

# The Gospel and Me

By Geoff Giesemann

## Introduction

Hearing the Good News, the Gospel, about Jesus and His gift to all humanity is an amazing thing to hear. Many have heard it, yet still many have not. However, just hearing this message does not necessarily mean that, 1. we understand it, and 2. that it changes our lives in any significant way. The message contained in God's Bible is the single most transformative message ever written. It can not only change your life, but it has the potential to change the entire world.

Jesus' influence on history has been so significant that to ignore it is to deny that there is a divine influence moving among us, and that the history of the world has been significantly impacted by Him. Ask yourself, what power changed the Roman Empire in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century? What power caused peace and freedom to begin to move across the world? What influenced individuals to conquer addictions, control their anger, learn to love instead of hate, grant them peace instead of guilt, learn to accept all people as equals, and so much more that time doesn't permit to name. What changes does Jesus need to make in our lives still? God's work to transform people into the image of His Son Jesus is the center of the Bible message. We should all be about spiritual advancement and better know God's will in order to grow spiritually.

This short booklet has as its objective to introduce people to the message of Good News (The Gospel) that **God really does love all people** and how He shows us His love. It also has as its purpose to **revive**, **redefine**, and **restore** the power of the Gospel in the hearts and lives of those who are already Christians. From time to time our walk with God takes a vacation. When it does, so does our commitment to holy living and the desire to be a Godly person. This is why families, who

once were powerful and strong, become weak and begin to break apart. This is why business people get drawn into bad situations or make very poor decisions which destroy their reputations. We all have had similar struggles at one time or another. God is always there. He lifted David out of the gutter. He brought Moses back to Egypt to deliver Israel. Jesus even went and made breakfast for Peter and the other apostles who were on the verge of leaving it all behind and going back to fishing. Sometimes we just need to have a new encounter with God and Jesus to put us back on the road to an incredible purpose and life again.

Join me in this study of six lessons to learn what God has done and is doing for us to save our lives and our souls. It can change a lot. Jesus is calling us to be His disciples. God bless you as you read.

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# Chapter 1: For God So Loved the World

## John 3:16

### Jesus has a talk with a man - John 3: 3-21

There was a church-goin' man who was a spiritual leader. Actually he was a Temple-going man who was a member of the ruling council in Jerusalem. The only position higher was that of Head of the Council. He had to be close to God, don't you think. He had to know all there was to know because he was a **"teacher of the Jews."** But when Jesus came along this man began to listen to what He was saying and saw him performing miracles. He began to wonder, "Who is this guy? Is he the Messiah? Could it be that he really is the one we have all been waiting for?" So one night he sought Jesus out to sit down and ask him a few questions. He got answers alright, but not to his questions. He got answers about himself that he didn't expect.

What are the answers that Jesus and God are trying to give us? Actually the first very important question that God asks us is, **"Do you know that I love you?"**

The obvious answer to that question is YES, God loves me! How do we know? Jesus tells Nicodemus, *"For God so loved the world, (and \_\_\_\_\_, write your name here) that he gave his one and only Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Yes, He does love me and you and everyone ever born. Yes, there is no doubt, and there is more that Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know.

**John 3:3-6** The first thing that Jesus told this ruler of the Jewish people, the teacher of the Law, is that he needed to be born again. Starting over is not the first thing that comes to our mind when we are taking an inventory of our lives, but in God's reality, it is the only way that we can fix all that is broken in our world. Jesus says "be born again," start over. Let God renew and restore what He started on you the day you were born.

This is a divine, holy, and miraculous process. God Himself, through the work of the Holy Spirit, wants to restore you to be a **child of God!** No, we can't do it on our own. No, we are not good enough. No, we aren't smart enough to be a holy person, much less a leader of other people in a spiritual walk. God will take us to this point once we let him make us into a new, born again, child of His.

**John 3:7-8** This process is powerful and mysterious. God is working in the world right now. He didn't leave and go back to heaven when Jesus left. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to stay with us and to be very active in the world and in our lives. As time goes by we can look back on what has taken place in this process and see where He was working. He may have used a child to remind us that God loves us. He could have sent a neighbor to welcome us to the community and introduce us to God. Maybe He delivered us from a terrible accident. There are thousands of ways in which God is moving and we aren't aware of it until later. All of this tells you and me that God is still here and that He most definitely loves us.

**John 3:12-16** Jesus came to do several things, but the most important one was to be lifted up on the cross to die for us. God let him do it. Jesus volunteered for the job, and we are the beneficiaries. There has been no greater expression of love than this. The cross demonstrates the love of God and Jesus!!!

**John 3:17-21** God's objective from all of this activity is to save our souls. Some ideas that many people get oh so wrong are these; "God just wants to punish us all. God wants us to be miserable. Who wants to give up all the fun stuff they are doing?" These and many other false concepts are totally blown away by this passage. Why would a God who hates us want to let men kill his son and use his blood as a payment for all the sinful things we have done? That just doesn't make sense.

## **God's Plan - Ephesians 1:3-6**

Our world is an amazing place. It is unlike any other planet or star that we can observe in our solar system which tells us that the absolute perfection of all of the systems of water, air, seasons, food chains, body systems, planet alignment all scream out, "There is a plan!" "There is a designer." "There is a Maker, and He did all this for you!"

This passage tells us something even deeper and more powerful. Paul is telling us that God built this house for us, but even before He built the house He had a plan for our lives. He also says that He would reach out to us and bless us through **LOVE** in Jesus. Stop and meditate on this for a while. Review this passage and see the things that God planned to give us. Notice the use of the term "adoption." God had a plan and put it into action long before we were made.

## **Before Jesus came to the earth – Genesis 1:26 & Romans 8:28-30**

What does the statement, "Let us make man in Our image and in Our likeness..." mean to you? In Romans 8:29, look at this phrase, "predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." As we read though these two passages we see that there is a special relationship between us and God. It is more than just that we are to obey what he says because He is God. No! It is that God wants us to be the best that we can ever be because we are the best that there is. When we think about what it took to make that happen, the only answer is **Love!**

## **Jesus' decision to leave heaven – Philippians 2:5-11**

After you have read though this passage I want you to see if you can list the things Jesus gave up and went through to come to earth to assume His position as Savior. Talk about a change of lifestyle!!! Notice that it took so much to give up his place in heaven. Once He got here He had to suffer unspeakable treatment, lack of resources, punishment, and so much more. Few people would ever move from their home town to help someone else, much less die on a cross to save strangers.

Again the term, "**For God so loved the world,**" comes pouring out over and over again. Meditate on these truths. How do these things affect you? What do you think about The Father and Jesus now? What does their love and sacrifices mean? How will we respond to that love?

Notice the profound affect that God has had on the world. Do you need that effect in your life? There are some questions about each verse below. If you will, take the time to read them again, maybe twice, and then write out your answers so that you can absorb the full impact of what God is telling us.

## Discipleship Lesson 1 Class Outline

### For God so loved the world

Memory and Meditation Verse: John 3:16

John 3:1-21 Jesus has a personal conversation with Nicodemus. He is concerned about finding out who Jesus really is. Jesus is focused on helping Nicodemus see what he really needs. Life is not just about Jesus or God, it's about us finding out who we are and that we need to come back to God.

Important Points Jesus made:

1. Vs. 3-6 You must be born again of the water and Spirit.
2. Vs. 7-8 God is behind all of this process. It is powerful and mysterious.
3. Vs. 12-16 You should understand that God is in charge of all these things because He loves you.
4. Vs. 17-21 God's objective - Save our souls....

Discussion Questions:

1. What is my true spiritual condition?
2. Do you have a relationship with God? If so, how does God's love for you affect your relationship with Him?
3. Are you running toward God, or away from Him, or maybe you are just in a co-existing state?

God's plan for the world.

Eph. 1:3-6 Before the world was made God made plans to save mankind.

Make a list of the things that God did for you before the world was made.

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Discussion Questions:

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. The term "Adoption" is used. Explain the significance of that word and note that verse 5 actually should begin with the last two words of verse 4.

### **Before Jesus came to earth.**

Genesis 1:26 tells us that we are made in the image of God Himself.

What does this simple statement mean to you? How important is it for you to know who we are? God's child.

Romans 8:28-30 Notice God's plan when He made us in His image. He had the idea that we would become like Him. Children often favor their parents in many ways. We are no different when it comes to our relationship with God. He wants us to look like Him.

How close are you to favoring God?

Is that a question that needs work in your life?

This is the journey we want to begin so that we can become more conformed to God's image and fulfill His plans for our lives.

**The decision by Jesus to come to the earth. Phil. 2:5-11**

Notice that Jesus had things to give up in order to come live among man. He also had to choose the lifestyle he would live as well.

What other decisions had to be made about his time on earth?

How do those decisions affect you?

## Chapter 2: Sin and How to Deal with It

### Romans 3:23

Sin is a word we don't want to hear much about. Yet if we do admit that we have sin, we know that it is very hard to control. What sin by others has hurt you in the past? Unfaithfulness or unkindness of a parent or spouse, anger, jealousy, greed, bloodshed, violence, theft, lies, deceit, lust, the list is endless. Now which sins have we committed. Maybe the list is different, or maybe we have retaliated to give someone back the same thing they gave us. God tells us that except for children we are all guilty, and it is a real problem which every person deals with, many times on a daily basis.

Rom. 6:23 Paul reminds us that sin carries terrible consequences for all of us. Death is just one of them. That can be actual physical death, but especially spiritual death. Sin brings consequences. Some are relatively small, but many are huge. Do you know of someone who has gotten fired from a job because of a very bad decision they made? How many people have experienced at least one divorce in their family? How many people are in jail? Relationships are broken and we can't count the consequences brought on by addictions to different substances. Sin is real and the consequences are even more impacting.

Name some feelings that sin produces in us: Shame, Guilt, Sadness, Anger, Revenge, Lack of self-worth, the need to prove ourselves, etc. How long do these feelings last? Is there something that reminds us of them occasionally? Time and again in counseling sessions the feelings of guilt, anger, lack of self-worth are brought up because of someone else's sin, or because of their own. The effects are very long lasting. I have seen very mature adults shed countless tears because of what they have suffered at the hands of their parents or spouses. Is there anyone who does not, or has not felt these feelings? Very few.

Who forgives and who remembers? This question is a key one in seeking out relief from our own past sins as well as those of others against us. We will discuss forgiveness and forgetting sin a little later. However, for now just remember that without God, there is no relief from anyone's sins.

**How do we get rid of all of these toxic feelings?**

**Dealing with sin is our only hope, and it can be accomplished, but how?**

### Confession and Repentance

Sin's power is the darkness. Sin cannot exist when light is shined on it. There are only two ways to escape sin; 1. Someone shines the light on your sin (exposes it) and you are forced to admit it. 2. You confess it and repent before someone calls attention to it. Notice I didn't mention someone else's sin. We are talking about our own. That is because only the person who commits the sin can repent of it and begin the road to reconciliation. Admitting our sin is the absolute first step that must be taken to resolve guilt. We either are forced to admit it, or we make the choice ourselves.

No matter which way it happens, the next key step is **repentance**. Many struggle in getting to this point because they take another step instead, **denial**. Once we deny we have sinned we are either telling the truth, or we are lying. If others have witnessed it then our road to reconciliation and restitution has just taken a major detour. We just went deeper into sin. God reminded Cain of this when he gave a poor sacrifice (Gen. 4:7.) God basically told Cain, "Sin is at your door and it is waiting to eat you up." The only pathway out is admitting our sin and starting on the road to repentance.

Repentance has three basic parts: **1. Remorse** – understanding the pain and hurt my sin causes myself, my family, others, and God. **2. Restitution** – Making amends for the wrongs we have done, when possible. An apology is also part of restitution because it is the extension of our heart and hand toward the person offended. Without it the offended person finds it hard begin the process of forgiveness. **3. Renewal** –

The process of remaking our lives while leaving our former behavior with God and the Holy Spirit's help.  
Note; we can call on the Holy Spirit to help us with our renewal, Rom. 8:26.

## Discipleship Lesson 2 Class Outline

### Sin and how to deal with it.

Memory and Meditation Verse: Rom 3:23

Romans 3:21-26; Gen 3 Sin and its guilt. Confession, Repentance (remorse, restitution, renewal)

Sin is a word we don't want to hear much about. Few people will admit that they are sinners, but look around you. What sin has hurt you in the past? Unfaithfulness of a parent or spouse, anger, jealousy, greed, bloodshed, violence, theft, lies, deceit, lust, the list is endless. However, which sins have we committed. Maybe the list is different, or maybe we have retaliated to give someone the same thing they gave us.

Rom. 6:23 Paul reminds us that sin carries terrible consequences for all of us.

Make a list of consequences suffered due to someone else's sin toward you, and/or that you have suffered from your personal sin.

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Name some feelings that sin produces in us.

Shame, Guilt, Sadness, Anger, Revenge, Worthlessness, Lack of self-worth, The need to prove ourselves, etc.

How long do these feeling last? Is there anything that brings them up again?

Is there anyone who does not, or has not felt these feelings?

#### Who Forgives and who remembers?

How do we get rid of all of these toxic feelings?

Confession and Repentance

Sin's power is the darkness. Sin cannot exist when light is shined on it. There are only two ways to escape sin, 1. Someone shines the light on your sin (exposes it), and you are forced to admit it. 2. You confess it and repent.

Repentance has three basic parts: 1. **Remorse** – understanding the pain and hurt my sin causes myself, my family, others, and God. 2. **Restitution** – Making amends for the wrongs we have done, when possible. 3. **Renewal** – The process of remaking our lives leaving the former behavior with God and the Holy Spirit's help. Note; we can call on the Holy Spirit to help us with our renewal, Rom. 8:26.

Personal Inventory

List some ways that Satan entices you to sin? \_\_\_\_\_

What steps would be helpful to avoid these areas? \_\_\_\_\_

What help do you need to repent of these sins and avoid them in the future?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 3 Forgiveness –God’s Greatest Gift

### Acts 2:36-39

Not too long ago a class of teenagers asked a question that troubled them greatly. ***“Why did Jesus have to die such a horrible death? Why not just have him be stabbed or use some other quicker, easier method?”***

As you think on this question you realize that there is compassion on their part for Jesus and his great suffering. It seemed excessive to them and also very cruel. They thought that God was punishing Jesus when he did nothing. In reality, that is the key to the answer.

Justice is vital in our world. Unfortunately, it seems many people don’t want justice, but mercy for the offenders. What should be done to those who commit crimes, kill, steal, and commit other terrible offenses? Justice says, the ***punishment must fit the crime.***

I had the privilege of getting to know three judges from three different levels of courts. Each of them said that there were sentencing guidelines to follow but that they also had some leeway in applying the punishment once the verdict of “guilty” was determined. The three judges told me that they took into account the crime, the circumstances, and the attitude of the offender in relation to the crime committed. They truly did make a great effort to make the punishment fit the crime or offense. This is not easy. Good thing everyone isn’t a judge.

When it comes to Jesus, what crimes did He commit? None! So why did he have to die such a horrible death? The answer: ***In order to pay for the sins of every person who has ever lived, who lives, and will live if they come to Him for forgiveness.*** So yes, God did punish Jesus, but not for his sins, but for ours.

So, what have we done? Our own sins may not be terrible, but what has everyone in the world done? Every terrible sin imaginable! Every crime, sin, evil thought and act, and all cursing known to man have been committed. Who was going to pay for that?

The prophet Isaiah opens our eyes to a portion of the plan God declared long before Jesus came. Read this passage in both versions to get a deeper sense of what God is telling us.

***Isaiah 53:3-5 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. (NIV)***

***Isaiah 53:3-5 One look at him and people turned away. We looked down on him, thought he was scum. But the fact is, it was our pains he carried—our disfigurements, all the things wrong with us. We thought he brought it on himself, that God was punishing him for his own failures. But it was our sins that did***

***that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him—our sins! He took the punishment, and that made us whole. (The Message)***

Through His bruises we are healed. The sum of everyone's sin required a powerful price be paid for the terrible sins we have and will all commit. Do you want to pay for all your sins? What would it take?

**Now Read John 19.** This is the account of the crucifixion of Jesus. When we contemplate our sins compared to his punishment it doesn't seem fair, but when you add in those of the entire world you could ask, "Is it enough?" Think about 10 random people, 5 morally good people, and 5 evil people. Who could pay for all their sins? Remember, the morally good people sin too, and some may be worse than what we imagine or know. Now add in all the sins of everyone in the world. Again, who could pay that price?

### **Forgiveness becomes a reality!**

In Acts chapter 2, Peter is announcing to the people in Jerusalem that the man they were chanting to have crucified was actually the Messiah, the Christ. This is who they were all waiting to receive; God's anointed one, who was going to save them. They had shouted for him to be crucified, and now they were struck with the enormity of their sin. He really was innocent and they killed him. They shouted to Peter and the other apostles, "Men and brothers, what shall we do?"

That same cry goes forth every time we realize how enormous our sin is and understand we are guilty. God heard their cry and for the first time in history he offers something never before announced. ***"Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*** Acts 2:38 NASV (underlining mine.) Peter is telling the people that God will actually fully forgive them for that sin, and not only that one, but all of their other sins. On top of it all he will actually bless them by giving them a divine gift of the Holy Spirit who will come and dwell in them to strengthen and help them so that sin won't dominate them in the future.

This is why we say that God's forgiveness is the greatest gift that has ever been given to man. Jesus took our punishment that we deserve. So what are we going to do about it? You may have already started the process of growing closer to God and allowing the Holy Spirit to help you in this journey, but do we understand what that forgiveness actually means?

### **Jesus wants us to learn what it means. Matt. 18:32-35**

Read this passage and answer this question: What does God expect us to do once we have received His amazing forgiveness? Write out your answer so that the fullness of forgiveness can penetrate into your heart.

## Discipleship Lesson 3 Class Outline

### Forgiveness – God’s Greatest Gift

Memory and Meditation Verse: Acts 2:36-39

Some teenagers asked the question once, “Why did Jesus have to die such a horrible death? Why not just have him be stabbed or some other quick method? “

Justice says that the punishment must fit the crime. What punishment did He deserve? None! So why did he die? To pay the sins of every person who will come to Him for forgiveness.

So, what have we all done? Answer - everything!!! Collectively, every crime, sin, evil thought, and cursing known to man.

Isaiah 53:4-5 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. (NIV)

Isaiah 53:4-5 One look at him and people turned away. We looked down on him, and thought he was scum. But the fact is, it was our pains he carried—our disfigurements, all the things wrong with us. We thought he brought it on himself, that God was punishing him for his own failures. But it was our sins that did that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him—our sins! He took the punishment, and that made us whole. (The Message)

Through his bruises we get healed. The sum of everyone’s sin required a powerful price be paid for the terrible sins we have, and will commit. Do you want to pay for your sins? What would it take?

Read John chapter 19.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

When we think about all the wrongs we have done, tell how we could pay for them or make amends for them all.

Would we dare offer to take the punishment we deserve for our wrongs?

Think about 10 people; half really good and half really bad. Who could pay for all of their sins? Remember, even good people sin.

#### **Forgiveness became a reality!**

Acts 2:36-39 This is the very first time that God told the world about His incredible gift of forgiveness. The people recognized that they were the ones who had killed Jesus and that He was innocent.

Think about it, since Jesus died for us, He also took the punishment that we deserve.

So what are we going to do about it? You may have already started, but do you fully understand what forgiveness means?

How great is God’s gift which He gave for your sins? Forgiveness is the greatest gift ever given.

What does God expect us to do once we have received His amazing forgiveness? Explain your answer. Matt. 18:32-35

## Chapter 4 - Mercy and Grace

### Exodus 34: 5-7

In Exodus 20: 5&6 Ex. 34:5-7 God reveals what He is like to Moses. Mercy (Hebrew word, **chesed**), lovingkindness, compassion. This passage also speaks of justice which must be given to those who refuse to repent and call on God. However, God first mentions that He is **Mercy**. Like all other fathers, God wants the very best for his children and is willing to forgive and renew them from the mistakes and problems they have caused. As I am writing this I just received the news of a dear friend who I baptized several years ago. He died of a heart attack two days back. He had many struggles and his family fell apart twice, but he started to rebuild his life. He remained single since the second divorce and in his funeral the minister spoke of how he had returned to God with great fervor and strength. He became a good servant of the Lord.

The joy of knowing that God forgives and restores us is powerful. We need to comprehend and capture the meaning of the word "mercy." See if you can give an illustration of the Mercy that God feels and demonstrates toward mankind? We need to understand this principle which is often associated with grace. That is the concept of Mercy. Look at this definition from Webster's Dictionary.

**Mercy - Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom is within one's power to punish or harm.**

Another, more simple definition is this; **God decides not to give us what we deserve. Or, not getting what we deserve, but the punishment is set aside.**

When was the last time you were punished for something you did wrong? What did it feel like, and do you want to be punished again? What would God's punishment be like? This idea of punishment seems so foreign to us as adults. Hopefully we learned how to behave ourselves sufficiently that we don't get into serious trouble, but many have not learned to do that. That is why the jails are overflowing. With most of us however, we still make poor decisions. We may not get punished by an authority figure, but we sure will suffer the consequences of poor decisions and bad behavior.

Passages about mercy.

**Titus 3:5-7** *he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.* It's not how good we are, or can be, it's the fact that God had mercy on us to save us. He has a lot of work to do to remake us into His image concerning our heart and behavior.

**Eph. 2:1-5** *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we*

***were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*** By God’s mercy he **made us alive again** together with Christ. We can be raised from a terrible state to be God’s children.

**Hebrews 4:16 NIV** *“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

In all of these passages there are two words which are used side by side but yet are different. The first is “mercy” and the second is “grace.” What is the relationship between these two words? These really are two of the most incredible words that God uses to explain to us who God is and how He is working to rescue us from our lost state of life. Let’s compare these two terms.

**Mercy** - God does not give us what we deserve, punishment.

**Grace** - God gives us way more than what we deserve, salvation, blessings, forgiveness and much more.

How incredible is God? The fact that he gives us mercy and then on top of that he gives us grace? Are you kidding me? Is it really that good? Yes, it is!!! We need to open our eyes and understand what incredible favor God is pouring out on us. Once we see that, then we can begin to respond to His love and goodness in a more realistic way. Our response to God is often much weaker than love, mercy and grace. Oh how great is our God!?!

### **Now What? Matt. 9:9-13**

**I Desire Mercy not sacrifice.** After we have received God’s mercy and grace he tells us that this is what we need to learn and imitate. We could bring a million gifts to the altar and it would not be enough. We could do a lifetime of good works and still not treat our fellowman with mercy. God says, “Be like me. Learn to do what I do.”

This should be the response of God’s children towards others in the world. Jesus is really saying to those at this dinner. **I have nothing to say to the righteous, but rather the sinner.** Why? Because those of us who believe we are great, arrived, holy, etc. we cannot hear Jesus’ words until we can see the darkness in us and call out for **mercy**. Then we can see and hear Jesus. Then the mercy of God begins to operate in our favor. He then says, go out and do likewise. Calling on God opens the doors to His mercy for not only us, but for everyone else who doesn’t have it. Through us the world can come to see God’s mercy. Where would we be if God had no Mercy?

## **Discipleship Lesson 4 Class Outline**

### **Rom 5. Grace and Mercy**

Exodus 20: 5&6 Ex. 34:5-7 God reveals what He is like. (Heb. chesed) mercy, lovingkindness, compassion  
Give an illustration of the Mercy that God feels and demonstrates toward mankind?

We need to understand a principle that is often associated with grace. That is the concept of Mercy.

Define Mercy: \_\_\_\_\_

**Definition:** Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom is within one's power to punish or harm. Also mercy is not getting what we deserve, but the punishment is set aside.

How and when is mercy applied to the sinner? \_\_\_\_\_

When was the last time you were punished for something you did wrong? What did it feel like and do you want to be punished again? What would God's punishment be like?

In a few words describe the role of mercy in these passages.

Titus 3:5-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Eph. 2:1-5 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 4:14-16 \_\_\_\_\_

What is the relationship between Mercy and Grace?

Mercy is when God does not punish us for our sin or give us what we deserve.

Grace follows mercy giving us an incredible list of blessings and help to continue growing in our relationship with God. He gives us more blessings than we deserve.

Hebrews 4:16 NIV

***16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.***

In your own words try to explain the relationship between Grace and Mercy as they are used in this verse.

Relate this to the need you have now or have had for grace and mercy in your life.

List some of the things you don't want to be punished for doing.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Can mercy and grace be earned? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain the value of Grace and Mercy as they are received from God.

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Matt. 9:9-13 "I desire mercy not sacrifice." This is the response of God's children should give to others in the world.

Jesus says, "I have nothing to say to the righteous, but rather the sinner."

Those of us who believe we are great, arrived, holy, etc. cannot hear Jesus' words until we can see the darkness in us. When we do, then the mercy of God begins to operate in our favor and our lives. Calling on God opens the doors to His mercy. Where would we be if God had no Mercy?

## Chapter 5 The Qualities of Grace

### Understanding the Power of Grace

#### Rom. 5:8

In my lifetime the level of understanding of 'Grace' has been dismal. Not just in my own understanding, but that of the Christians I have worked with as well. The only definition that I knew was, grace is "unmerited favor." What does that mean? Yes, we understand that God is good to us, but do we really understand how good and how powerful is God's grace? The answer is a resounding, 'No we don't.' So let's see if we can define and begin to understand what grace is. My study of graces has shown me how ignorant we are of its power.

God has many qualities and characteristics that few of us understand. The depth of His love and goodness for us is deeper than what we are able to fully comprehend. God has been so good to us that we can never count our blessings. I was taken aback at how many verses there are that describe different qualities of grace. This definition of "unmerited favor" is very weak simply because it says, 'God is better to us than we deserve.' The reality is that there is so much more to it than that. He not only has mercy on us, which means He doesn't punish us for our sins, but He also gives us so much more than we have given him credit for.

In this lesson I have listed several passages which will illustrate the ways in which grace is applied in our lives and will hopefully help us begin to capture its magnitude. Get ready to drink from a fire hose as we look at how deep and wide the grace of God is toward us all.

**After looking at the relationship between mercy and grace, let's go deeper into the meaning of Grace. These passages will hopefully help us understand how many different ways God extends his hand of goodness to us, His children.**

#### Qualities of Grace

**Grace is the initial offer of forgiveness- John 3:16** Forgiveness is the greatest gift that man has ever received after our gift of life. When we consider the amount of sinful offenses that man has committed against himself, his fellowman, and God, the offer to completely forgive us is hard to comprehend. Of course there must be repentance and remorse for our sins. To illustrate our lack of forgiveness, think how people are not often willing to forgive others for even insignificant wrongs, much less things as bad as murder. God does. Consider the word, "**whosoever**" and know that forgiveness is offered to all who sin no matter what they have done. This is grace.

**Continual forgiveness - I John 1:5-10** Forgiveness is not just a one-time shot at getting cleaned up. With the commitment of giving God your life, there comes the offer of a continual cleansing of our sins. The blood of Jesus is ever working to keep us pure and inspired to walk with God. This too is grace.

**Receiving power from God to overcome and grow - II Cor. 12:8-9** Paul had a health problem that bothered him greatly. We assume that God is saying, "If I take this away, you might think you don't need me." So instead of taking it away, God gave Paul the strength to depend on Him to tolerate the problem, and to continue to live for and serve God. Grace supports us in our weaknesses so we can overcome challenges and be more godly people.

**God's everlasting love - Jer. 31:2-3** After God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt He lead them to Sinai where He was going to give them the Law. Moses came back down from the mountain and found them worshipping a golden calf as if "it" had delivered them from Egypt. God punished those who refused to honor God and repent. For the others He extended them grace, made them a nation, and lead them toward the

promised land. He loved them with “an everlasting love.” This type of love is grace, because we will fail God again, yet he will still love us and draw us to Himself.

**Confidence before God - Heb. 4:16** God sits on a throne of grace. The foundation of his relationship with and guidance of man is grace. He does not want to leave us without help. God is always there. He understands our circumstances, He watches over us, and he sent Jesus to experience all that we experience so that we can trust Him to know he forgives our sins. Another gift of grace.

**Continual Mercy - Heb. 10:22-27** Mercy is continually offered to us if we walk with God and are faithful. There are consequences for those who forsake and deny God’s love and forgiveness. Grace has requirements. It is not to be abused by anyone. It cost too much. Realize that mercy never ends, thus our actions portray our understanding, or our lack thereof as to what mercy means to us.

**Receiving the fullness of God - John 1:15-17** Jesus came to give us so much grace that John describes it as “grace upon grace.” It is piled up, abundant, and overwhelming. What more do we need? This is the grace of provision from the fullness of God’s storehouse of goodness.

**An inheritance of God and a building of character - Acts 20:32** The word of God’s grace - it is what builds us up into new holy people and then gives us an inheritance along with other Christians who have been made holy. The Bible is another demonstration of God’s gifts of goodness and favor to help us along our spiritual journey.

**A healing forgiveness - Heb. 12:15** God recreates us into new people and His grace is the standard that we use to help us avoid the problems we cause ourselves and others. Grace as a healing guide. How much do you want to be forgiven? God offers it to all. It heals our soul.

**Confirmation, strength, and establishment - I Pet 5:10** After we live with God on earth, having proven to have endured the suffering of being holy in an unholy world, God’s reward for us it to make us perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish us. This looks to be a gift of heaven and the blessing of living in God’s presence. More grace.

**Justification and redemption - Romans 3:24** Standing before God in all our raw guilt is a horrible thing to face. It is obvious that God doesn’t want to see us there either so he provided an out. The out is Jesus’ blood on the cross. When we claim that blood God buys us back from Satan and declares us “Not Guilty!” This is incredible grace.

**God’s promise of redemption - Rom. 4:15-18** The story of Abraham and the promise made to him is a wonderful story of grace. God looked way down the road and saw us. He made this promise of grace way back when Abraham was alive. Take him up on his promise of grace.

**Justification, peace with God, and the hope of glory - Rom. 5:1-2** Once you have offended or hurt someone it is rare that an open relationship of peace will once again exist. Think about it. How many churches split and the brothers and sisters never speak again even in the same town. God is not that way and doesn’t want us to be that way. He cleans us up, grants us peace with Him, and in turn He gives us the incredible hope of eternal life. Yes, this too is grace. Can we learn to practice it as well?

**A free gift - Rom. 5:12-21** There was no way man could pay for his own sin except to die as a payment for it. Even then Satan would claim him as his own. God said, I will give you a free gift of my Son’s payment with his own blood. What will that pay? It pays it all and we owe nothing. Grace, enjoy.

**Salvation - Eph. 2:4-9** “By grace you have been saved.” Think about it. Not because you were baptized were you saved, but you were saved because God decided to pay for your sins with the blood of His son. Baptism is a step in the process of approaching God and regenerating ourselves to be His sons and daughters. God gives us grace when we don’t deserve it.

Now are you beginning to see the expanse and power of the grace which God pours out upon us? It is goodness, care, help, patience, mercy, love, forgiveness, salvation, and so much more. What do we do in return? This is the next lesson.

**Discipleship Lesson 5 Class Outline**

**Understanding the Power of Grace**

**Memory and Meditation verse: Rom. 5:8**

After looking at the relationship between mercy and grace, let's go deeper into the meaning of Grace.

**Qualities of Grace**

Grace is initial offer of forgiveness- John 3:16

Continual forgiveness – I John 1:5-10

Receiving power from God to overcome and grow- II Cor. 12:8-9

God's everlasting love - Jer. 31:2-3

Confidence before God - Heb. 4:16

Continual Mercy – Heb. 10:22-27

Receiving the fullness of God - John 1:15-17

An inheritance of God - Acts 20:32

Building up our regeneration - Acts 20:32

A healing forgiveness - Heb. 12:15

Confirmation, strength, and establishment of our lives – I Pet 5:10

Eternal gift from God – I Pet. 5:10

Justification and redemption – Romans 3:24

God's promise of redemption – Rom. 4:15-17

Justification, peace with God, and the hope of glory – Rom. 5:1-2

A free gift – Rom. 5:12-21

Salvation – Eph. 2:4-9

Understanding Grace

Explain how these thing affect your relationship with God.

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Do any of us deserve this kind of treatment? \_\_\_\_\_

What does it mean to you to receive all this and more?  
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\_\_\_\_\_

How does this affect your idea of forgiveness and grace as it relates to our continual sin?  
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\_\_\_\_\_

Think about this.

What does God do to the person who abandoned Him, cursed Him, and refused Him on a daily basis when they repent and come home to God?

The answer: Punish them, hold a grudge, stay angry, curse them, or worse? No, not at all.

When someone realizes their sin and comes back to God asking for forgiveness, God blesses them GREATLY! Now explain this. \_\_\_\_\_

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## ***Chapter 6***

### ***Accepting and Applying Grace***

#### ***Psalms 51:17***

Have you ever been caught red handed and red faced committing a sin? It may have been when you were a child, or a teenager. However, it happens all the time among adults. People get fired every day because of something they did at work or home which is very wrong. It is rare that someone treats them with grace. They are usually lead out of the building by security, talked about behind their back, and made to feel like complete fools. Then the other side of the coin is how we react when discovered. There is denial, even though they were caught in the middle of the act. Others justify their actions by trying to explain why they did it. Some try to act as if the other person is the fool, not them. Sin changes lives in a heartbeat and usually not for the better. However, the message we see in Psalm 51, is that there is hope even for the worst of sinners when grace is accepted and applied.

Grace cannot be received until we know that we stand condemned before God. This verse is taken from the Psalm which David wrote after Nathan the prophet rebuked him for his sin with Bathsheba and his killing of Uriah. When Grace is applied it gets to work renewing our hearts and lives. It can't be applied to the arrogant, or unrepentant heart. The first step in accepting grace is to admit that we are guilty and the true offender.

Read Psalm 51 and listen for the tone of voice with which David is praying and pleading with God for forgiveness.

***Be gracious to me, have compassion, wash me of my iniquity, I have sinned against you, I have done evil, you are right in judging me, purify me, don't hide your face from me, create in me a clean heart, renew a steadfast spirit within me, restore to me the joy of your salvation.... From Psalm 51***

All of these and more are phrases which show David bowing down before God and begging him for forgiveness which God freely gave. David was restored as king over Israel although he suffered great shame for this and other sins he committed.

The Bible contrasts Saul and David. Saul tried several ways to justify, excuse, and blame others for not obeying God in a command given him. David on the other hand writes the penitent psalm. Which one does God accept? David.

Notice that even after David's sin he is called "a man after God's own heart" by Paul in Acts 13:22. Even Paul knew all too well the power of receiving grace instead of the punishment he deserved for persecuting and even having Christians killed. The effect that grace has on us when we actually understand how wonderful a gift it is, should transform us into people who are eternally grateful. Are we grateful?

Another component of accepting grace is the act of confessing our sins. This action has a healing effect as well. It is a purging of our soul. It is a time in which we bow before God and our fellowmen to admit to our wrongs. Although the most difficult part of the process, confession begins to purify us of our sins and we take the steps toward being a better person. I John 1:9 assures us that "**God is faithful and just to forgive us**" of that sin. We do our part and He does His. There is nothing sweeter than to hear the words, "You are forgiven."

Now, how do repentance, confession, forgiveness and grace change us? After accepting grace, we are then expected to apply it in return to others. Matt. 18 has the incredible story of the man who was forgiven a fortune in debt, but was unable to forgive a friend \$50 of debt in return. Jesus tells us this story to emphasize the great importance of being people of grace.

Philip Yancey in his book "What's So Amazing About Grace," coins the word 'ungrace.' He uses it to describe our reaction toward others when we should be offering grace. Instead we condemn, criticize, and even yell at the offender with ungrace instead of applying grace. Jesus' instruction in the Matt. 5, calls us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Being and showing grace when everyone else is showing ungrace is one powerful way in which we can follow the instruction to be salt and light to a lost and angry world.

If we haven't learned anything else in these 6 lessons, please let us learn this. **Applying grace to the undeserving was God's mission when He planned the creation of the world and decided to send His son Jesus.** It is this lesson that we all must learn and follow. Who needs our grace? To whom have we denied it? Will we learn this lesson to accept God's grace and be givers of it in return? My plea is just that. Let us imitate God and be people of grace.

In closing let me remind us that this is the '**Good News, the Gospel,**' that God wants us all to know and receive. Understanding and accepting this great gift is where we begin to reshape our lives into God's image. The next step is to then live out the good news and then share it with those who don't yet know it. Are we grateful for the gift? If yes, then let us share it. There is no other gift greater that we could give someone else the grace which we have received. The world is waiting for it.

**Discipleship Lesson 6 Class Outline**

**Accepting and Using Grace**

**Memory and Meditation Verse: Psalm 51:17**

Grace cannot be received until we know that we stand condemned before God. This verse is taken from the Psalm which David wrote after Nathan the prophet rebuked him for his sin with Bathsheba and his killing of Uriah. When Grace is applied it begins to work renewing our hearts and lives. It can't be applied to the arrogant, or unrepentant heart.

Read Psalm 51 and listen for the tone of voice with which David is praying and pleading with God for forgiveness.

Make a list of the attitudes David demonstrates toward God in these verses.

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**Discussion Questions:**

Does grace make us more apt to have these attitudes, or do we find ourselves more reluctant?

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Explain what it means to you to be fully forgiven of your sins.

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I John 1:5-10

How important is the confession of our sins as it relates to forgiveness?

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How easy, or hard is it for you to confess sin and ask God for forgiveness?

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James 5:16 -20

What affect does confessing our sin to someone else have on our practice of that sin?

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What makes it hard for us to confess our sin to someone else?

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Are forgiven people more or less likely to be forgiving of others?

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Why?

Let us learn the lesson of receiving grace and giving it back to those who do not deserve it. God did this for us.

Discuss unconfessed sin among those in your group and pray for each other that you may be healed.