



Grace is not just how we start following Jesus; it is how we keep following Jesus. Disciples are always growing in grace, always pursuing a greater experience of God's power and goodness. This series will declare that grace is amazing because it is so deep!

These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

1 As a follower of Jesus you never reach a place where you don't need grace. We usually define grace as *unmerited favor*. Which is true, but grace is so much deeper than that (it's not just about forgiveness). Dallas Willard defines grace as *God acting in our life to do what we cannot do on our own*. Grace is necessary to start following Jesus, and it is necessary to keep following Jesus. Why is it easier to start your Christian life with grace but often harder to rely on grace as you get further along on the journey?

2 As mentioned above, grace is God's power to do what we cannot do in our own power. In what ways does God's grace supply everything we need (be specific)? What causes us to begin to rely on our own power more than continuing to rely on God's power for daily living? Share some examples of how this has been true in your life.

3 SHALLOW GRACE... produces infantile faith. To become stronger in Christ we must go deeper in our understanding and experience of his grace. **Read 2 Peter 3:18.** What does it mean to "grow in the knowledge of grace" and how does that normally happen in a person's life?

4 GRACE IS DEEPER... Grace strengthens my weakness. Suffering is a given, but it can also be a gift. It is when we hit bottom that we discover the depths of grace. **Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-9.** What good came out of Paul's suffering? What difference

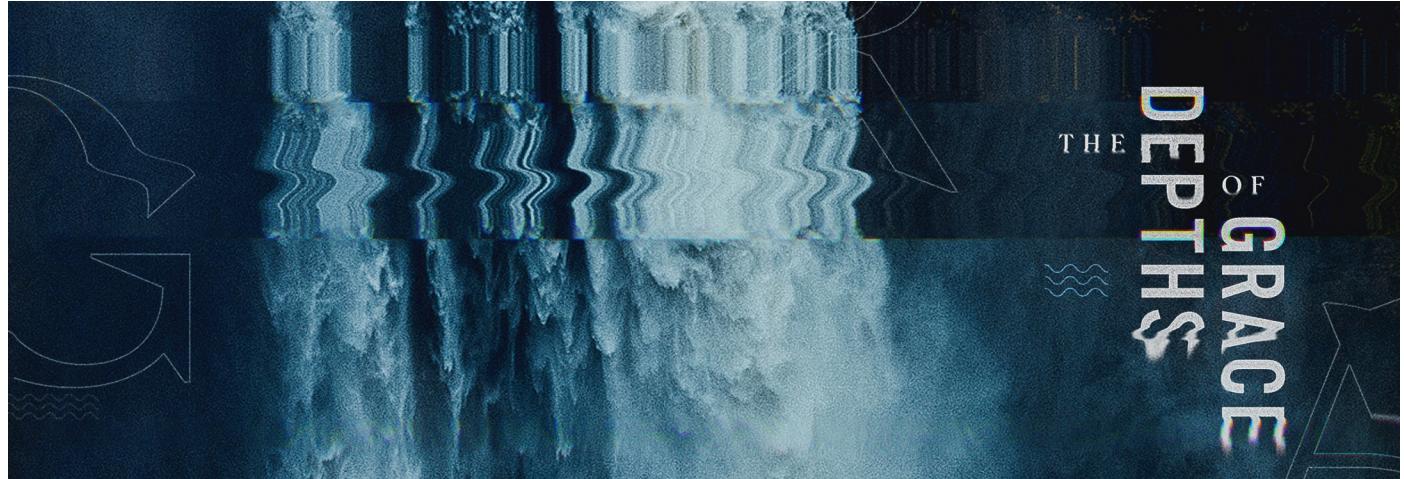
should it make to you knowing that God has promised you an all-sufficient grace?

5 Rick reminded us that God wants us to grow in our capacity to have every part of our lives empowered by Him. And to attain this understanding, God will enroll us in a course called "Suffering." Share an example of how God has used suffering to grow you. How did you experience His grace during your suffering?

6 GRACE IS DEEPER... Grace lengthens my witness. Paul goes on to say, "So if Christ keeps giving me his power, I will gladly brag about how weak I am. Yes, I am glad to be weak or insulted or mistreated or to have troubles and sufferings, if it is for Christ. Because when I am weak, I am strong." (**2 Corinthians 12:9-10 CEV**) Your scars are your story of your encounter with God's grace at the bottom. No one can take away your scars, but you can give away your story. Share an example of how your weakness has been your witness.

7 ALLOW GRACE... to go to the deep places of your life. You will never know God's best as long as you splash around in the shallow water of grace. If God won't remove it (the deep places of pain and suffering), ask Him to redeem it. You can be confident He will. **Read Hebrews 4:14-16.** Where do you need grace the most? Remember, it is deep enough to go there. Spend some time in prayer as you reflect on the responses together.





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1 Rick began by reminding us that in life everyone gets fouled, and sometimes the fouls are flagrant. The important thing is to not allow your foul to become your cell. What are some ways people often respond to being wounded that reflect a shallow understanding of grace? How do those types of responses imprison the one who has been hurt?

2 GRACE IS... better than bitter. While we rarely choose our wounds, we can always choose how we will respond to being wounded. **Read Hebrews 12:15.** What is so dangerous about bitterness? How would you describe the differences between unhealthy and healthy forgiveness?

3 GRACE IS BETTER... because grace erases false labels. Bitter people are quick to justify how they feel and are eager to recount how they got fouled again and again. Their wound becomes their label. Why is that a problem and how does it keep a person from living in freedom?

4 On the other hand, when grace goes deep we are able to find our identity in what Jesus has done for us; not in what someone else did to us. **Read Colossians 3:12-13.** How does grace keep you from being chained to the past even though it doesn't change the past?

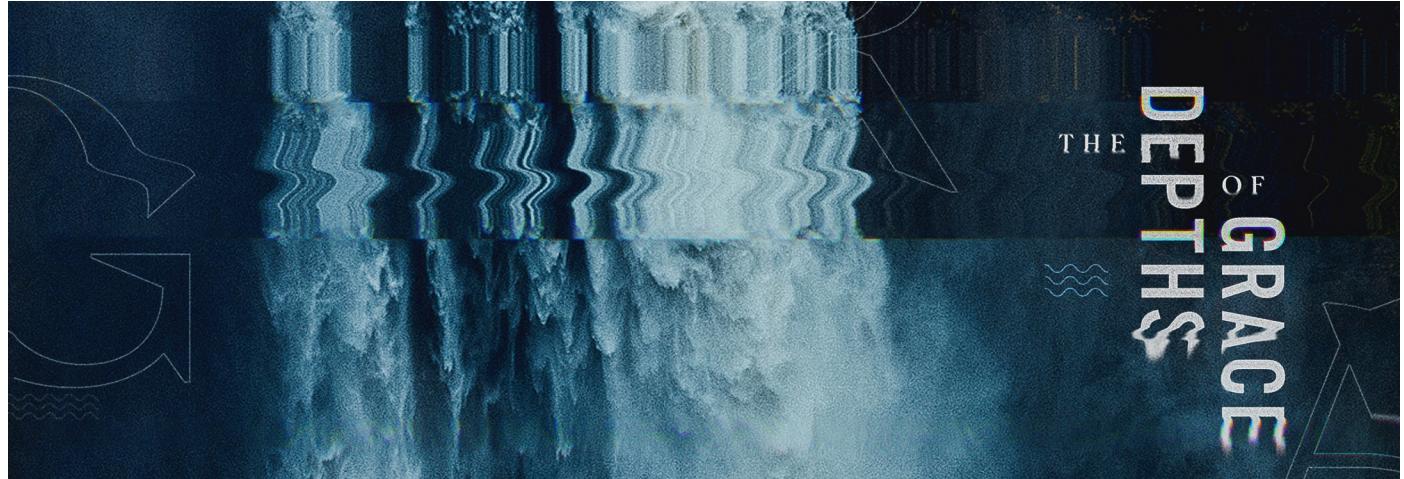
5 GRACE IS BETTER... because grace embraces true forgiveness. Resistance to grace

is most evident by insistence to get what you're owed. **Read Matthew 18:21-35.** What is one thing that jumps out to you from this parable?

6 Rick pointed out that "*this parable teaches the dynamic importance of remembering.*" God expects a change of heart from those who have received an undeserved change of status. Nothing that's happened to us should go deeper than what Christ has done for us. Jesus is not saying that forgiveness is "excusing, pretending, forgetting, or reconciling." He is saying that forgiveness is canceling both the desire to pay back and the need to be paid back. Why is that often so hard to do? What practical steps can you take this week to treat people the way God treats you?

7 Forgiving flagrant fouls is not done in a moment; it is a journey. The enemy will often return and whisper, "You deserve justice." But **GRACE IS... deeper than fair.** In fact, Rick reminded us that *grace is totally unfair, and we would be totally helpless if it wasn't.* And that's why the fellowship of the fouled becomes the fellowship of the forgivers. **Read Ephesians 4:31-32.** Extending grace may not bring the person who hurt you into the kingdom, but it will bring more of the kingdom into you. Are you willing to let grace go that deep? Spend some time in prayer and let this prayer guide you this week, "Father, in Jesus' name, I speak forgiveness to..."





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1 The first two lessons in this series reminded us that grace is deeper than our suffering and our wounds. What is one thing you learned about God's grace from those messages and how have you been applying it to your daily walk?

2 This week's message showed us that grace is deeper than our sins. Rick began by reminding us that *we are all sinners in deep need of the mercy and rescue of God. But our perception of our need for grace is often too shallow.* Why is that the case, and what are the consequences in our lives and in our churches when we think others need grace more than we do?

3 RATHER THAN minimize sin Jesus would maximize grace. Grace will never be that good as long as people think they are not that bad. Ironically, Jesus is often used to champion the idea that it is offensive to name sin and confront sinners. **Read Matthew 1:21, 26:28; Luke 13:5, 19:10; and John 8:24.** How do these verses contradict the view that Jesus would "minimize sin"? In what ways does Jesus "maximize grace"?

4 In his book, *The Day the Revolution Began*, N.T. Wright notes that sin is "not simply the breaking of God's rules. It is the outflowing of idolatry". In other words, the problem isn't simply human wrongdoing ("sin"); rather, there is a deeper element as well ("sin" is rooted in idolatry — the failure to keep God first in our lives and properly reflect His glory by the way that we live). **Read Romans 3:23.** How

does what N.T. Wright mentions help you better grasp the deeper element of what sin actually is? Why is that distinction important?

5 ONLY GRACE... can wash away sin's penalty. The problem with the "goodness gospel" is that it misdiagnoses the severity of our condition. **Read Ephesians 2:1-5.** What is significant about the fact that Paul says "*you were spiritually dead because of your sins*"? With that in mind, why must God take the initiative to give life and how has that impacted your relationship with Him?

6 ONLY GRACE... can take away sin's power. The message of grace is so good it can cause people to think that sin is not that bad. That's why it's important to go deeper in our understanding of grace. **Read Romans 6:1-14.** How does Christ's death and resurrection tie into our relationship with sin? Share some examples of how God's grace has been deep enough in your life to take away sin's power over you so that you could live in freedom.

7 Rick closed by reminding us that we don't need to turn over a new leaf; we need to ask God for a new life. And that is the powerful confession announced in baptism. **Baptism declares my desire to go deep with grace!** How have you experienced this powerful truth in your life? Have a few people share about their baptism story. What next step do you need to take as a result of this series on grace?

