's unmerited favour

### 1. Grace Beckons: Our need of grace

**Passages:** Galatians 3:3, 5:1-5, Ephesians 2:1-10 & Romans 3:10-19

**Blurb:** We begin by defining the word 'grace' which has all kinds of meanings to different people (meal time prayer, address for royalty, gratis, musical notes, persona non grata, gratification disgrace etc). Then we distinguish between grace as God's unmerited favour and God's divine assistance. We aim to draw out why we need grace. Firstly we look at how God feels about sin (see Isaiah 53:6, Lev 16:21, 2 Sam 12:9-10, 1 Kings 13:21, Psalm 5:4, 51:4, Zech 3:1-4). Part of the answer to this is our tendency to either live our lives without reference to God or try and go it alone and earn His favour on our own. Even as believers we have a tendency to base our relationship with God on merit rather than on the grace of God. Preaching the gospel to ourselves every day is part and parcel of walking with Jesus. Reading: Transforming Grace c1-2, Grace Abounds Bible study 1

### 2. Grace Astounds: The Wonder of grace

**Passages:** Matthew 20:1-16, Romans 9:20-21 & Luke 23:39-43

**Blurb:** Now we turn to the good news: how great is this grace. Having understood our great need of grace in Session 1 this session seeks to develop our thinking of just how good grace really is. Firstly Paul uses the word 'But' to draw a contrast between the situation we are in before/after coming to Jesus (e.g. Rom 3:21-25, Titus 3:3-5, Eph 2:1-15, Rom 3:20-26). Secondly the Bible uses lots of pictures to describe how good God's grace is (e.g. Psalm 103:9-12, Isaiah 38:17, Micah 7:19, Isaiah 43:25, Rom 8:1 & Col 1:21-22). Thirdly there is Jesus' parable of the generous Landowner which brings out some of the challenges of getting our heads around grace: namely it does not come naturally. I would spend most of the time on this parable. Reading: Transforming Grace c3-4, What's so amazing about grace? (Yancey), Grace Abounds Bible study 2

### 3. Grace Motivates: The Danger of Licence

**Passages:** Titus 2:11-12, 2 Cor 5:14-15

**Blurb:** Having looked at the good and the bad news we now try and delve deeper into how grace works. Specifically in this session we look at how grace motivates us to live for God. First we ask the question how might grace be misunderstood, misinterpreted or abused (see Rom 6:1-2, 15, Gal 5:13 and Jude 4)? We are not to be motivated by duty but by grace. Martin Lloyd-Jones asserts that a right idea of grace will lead to misunderstandings! Then we look at the relationship between grace and obedience (John 14:15,21,23, 1 John 1:4,19, 5:2-3). This talk should help us move from duty, law and requirements towards love, desire and a response of gratitude. Reading: Transforming Grace c-7, Grace Abounds Bible study 3

### 4. Grace Transforms: The Danger of Legalism

**Passage:** Hebrews 10:9-17, Rom 7:4-6, Rom 14:1-6

**Blurb:** God's ultimate goal for our lives is holiness (Rom 8:29, 2 Cor 3:18, Titus 2:14). The Bible says that we have been made holy but we are also being made holy: our first task is to wrestle with how these can both be true. Holiness is God's gift of grace to us but we still have to work it out. We can identify with Paul who wrestled with what he did and what he wanted to do (Romans 7). The Holy Spirit plays a significant role in helping us become holy. Then we turn to the idea of legalism and how it opposes freedom (Gal 5:1,13). We consider the moral fences (i.e. pharisaic style laws) we put up in order to keep ourselves from committing certain sins: not inherently wrong but the danger is that they become legalistic and impact on our freedom or that of others (e.g. Romans 14:1-6). Our aim here is to ensure that the gift and freedom of grace does not get weighed down by a yoke of slavery (Gal 5:1). Reading: Transforming Grace c8-9, Grace Abounds Bible study 4

## PART II: Grace as God's Divine Assistance

### 5. Grace Assists: The Sufficiency of Grace

**Passages:** 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

**Blurb:** Our focus now shifts to Grace as God's Divine assistance as we think about the sufficiency of God's grace in our daily lives. We are talking about drawing on the grace of God to help us deal with all that life throws our way. We find this kind of idea all over the Bible (e.g. Lam 3:19-23, Job 23:8-10, Psalm 13 & 73). This sufficiency of grace is true firstly in terms of our weakness and adversity (2 Cor 12, 2 Tim 1:7-8, 2:1) and secondly in our unworthiness and inadequacy (Eph 3:8, 1 Cor 15:9-10). Finally we wrestle a little with the connection between grace and spiritual gifts [literally grace-gifts] and see how God wants us to serve Him (Rom 12:6, 1 Pet 4:10-11). Reading: Transforming Grace c10

## **6. Grace Strengthens: The Appropriation of Grace (or Claiming Grace)**

**Passages:** Hebrews 4:15-16, Acts 20:32, Gal 5:22-23 & Colossians 3:12-15

**Blurb:** Finally we focus on some practical ideas of how we can appropriate grace in our daily lives. Paul expresses this thought in 2 Tim 2:1 when he urges us to be strong (or take hold of) in grace. This takes us into the practical topics of prayer (Heb 11:15-16) and God's word of grace (Acts 20:32). It also encourages us to humbly submit to God's providence in our lives (e.g. Joseph in Gen 45:8, 50:20 or Job in 1:21, 2:10, 42:1-3 & 12 – see also Heb 12:5-10) and to think about how we might administer God's grace to others (Eph 3:2-3). Finally we talk of clothes/garments of grace which Paul in particular encourages us to put on (Gal 5:22-23, Colossians 3:12-15). Reading: Transforming Grace c11-13.