

GRACE  
*Changes*  
EVERYTHING



# STUDIES



## STUDIES

### GRACE CHANGES EVERYTHING

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### GRACE AND GOD

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### GRACE AND CHANGE

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### GRACE AND EVANGELISM

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### GRACE AND COMMUNITY

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### GRACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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### GRACE AND STEWARDSHIP

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## THE YEAR AHEAD

### MARK 11-16

Leading up to Easter, Mitch will take us through the last section of Mark, through to the crucifixion and resurrection.

### LETTERS IN REVELATION

Jayesh is going to spend 3 weeks looking at the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 & 3.

### SONG OF SONGS

Derek will open up the book of looooooooooove.

### JAMES

Faith without deeds is dead. So we're going to learn what it looks like from James to be alive in Christ.

### A DEON SPECIAL

A serve of great bible teaching with a side of Deon. Would you like fries with that?

### 1 PETER

Leading into Christmas, we'll look at being God's people in a world that's not that fond of Christians.

APR

MAY

JUN

AUG

OCT

NOV



We want our groups to be places where we work out what it looks like to be in a relationship with God, and pray for each other as we try to share Jesus with those around us. Here's two ways we're going to do that in 2014.

# TRANSFORMING GRACE

LIVING CONFIDENTLY IN GOD'S  
UNFAILING LOVE

JERRY BRIDGES

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Paul the Apostle had this to say when talking about his work and the Gospel:

*"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died." (2 Cor 5:14)*

God's love for him shown in Jesus shaped and directed his life. He felt compelled to pour out his life so that others might know the same good God that he'd come to know. And so he prayed, spoke and lived in such a way that people would have the best chance of hearing & seeing the message of the Gospel.

The Gospel isn't academic. And we don't want to be a community that sees it as merely academic. We want those around us who don't know Jesus to come to know him. And we want to be sensitive, wise & loving in the way we give them opportunities to hear the Gospel. But the place it's got to start is with prayer.

So each week we meet as a group we're going to pray for each other and the friends that we're hoping to share the Gospel with. On the first night, consider who you're going to pray for this year. If you want, you can write them below.



F

Freedom & confidence before God have never been found in what we do. Not before we knew Him and not after we came to know Him. Freedom & Confidence have always been found in one thing - God's Grace.

This year we're going to try and read 4 Christian books. The first book we're going to try and read together is a brilliant book written a while ago by Jerry Bridges called Transforming Grace.

So maybe in your growth group you can set aside 10 minutes a week to talk about what you're reading, over a meal or just during the week. But whatever you choose to do, grab it today. It's a great book, and it's only \$8.90 on Amazon!



# COMMUNITY & MISSION

For the first night, we're going to spend some time getting to know each other, sharing our stories, and talking about what the group is going to look like.



Here's what we're going to do first - share our stories. Chances are there are people in the group who you don't know very well, so as a starting point, we're going to talk about where we're at with God. Here's what would be good to share:

*What your background with God is.*

*How you became a Christian OR where you're at with God.*

*What's been the most helpful thing in helping you grow in your understanding of Him.*

It doesn't have to be dramatic, impressive or even a finished story - I hope it isn't. It just has to be honest. Share as much or as little as you like, but for the group to work as it's meant to, we need to be sharing at least something about where we're at so we can help each other along.

So going round the group, just spend 3-4 minutes telling people a bit about yourself.



There's three aims for our Growth Groups. We want (1) to keep pushing each other in our relationship with God, (2) practically & prayerfully care for one another, and (3) keep praying for and encouraging each other to share Jesus with, those around us who don't yet know him.

Experience shows that people get as much out of the group as the group puts in. So it might be worth stopping now to discuss what some helpful ways in which the group can achieve the above goals are. Can you eat together? How can you care for & look out for the group - mid-week & Sundays?

**So just take a while now to stop and agree on some expectations for the group.**

# GRACE CHANGES EVERYTHING

Tonight the passage we're going to look at is Ephesians 2:1-10. Read it together.

## 1. KNOWING IT

Define Grace.

What's the relationship between understanding where we were (or are) according to the Bible, and what God is offering in Jesus?

How does this passage describe the relationship between grace, faith & good works?

## 2. APPLYING IT

Watch this video from Francis Chan:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLr9mwfCqSg>

What are some of the aspects of Grace you find hard to understand?

Discuss some of the implications for not understanding Grace as the Bible describes it?

Discuss the implications of really grasping grace.

## 3. DOING IT

If you were to explain Grace to someone who had never heard the Gospel, how would you do it?

Have you ever tried to explain grace to someone? How'd it go?

In your experience, do people associate grace with the Christian Gospel?

## 4. SHARING IT

How would you talk to those around you in such a way that they could see your relationship with God was defined by Grace?

Discuss how this week you could share the concept of Grace with someone you know in a way that doesn't make you want to cringe.

Stuff to pray for from the above...

Share about two friends / colleagues / family members that aren't Christians that you can pray for this year.

# GRACE & GOD'S WORD

Tonight we're going to be looking at how Grace affects our relationship with God, and therefore how we receive His Word. Because the challenge in most situations in life isn't that we don't know what God wants for us, but that we want something other than God.



*As you've been reflecting on the idea of grace over the last week, is there anything that's struck you or that you've been reminded of that you can share with the group?*

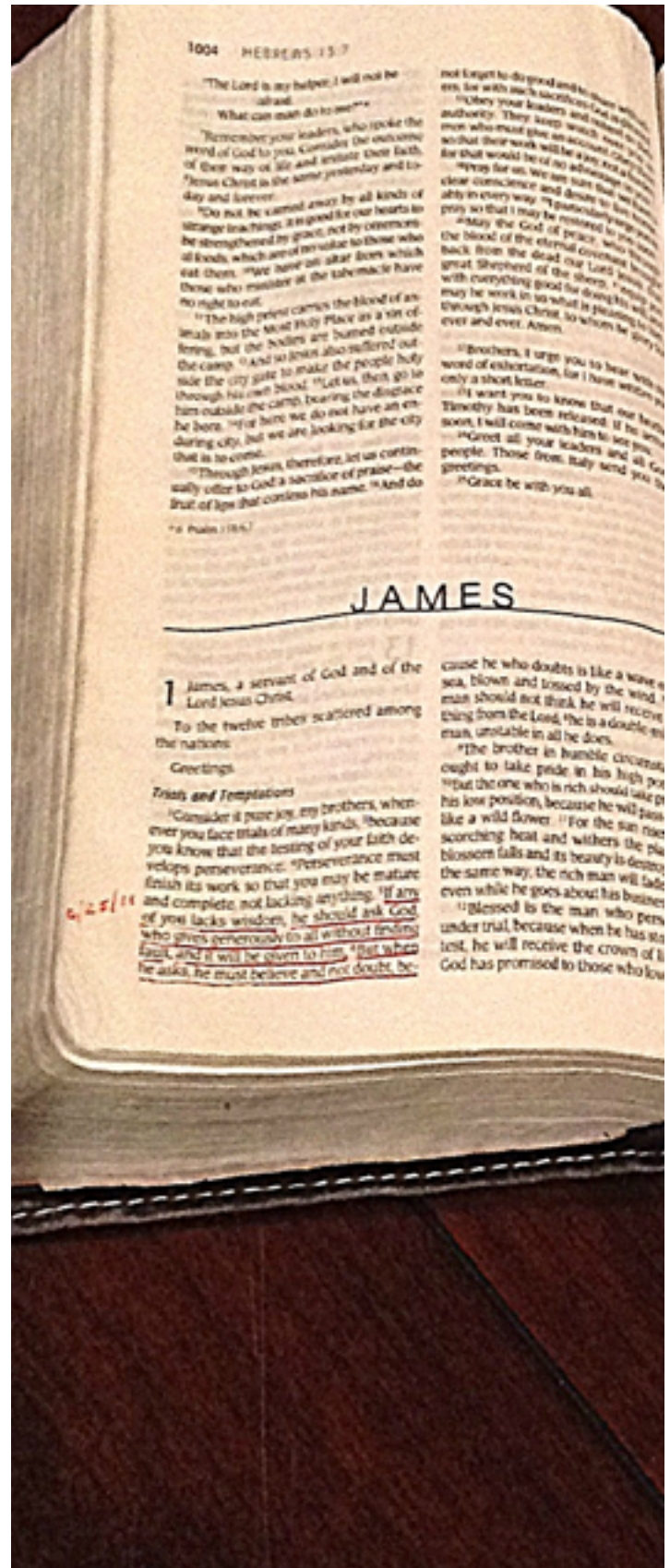
As Christians, we want to say that God speaks. His clearest expression is in Jesus (John 1; Hebrews 1:1-4) whom we meet in His written Word, the Bible (Luke 24:44-47; Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

The challenge is that some of what we read - even if we just restrict it to the teachings of Jesus - is counter-cultural and unpopular. This week we want to explore how grace changes our understanding of God's words to us - even the hard bits - and what that means for life now.

*What are the things you think God calls on you to do that you find go against the grain? How do you deal with / work through those things?*

*As you speak to others about Christianity, what are the points at which they find Christianity difficult, irrelevant or just plain confusing?*

Some things that God calls us to do come easily. Some not so. But underlying our approach to either of those is how we understand the relationship that the things God is calling us to is based on.



**Read Galatians 3:26-4:7.** In Galatians, Paul is arguing to his readers that there has been a monumental shift in their stance before him. What defines them now is not their Jewish-ness, nor even their obedience, but something completely independent and outside of them - Jesus.

## 1. KNOWING IT

In this section Paul goes one step further than saying that the Galatians are right with God. What's the "status" change of those who have faith in Jesus? (4:7 is a good summary, but the whole passage explores it.)

Paul describes how a status change before God also changes how we relate to God. Looking at 4:5-6, what's the change in how God speaks / works in & through those who have faith in Jesus? (Particularly look at 4:5-6)

## 2. APPLYING IT

In this passage, Paul mentions a number of status', particularly the move from slave to son. It might feel sexist, but he's drawing on the idea of the first-born son inheriting all, which is why he also calls those with faith in Jesus "heirs" - so it's not so much about gender, but the privileges associated with first-born males in that culture.

What's worth considering is the difference in relationship between a slave & his master, and the first-born son and his father. Discuss what the differences might be.

How does having God as a Father who saves, loves & promises so much so freely change the way we respond when He calls us to do things which go counter to what we might want/think?

## 3. DOING IT

Behind the struggle for many Christians to live the way God is calling them to live, is the question of whether God knows what is best for them AND whether He has their best in mind. What areas of your life do you struggle to believe that both of those things are true? Why?

How does grace help us move towards a position of trust, reliance and obedience?

## 4. SHARING IT

There are parts of the Bible that are uncomfortable. No two ways of getting around it. How do we speak to other people about these parts in light of a Gospel of Grace with God as a loving Father?

If you were to explain why you take what God says over and above what our culture might say, what would it look like?

Grappling with what God is calling you to is hard. It can go against the grain, yet when we grasp that we have a God who loves us, who has adopted us, and who is working towards our good even when we can't see or understand it - it gives a different perspective to the hard things.

When you pray for each other tonight, pray that you'd see God not as a distant, remote being, but as a loving, gracious father. Pray as well that we'd learn to speak to others about God as our father, not merely a law-maker.



# KEY EVENTS

## **MPC BIBLE TEACHING WEEKEND**

28 Feb-2 Mar, held at MPC. On the Friday night there's a bushdance (Kloky's band), and dinner. Throughout the weekend there'll be bible teaching and music workshops by Rob Smith, lecturer at SMBC Sydney, and part of Emu Music. Watch out for more details in the bulletin.

## **EASTER SERVICES**

There'll be a Good Friday service (18 April) back at MPC, and an Easter Sunday service at Village as normal.

## **FOOD FOR THOUGHT - 15 MAY**

Dave McDonald, a minister in Canberra, is coming up to talk about life & suffering. For the past few years, Dave has been going through Chemotherapy and battling cancer, and has written a book reflecting on what he's gone through in light of being a Christian. This'll be a great opportunity to invite friends.

