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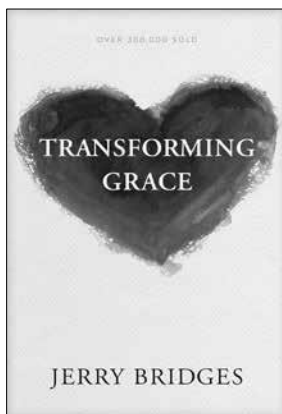
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Books of Study

Further in-depth Bible studies by the authors presented this quarter in MasterWork® are available in their full-length books. To purchase your own copies to read and study, visit lifeway.com. Or you can order a copy by calling 1.800.458.2772.



Transforming Grace
Jerry Bridges

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One at a Time
Kyle Idleman

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Transforming Grace

ABOUT THE WRITERS

Jerry Bridges was a well-known Christian writer and conference speaker. His best-known book, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, sold over a million copies. A prolific author, he sold over 3.5 million copies of his various books. He joined the staff of The Navigators in 1955, serving for sixty years. Jerry passed away in the spring of 2016, leaving behind his wife, Jane; two married children; and seven grandchildren.

Leslie Hudson contributed learning activities, discussion prompts, and teaching plans for this study. A member of First Baptist Church, Dickson, Tennessee, Hudson helps others find “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” in God’s Word. She practices praying God’s Word for her family, Sunday School class, and community.

The grace of God is one of the most important subjects in all of Scripture. At the same time it is probably one of the least understood. All Christians by definition believe in grace. Many of us frequently quote Paul’s well-known words in Ephesians 2:8-9: “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.”

John Newton’s beloved hymn “Amazing Grace” is said to be the all-time favorite hymn in the United States. Why then do I say the grace of God is one of the least understood subjects in the Bible?

Even Christian literature available on the subject of grace seems to deal almost exclusively with salvation. But the Bible teaches we are not only saved by grace, but we also live by grace every day of our lives. It is this important aspect of grace that seems to be so little understood or practiced by Christians.

My observation of Christendom is that most of us tend to base our personal relationship with God on our performance instead of on His grace. If we’ve performed well—whatever “well” is in our opinion—then we expect God to bless us. If we haven’t done so well, our expectations are reduced accordingly. In this sense, we live by works rather than by grace. We are saved by grace, but we are living by the “sweat” of our own performance.

The realization that my daily relationship with God is based on the infinite merit of Christ instead of on my own performance is a very freeing and joyous experience. But it is not meant to be a one-time experience; the truth needs to be reaffirmed daily. That is what this book is all about.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: We are spiritually bankrupt and incapable of earning God's favor; our salvation is the result of God's grace through Jesus Christ .

Focus on this goal: Acknowledge our spiritual bankruptcy, reject performance-based mindsets, and live in the freedom of grace provided through Christ .

Key Bible Passage: Ephesians 2:8-9

Before the Session

1 . **Label** a large piece of paper "Grace," centered and in large font . You'll use this throughout the course of our eight-week study, but specifically in Steps 1 and 7 today .

2 . If your church has hymnals, **obtain** enough for all in your class to use one . Find "Jesus Paid it All" and be ready to help your class sing it in Step 3 .

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Direct learners to the large piece of paper labeled "Grace" that you attached to a wall before class .

Ask: *When you hear the word grace, what comes to mind?*

Give learners time to share Scripture, hymns, or even memorable statements containing the word .

Read the paragraph that begins "My observation of Christendom" from the Introduction on page 6, as well as the paragraph following it .

Ask: *What are some personal and collective challenges or goals we can set for the coming weeks?* **Open** with prayer for the study .

STEP 2 - Spiritually Bankrupt

Read aloud the paragraph from Day One that begins, “You and I and every person,” as well as Romans 3:10-12.

Briefly **give** an overview of the two types of financial bankruptcy: *Chapter 7 is for a company that is totally insoluble, with no viability for the future, while Chapter 11 deals with more of a temporary bankruptcy with the ability to work through the problems.*

Stress that, according to Romans 3:10-12, every human except for Jesus should declare Chapter 7 spiritual bankruptcy; however, many of us are living like we’re in Chapter 11, doing our best to work out of the hole of sin we created .

Read Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:8-9 aloud . **Emphasize** the gift of grace that no one earned .

STEP 3 - Grace Alone

Ask for a show of hands to the question, *Who in here is legalistic about turning off lights? How about following speed limits?*

Read aloud the paragraph from Day Two that begins “Not only are we legalistic” aloud .

Engage learners in considering the difficulty in obeying these exhortations even as we recognize our own spiritual bankruptcy .

Ask: *Are we still spiritually bankrupt after we start following God through spiritual disciplines?* **Enlist** one volunteer to read aloud the paragraph beginning “One of the best-kept secrets among Christians today .”

Hand out hymnals and sing “Jesus Paid It All .”

STEP 4 - From Justification to Glorification

Direct learners’ attention to the definitions of justification, sanctification, and glorification found in Day Three .

Invite a volunteer to read Ephesians 2:8-9 and **ask:** *According to this verse, which part of our Christian experience is found in grace alone?* (Justification)

Read aloud the paragraph that begins “All true Christians readily agree” from Day Three and **engage** learners in considering the truth of that paragraph, using the continuing bankruptcy analogy .

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 5:1 and Hebrews 10:22, stressing that spiritual bankruptcy is different from either financial parallel; we are totally forgiven and can never go into debt again!

STEP 5 - Grace Defined

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 11:6 aloud, explaining that grace and works are mutually exclusive.

Invite a volunteer to read Philippians 1:6 from Day Four and **ask:** *According to this verse, how long is the grace of Christ going to work in our lives?*

Explain that God's grace will work in our lives until we are glorified in Christ at the end of this age. Then **say:** *We've already looked at Ephesians 2:8-9; let's consider the verses before that.*

Read Ephesians 2:4-7 aloud and point out the connection between Christ and grace.

STEP 6 - Who Needs Grace?

Invite a volunteer to read Isaiah 53:6 aloud; be ready to **read** Romans 3:10-12 immediately following.

Read aloud the second paragraph from Day Five and **ask:** *According to Isaiah 53:6 and Psalm 51:5, who is sinful and when did they become sinful?*

Emphasize that our spiritual bankruptcy is within each of us, bent on self and away from God.

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 4:5 and 10:20. **Engage** learners in considering how prevalent God's grace is in every part of our relationship with Him.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Read Luke 18:9-14 aloud, and then go back and repeat the tax collector's quote in verse 13: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Say: *This statement, alone, reflects the truth for each of us. We are spiritually destitute, and only through God's grace can we lift our heads.*

Ask: *What do we want to remember about today's session?*

Write those items on the paper you hung in Step 1. If time permits, close by singing "Amazing Grace."

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: God's grace through Jesus's sacrifice transforms our spiritual ruin into righteousness through faith .

Focus on this goal: Salvation is not earned by works but is a free gift available to all through faith in Christ .

Key Bible Passage: Romans 3:23-24

Before the Session

- 1 . You'll continue to use the large paper labeled "Grace" throughout this series . Today you'll look at it in Step 1 and add to it in Step 7 .
- 2 . **Bring** an item from home that has been restored or refurbished . If the item is too large, take a photo and be ready to share that with your class . You'll do that in Step 1 .
- 3 . **Bring** hymnals to class again, or have lyrics to "Nothing But the Blood of Jesus" ready for Step 7 .

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Open class by directing learners' attention to the restored item (or photo of an item) you brought to class .

Share how the work was accomplished, how long it took, and so on .

With exaggeration, **point out** that the item itself did not do any of the work; it was you (or your spouse, whomever took on the project) that is 100% responsible for the transformation .

Point to the large "Grace" poster you wrote on last week and briefly review what you discussed .

Say: *In today's session, we're going to see how, through God's grace and Jesus's sacrifice, we are transformed from spiritual bankruptcy to righteousness.*

STEP 2 - God's Remedy for Our Ruin

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 3:10-20 aloud, explaining that these verses reveal the dark background of our sin.

As a group, **consider** how these verses point back to last week's focus on spiritual bankruptcy and the truth that observing the law does not lead to righteousness (v. 20).

Point to the phrase "but now" in verse 21, using Day One content to stress the beauty of God's grace in contrast to our sin.

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 3:21-25 aloud, **pointing out** that our righteousness comes apart from the law, because of God's grace, when we have saving faith in Christ, who bore our sins in His death.

STEP 3 - Infinite Forgiveness

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the opening two paragraphs from Day Two.

Stress that God's complete and ultimate forgiveness was truth even as David wrote it a thousand years before Christ!

Ask: *If you could speak face-to-face to God about this truth, what might you say?*

Read Isaiah 38:17 aloud and use the Day Two content to drive home God's gracious willingness to forgive and remove our sins by placing them behind His back, not because we are innocent but because His wrath is satisfied in Christ.

Ask: *How should this grace shape our worship and our prayers?*

STEP 4 - The Depths of God's Forgiveness

Invite a volunteer to read Micah 7:19 aloud.

Ask: *What do you picture when you hear that God hurled our sins into the sea? What makes that verb powerful?*

Keep stressing that our sins being at the bottom of the sea is not our own doing, but all God.

Read Isaiah 43:25 aloud, followed by the Jay Adams quote found in Day Three.

As a group, **consider** how God's forgiveness affects not only our standing before Him but our relationship with Him .

Invite a volunteer to read the last paragraph of Day Three .

STEP 5 - Free from Accusation

Invite a volunteer to read Colossians 1:21-22 aloud .

Point out again the "but now" between who we were before and after saving faith in Christ .

Use the Day Four content to **explore** the phrase "free from accusation" (v . 22) .

Read aloud the paragraph that begins "I want to call," as well as the paragraph following, **inviting** learners to silently consider their own answers . Offer to talk to anyone desiring after class .

Read Matthew 18:23-34 aloud, **pointing out** how God's grace to forgive us should be evident in how we forgive others .

STEP 6 - Grace Beyond Measure

Read aloud the opening paragraph from Day Five and enlist someone to read John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 9:15; and Romans 8:32 aloud . As a group, consider how each verse points to the abundance of God's gifts of grace .

Point specifically that God already gave us the greatest gift: Christ, and He will not withhold His other graces from us .

Using the final four paragraphs of Day Five, **point out** God's grace in the lives of Adam and Eve: from trees and companionship, to grace even after their sin .

Challenge learners to take time this week to recall God's grace in their own lives and pray for an opportunity to share it .

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Ask: *What do we want to remember from this week's study of God's Grace?*

Write those elements on the Grace poster you started last week . Close by singing "Nothing but the Blood of Jesus" together .

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: God's grace is not dependent on human effort, merit, or performance but is fully rooted in Him.

Focus on this goal: Replace entitlement and performance-based expectations of God's blessings and instead rest in the sufficiency of Christ and His promises.

Key Bible Passage: 2 Corinthians 1:20

Before the Session

1. You'll continue to add to the Grace poster that you began in Session 1. Today you'll refer to it in Steps 1 and 7.
2. Before class, **write** the following on a board: "When I was younger, I thought I deserved _____. " You'll use that prompt in Step 1.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Draw learners' attention to the prompt you wrote on the board.

Share how you thought you deserved certain things in your childhood: a bike, a good grade, free time after school, and so on.

Invite a few volunteers to share things they thought they deserved and whether or not they received them.

Ask: *Hypothetically, do we think we're entitled to things spiritually, as well?*

Enlist a volunteer to read aloud "Focus on this goal."

Review briefly all you've recorded on the Grace poster and challenge learners to continue to connect each week's focal truths to today's Scripture.

STEP 2 - Grace Beyond Fairness

Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 20:1-16 aloud.

Read the opening two paragraphs of Day One aloud and **engage** learners in discussing how the two stories have the same point: *Jesus is not operating a classroom or managing a corporation; He operates in the principle of grace and not the principle of merit.*

Ask for a show of hands to the question, *Who would consider the teacher—and the landowner—to be unfair?*

Read Matthew 20:15-16 aloud and engage the class to consider, *What do we observe about Jesus in these words?*

Share some of the examples of merit-based expectations in the last few paragraphs of Day One, and share your own example if you have one.

STEP 3 - Obedience Without Entitlement

Invite a volunteer to read the opening of Day Two, slowly and intentionally.

Ask: *Have you ever lived as though this statement isn't true?*

Read aloud the second paragraph of Day Two and **engage** learners to consider the parallels between obeying all traffic laws and obeying all of God's laws.

Ask: *What are some elements people expect from society? What are some elements Christians expect from God?*

Invite a volunteer to read James 1:17 aloud, and **ask:** *What spiritual disciplines help us to stay mindful of these good and perfect gifts?*

Invite volunteers to read the last paragraph(s) of Day Two silently and allow time for insight.

STEP 4 - Grateful Contentment

Invite a volunteer to read the opening paragraph from Day Three, and the Scripture following it, aloud.

Skim the next paragraph to read Isaiah 26:12 and Acts 17:25, **engaging** learners in considering everything we have is a gift from God.

Ask: *What attitude should we be filled with if we really believe this truth?*

Read 1 Timothy 6:6, stressing that contentment flows from knowing we are eleventh-hour workers.

Enlist a volunteer to read the final paragraphs of Day Three aloud.

STEP 5 - The Danger of Comparing

Ask: *For the parents or childcare givers in class: do you treat each child the same in every situation? Or are there times when you might give one child a different response?*

Direct attention back to Matthew 20 and read verses 9-16.

Ask: *How does this passage point to the sovereignty of God? What should our response be to His sovereignty?*

Read aloud the second paragraph of Day Four, and then **enlist** a volunteer to read Romans 9:20-21.

Use the paragraph to help learners see that God's sovereignty and grace always work together; when we reject His sovereignty, we reject His grace.

STEP 6 - Grace Beyond Our Efforts

Enlist a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 1:20 aloud.

Use Day Five content, in particular focusing on the quotes from Philip Hughes and John Calvin to help learners understand that all God's gifts to believers flow out of Jesus.

Engage learners in considering how we bring our greatest needs to God in prayer: *Do we want our own merit or the merit of Christ offered as a consideration for His meeting our needs?*

Enlist a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 8:17-18 aloud and read the Martin Luther quote in Day Five.

Ask: *How does the grace of God encourage us to continue to labor for God without making our labors the source of His grace?*

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Engage learners in noting the main points for today's session and writing them on the Grace poster.

If you still have hymnals in your room, **invite** learners to join you in singing "Wonderful Grace of Jesus." If not, find the lyrics and read them aloud.

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: Grace frees us from the performance-driven mindset and into a life of gratitude, reverence, and joyful obedience .

Focus on this goal: God's grace shapes our motivations, obedience, and daily walk with Him .

Key Bible Passage: 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Before the Session

1. You will continue to add to your Grace poster, begun in Session 1. Today you'll use it in Steps 1 and 7.
2. Have enough paper and pencils for each learner handy. You'll use those in Step 1.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Say: *Many people keep a to-do list, whether it's daily or long-term. Take just a moment and write out your to-do list for tomorrow.*

Write out your own list, and be the first to **share** it with the class .

Enlist a few other volunteers to share their lists .

Say: *We've been looking at grace and how everything we have—every blessing—is God's grace, not our works. But we live in a world that requires work, as evidenced by our to-do lists. Today, let's consider how God's grace shapes our motivation, obedience, and daily walk.*

Review the Grace poster as a group .

STEP 2 - From Performance to Duty

Read aloud the opening paragraphs of Day One and **engage** learners in answering the questions asked in that second paragraph .

Invite a few volunteers to read Jude 1:4; Romans 5:20; 6:1; and Galatians 5:13 aloud, pointing out that obviously Paul realized that the gospel of grace could be misunderstood as a license to sin .

Stress: *God's grace calls us to respond out of gratitude rather than a sense of duty.*

Read the last paragraphs of Day One aloud .

Ask: *Does this teaching line up with what you were taught? Does it line up with what you live?*

STEP 3 - Grace That Compels

Read aloud the Richard Gilbert quote from the opening paragraph of Day Two, followed by the second paragraph .

Share how your own image of the “cost of discipleship” affects your lived-out faith .

Ask: *Do you know anyone whose faith is revealed in their grace and gracious living, with no work-based theology? How does that kind of faith impact others?*

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 12:1, explaining that this entire letter is written to believers .

Use the insight from Day Two to delve into the phrases “offer your bodies” and “living sacrifices .”

Stress: *Paul didn't appeal to duty but to God's mercy; not a response of obligation but gratitude.*

STEP 4 - Motivated by Grace

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the opening paragraphs of Day Three .

Engage learners to consider that this is how we begin living in a grace-based faith life: focus on God's love, mercy, and grace before we consider our response .

Read 1 Chronicles 28:9 aloud, pointing out that David stressed serving God with heart and mind rather than actions .

Read the Abraham Booth quote from Day Three and **ask:** *How can we incorporate this system of thinking into our own daily responses?*

Invite all learners to turn to 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and connect that passage to the Booth quote.

STEP 5 - Grace That Transforms

Invite a volunteer to read the opening paragraph of Day Four aloud.

Ask: *Do you think abuse of grace is a valid concern? Why?*

Read Jude 1:4 aloud, pointing out that grace is certainly abused by unbelievers.

Read Romans 4:7-8 and **ask:** *When we recall our own spiritual bankruptcy, what should our response to this verse be?*

Use Day Four content to consider that many church members are not troubled by the “immoral” sins, but rather by the “refined” sins.

Discuss these sometimes hidden sins and how we daily receive grace even as we struggle.

STEP 6 - Obedience Rooted in Grace

Give a brief overview of the account of Joseph in Potiphar’s house (Gen. 39:1-9) and **read** aloud the last question in verse 9: *So how could I do this immense evil, and how could I sin against God?*

Read 2 Corinthians 7:1 and **point out** that Paul and Joseph would agree: reverence for God leads us toward holiness and away from sin.

Read aloud the Philip Hughes quote from Day Five and **explore** the definition of reverence given by our author.

Reread Romans 12:1 and 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and **ask:** *What does it mean to grow in grace?* **Use** Day Five content to help guide your group’s answers.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Turn attention to the Grace poster and add to it the memorable points from today’s lesson. If your group knows the hymn “My Faith Looks Up to Thee,” **sing** it together. If not, **read** the lyrics aloud as learners listen with eyes closed. This would make a beautiful closing prayer.

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: True love for God is demonstrated by joyful obedience to His commands .

Focus on this goal: God's grace is our call to loving obedience .

Key Bible Passages: John 14:15; 1 John 5:3

Before the Session

1 . You'll continue reviewing and adding to your Grace Poster in Steps 1 and 7 .

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Say: *Take a moment to think of someone you truly, genuinely love. Now tell me an action you took recently for the sole purpose of letting that person know how much you love them.* Be ready to offer your own answer first .

Say: *Perhaps many of us don't always consider showing love for the sole purpose of showing love. But when we do, it brings joy and strengthens relationships.*

Read aloud the main point of this session .

As a group, **consider** briefly the ongoing Grace poster you began in Session 1 as a review for the series .

STEP 2 - Grace, Commands, and Timeless Principles

Read aloud the opening paragraphs of Day One .

Implore learners to look carefully at the John 14 passages with you .

Ask: *Is anyone here unclear as to how we show love to God?
Is Jesus vague or not specific enough in His explanation?*

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 6:1-2 aloud.

Ask: *Why is obedience the Jesus-ordained expression of our love for Him?*

Use the final paragraph of Day One to help learners consider situation ethics—the idea that giving a loving response to a situation is the proper way to live.

Ask: *How does this idea fly in the face of Christ's teachings?*

Read Jeremiah 17:9 aloud.

Ask: *According to this verse, by what standard do you most often make decisions—from your heart, from what seems right, or from the biblical standard? Explain your answer.*

STEP 3 - The Authority That Defines True Love

Enlist a volunteer to read Ephesians 5:17 aloud.

Use the Day Two content to point out that this verse is speaking to God's moral will—the set of expectations for His people.

Say: *We should all know a basic list of God's will: the Ten Commandments. As a group, see if you can list them verbally, using Exodus 20 to check. (Just for reference, there are two commands of what to do and eight commands of what not to do.)*

Use Day Two to explore the authority of Christ's commands: commands from one in authority require obedience, and He has the authority to insist we obey.

STEP 4 - Command or Desire?

Explain that the "Law" of God refers to the summation of God's moral commands.

Read aloud from Day Three where it begins, "*Some people believe that . . .*"

Ask: *Have you been taught legalism when you should have been taught obedience? What is the difference?*

Stress: *Legalism points to seeking justification through merit rather than by faith; obedience seeks to reveal our love for God through our acceptance of His Word and commands.*

Summarize the highway speed limit signs analogy found in Day Three.

STEP 5 - Two Sides of the Same Coin

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 13:8-10.

Read the second and third paragraphs from Day Four aloud.

Ask: *How can you see God's love and law existing parallel in some Old Testament passages? How have you experienced God's love and law simultaneously in your own life?*

Stress: *God's law reveals who He is; so does His love.*

Challenge learners to grasp that God's law and love cannot be separated.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 aloud and ask: *What does it mean to live this out?*

Point out: *God's law is revealed in our love.*

STEP 6 - Timeless Principles

Enlist a volunteer to read the Gordon Wenham quote slowly and intentionally.

Be prepared to **use** the illustrations given in the paragraphs following it (Deut. 22:8 and 1 Cor. 9:9-10) to drive home the teaching.

Stress: *This teaching does not remove all questions, for some might take an Old Testament teaching and interpret its base meaning differently from another.*

Ask: *How do we daily and realistically live out the law and love of God without falling to legalism?*

Challenge learners to state aloud one step they'll take this week in answer to this question.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

To end today's session, be prepared to provide lyrics to the hymn "Trust and Obey" and sing it as a group. *(If your group is likely not familiar with that hymn, be prepared to read the lyrics aloud.)*

Engage learners in considering the most memorable points from today's passage and add them to the Grace poster you began in Session 1.

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: Christians are called to live in the freedom of God's grace .

Focus on this goal: Avoid the pitfalls of legalism and cultural expectations while fostering love, grace, and unity within the body of Christ .

Key Bible Passage: Galatians 5:1,13

Before the Session

1. On the board, **sketch** a flat landscape with pits in it. **Draw** a stick person in the pit. You'll use this in Step 1.
2. Today you'll continue to review and add to the Grace poster, begun in Session 1, in Steps 1 and 7.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Direct learners' attention to your drawing of the landscape . (Depending on your artistic abilities, you may need to explain it!)

Say: *As we walk through life as a follower of Christ, we have times of smooth sailing, spiritually speaking. But sometimes we realize that we've fallen into a pit. It may be a pit of sin, it may be self-indulgence or self-focus, it may be a lack of focus on Jesus, or any number of pits that hold us captive. Today we'll look at two specific pits and how we can avoid them.*

Review the Grace poster and open with prayer .

STEP 2 - Guarding Against Legalism

Explain that one pitfall of faith is legalism .

Use the Day One content to give an overview of Paul's letter to the Galatians and the legalism faced by those first-century believers .

Invite a few volunteers to read Galatians 5:1,13 from their Bibles in a few different translations .

Read aloud the paragraph that begins “Legalism is, first of all, ” as well as the paragraph that follows, including Mark 7:6-8 .

Challenge learners to consider some rules they have heard concerning how Christians should live that had no biblical basis but were considered to be a standard for that group .

Ask: *How do non-biblical life standards line up with all we've been studying about the grace of God?*

STEP 3 - Fences

Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 19:9-13 .

Read the William L. Coleman quote found in Day Two .

Engage learners in considering how a “fence” may seem to be a good idea in terms of God's law, but how it can easily lead to legalism .

Summarize the author's story of how he handled visual temptations on a trip with his family to the beach and how he could have turned the experience into a legalistic fence .

Read aloud the paragraph that begins, “That is the way..... ”, stressing the main point: *“We deal with the externals instead of the heart.”*

Point out: *We know ourselves and sometimes fences are healthy; the problem comes when we give our personal fence equal ground with God's Word.*

STEP 4 - Differing Opinions

Invite a volunteer (or a few volunteers) to read Romans 14 in its entirety . But if time is tight, stick to verses 1-5,13-18 .

Ask: *What are some ‘disputable matters’ (Rom. 14:1) you've had come up in groups of believers?*

Briefly **overview** the story of the missionary family who left their mission field over peanut butter. Consider the speculative consideration of how peanut butter became a divisive issue.

Ask: *Does this still happen today?*

Read the last two paragraphs of the Day Three commentary aloud.

STEP 5 - Spiritual Disciplines

Explain: *In our author's explanation, the "don'ts" are the fences we put up to keep us aligned with God's commands; the "dos" are spiritual disciplines.*

As a group, **name** as many spiritual disciplines as come to mind.

Ask: *Are any of these a requirement in order to be saved? Are any a requirement in order to keep salvation? Are any a requirement to call oneself a Christian?*

Read aloud the paragraph from Day Four that begins "Let me clearly say " and **engage** learners in discussing its truth.

Invite volunteers to read the last three paragraphs of Day Four silently and share poignant phrases.

STEP 6 - Living for God, Not Approval

Read aloud the opening two paragraphs of Day Five.

Briefly **summarize** our author's story about the romantic relationship after his wife's death and how the expectation of others caused him to doubt God's plan.

Ask: *Was the maxim of not making any decisions within a year of his wife's death a good idea? But was it God's idea? Is it a standard that everyone should follow?*

Challenge learners to systematically consider these questions with the maxims they adhere to in their own lives.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

If you have a group familiar with hymns, **sing** "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" as a group. If not, **read** aloud the lyrics to the first and fourth verses. (*The fourth verse begins "He breaks the power of cancelled sin."*)

Close your time with the words of that fourth verse prayed over your group.

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: God's grace is sufficient to sustain us in every trial, revealing His power through our weakness.

Focus on this goal: Depend on God's grace in all circumstances, finding contentment and strength in Him.

Key Bible Passages: 2 Corinthians 12:9

Before the Session

1. You'll continue to use the Grace Poster to review previous lessons and add today's main points. You'll use the poster in Steps 1 and 7.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Say: *Can someone tell me what we mean when something is our "kryptonite?" (Superman's weakness was kryptonite, so it usually means one specific person's weakness.)*

Share a lighthearted kryptonite you have. *[Examples might include cream cheese, nachos, home renovation shows, fishing gear, etc.]*

Enlist a few volunteers to share their own 'kryptonite.'

Explain: *In today's study, you'll consider a new way to look at the weaknesses in your lives: a way to reveal the power of God.*

Review the Grace poster you began in Session One and open with prayer.

STEP 2 - God's Strength in Our Weakness

Invite a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 12:6-10.

Use the paragraph from Day One that begins *“Paul was no stranger . . .”* to give an overview of the difficulties Paul had experienced .

Point out that 2 Corinthians 12:9 (our focal verse) reveals that grace also means God’s divine assistance through the Holy Spirit.

Explain: Through the previous six sessions, grace has been evidenced by blessings and gifts; in 2 Corinthians 12:9, though, we see that it is the Holy Spirit helping us through difficulty .

Read aloud the paragraph that begins *“Paul needed grace . . .”*

Engage learners to consider their own levels of pride using James 4:6 and 2 Corinthians 12:7 .

STEP 3 - God’s Purpose in Our Pain

Read the opening paragraph of Day Two .

Ask: *What do we mean when we say that expression: “There, but for the grace of God, go I”?*

Engage learners in considering how they may have used it flippantly or without compassion .

Read aloud the second paragraph and stress that Paul recognized why he’d been given a thorn (2 Cor. 12:7) and yet God did not remove it.

Ask: *What are some of the questions we ask when we can’t understand why we’re suffering? What happens to our faith when we go through those times of darkness?*

Use the portion of commentary on page 94 that starts with, “Paul said the thorn ” to consider how God used difficult situations to reveal the folly of self-sufficiency .

Read Moses’s words in Deuteronomy 8:2-3 and engage learners in discussing their own need for dependency on God .

STEP 4 - Grace To Glorify

Enlist a volunteer to read aloud the Philip Hughes quote from Day Three; then read aloud the two paragraphs that follow it .

Engage learners in considering our author’s point that society wants to help us get rid of the pain, but God wants us to trust Him in it.

Ask: *How do we balance pain management with faith? How do we place our hope in God in the midst of pain?*

Use the final two paragraphs of Day Three to consider what it means to have spiritual sufficiency in the midst of trials.

STEP 5 - Strength for Every Need

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Peter 5:10 and 2 Timothy 2:1.

Say: *God is the giver of grace, but our job is not to simply receive it; we are to appropriate it.*

Use the Day Four content to point out that Timothy struggled with fear, but God commanded him to be strong in grace.

Explain that, as we receive God's grace, we use it in every situation: in fear, in doubt, in discontent, in impatience, in impurity, and more.

Read Exodus 16:4,14-17 aloud.

Guide learners to see the parallel between God's provision of manna and His outpouring of grace.

STEP 6 - Grace-Fueled Ministry for All

Read aloud the paragraph that begins "*In Romans 12:6 Paul said.....*" from Day Five.

Say: *We began our study of God's grace in Session One by looking at our own spiritual bankruptcy. We've come full circle, seeing that His grace gives us everything we need, including a personalized ministry.*

Invite a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 4:1.

Use the Day Five content to stress that, through God's grace, we don't become pompous or lose courage.

Ask: *How do we keep the proper perspective when considering our lives and ministry?*

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Turn attention back to the Grace poster and add the main points you want to remember. If your class is familiar with the hymn, "There's Room at the Cross for You," sing it together. If not, read the lyrics aloud.

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: Living by grace transforms how we respond to God's will and how we extend His love to others .

Focus on this goal: God's grace in our daily lives includes dying to personal desires, seeking God's power, and extending His grace to others .

Key Bible Passage: Hebrews 4:15-16

Before the Session

1. **Write** the following on a board: "5:00 AM alarm," "steak for dinner," "theme park vacation," "running for fun," and "instrumental jazz." You'll use this in Step 1 .
2. Today you'll finish the Grace poster . You'll use it in Steps 1 and 7 .

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Direct their attentions to the items listed on the board .

Say: *I'm just wondering how everyone feels about these.* You'll likely hear differing opinions; perfect .

Explain that you'll say each item on the board aloud, and each learner should hold up either thumbs up ("I like it!") or thumbs down ("No thanks!"). If you want to note what percentage votes which way, that would be fun .

Ask: *Is your opinion about each of these things different now than it would have been twenty years ago? What changed?*

Say: *We may feel strongly for or against something, but that's subject to change over time.*

Explain that, in today's lesson, we'll see how God's grace transforms how we respond to Him .

Review the Grace poster and open with prayer .

STEP 2 - Dying to Self

The opening paragraphs of Day One contain a situation in which our author struggled to yield to God's will; he strongly felt that he knew God's will and didn't have the strength to say yes to Him . If you have a similar story, **share** that with the group; if not, summarize his story .

Read John 12:24 aloud and **ask**: *Does dying to our own desires get easier as we grow in faith?*

Use the last paragraph of Day One to clarify the word "appropriate" (which you considered last week) as drawing from an inexhaustible bank account of God's grace .

STEP 3 - The Throne of Grace

Invite a volunteer to read Hebrews 4:15-16 aloud .

As a group, **list** aloud every description of Jesus found in these verses .

Ask: *According to Hebrews 4:15-16, what do we receive when we ask?*

Read Revelation 6:16-17 and Isaiah 6:5 aloud, explaining that God's throne can be a source of grace and mercy, a source of wrath and judgment, and the center of holiness, depending upon the soul of the person approaching it.

Read aloud the two paragraphs that begin, *"This invitation is a striking contrast, . . ."* from Day Two .

Ask: *Which of these Scriptures speaks loudly to you today?*

STEP 4 - The Word of Grace

Invite a volunteer to read Acts 20:22-32 aloud . As a group, **consider** how Paul revealed God's grace in these words to his friends from the Ephesian church, particularly in vv. 24,32.

Stress that God's Word is how we come to understand and appropriate God's grace .

Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and Ephesians 6:17, stressing that this is God's Word, and while the Holy Spirit guides us through it, we are called to use it to know God in truth .

Read aloud the paragraph that begins “*The Bible is more than . . .*” from Day Three.

STEP 5 - The Ministry of Grace

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 12:25 aloud.

Point out that we are to be channels of grace to one another.

Read aloud the third and fourth paragraphs from Day Four.

Engage learners in considering who makes up their “small group” of close, ministering friends, whether one-on-one or in a circle of friends.

Share that we must be willing to be honest, vulnerable, and transparent in order for that small group to minister as God intended.

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 aloud and encourage learners consider how they minister or receive ministry through their relationships.

STEP 6 - Clothed in Grace

Read aloud the opening paragraph of Day Five, and **invite** a volunteer to read Colossians 3:12-14 aloud.

As a group, **use** the commentary to briefly overview the character traits of gratitude, contentment, humility, forbearance, and forgiveness.

Instruct learners to write a checkmark next to each item if they have displayed that trait recently, an X if they should have but didn’t display it, or both if that’s applicable.

Challenge learners to acknowledge these traits in others as they yield to live them more fully.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Point out that this concludes our study of *Transforming Grace* by Jerry Bridges.

Ask: *What insight or wisdom will you take with you from this book?*

Challenge learners to continue singing the hymns of grace in their daily worship time or to learn them if they don’t already.

Sing “Amazing Grace” together, and close with a circle prayer, open for individuals to respond to God’s grace in individual lives, your group, your church, and in families.

Close in prayer.

One at a Time



We all want to change the world. But it's easy to get caught up in the everyday life, and the question seems to get louder: Am I making any difference in this world? Most people measure the difference a person makes by how many and how much. How many friends, followers, and comments someone gets on social media determines if they're an influencer. How much money and power someone has is how we gauge a person's impact. Maybe there's another way to make a difference, and we're missing it.

Jesus made the biggest difference in all of history, yet he didn't follow anything like the formula society gives us. He grew up in a poor family and worked as a carpenter. He never traveled far from his small hometown. So, how did Jesus make such a difference in this world? If we study his life, there's one particular phrase that captures how Jesus had such an impact, and I believe it's how he wants to use us to make a difference: one at a time.

Jesus didn't have thousands of Facebook friends. He didn't have a YouTube channel. Think back on your life to some of the conversations that influenced you the most. Did they come from a stage or a table? Were they through a podcast or over a cup of coffee? I'm not saying one is wrong and the other is right. And I'm not saying God doesn't use both.

But I am saying that maybe we make changing the world more complex than it really is. Maybe we need to stop leaning into the usual ways this world tells us to measure difference-making and start leaning into the unexpected ways God wants to use us. Making a difference isn't measured by a viral post or a name on a building. Making a difference isn't dependent on what's in your bank account or who's in your contacts. Want to make a difference? Focus on the one. That's it. That's the secret of the way of Jesus. One at a time.



ABOUT THE WRITERS

Kyle Idleman is senior pastor at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, one of the ten largest churches in America, where he speaks to more than thirty thousand people each weekend. He is the bestselling and award-winning author of *Not a Fan* as well as *Grace Is Greater*, *Gods at War*, and *The End of Me*. He is a frequent speaker for national conventions and in influential churches across the country. Kyle and his wife, DesiRae, have four children and live on a farm, where he doesn't do any actual farming.

Amy Summers wrote the personal activities, discussion prompts, and teaching plans for this study. She graduated from Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: Jesus focused on one person at a time .

Focus on this goal: See and love people the way Jesus did—one person at a time .

Key Bible Passage: Matthew 9:36

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Guide the group to brainstorm what people might think they need in order to change the world .

Point out Jesus didn't have money and power . He changed the world one person at a time and that's how He wants to use believers to make a difference as well . Read the last paragraph of the Introduction aloud .

State: *This is not something we can do on our own. But Jesus, who focuses on each of us one at a time, can empower us to focus on the one and change our world. Let's lean into that truth as we study and seek to imitate the Jesus way.*

STEP 2 - The Way of Jesus

Invite participants to pull out their cell phones and open their camera app .

Ask: *Which camera options do you use most — photo, video, pano?*

Declare: *When Jesus walked this earth He didn't pan out because He already knew the big picture. He zoomed in because, "The only thing that mattered was the person standing in front of him."*

Discuss Day One, activity 1 . Evaluate what may keep us from really seeing people .

State: *Earlier I asked you to pull out your cell phones, now I'm asking all of us to put away our phones because they are one of the major reasons we no longer see people.*

Ask participants if they agree with you and why .

Relate the author's testimony about his strategy for dealing with people .

Invite volunteers to share responses to Day One, activity 2 .

STEP 3 - Zoom In

Declare: *If we want to change our strategies, we need to do what the author did and turn to God's Word and let it change us.*

Request participants skim Luke 8:22-39 and state two major miracles the disciples experienced . Discuss Day Two, activity 1 .

Ask: *How do you feel about crowds and why?* Invite someone to read Luke 8:46-48 .

Ask: *What can you learn from Jesus about how to respond to crowds?*

State: *If asked His favorite option on His camera app, Jesus probably would have said portrait mode. He zoomed in on this woman who was at the bottom of the social scale. For the moment everything else, even Jairus with His great need, blurred and faded into the background.*

Ask a volunteer to read the Day Two paragraphs that begin with "It's the next verse . . ." and "It was like the words."

Relate from Day Two various instances from Scripture where Jesus made sure no one went unnoticed . Invite responses to Day Two, activity 2 .

STEP 4 - What Jesus Saw

Assert: *If we're going to answer Jesus's call, we may need to change the way we see people.*

Request participants consider Day Three, activity 1 (depending on the intimacy level of your group, some may want to answer the questions aloud) .

Refer back to Luke 8:48 and **ask:** *What did Jesus see when He zoomed in on the woman.*

Invite someone to read Matthew 9:36 .

Ask: *How is it possible to have compassion when confronted with noisy, needy crowds of people?*

Read the author's comment, *"Compassion comes when we see the crowd one person at a time. One daughter, one son at a time."*

STEP 5 - In Then Through

Request a volunteer read Mark 1:29-34.

Determine how we see Jesus focusing on one at a time.

Analyze what we might do after a busy day like that. Instruct participants to silently read Mark 1:35 and state what Jesus did.

Read Mark 1:36-37. Discuss Day Four, activity 1.

Guide the group to explore the "in then through" approach to making a difference.

Discuss Day Four, activity 2. **Read** the final paragraph of Day Four.

STEP 6 - Dirty Work

Note the author used Jesus's parable of the soils to illustrate the "in then through" approach to making a difference in the world.

Invite someone to read Matthew 13:3-8.

Determine what has to happen for seeds to produce fruit.

Point out: *God does a lot of work in the dark and the dirt before we ever see any fruit.*

Indicate how that's evident in world-changers like Moses, Joseph, and David.

Urge participants to prayerfully consider Day Five, activity 1.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Encourage participants to use portrait mode this week.

Say: *First zoom in on your relationship with God asking Him to work in then through you. Then look for people that others often do not notice. Let everything else that's vying for your attention fade and just focus on that one person. Start at home with your family, then expand to people at work, church, school, and community.*

Pray Day Five, activity 2 as a corporate prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: God's will calls us to love others intentionally .

Focus on this goal: Love others as Jesus loved—placing their needs above our own, embracing proximity, and responding to compassion with action .

Key Bible Passage: John 13:34

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Guide the group to determine good strategies for goal setting .

Explain the acronym SMART is used to set goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timebound .

Invite a volunteer to read the “Focus on this Goal” statement” for this session .

Ask: *Would you say that's a SMART goal and why? This session explores how believers can attain that goal in specific, measurable ways.*

STEP 2 - The Power of Proximity

Declare: *Loving others as Jesus loved is a smart goal because it means we leave this life with few regrets.*

Read the first two paragraphs of Day One . **State:** *The map to the adventure of God's will is drawn in John 13.*

Read John 13:3-5,34 . **Determine** a measurable way Jesus loved the apostles . Discuss Day One, activity 1 .

Assert: *Jesus never gives us a command He does not empower us to obey. We can attain the goal of loving others as Jesus loved by relying on Christ's love for us. The proximity principle is a way we can measure whether we are*

attaining that goal. Because Jesus chose to be near us, we can choose to be near others.

Consider reasons our instincts may tend toward distance rather than proximity.

STEP 3 - Going Far to Get Close

Point out Jesus went out of the way to be in proximity with the ones who were difficult, draining, and different.

Read Mark 4:1 and 35-36. **Ask:** *How would you have felt about getting into that boat if you were a disciple?*

Invite responses to Day Two, activity 1.

Read Mark 5:9-20. **Ask:** *How did Jesus see that one man differently than everyone else did?* Discuss Day Two, activity 2.

Consider risks of embracing proximity.

State: *One strategy for dealing with the risk of loving as Jesus loved is balancing risk vs. reward.*

Declare: *Rather than fearing the risk, we should fear the regrets of missing God's adventure for our lives.*

STEP 4 - Following Jesus to the One

Ask: *Do you think loving as Jesus loved was easier or less risky for the early Christians than it is for us today? Explain.*

Declare: *The first disciples were so captivated with Jesus's love for them that they were empowered to follow Him to love on the one.*

Read Acts 8:4-8 and 26. **Consider** why it wouldn't have made sense for Philip to leave Samaria.

Invite a volunteer to read Acts 8:27-38.

Guide the group to consider risks and rewards of Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch.

Read the Day Three paragraph that begins, "Just like Philip, if we follow....."

Invite responses to Day Three, activities 1 and 2.

STEP 5 - Compassion in Action

Note: *According to the SMART strategy, goals aren't just to be specific, measurable, and attainable, they are to be relevant and timebound.*

Declare: *Emotions we may feel about hurting people are not relevant if we don't do something with those emotions in a timely manner. If we're going to love as Jesus loved, we need to activate the "power of and."*

Discuss Day Four, activity 1.

Evaluate whether the opposite of compassion is hatred or apathy.

Declare: *The first step in overcoming indifference and responding with compassionate action is eyes-open prayer.*

Read the last paragraph of Day Four.

Invite responses to Day Four, activity 2.

STEP 6 - Lens of Compassion

State: *We can pray for Jesus to open our eyes to people in need and to see them through the lens of compassion as He did for a grieving woman.*

Invite someone to read Luke 7:11-15.

Point out Jesus could tell the woman, "Don't cry" because He knew what He was about to do. Although that is not an appropriate way for us to respond to a grieving person, we can still learn some valuable lessons from this passage. Discuss Day Five, activity 1.

Analyze whether or not the following scenarios illustrate true compassion: You see a Feed the Children commercial on TV and ache for those poor children. You hear of an instance of racial injustice and feel outrage. You hit the like button for a cause on social media.

Ask: *Are we compassionate because we feel compassion? When are we truly compassionate? How can we possibly do something about all the overwhelming needs in our world?*

Invite a volunteer to read the last paragraph of Day Five.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Read once more the "Focus on this Goal" statement for this session and emphasize this goal is attainable because Jesus has loved us in this same way.

Close by praying: *Jesus, help us see people the way you see people, feel what you feel for them, and take the opportunities You give us to do something.*

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: Jesus calls us to demonstrate love, grace, and forgiveness toward others, even when it is counterintuitive or uncomfortable .

Focus on this goal: Jesus treated people with compassion and grace without condoning sin .

Key Bible Passages: Matthew 5:41

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Ask: *What's the longest walk/run you've ever taken? If you do take long walks/runs, what motivates you to keep going?*

Note: *Some people are motivated by telling themselves to go just one more block or one more mile.*

State: *When it comes to loving others one at a time, Jesus calls us to go that extra mile.*

STEP 2 - God's Dream

Consider common understandings of the phrase "go the extra mile ."

Explain that phrase comes from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount which can "help us better understand the one at a time life ."

Discuss Day One, activity 1 . **Read** the statement, "What Jesus teaches..... "

Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 5:13 . **Determine** uses of salt .

Explain: *In the ancient world salt could become stale or contaminated with impurities and would be spread on the ground to kill unwanted vegetation.*

Emphasize: *Jesus does not throw us away if we go through a time when we lose our influence and usefulness; His mercy and grace for the one includes us. However, our goal should be to "stay salty."*

Discuss Day One, activity 2. **Invite** someone to read the last paragraph of Day Two.

STEP 3 - Default Setting

Explain Jesus's "You have heard it was saidbut I say" format in the Sermon on the Mount (Day One), then **ask** a volunteer to read Matthew 5:38-42.

Analyze how Jesus is calling us to change our default setting.

Read Scenario #1 and evaluate what Jesus is and is not saying.

Emphasize Jesus is not talking about domestic abuse.

Urge those who are experiencing or know of domestic abuse to seek or offer help.

Read Scenario #2.

Explain the Jews were forbidden to sue someone for a coat because they were used for blankets and considered a basic human right. Consider what the unbelieving world might think if Christians consistently gave up their rights for others.

Read Scenario #3, pointing out the word "forces" as opposed to "requests."

Explain Roman soldiers could legally force a Jew to carry their heavy pack for one mile.

Ask: *What might that soldier think if a Christian cheerfully carried that pack an extra mile? What might it look like specifically in our lives to go the extra mile with difficult people?*

Discuss Day Two, activity 2 **State:** *We obey Jesus's teachings when we rely on His power and follow His example.*

Consider how Jesus didn't just teach, but lived, Matthew 5:38-42.

STEP 4 - Choosing Condemnation

Note that Jesus models how to respond to mean people and to sinful people. **Discuss** Day Three, activity 1.

Note: *We might feel sorry for the woman and indignant about the religious leaders as we read this biblical account, but we must ask ourselves who we would most be like if we were in this situation.*

Invite volunteers to share responses to Day Three, activity 2.

Note: *Like the religious leaders, we might find ourselves dealing with some self-righteous anger. Perhaps we're angry because of what someone has done to us.*

Ask: *Why must we learn from Jesus how to handle condemnation and anger?*

Refer to the last paragraph of Day Three as the group discusses that question .

STEP 5 - Releasing Rocks

Guide the group to read and discuss the first two paragraphs of Day Four .

Declare: *Anger is such a serious matter that it's the first of Jesus's "You have heard . . . but I say" topics in the Sermon on the Mount.*

Invite someone to read Matthew 5:21-22 .

Evaluate why Jesus makes such a big deal about anger . **Use** Day Four, activity 2 to add to that discussion, noting that Paul put anger on par with immorality and evil desires (Col . 3:5-8) .

Point out Jesus defused the anger and condemnation in John 8 with calm compassion; He didn't angrily condemn the woman or the religious leaders .

Ask someone to read the last paragraph of Day Four .

STEP 6 - A New Command

State: *We are called to be like Jesus, to go the extra mile in offering compassionate grace and forgiveness one difficult sinful person at a time. But we've got some challenges to overcome in doing so.*

Discuss Grace Challenge #1 and ways to overcome it .

Consider why Grace Challenge #2 is so challenging .

Ask: *How can we compassionately accept sinners without accepting their sin? Why might that require us to go the extra mile?*

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Acknowledge going the extra mile is not easy; but it's possible when we walk that extra mile with Jesus one person at a time .

Encourage participants this week to choose to love as Jesus loves one difficult person and one annoying situation at a time .

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: We are called to bring joy, build connections, and express love one at a time through intentional acts .

Focus on this goal: You can create opportunities to demonstrate the love of Christ .

Key Bible Passages: John 13:35

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Guide the group to list what makes a good party . **Note** some people may say a good party is one they don't have to go to .

Explain this session challenges believers to have parties as it addresses practical ways we can live out the “one-at-a time” principles examined in the first three sessions .

Ask a volunteer to read the main point of this session statement .

Declare: *We can do that one party, one word, and one loving expression at a time.*

STEP 2 - Invitations with Purpose

Ask: *How do you think God feels about parties and why?* **Invite** someone to read Matthew 22:1-2 .

Ask: *Why might throwing some parties bring the kingdom of God to this earth?*

Note parties with a purpose can create and grow relationships, and relationships are how we point people to Jesus . **State:** *Before we start throwing parties, we might need to start going to parties.*

Read the first sentence of Day One . **Invite** someone to read John 2:1-11 .

Consider reasons this was Jesus's first miracle .

Note this should compel us to consider what we bring to social situations. **Urge** participants to consider Day One, activity 1.

Ask: *What would it take for us to become people that others know can bring joy?*

Point out to bring the kingdom of God to earth we also need to extend invitations to parties.

Invite someone to read Luke 5:27-32. Use Day One to explore how believers can throw Oikos and Xenos parties. **Draw attention** to Day One, activity 2.

STEP 3 - Breaking Barriers

State: *We can make an eternal difference one party at a time and one word at a time. In Luke 7 we can see how Jesus combined the two and made an eternal difference with words at a party.*

Read Luke 7:36-50 or **summarize** that passage using remarks from Day Two. **Evaluate** the main concern of the Pharisees, Jesus, and the woman.

Discuss Day Two, activity 1. **Ask** a volunteer to read the last paragraph of Day Two. Discuss Day Two, activity 2.

STEP 4 - Speaking Words of Life

State: *The words we say are crucial in loving one at a time like Jesus did, so we need to know what kinds of words to speak.*

Read the first italicized heading in Day Three. **Invite** someone to read Ephesians 4:29.

Discuss Day Three, activity 1. **Invite** volunteers to share affirming words that have been words of life to them.

Read the next three italicized headings.

Ask: *Which of these words are most difficult for you to say? How can we overcome those difficulties?* **Note** one way we can overcome those difficulties is by having a plan.

Relate the author's plan that might help bring real change. **Encourage** participants to consider Day Three, activity 2 every day this week.

STEP 5 - Loving the Untouchable

Ask the group whether they think it is easier to say they love someone or show that person love.

Declare: *Jesus conveyed love with more than words. He loved the unlovable with one tangible expression at a time.*

Say Day Four, activity 1. **Use** the Day Four remarks to emphasize the leper's dire situation and how radical it was for Jesus to touch him.

Ask: *What did Jesus reveal about Himself when He healed the leper? When He touched the leper?*

Explore how believers today can offer people the healing power of touch.

Acknowledge love is healing but love is also challenging. **Draw attention** to Day Four, activity 2.

STEP 6 - Love the Hard to Love

Point out two questions can help us with the challenge of loving the unlovely.

Request someone read the first bolded question from Day Five. **Invite** two volunteers to read Romans 5:8-10 and Romans 8:38-39.

Ask: *How has God loved us?* **Discuss** Day Five, activity 1.

Examine how considering the question "What would it be like?" can help us love the hard to love.

Say: *There comes a point when we must stop talking about love and reach out and express love.*

Read Day Five, activity 2, inviting volunteers to respond.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Say: *We can create opportunities to demonstrate the love of Jesus. We can do so individually as we plan ways to speak affirming words and express love in tangible ways. We can also create opportunities as a community of believers. We can throw a party and invite others to join us.*

Guide the group to brainstorm party plans, including a time, place, and who to invite.

Close in prayer.

After the Session

Communicate with some key group members to create a team to implement the party plans you discussed in Step 7.

Leader Guide

The main point of this session is: God can help you overcome fear, excuses, and relational barriers by leading people from superficial interactions to personal encounters with Him .

Focus on this goal: Follow Jesus's example of loving others intentionally, trusting God to guide conversations and produce results .

Key Bible Passage: John 4:13-14

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Invite those who remember the TV show *Fear Factor* to state the main premise of this game show . **Clarify** this show challenged contestants to face some of their greatest fears, including eating disgusting items, being covered in bugs, or being submerged in water .

Ask: *If there was a Fear Factor for Christians, what fears might we be challenged to face?*

Invite someone to read the main point of this lesson statement .

STEP 2 - One Conversation at a Time

State: *Some believers fear “Jesus conversations” but we must allow Jesus to help us overcome that fear because influence comes through conversations. Note the Bible records fifteen times Jesus spoke to crowds, and forty times Jesus had one-on-one conversations. One of those times is in John 4.*

Discuss Day One, activity 1 . **Guide** the group to explore reasons this conversation should have never happened .

Invite responses to Day One, activity 2 . **Explore** ways believers can overcome those reasons, using the remarks in Day One to add to the conversation .

Read John 4:4. **Evaluate** why Jesus had to go through Samaria.

Analyze how we can determine things we “have” to do or places we “have” to go because God has a conversation waiting for us.

Urge participants to accept the challenge to ask God for divine appointments. **Ask** a volunteer to read the last paragraph of Day One.

STEP 3 - The Art of Asking

Ask: *According to Jesus’s example in John 4:7, what is a really good conversation starter?*

Analyze the value of asking people questions.

Consider the kinds of questions that are, and are not, good ways to open conversations.

Discuss Day Two, activity 1. **Analyze** what Jesus did in John 4:10.

Ask: *Why might turning the conversation from superficial to spiritual be a real fear factor? How do we get over that fear?*

Recall the steps mentioned in Day Two, activity 1. **Read** the last paragraph of Day Two. **Discuss** Day Two, activity 2.

STEP 4 - From Spiritual to Personal

Ask: *At what point in this conversation with the woman do you think Jesus got really radical?* **Consider** what we can learn from Jesus’s example in John 4:16 that we might (or might not use) in our one at a time conversations.

Point out Jesus modeled the necessity of moving the conversation from the spiritual to the personal. **Analyze** why that’s necessary.

Explore ways we can make the conversation personal without being judgmental or condemning.

Note: *Even if our attitude while getting personal is compassionate, people will probably get defensive.*

Ask: *How did the woman display her defensiveness.*

Discuss Day Three, activity 1. **Acknowledge:** *The prospect of being asked those questions can be frightening. So how can we overcome that fear?*

Use Day Three remarks to add to the discussion.

Read the Day Three paragraph that begins with “Jesus then turned to her and said ...”

Summarize from John 4:28-41 what resulted from this conversation .

Discuss Day Three, activity 2 .

STEP 5 - Breaking Bread

Note: *Many of Jesus's one at a time stories happen over food.* **Discuss** Day Four, activity 1 . **Analyze** how people, unfortunately even Christians, destroy unity and create walls of hostility .

Ask: *How can a dinner table tear down walls of hostility?* **Invite** someone to read Luke 19:1-10 . **Examine** why the Jews were hostile to Zacchaeus .

Explore how Jesus broke down the walls with this “wee little man .” **Invite** responses to Day Four, activity 2 .

STEP 6 - One Need at a Time

Invite volunteers to share some of the most impactful “one at a time” principles they have gained over the course of this study .

Note: *Day Five identifies some obstacles that might prevent us from living out those principles.*

Ask if participants have ever encountered Obstacle #1 .

Briefly summarize Matthew 13:53–14:21 by explaining that Jesus was rejected by the people in His hometown, then when His cousin John the Baptist was murdered He tried to get alone only to be followed by a huge crowd whom He miraculously fed .

Request adults silently read Matthew 14:23 and **state** what kept Jesus from caving in to compassion fatigue .

Read the Day Five paragraph that begins with “Remember, before God does his work...” **Guide** the group to identify and discuss Obstacles 2-4 .

Discuss Day Five, activity 2 .

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Request participants prayerfully consider: *Who is new, left out, or just lonely that God has put in your sphere of influence? How can you follow Jesus's example of loving that person intentionally?*

Urge them to pray each day, “God, who do you want to love through me today,” and then watch for and take advantage of divine opportunities to engage in spiritual conversations that point people to Jesus .

Close in prayer.