



**WAY
TRUTH
LIFE**

A Pastor's Resource

**YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY
LEADER'S GUIDE**

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: THE JOURNEY AWAITS

HOW TO PREPARE FOR EACH SESSION

SESSION 1: AMAZING GRACE

SESSION 2: SEEKING GRACE

SESSION 3: SAVING GRACE

SESSION 4: SANCTIFYING GRACE

SESSION 5: SUSTAINING GRACE

SESSION 6: SUFFICIENT GRACE

INTRODUCTION

THE JOURNEY AWAITS

Welcome to the journey, friends! Let's start with a simple question. What ideas does the word "journey" evoke for you? There are no doubt a variety of answers to that question, but we imagine most responses fit into one of two categories.

For some, the idea of a journey brings to mind images of a desired destination. It may be a place, an achievement, or a particular life stage, but the journey's *destination* is the focus. For others, the idea of a journey brings to mind images of traveling, walking, and exploring—the journey is all about what happens *between* setting out and arriving.

As we explore the journey of grace that is discipleship, we invite you to help youth and young adults lean into this second understanding of a journey. The chapters in *Way, Truth, Life* are not markers along the road, merely showing us how far we've come and how much farther we have yet to go. We do not travel past marker number one, check it off, and leave it in the past, ready for the next marker. Our growth as disciples of Jesus Christ will come as we explore and wrestle with each aspect of the journey. There will be much to pick up along this journey, and there will also be much to lay down.

As with any journey, there are resources and guides to help along the way. Before you start out, we invite you to read the following section that explains how to prepare for each lesson and how best to use this leader's guide.

Happy journeying, friends!

Janary Suyat de Godoy and Shaun Bati

HOW TO PREPARE FOR EACH SESSION

STEP 1: COLLABORATE

This leader's guide is a companion resource to the book *Way, Truth, Life: Discipleship as a Journey of Grace*, by David A. Busic. Multiple resources have been created to help entire churches walk on this journey of grace together. Connect with your pastor to see if she/he is planning a whole-church emphasis on *Way, Truth, Life*. If so, make plans to coordinate these lessons with the weekly emphases for your church.

STEP 2: READ

Each session corresponds with one chapter from *Way, Truth, Life*. To prepare for the session, read the appropriate chapter and make notes of aspects that are especially important for your particular group to wrestle with or understand. Invite and encourage your group participants and volunteers to read along with you a chapter each week of *Way, Truth, Life*. If it is not possible for each person in your group to have a copy of the book, part of your weekly session prep should include creating a summary of the correlating chapter to share with the group at the beginning of the lesson.

STEP 3: PRAY

After you finish reading each week's chapter, reflect on the needs you see in your group that connect especially to that week's lesson. Make space to pray for your participants, asking God to prepare their hearts, to give you the words to share the lessons with grace and love, and to begin moving before the lesson even begins.

STEP 4: FILL IN THE LESSON OUTLINE

The beauty of this journey is that our youth and young adults have people like you walking alongside them. You know best what your group is dealing with, how they are growing, and the areas in their journey of grace where they are ready to be challenged to walk more closely with Jesus. In each week's lesson you will find an outline that we hope you approach as a starting point. Our intent is for you to fill the lesson out in ways that will allow the truth to connect personally in your specific context. We have offered suggestions and prompts that are intended to connect to a broad audience, but we hope you will tweak some of these to add your own personal takeaways from the book as well.

STEP 5: IDENTIFY YOUR DISCUSSION TRACK

In the effort to facilitate the distribution of this resource, we have created a combined resource for youth and young adults, but after each key teaching point, there will be a section for you to engage your group in more focused age-level discussion. Each section has a discussion track for early youth, youth, and young adults. Read through each set of questions to determine which set fits best with your group.

STEP 6: PLAN TO LEAD YOUR DISCUSSION

Leading a small group discussion can sometimes be incredibly easy, and other times it can be painfully difficult. With a little preparation, you can help make it an easier experience for everyone. Here are a few basic tips:

- *Don't skip the opening question.* We've included this question to help the group become comfortable with the idea of sharing their thoughts.
- *Assess your group.* Does your group have all talkers and your role will be to help keep them focused? Is your group quiet and unlikely to share their thoughts immediately? Do you have internal processors who need space to write or extra time to gather their thoughts? Do your best to prepare according to the particular dynamics of your context, whether that means sharing printouts of the questions you will ask; providing journals for participants to use if they would like to write or doodle during sessions; mentally identifying those who need to be specifically invited to share; or making a plan to share one by one around a circle with a caveat that skipping is always allowed. You know your group best, so plan ahead to make their discussion experience comfortable but enriching.
- *Prepare yourself.* Do you get uncomfortable with silence? Are you tempted to fill the gaps when waiting for a reply with an additional comment or further explanation? If that's you, acknowledge that in

yourself and be ready to feel a bit uncomfortable. Allow space for those in the group to think about and process what they have just heard. Allow space for them to formulate their own thoughts. Allow silence. Silence does not always mean non-participation. Often, it means contemplation. Don't make the mistake of missing out on a great discussion because you moved on too quickly.

- Another way to prepare yourself is to plan to take some notes when those in your group are sharing. If they offer a short answer, be ready to reply in a meaningful way, whether that's affirming their ideas or asking for clarification or simply acknowledging and thanking them for their willingness to share. As the leader, you are responsible for setting the tone that will make others feel comfortable opening up.
- *Set boundaries.* When your groups begin, remember to set some healthy boundaries. Establish expectations for making the discussion group a safe space. Give participants permission not to share if they are not comfortable. Ask the group to agree to be respectful and to hold in confidence personal stories told during your discussion time, not re-sharing other people's stories outside the group.

SESSION 1:

AMAZING GRACE

LESSON IN A SENTENCE

Grace is God's no-strings-attached gift of forgiveness, relationship, and kindness offered to us.

LEADER REFLECTION

Be prepared to share with your group your own personal story of God's grace and salvation. Take some time to reflect on the moments in your life where you can point to God's grace meeting you right where you were. Write those down to share.

LESSON OUTLINE

Opening Prayer: An Adaptation of a Prayer by John Wesley

Holy God of love, all we could ever want or desire finds its infinite and fullest expression in Christ Jesus, but what we most desire to receive is grace upon grace. Grace to pardon our sins, and overcome our injustices; to justify us and to sanctify our souls; and to bring about the holy change, the renewal of our hearts that will enable us to be transformed into your own blessed image, in which you created us. Father, work in us by the grace of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit—one God, now and forever. Amen.

Discussion Opener

Ask several people in the group to share about a time when someone was incredibly kind to them. After everyone has shared, as an introduction to the lesson's subject, share the definition of grace provided in the **Lesson in a Sentence** section.

Teach & Engage

Key Verse: Ephesians 2:8–10

Introduction

Share the story you have prepared about your own personal experience of God's grace and salvation. You can also share the story of John Newton, the writer of the hymn "Amazing Grace," which is shared in the book (pp. 23–24).

Highlight #1: Grace Is a Gift (Read Romans 8:35–39)

"Amazing Grace" is a well-known hymn. Sometimes we can become so familiar with a message that we no longer hear it. What would it look like to move "Amazing Grace" beyond a song that we sing and have a personal encounter with this grace that is truly amazing?

For our youth and young adults to rightly understand grace, they must understand that it is a gift. As recipients of this gift, we cannot repay the giver. To offer to do so cheapens the gift and converts it into a transaction. It would also reveal a misunderstanding of the seriousness of our own condition. Our weakness toward sin is not something we can fix on our own.

Just like in some of the stories that were shared in response to the opening question, where the kindness shown to us went beyond what we could do for ourselves, that's a mere glimpse at the amazing grace God gifts to us! God longs to have a deep and meaningful friendship with us, but sin destroyed the path between us, and humans have no way to rebuild it. Grace is God's restoration work, repairing the road, so we can journey together.

Discussion Track for Highlight #1

Early Youth

- Why do we like to receive gifts? What makes receiving a gift so wonderful?

- Have you ever received a gift you thought you didn't deserve? How did you respond?

Youth

- Have you ever received such a great gift from your family or a friend that you felt you didn't deserve it? What was the gift? Why did you feel you didn't deserve it?
- What does receiving this type of gift teach us about a God who gives us such a great gift even though we don't deserve it?

Young Adult

- Have you ever been part of a group project at school where everyone in the group received the same grade no matter their participation? Or have you worked at a job where tips or bonuses were evenly split among employees no matter how much or how little they worked? How did that make you feel?
- In Matthew 20:1–16 Jesus tells a story that feels like that. What do we learn from these examples about grace being a gift?

Highlight #2: Grace Is Personal (Read Acts 9:1–19)

For youth and young adults who grew up in the church, many will begin or have already begun a season of life where they are wrestling with identifying their faith as their own. How do they take the external rules, guidelines, and faith of their parents, grandparents, pastors, and mentors and fit them into their own identity? This wrestling makes it especially significant for youth and young adults to understand that grace is not earned by adherence to rules; rather, it is the gift of a restored and personal friendship with God. Saul had to learn the same thing on the road to Damascus, and God transformed this zealous defender of the law through an encounter with the *person* of Jesus.

Grace is also personal in that God reaches out and offers this gift directly to each of us individually. Dr. Busic put it this way: “grace comes to every person according to his or her particular need or capacity to receive it” (p. 32). Our situations are uniquely different; therefore, our stories cannot be the same even though we are all children of one Father. It is crucial for each young person to understand how personal God's grace is. Especially when we are young, the winds of the world can redirect our focus from the impact of God's grace in our lives as we search for our own personal identity. To understand grace personally is to have knowledge of the God who extends grace to us in the exact ways and moments we need.

Discussion Track for Highlight #2

Early Youth

- What is the most thoughtful gift you've ever received? What is the worst gift you've ever received? (These gifts do not have to be things.)
- What makes a gift thoughtful? What does that teach us about God's grace, which is so personal?

Youth

- What is the kindest thing someone could *do* for you? (*Have everyone share. Make sure the answers are about what someone would do, not about an object they would give.*)
- You don't have to say which answer it was, but how many heard someone else's answer and thought you would be embarrassed, annoyed, or even upset if someone did that for you?
- God created us uniquely, and we have all had different life experiences. What does it mean to think about God's grace being personal to you?

Young Adult

- It can be tempting to compare our lives with the lives of others, but God has made you uniquely you, God knows what has happened to you (the good and the bad), and God knows what is in your future. With all those unique factors, your life, your relationship with God, and your journey are not going to look exactly like anyone else's. What has grace looked like in *your* life?
- How has God's no-strings-attached gift of forgiveness, relationship, and kindness (i.e., grace) surprised you?

Highlight #3: Grace Is Costly (Read John 3:16)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us that, although grace is free, it doesn't come without a cost. Grace is not cheap because it cost the Father the separation, suffering, rejection, and death of his only Son. However, there is another cost as well. Grace provides the way for us to enter into friendship with God, but just like with any relationship, friendship with God means spending time with God and—because it is God—allowing God to shape us through that time together. To be clear, we are not paying for the grace we have

received. Rather, if we take seriously the costly grace God has given to us, we will take seriously the friendship with God that it provides.

Reflect on the words of Bonhoeffer that Dr. Busic quotes: “Cheap grace is grace without discipleship” (p. 32). It was costly for God to give the life of his Son, and our perfect response is to give our lives back to God. The world today provides us with shortcuts to every single thing we do, so many of us miss out on the richness of the long journey that leads to true success—be it spiritual, relational, financial, emotional, etc. Through the stories of the Bible (Joseph, Elisha, David, Isaiah, the twelve disciples, etc.) God is consistently teaching us that to journey with God requires a faith that involves laying down our lives wholly and entering into true relationship with God.

Discussion Track for Highlight #3

Early Youth

- Do you think your response to God’s gift of grace looks more like the way you responded to the most thoughtful gift you’ve ever received, or more like the way you responded to the worst gift you’ve ever received? How so?
- Think of a parent or teacher or friend who has never given up on you. Then imagine how much greater is God’s grace and love for us. How does that friendship with God change you?

Youth

- What are other types of gifts that carry with them some type of responsibility? *(Some ideas about possible answers might be a pet, a musical instrument, a piece of sports equipment, lessons in the arts or another area of interest.)*
- We don’t see the responsibility as a means of paying for that gift; the gift was still free, but we honor the giver and the gift by . . . *(taking care of the pet, practicing the instrument or the sport, developing our talents and interest through lessons, etc.).* What can we learn about our response to God’s grace from that?

Young Adult

- Have you ever considered the costliness of grace? What do you think of the Bonhoeffer quote “Cheap grace is grace without discipleship”? *(You may want to read the various quotes included from Bonhoeffer in the “Grace Is Costly” section on pages 32–33.)*

- As young adults, you often have more freedom than you had as a youth, but there is responsibility that comes along with that freedom. When we embrace freedom and abandon responsibility, we will eventually get hurt, and usually hurt others as well. What does the costliness of grace teach us about freedom in general, and especially freedom in Christ?

CONNECT

As you gather back together for the closing, sing the hymn “Amazing Grace” together and provide space for reflection.

JOURNEY TOGETHER

Invite the group to make a commitment to be their brother and sister’s keeper by checking on each through prayer, calls, texts, visits, and any other way possible as a demonstration and reminder of the grace of God.

CLOSING PRAYER

Invite everyone to pray the opening prayer together, or close with your own prayer.