

life group study guide

GRACE IN. GRACE OUT. | Timothy 1

September 16, 2012



Introduction:

- Today's topic is Grace. Mercy. Two sides to the same coin. Growing up, I was told that Grace is receiving something we don't deserve, where Mercy is not receiving something (as in a punishment) we do. My dad was never one to show much of either. Rules were black and white in our house—not much room for mistakes, and we came to see my father as someone who enjoyed punishing us. Now, as a parent, I now know that our view was skewed, and I'm sure he didn't enjoy punishing us. But, truth be told, he didn't go out of his way to offer grace or mercy either. Except for one time. My little sister and I were 7 and 8 respectively, and had the brilliant idea to throw rocks over cars as they drove past our house. I know...not very smart. But, at that age, it seemed fun. This is a loooong time ago, so when one woman's car got hit, she got out of the car, grabbed our arms, and proceeded to shake us, yell at us, and I was sure, hit us. My dad happened to be home that afternoon and came tearing out of our house. "You get your hands off my daughters!" I heard him yell. After yelling for us to get in the house, he let the woman know what he thought of what she was doing—and I'm sure heard her story of what we were doing. I knew we were in for it for sure. He returned to find us crying in our room. I was sure we were going to get the spanking to end all spankings. I think we may have cried through our explanations and stammered something like "don't spank us Daddy!" He was silent for a few moments. And then he said, "Girls, your actions deserve punishment. However, today, I'm going to take your punishment." (*Remember, this is a long time ago, so no judgement, please...*) He handed us the wooden spoon used for spankings, got down on his knees, and leaned against the bed so we could give him the spankings we deserved. I remember sobbing and begging him not to make us do a spanking—either way—but he maintained that a punishment had to be meted out. We cried all the way through it. He hugged us.

We understood Grace and Mercy that day.

Check It Out:

The Apostle Paul was in the same boat. He came to a place where he understood his absolutely depravity. He experienced Grace. And, in response, he chose to passionately pursue any opportunity to share that Grace with others. Before we dig into his past, let's look at a snapshot of his passion as he writes to Timothy, his son-in-the-faith, and partner on many church planting missions.

Read I Timothy 1:12-17.

Q: How does Paul describe himself in this passage? (see vs 13, 15, 16)

Q: For what reason did Paul say he was shown mercy? (see vs 16, 17)

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Dig In:

Paul and Timothy have quite a history together. Timothy accompanied Paul on several church-planting/mission expeditions. Paul also traveled with other young missionaries, including Silas and Titus. Timothy would have had plenty of opportunities to see or hear about Paul's experiences, thus, the weight of Paul's words to Timothy in this epistle land with meaningful weight.

Let's check out Paul's Grace-giving opportunities as he began the church in Philippi.

Divide into 3 groups, and read these passages. Reconvene and share what you learned. Answer these questions:

Q: With whom did Paul share? What were the circumstances of this person? How did he/she react? What came of Paul's passionate message? Did growth happen in this city because of the grace shown this person?

Read Acts 16:11-15, 16:16-21, 16:22-34.

The very first converts to Christianity in Philippi were a well-to-do fashion designer, a demon-possessed slave girl, and a jailer. God poured out His grace on very different people. And, Paul was obedient and open enough to notice the opportunities for that grace-pouring.

Let's read a little of Paul's thoughts regarding his Philippian friends.

Read Philippians 1:1-6, 9-11, 18b-21, 27-28

Q: What was Paul's overwhelming emotion regarding his church family in Philippi?

Q: In what was he encouraging them?

Q: What was he encouraging them to do?

(See 1:9, 21, 27 (conduct yourselves worthy of the gospel of Christ, and content as one man in the fight for the gospel.)

Take It Home

Let's revisit those first verses we read—the ones Paul wrote to Timothy.

Read I Timothy 1:15-17.

“For that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life...”

The challenge for me is this: Is my life one that 1. reflects my gratitude for the grace shown? And, 2. looks for opportunities to share that grace with others—no matter how inconvenient it may be? Or, how messy it may get in sharing?

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Q: Do we take time to recount all the ways we've been shown grace?

Let's do that now. *Make a list* (white board, chalk board, big paper) of ways we've been shown grace.

Q: The next step is to think about those people with whom we come into contact that need to know about—or be shown—Grace. *Make your own personal list.*

Q: Just as Paul encouraged his Philippian brothers/sisters to content as one man for the sake faith of the gospel, we can do the same. *Share with at least one other person today* how you will show grace this week.

Q: *Read Ephesians 2:8-10.* For what reason are we saved by grace? How are you doing with those good works prepared in advance for you? My personal challenge is that I often fall into a rut, or choose the ones I can do out of habit.

Q: How do you feel God prompting you to respond to this Grace challenge today?

Prayer: Gather in small groups and pray specifically for each person by name to be strengthened in the knowledge of the grace shown him/her, and impassioned in the understanding that we're called to show grace to those who need it. Pray for courage, opportunities, patience and awareness, whether these opportunities come under our own roof, or out of the blue.

Be fearless! Philippians 1:28 reminds us that we are not to be frightened by those who may oppose us, because we will be saved and they will be destroyed!

Grace In. Grace Out. In abundance.

Extra Reading:

Acts 16, Philippians 1