

Group Guide 5 — It Is a Gift

God Is Gracious • Given, Not Earned

ICE BREAKERS AT THE TABLE

Step 1 — Pick This Week's Table Host. The host reads the questions (or calls on others) and keeps the conversation moving. Host reminder: don't rush. Give people time to think.

Opening Questions

- What is something good you received that you didn't earn?
- What is the best gift you've ever been given?
- On a scale of 1–10, how easy is it for you to receive something without trying to pay it back?

TEACHING (LED BY TEACHER)

Big Idea: Grace is God giving good things to people who don't deserve them — a gift, not a wage.

Teaching Summary: Most of life teaches us that you get what you earn. But grace completely breaks that system. To say God is gracious means He gives good things to people who do not deserve them — not because we worked for it or proved ourselves, but because He chose to give. Grace is not God rewarding our effort or meeting us halfway; it is God stepping in when we had nothing to bring. Grace is not fair, and that is the good news — it does not meet us where we deserve, it meets us where we are.

TABLE STUDY GUIDE

Scripture Focus

Ephesians 2:8–9 • Luke 19:1–10

Step 1: Read It Slowly

Have one person read Ephesians 2:8–9. Have another read Luke 19:1–10 (Zacchaeus).

Take Note: What Do You Notice?

- In Ephesians, what words tell us salvation is a gift and not something we achieve?
- In the Zacchaeus story, who makes the first move — Zacchaeus or Jesus?
- What changed in Zacchaeus after he received grace?

Step 2: Take a Closer Look

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector — rich, despised, and known for cheating people. He is exactly the person the crowd would say deserves nothing. Yet Jesus says, “I must stay at your house today.” Grace always initiates.

Discuss Together

- Why is it significant that Jesus invited Himself to the home of the least-deserving person in town?
- What is the difference between grace as a reward for changing and grace as the thing that changes us?
- Why is it good news that grace is not fair?

Step 3: Make It Personal

Be Honest

- Where have you started to feel like you earned something God actually gave you?
- Where has gratitude quietly turned into entitlement?
- Is it harder for you to receive grace, or to extend it to someone else?

Step 4: Reframe the Way We Think

Table Reflection

- How would your attitude change if you remembered everything you have is grace?
- Grace tends to make people humble, grateful, and generous. Which is God growing in you right now?
- Who would you treat differently this week if you stayed aware of how much grace you've received?

GOING DEEPER: A CLOSER LOOK AT THE TEXT

Optional — for groups that want to dig further. Use this alongside the questions above; the table host can take as much or as little as time and the group's appetite allow.

Break Down the Verse

Ephesians 2:8–9 (NIV)

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

The Greek word *charis* means a gift freely given. Paul piles up the disclaimers — “not from yourselves,” “the gift of God,” “not by works” — closing every door to boasting. Even the faith is described as God's gift, not our contribution. Grace, by definition, cannot be earned, or (as Romans 11:6 puts it) it stops being grace at all.

Luke 19 puts skin on it: Jesus invites Himself to Zacchaeus's house BEFORE Zacchaeus changes a thing. Grace comes first; transformation follows. Zacchaeus's generosity is the response to grace, never the price of it.

Wrestle With It

Provocative Questions

- If grace is completely free, why is it so hard to receive — and why do we keep trying to pay for it anyway?
- Jesus moved toward Zacchaeus before he repaid anyone. Where do we reverse the order, demanding people clean up before we let them belong?
- Does “you can't earn it” make grace feel freeing, or threatening to your sense of control?

WRAP-UP QUESTION

As you think about this week:

- Fill in the blank: “God, remind me this is a gift: ____.”
- What is one thing you've been trying to earn that God is offering you freely?
- What would it look like to receive grace with open hands this week?

CLOSING PRAYER (OPTIONAL)

Invite someone to pray, asking God to remind the room of what He has given and to break the need to earn what He has already offered.

God, remind us what You've given us. Break our need to earn what You've already offered. Help us receive Your grace.