

FEARLESS CONVERSATION™

WHY IS GRACE SO AMAZING?

DISCUSSIONS FROM ACTS, ROMANS,
1-2 CORINTHIANS, GALATIANS,
EPHESIANS, AND 1 THESSALONIANS

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PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Loveland, CO

Group
Real. Bold. Love.



Group resources really work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's:

Relational—Learner-to-learner interaction enhances learning and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential—What learners experience through discussion and action sticks with them up to 9 times longer than what they simply hear or read.

Applicable—The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Learner-based—Learners understand and retain more when the learning process takes into consideration how they learn best.

Fearless Conversation: Why Is Grace So Amazing?

Discussions from Acts, Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and 1 Thessalonians

Participant Guide

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Fearless Conversation adult Sunday school curriculum is created by the amazing adult ministry team at Group. Contributing writers for this quarter are:

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HERE'S WHAT A LESSON LOOKS LIKE

Your leader will guide each lesson through four sections:

GREETING

Make new friends and start the conversation as the topic of the week is introduced.

GROUNDING

This is where you read the Scripture for the week. The Bible content is always provided here in the participant guide. After hearing God's Word read aloud, you'll have the opportunity to follow the inductive study method of writing down first responses, questions, thoughts, or ideas that are sparked by the Bible reading.

GRAPPLING

Here's where the conversation deepens. You'll find questions that are intentionally challenging to answer. These won't have easy answers and you won't have a fill-in-the-blank option. Everyone will wrestle with the questions that the lesson provides, as well as their own questions that they're wondering about. The leader will ask God to guide the conversation—and you can join in that prayer! Remember to treat others with respect during these conversations, even if you don't agree with them. Listen first. Speak second.



GROWING

Here's where the personal application comes in. You'll have the chance to reflect on what God's Word, as shared in this lesson, means to you for your own life and determine what your personal response is.

Throughout each lesson you'll also find two other helps:

BEHIND THE SCENES

These sections of commentary and notes from Bible scholars will give you additional context into history, language, culture, and other relevant information. You can read these sections ahead of time or during the lesson—whichever works best for you.

GOING DEEPER

These tips will help you be a great conversationalist. They remind you how to keep a conversation going, how to be a better listener, and how to be respectful even if you don't agree with someone.

FINAL TIP:

Have a sense of divine anticipation. Approach each class with a heart full of anticipation over what God might do that day. God is alive and present with you and your class. Always prepare by praying, asking God to help you see his hand at work in the conversation. Trust God to show up and show you and others in the class exactly where he wants the conversation to go!

Sample

LESSON 1: CAN GOD CHANGE SOMEONE— EVEN IF THEY DON'T WANT TO BE CHANGED?

GREETING

What are the little pet peeves that drive you crazy?

When someone else asks you to change, what's your initial reaction? Be honest!

G R O U N D I N G

God's Word: Acts 9:1-19

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

13 “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

What are the first questions that come to mind? What catches your attention?

Capture those thoughts here.

GRAPPLING

GOING DEEPER

You can help others in your group go deeper by listening with your full attention and by asking questions as others share. Saying “I wonder about what you just said. Tell me more!” will help people know you care about what they’re saying and want them to open up more.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Saul wasn't your typical guy. In Philippians 3:4-6 he gives us a glimpse of some of his achievements and reasons for confidence in himself. His Jewish pedigree was impeccable. He was born of the tribe of Benjamin, meaning he could trace his lineage back hundreds of years to Benjamin, the brother of Joseph. He was a Pharisee, one of the Jewish elite, and kept to the letter of the Mosaic law. Paul says he kept the law so well that he was considered "faultless." His passion for protecting the Jewish teachings and law was so great he was willing to persecute others who taught something he viewed as heresy.

Why do you think Jesus used such dramatic means for changing Saul?

You'll find "Behind the Scenes" boxes with Bible commentary provided throughout this lesson. You can read these ahead of time or as you move through the lesson. They're here to help you gain a better understanding of the Bible.

Verses 15 and 16 of this chapter say, "But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.'" What do you think is meant by this statement?

INTERESTING THOUGHTS SPARKED BY OTHERS IN MY GROUP:

BEHIND THE SCENES

Just before the events in today's passage from Acts 9, Stephen, known as the first Christian martyr, had been stoned by members of the Sanhedrin, which was the highest judicial council in the Jewish community. The stoning, which led to the persecution of other Christians and caused disciples to scatter to other cities, had been witnessed and approved by Saul (Acts 8:1). The disciples fleeing to other parts of Israel wasn't such a bad thing, as it allowed them to tell others about Jesus who otherwise might not have heard about him. But this dispersion from Jerusalem wasn't enough for Saul, as he "was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples" (Acts 9:1). Saul was so determined, he was willing to make a six-day journey of approximately 140 miles on foot to Damascus to root out followers of Jesus.

BEHIND THE SCENES

You've heard the terms "disciple" and "apostle," but what do they mean? Are they the same? Interestingly, they aren't. An apostle is literally "a messenger or envoy." In the Bible, these are the 12 men who followed Jesus. They saw him, talked with him, and were sent by Jesus to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Paul (Saul) is also included as an apostle, as Jesus spoke to him specifically and called him to be a messenger to the Gentiles.

But when reading the Bible, we tend to think of the 12 men who followed Jesus as "the 12 disciples." Disciple is a term for the follower of a specific teacher. Generally, a disciple isn't a casual follower, as one might listen occasionally to a preacher they hear on the radio. Rather, a disciple adheres to the teachings of the master and imitates him. Ananias was a disciple of Jesus who trusted so much in him that he was willing to risk his life when Jesus asked him to help Saul. How does his devotion and obedience challenge you?

Which do you think shows the power of Jesus more—an experience like Saul's, or a transformation that might take years? Explain your reasoning.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Have you ever heard the saying, “Nothing is wasted in God’s economy?” Meaning, nothing in your life is wasted. God will use every experience in some way, either to change you or to change others. This was true in Saul’s life. Although he was a Jew, he had been raised in Tarsus, so he was familiar with Greek culture. As a Pharisee, he also knew the Jewish tradition, theology, and Law quite well. Additionally, he was a Roman citizen, which brought a host of benefits he would need while traveling and telling others about Jesus. God used his passion, training, and upbringing in ways Paul never expected. Imagine what God can do with you!

GROWING

BEHIND THE SCENES

It’s interesting to note that prior to his transformation by Jesus, Saul was bent on persecuting those who followed Jesus. Yet after his transformation as he traveled to tell others about Jesus, he was arrested, jailed, and ultimately killed for his own faith in Christ.

Take a few minutes right now to have a fearless conversation with Jesus about what’s on your heart after reading this section of the Bible.

Write your personal response here.