

# THE GRACE OF GOD

*WHAT IS GRACE?*

## BIBLE STUDY



Grace is one of the most commonly used words when we seek to describe our Christian faith.

The apostle Paul was blown away by God's grace, which radically changed his life.

In this study we will be looking at one of his famous outpourings in a letter he sent to the early church in Rome.

### STARTER:

How would you describe God's love to someone from a different faith or no faith background?



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### Read Romans 5 : 1-11

Look over the following verses, put together a picture of what we are given because of God's grace. Think about what we have been given; what we have now; and what we have assurance of for the future.

*If you find some of the words hard to understand in an everyday context, you may like to look the passage up in the Message which gives a wonderful fresh translation.*

'We are justified and have peace with God - we have access into grace by faith'

v 1-2

'God's love is poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit'

v5

'Christ died for the ungodly and intervenes for the powerless'

v6-8

'We are saved by Jesus' life - grace is because of Jesus'

v10

'Even though we are sinners, we can be reconciled with God'

v11

### THINK IT THROUGH

- How do we know that God loves us, from this passage?
- When we stand before God, why would God accept us?

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## GOING DEEPER

Jesus told many stories that help us to understand grace. Look at one of the most familiar stories that Jesus told. Imagine how marvellous and yet how shocking this story would have been to his listeners.

What do you think Jesus wanted his listeners to understand about God our Father?

### Read Luke 15 : 11-24

Find places in the story where we see aspects of grace that are wonderfully ours today:

- It's only because of Jesus
- We access it by faith
- It is for the forgiveness of sin
- It achieves reconciliation and access to God
- It is for sinners



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*WHAT IS GRACE?*

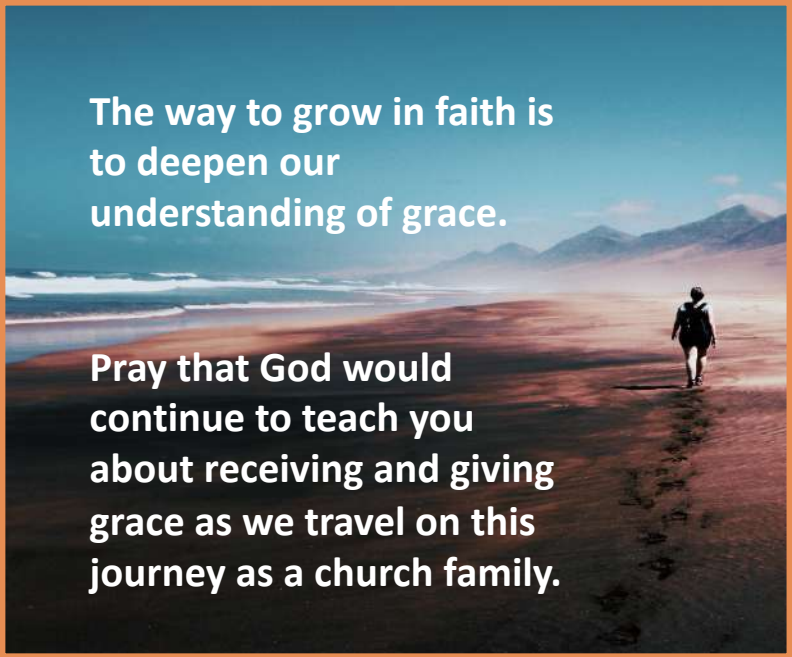
## REFLECTION

Tim Keller said:

'God sees us as we are, loves us as we are, and accepts us as we are. But by His grace, He does not leave us as we are'.

Considering what you have learned, think about:

- What was needed in order for the prodigal son to return to his Father? **(Luke 15 v 19, 21)**
- What would you say to someone who said that feeling unworthy **(v21)** is incompatible with our understanding of a God of grace?



The way to grow in faith is to deepen our understanding of grace.

Pray that God would continue to teach you about receiving and giving grace as we travel on this journey as a church family.

# THE GRACE OF GOD

FREE GRACE

## BIBLE STUDY



### STARTER:

*'By instinct, I feel I must do something in order to be accepted. Grace sounds a startling note of contradiction, of liberation, and every day I must pray anew for the ability to hear its message.'*

***Philip Yancey - 'What's so amazing about grace?'***

**Why is it so much easier to 'do something in order to be accepted' than to understand grace as a free gift from God?**



# THE GRACE OF GOD

FREE GRACE

## BIBLE STUDY



### Read Ephesians 2 : 1-10

#### Verses 1-3

What did our lives look like before we were rescued from our life of sin? .

Why do you think Paul uses such strong imagery as he describes how we lived before God had mercy on us?

#### Verses 4-5

How were we rescued from this way of life?

#### Verse 5

What does it mean to be 'alive with Christ'?

#### Verses 6-7

How do these verses contrast with verses 1-3?

#### Verses 8-9

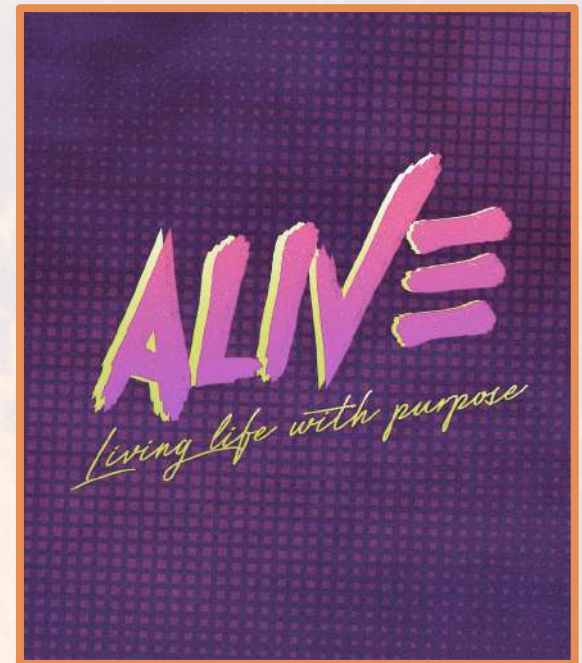
These verses are key to our understanding of grace as 'God's undeserved favour'.

What do they teach us specifically about grace?

#### Verse 10

Why were we saved by grace?

What might this look like in our daily lives?



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## BIBLE STUDY



Previously we looked at the first part of the parable of the Prodigal Son. Today we're going to look at his older brother and what we can learn from his reaction in the face of the outrageous grace shown by his father to his rebellious brother.

### Read Luke 15 : 25-32

- Why was the older brother so upset with the celebrations?
- What specifically do we learn about his father in this section of the story?
- What has the older son missed through all his hard work?
- When and how do we act like the older son?

### Return to Ephesians 2 : 1-10

In one of his reflections on grace, CS Lewis quotes St Augustine who said 'God gives where he finds empty hands'.

Lewis went on 'A man whose hands are full of parcels can't receive a gift'.



- Look at **verses 8 and 9** in particular, and think about the older son in the parable, what 'parcels' do you think we are tempted to carry that mean we miss out on the potential fullness of life that God offers? When might we struggle under a heavy yoke of obligation?
- Look again at **verse 3 of Ephesians 2**, why might we find it so hard to 'put all our parcels down'?

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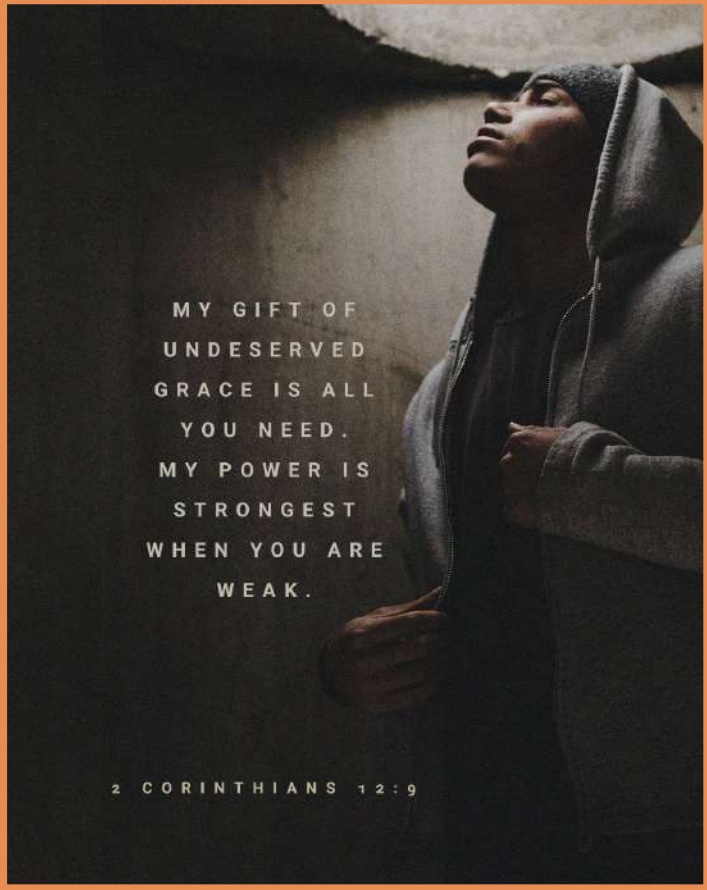
FREE GRACE

# PRAY

*Thank God for his amazing gift of grace and the way that he found us and reached out to us.*

*Ask him to help you to recognise places in your life which are held as closed fists, so that grace is held at bay.*

*Pray that as a church we would hold out the gift of grace to those who come through our doors so that their lives are transformed by Jesus*

A person wearing a grey hoodie and a beanie, looking upwards with a contemplative expression. The background is dark and textured, possibly a wall or a night sky. The text is overlaid on the image.

MY GIFT OF  
UNDESERVED  
GRACE IS ALL  
YOU NEED.  
MY POWER IS  
STRONGEST  
WHEN YOU ARE  
WEAK.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9



# THE GRACE OF GOD

COSTLY GRACE

## BIBLE STUDY



### STARTER:

What are some of the ways that it is costly to live as a believer in Jesus?

Why and when do you think we may avoid talking about the cost involved in following Jesus?

*Although God's gift of underserved favour (grace) is free, it should never appear cheap - that is, grace enjoyed for what it gives us, but with no understanding of what it cost Jesus, or how it transforms our lives.*

An aerial photograph of a river with white water rapids, set against a dark, textured background. The text 'THE GRACE OF GOD RUNS DEEP' is overlaid in white, with each line of text on a thin yellow horizontal bar.

THE GRACE  
OF GOD  
RUNS DEEP

# THE GRACE OF GOD

COSTLY GRACE

## BIBLE STUDY



### Read 1 Corinthians 15 : 1-11

- **In verse 1**, Paul begins this chapter by reminding the believers in the church at Corinth of the gospel that they received and ‘on which you have taken your stand’. What does it mean to receive and take a stand on the gospel?
- **In verse 2**, Paul tells us we are saved ‘if we hold firmly to the word’. Do you think this happens as a one-off or over the course of our lives - or both? How does it happen?
- **Verses 3-8** are an early Christian creed that outlines the key components of the Gospel message.
- Why is it important to understand that the truths of the gospel, as outlined here, are ‘of primary importance’ (**v.3**)? How can we avoid getting distracted by matters of ‘secondary importance’?
- **Verses 9-10** - Why does Paul remind his readers of his past and the part God’s grace has played in who he is now?
- Paul is using this chapter to remind the Corinthians of the core gospel. Why is it so important to continue to remember what the gospel means for us as believers? What is the danger if we forget what it cost Jesus to win our salvation?



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## BIBLE STUDY



Jesus told two parables about the Kingdom of heaven being something that was pursued with great purpose, and which resulted in great riches. *(The Kingdom of Heaven is God's reign over the lives of those who worship him as their King).*

### Read Matthew 13 : 44-46

- What is the treasure in these parables?
- What evidence is there that the man in each parable considered his discovery to be something highly valuable?
- If we consider the good news about Jesus to be valuable, how should we live?
- What price is asked of us if we want to find the treasure? What does this look like?



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COSTLY GRACE

## BIBLE STUDY



*Dietrich Bonhoeffer coined the phrase 'costly grace'. He said 'Above all, it is (costly) grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.'*

- Remind yourselves of the sacrifice that Jesus made **(1 Corinthians 15 v 3)**; and what was won for us by this sacrifice **(v2)**.
- We are not saved by simply mouthing the words that *'Jesus is Lord'* but by a living, active faith, in response to the sacrifice that he made for us.
- As we think through what Jesus did for us, what do you think it looks like to grow in maturity as a believer?



# THE GRACE OF GOD

COSTLY GRACE

PRAY

*Use some of the thoughts and verses from today's study to inspire you to worship Jesus for what he did for us, and to ask forgiveness for times when we lose sight of the treasure of grace.*

EPHESIANS 2:8

**FOR IT IS BY GRACE YOU HAVE  
BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH—  
AND THIS NOT FROM YOURSELVES,  
IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD—**

# THE GRACE OF GOD

AMAZING GRACE

## BIBLE STUDY



### STARTER:

*'I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily suppressed me. The spirit of mourning was taken from me, and I knew what it was to truly rejoice in God my Saviour' (George Whitfield).*

This response to God's grace is one that is reflected in the Psalm we will look at today.

Do you find it easy to be grateful to God?

When do we lose sight of what he has done for us?

A photograph of a waterfall with the text 'THIS IS AMAZING GRACE' overlaid in colorful, multi-colored letters. The text is centered in the upper half of the image, and the waterfall is on the right side. The background is a soft, light blue sky.

THIS IS  
AMAZING  
GRACE

# THE GRACE OF GOD

AMAZING GRACE

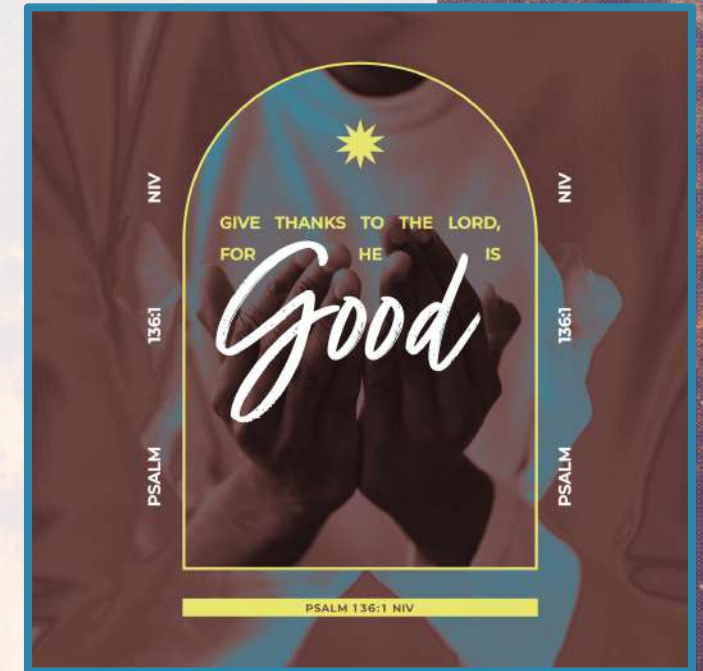
## BIBLE STUDY



### Read Psalm 136

- Look at the verses starting and ending the Psalm. What perspective do you think the Psalmist intends these verses to give as they bookend the Psalm?
- Why do you think it's so important for the Psalmist to remind the people of Israel to give thanks?
  - *Why is it important to us as a church family to give thanks?*
  - *What are some of the ways we do so?*

- The Psalmist remembers God's goodness in three different ways. Find examples of:
  - Who God is
  - What God made
  - How God saves
- Our tendency is to look at God's love from a human perspective. As we spend time reading our Bibles and applying what we learn to our lives, we will see how different God's love is from human love. What picture does this Psalm give us of God's covenant love?
- How does the Psalmist's recollection of God's loving-kindness shape his praise? How can we use this Psalm as a model for our prayers – as individuals and as a home group?



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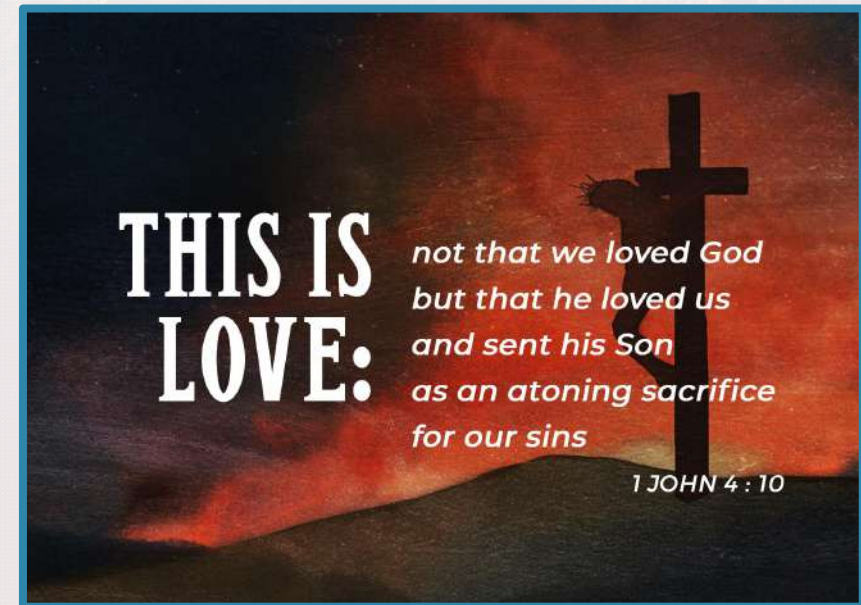
AMAZING GRACE

## BIBLE STUDY



### 'HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER' ... A WHOLE-LIFE RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR FATHER

- The Psalmist recalls tough times as well as times when it's natural to give thanks. He sees God as the one who walks alongside us through everything we go through.
- How can an awareness of God's grace move our hearts, whether things are going well or badly?
- How can your home group encourage someone who is going through a very tough time and is unable to thank God in it?
- Our verse of the year (**1 John 4 :10**) reminds us of God's love. How does it help us that our God became a human and faced the same difficulties as us?
- Look at **verses 23-24** of **Psalm 136**. How is the cross the ultimate demonstration of God's love?





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AMAZING GRACE

**PRAY**

As we come to the end of these studies on God's grace, reflect about what you have learned and where you have been encouraged to push deeper in understanding. Spend time thanking God for his goodness and love. Ask him to learn how to let grace impact your life so that it fills with gratitude.

You may like to begin to keep a prayer diary for 2023, which will help you to record prayers and answers to prayer. This is a great way to see God's loving-kindness at work in our lives.

