



## Growth Group Discussion Questions

### 1. Generous – grace in action

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

1. *In your own words, describe what you understand by the word 'grace'?*
2. The word 'grace' is repeated four times in this passage: verse 1, 4 (favour is the same word as 'grace'), 6 and 7. **Discuss why you think Paul stresses grace so much when he actually wants the Corinthian church to give more money. From what Paul says in this passage, what is a good indication that you have truly grasped grace?**
3. **Following on from the previous question, what is the great danger of motivating people to do something good without going the 'grace-driven' method?**
4. At a church people are encouraged to give money and then wait to see what blessings God will give them. They are encouraged to share stories of how their giving led to blessings – in short, how their giving turned into their getting. **Discuss whether this kind of thinking lines up with grace-driven generosity.**
5. Bono is the lead singer of one of the greatest boy bands of all time: U2. In an interview this is what he said about grace: "You see, at the centre of all religions is the idea of Karma. You know, what you put out comes back to you: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, or in physics—in physical laws—every action is met by an equal or an opposite one. It's clear to me that Karma is at the very heart of the universe. I'm absolutely sure of it. And yet, along comes this idea called grace to upend all that "as you reap, so you will sow" stuff. Grace defies reason and logic. Love interrupts, if you like, the consequences of your actions, which in my case is very good news indeed, because I've done a lot of stupid stuff. I'd be in big trouble if Karma was going to finally be my judge. I'd be in deep s---. It doesn't excuse my mistakes, but I'm holding out for grace. **Why do you think Christianity is so unique and why do we find it so hard to grasp grace?**
6. John Newton (author of Amazing Grace) taught that Christians only go from infancy in the faith to maturity as they increasingly learn to live by grace. Newton says that as baby Christians, we know that we are saved by grace and that Jesus is our Saviour but actually and psychologically we function as if something else is our Saviour (our good works or our religious performance etc.) We don't really know in the depths of our hearts that we are loved and accepted. We rest our assurance on our bible reading and prayer. Spiritual maturity begins when we finally grasp and learn absolute dependence on God's undeserved goodness to us; we constantly gaze on the glory of God in Jesus Christ; we find total resignation in the full sufficiency that is in Jesus Christ; we grow in depth of understanding of our own sin and unattractiveness to God and yet at the same time in

depth of understanding and joy of the certainty of His grace and love for us in Jesus Christ; and we become truly single-focused on God's glory as our aim, desire and absolute joy. ***Discuss where you think you may be in Christian Growth. Share some practical ways we can help each other to progress towards maturity.***

## **Leaders Notes**

1. Up to the Growth Group.
2. This study kicks off our new series 'Generous' in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. The key issue in this passage, 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 is that grace is seen in generosity. Grace overflows and the 'overflow' is being generous. If we get grace right, everything else will follow. So a good indication that you have truly been gripped by grace is that you will be generous. Someone who is not generous shows they have not been 'graced'.
3. The great danger of getting people to do things without grace is that their hearts remain unchanged. Where the heart is not overhauled by grace people will do good things but still remain devoted to themselves, still remain proud, still remain fearful, still remain selfish, and every other sin. So, I might stop stealing not because I love God, but because I don't want to get caught. I might be generous not because I think God has been generous to me, but because
4. Of course this kind of thinking goes against grace driven generosity. Its wrong because 1. It gets God wrong. It teaches that God gives when He gets. This is bordering on blasphemy. 2. Its wrong because it leaves people's hearts selfish. Whichever way you boil it down, they are actually giving in order to get and so, logically, they are actually giving to themselves. Grace driven giving is when we are generous because God has already been generous to us.
5. Grace is what makes Christianity absolutely unique. Take grace away and Christianity becomes like any other religion. So, if Jesus died for us just as an example for us to follow, or, if Jesus died for us just as a demonstration of God's love for us, we rip the heart out of grace. If Jesus was just an example to me, then it's still up to me to copy him and save myself. If Jesus was just a demonstration of God's love for me (a weird demonstration), then God is just showing off. But, if Jesus died bearing the punishment I deserve, and rises again to give me His righteousness, then grace becomes a reality. Grace is hard to grasp because its supernatural. Its not natural. It comes from outside of nature. In nature, the strongest survive. You only ever get what you give. This is still true in nature today. But grace is supernatural. You get what you don't deserve. In fact, you get the opposite of what you deserve. It's hard to grasp grace because by nature we keep reverting back to 'You only get what you deserve' mentality. Even where people grasp grace intellectually, they still often live by works not grace (see the next question).
6. Up to the Growth Group.