

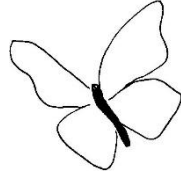
Small Group Discussion Guide



Fortify *your* Faith

Building *an* Unshakable Foundation
of Radical Grace, Brick *by* Brick

LAUREL APPEL



Chapter 1

Jesus

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Introductions and Expectations

Before you begin discussing Chapter 1, ask each member of the group to briefly answer the following question. Skip asking the group's first name if everyone knows each other already.

- What is your first name and what are your expectations for this study?

Explain to the group:

- Throughout this study we will be learning about the building blocks that form the foundation of the Gospel of Radical Grace. It will be interesting to see if/and how our understanding of the Gospel changes from now to when we complete the study. Let's write down any key elements that we know that define the Gospel.

Once the group's answers are written, tuck the page away for safe keeping so it can be retrieved during the final week of this study.

Note From the Author

Hello, my friends,

I am blessed that you have gathered to study and discuss God's revolutionary, magnificent, and radical grace as a group. My prayer for you all is that through this study you grow closer to each other and closer to Jesus.

I also hope that you break free from the suppression of constantly focusing on your sin, and instead, are released to a life that demonstrates who you truly are in Christ as you realize you are secure in your salvation, you are completely forgiven, you are treasured by God, and you have been created uniquely qualified to fulfill your God-given purpose in this life.

You can lay any shame and self-doubt aside forever and walk into your future with complete peace of mind, joy of spirit, and a heart filled with love for both God and for others. My desire is for you to live free and unashamed as you walk in faith and God's radical grace!

Discussion

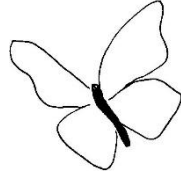
Remind the group of the three lesson topics of chapter one.

- In this first chapter of the study, we learned about Jesus. The three bricks we studied are as follows:
 - Brick 1: Jesus is the Cornerstone
 - Brick 2: Jesus is God and Man
 - Brick 3: "It's all about Jesus."

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 1 – Jesus*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?
3. Why is this brick, *Jesus*, important to cement down in the foundation of our understanding of the Gospel of Grace?
4. Why do you think it is important that you are mindful that Jesus is the cornerstone of the Gospel of Radical Grace?
5. Why is it important that Jesus is God who came as a man? How do these facts speak to His grace?
6. Why is it important that we know and believe that the entire Bible is about Jesus, and that the Word *is* Jesus?
7. Discuss your thoughts about Hebrews 4:12. What do you think about the concept that the Word reads you; it is a discerner of your thoughts and the intents of your heart?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapters are: 1-3



Chapter 2

Righteousness

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Note From the Author

My friends,

Welcome to the most important key to unlocking our understanding of the Gospel of Grace: righteousness. This is key because if you don't understand that you are born unrighteous and God's standard of righteousness is beyond your reach without Him, you may not understand that you need a Savior; you wouldn't know you need the Gospel.

Additionally, understanding our position and God's standard makes the beauty of the Gospel all that more glorious. That beauty will become evident as we learn more about righteousness in future chapters. The fact is, if you don't realize that you cannot make yourself righteous through obedience to the Jewish law or any other rules and regulations, you might waste your time in a futile attempt to do so. Plus, once you understand that Jesus has imputed His righteousness to you, you will not only be totally freed from the trap of legalism, but you will be set free to walk with the Spirit and share His love with the world around you.

Understanding righteousness as it relates to our first birth into this world and our second birth into God's world helps to define the Gospel of Radical Grace.

Discussion

Remind the group of the three lesson topics of chapter two.

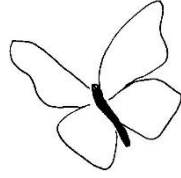
- In this second chapter, we learned about Righteousness. The three bricks we studied are as follows:
 - Brick 4: God's Righteousness
 - Brick 5: Our Unrighteousness

- Brick 6: Jesus is Our Righteousness

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 2 – Righteousness*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?
3. Why is this brick, *Righteousness*, important to cement down in the foundation of our understanding of the Gospel of Grace?
4. Why, do you suppose, it is important for you to know that God’s standard is perfect righteousness and that you cannot obtain it by your own effort? Does this fact change your understanding of the Gospel and God’s grace?
5. What are your thoughts about the fact that all of humanity is born unrighteous? How does this fact change your thinking about your own life?
6. Does learning about your old man or old woman help you to see why you struggle with temptation?
7. You can never make your old self perfectly righteous, and therefore, your righteousness doesn’t depend on what you do or don’t do outside of putting your faith in the grace and righteousness of Jesus. How does this fact change the way you view your flesh and sin? Doe this change your view about what Jesus has done for you?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapter is: 4



Chapter 3

Promise

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Note From the Author

My dear friends,

We are blessed to know that God made a promise, and He kept it. Keeping a promise, or being a man or woman of your word, is an act of love. God demonstrated His love through fulfilling His promise to send someone to bless the world. Ponder the beautiful fact that Jesus wants you to be with Him so desperately that He sacrificed Himself for you. I've heard people say that if you were the only person on the planet, Jesus still would have died and rose again for you. Just you! And I believe this is true. He loves you that much. Soak in that truth and allow it to produce great joy and peace knowing that God loves you, He created you, and He accepts you. You are why He kept His promise!

Discussion

Remind the group of the three lesson topics of chapter three.

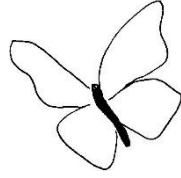
- In this third chapter, we learned about the Promise of God. The three bricks we studied are as follows:
 - Brick 7: God Promised Abraham
 - Brick 8: Jesus is the Seed of Abraham
 - Brick 9: Promise of Faith

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 3 – Promise*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?

3. Why is this brick, *Promise*, important to cement down in the foundation of our understanding of the Gospel of Grace?
4. Why is it crucial for you to understand that God had a plan since the beginning of time to send Jesus to save the world? How does this timing affect your perspective on the Gospel and God's grace?
5. Why does it matter that you believe that Jesus is the Seed, or descendant, of Abraham? How would it affect the Gospel of Grace if Jesus wasn't the promised Seed?
6. God came through with His promise. He is faithful. If God is faithful in things He promises, what does that mean for you? Are there other promises that God has made to you that He has fulfilled, or that you can depend on Him fulfilling? What are they?
7. God chose Abraham and his descendants to be the ones through whom He would send the Savior because of Abraham's faith. How does this point emphasize the importance God places on faith? Why does it matter that you believe the promise is by faith and faith alone? How does this question get to the heart of what grace is?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapter is: 5



Chapter 4

Old Covenant

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Note From the Author

Hello my friends,

This chapter gives us an overview of the Gospel; people are sinful and obeying the law can't make us righteous, so Jesus came and to put an end to the law and to make us righteous. This is the big picture of the Old Covenant in the Old Testament. Identifying the purpose of the Old Covenant is an important part of building our understanding of the Gospel of Grace. It is even more important that we know that the Old Covenant was never going to get us into heaven; it was only a shadow of the good things to come in Jesus.

Discussion

Remind the group of the three lesson topics of chapter four.

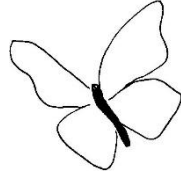
- In this fourth chapter, we learned about the Old Covenant. The three bricks we studied are as follows:
 - Brick 10: Israel Couldn't Obey the Law
 - Brick 11: The Purpose of the Law
 - Brick 12: Christ is the End of the Law

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 4 – Old Covenant*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?
3. Why is this brick, *Old Covenant*, important to cement down in the foundation of our understanding of the Gospel of Grace?

4. If you are in Christ, then the law did what it needed to do for you; it taught you that you were sinful and that you needed Jesus to pay the penalty and receive God's wrath for your sin. Now that the law has done its job, you are no longer under its control or power, but under grace. Is this a new concept for you? Discuss this with the group.
5. How does Israel's failure to obey the law perfectly affect your understanding of your ability to follow God's law? How might that help you in your understanding of the Gospel of Radical Grace?
6. Why is it essential that you understand the purpose of the law? Does defining its New Covenant purpose change your understanding about your ability to become righteous through your own efforts?
7. Why does it matter that Jesus ended people's required obedience to the Old Covenant law? What does it change in your life knowing that you are freed from trying to obey the law to gain your righteousness or prove your devotion to God?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapter is: 6



Chapter 5

New Covenant

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Note From the Author

Hi friends,

Today we get to talk about the greatest deal God ever made with humanity. We see that the New Covenant is far better than the deal He had made with the Jewish nation in the Old Testament. It is better because it is by His grace that He gives us His Son, and the only thing we need to do to receive it is to believe. Grace means we no longer must obey a list of rules and to cover our sins through the sacrifice of animals year after year. Jesus came to put an end to that system and simply asks us to believe that He did. What a glorious Gospel of Radical Grace!

Discussion

Remind the group of the three lesson topics of chapter five.

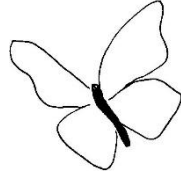
- In this fifth chapter, we learned about the New Covenant. The three bricks we studied are as follows:
 - Brick 13: A Better Covenant
 - Brick 14: Salvation to Believers
 - Brick 15: The Covenant of Grace

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 5 – New Covenant*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?
3. Why is this brick, *New Covenant*, important to cement down in the foundation of our understanding of the Gospel of Grace?

4. What might the fact that that God provided the New Covenant imply about the Old Covenant? Why would it matter for you to understand that the New Covenant is a better covenant?
5. We learned in this chapter that the letter, or written law, kills, and the Spirit gives life. What did Paul mean by making this contrast? What does that mean for your walk with Jesus?
6. If faith is the only way we may partake of the New Covenant, what does that mean if one doesn't have faith? What are your thoughts about the one sin that God will not forgive: unbelief? Why do you think it is this important to note this simple truth?
7. Why do you think it might be important for you to understand that your relationship with Jesus is about your faith in Him and His grace toward you, not what you do or don't do? If this is a new concept for you, how might this truth change your life? Can you offer any examples?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapters are: 7-10



Chapter 6

New You

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Note From the Author

My dear friends,

I cannot tell you how often I hear teachings that conflate grace with works. The reason this happens is because we look at ourselves as one person. We are told we are holy while at the same time sinful, and we simply cannot reconcile this in our minds. This view is like mixing water and oil, it just doesn't work. Therefore, we make up all sorts of explanations and doctrine trying to make sense of it. We are usually told that we must work on our behavior, stop sinning, and be obedient to become more holy as if we can make our sinful flesh holy, or holier, as if there are degrees of holiness.

That oil and water concept helps us to understand how we can be holy and sinful at the same time. Think of our duality as followers of Jesus as oil and water. Water represents our first birth through water from our mother's womb into this world and into our fleshly, carnal, and sinful existence; our old man or woman. Then, when we were born again, by the Spirit, who is represented by oil in the Word, He baptized us and gave us a new identity and a renewed spirit; the second part of our dual natures, or our new man or woman. But just like oil and water don't mix, our fleshly nature and spiritual nature don't and can't mix either. Our spirit is holy, our flesh is sinful, and they are separate. We cannot make our spirit worse or our flesh better.

This one concept unlocks so much for us. It makes sense of Paul's teachings, it makes sense of what Jesus did for us, and it allows grace to fully take on its definition without being degraded by our works. God gets all the glory, and we cannot boast.

Discussion

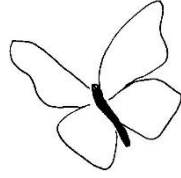
Remind the group of the three lesson topics of chapter six.

- In this sixth chapter, we learned about Duality. The three bricks we studied are as follows:
 - Brick 16: Born Again in Christ
 - Brick 17: Born into Righteousness
 - Brick 18: Born into Holiness

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 6 – Duality*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?
3. Why is this brick, *Duality*, important to cement down in the foundation of our understanding of the Gospel of Grace?
4. Why do you think it is important to understand that you still have your old self that was born into unrighteousness, yet now you have a new self that is born into God’s righteousness by His Spirit through faith in Jesus? How might grasping this concept of duality free you from being drawn into legalistic works?
5. Discuss the idea of being born first into the carnal and temporal world, and being born again, or anew, into the spiritual and eternal world. How might this perspective of the two worlds, or kingdoms, and being a part of both at the same time, affect your understanding of who you are as a child of God?
6. Can you think of any reasons why it would be beneficial for you to know and fully believe that you are, in fact, righteous? How does this truth impact your perspective of yourself and how you might approach your relationship with Jesus?
7. Can you think of any reasons why it would be beneficial for you to know and fully believe that you are, in fact, holy? Do you find that this truth releases you from the belief that it is your duty to work on becoming more holy? How does this fact further define the Gospel of Radical Grace?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapters are: 11-13



Chapter 7

Spirit

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Note From the Author

Precious friends,

What a blessing it is to have God's Spirit living within us. God has done something miraculous. Not only do we receive Him as a guarantee of our ultimate salvation, but while we are still here on earth, He gives us power to walk in love and supplies us His spiritual fruit so we may bless others.

Understanding the concept of walking in the Spirit can change our lives immensely. The way we interact and communicate with others, how we respond to difficult situations, and even our outlook on life and mental wellness are more positive. We live in such a downer society and depressive environment most of the time because of the struggles and hardships we endure as inhabitants of the earth. Yet, as believers who understand the power of the Spirit living inside us, we can rise above that darkness and walk in the light.

Discussion

Remind the group of the three lesson topics of chapter seven.

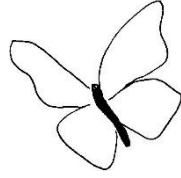
- In this seventh chapter, we learned about the Holy Spirit. The three bricks we studied are as follows:
 - Brick 19: The Holy Spirit
 - Brick 20: Walk in the Spirit
 - Brick 21: The Light Switch

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 7 – Spirit*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?

3. Why is this brick, *Spirit*, important to cement down in the foundation of our understanding of the Gospel of Grace?
4. Why might it be important for you to understand who the Holy Spirit is and how might that affect your everyday walk in Christ?
5. Why do you suppose it matters whether you seek to walk in the Spirit or not? How does walking or not walking in Him affect your daily life?
6. Knowing that you *can* walk in your spirit in submission to God's Spirit at any moment and in any situation, how might that affect your life, relationships, and wellbeing if you chose not to give in to your flesh, but chose to walk in love instead?
7. We read in this lesson from Galatians 5:16 that when we are walking in the Spirit, we cannot fulfill our fleshly desires. Does this verse clarify for you the separation of flesh and spirit? What does this mean for you and the way you approach your life in Christ?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapters are: 14-15



Chapter 8

Love

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Note From the Author

Hello friends,

In 1 John 4:8, John simply states that God is love. God loves us, He wants us to love Him, and He wants us to love each other. The simplicity of those truths is the basis for the Gospel of Radical Grace. Love defines Jesus' actions, and He asks us to allow love to define ours. Jesus demonstrated His love for us through everything He did for us. We can say we love Him, but He asks us to also demonstrate our love for Him through obeying His command to love others.

I appreciate the fact that Jesus knows how simple we need our mission to be defined. He makes it clear; just love. This is a simple statement, but it is difficult to do outside of Jesus. He stacked the deck for us by taking away those things which hindered us from being able to love, and by giving us everything we need to succeed. He took away the power of sin, wiped our slate clean, gave us His righteousness, and then sent His Spirit to live inside us. His grace is astounding that He would go to such lengths and depths to set us up for receiving His love and sharing our love with others.

Discussion

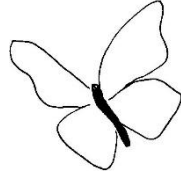
Remind the group of the three lesson topics of chapter eight.

- In this eighth chapter, we learned about Love. The three bricks we studied are as follows:
 - Brick 22: The Commandments of Jesus
 - Brick 23: Love God
 - Brick 24: Love One Another

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 8 – Love*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?
3. Why is this brick, *Love*, important to cement down in the foundation of our understanding of the Gospel of Grace?
4. Why is it important for you to know what commandments Jesus gave us as New Covenant believers? Considering what you have learned in this study, why can't you just follow the Ten Commandments? How does the Spirit play a part of your fulfilling of Jesus' new commands?
5. Has God ever called you to do something specific? What was it, and how did you respond?
6. Why does it matter that you understand what it means to love God? How might that change your life and approach to your relationship with Him?
7. Why is it important that you know that to obey Jesus means to love one another? Does this definition change your view of the word *disobedience* according to the Gospel? How does loving others speak to your appreciation for God's grace?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapter is: 16



Chapter 9

Freedom

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Note From the Author

Dear friends,

Life is messy. And God knows this. He knows we need His help to figure things out. He sent His Spirit to live with us so that we may navigate through this messy life. If He had made it less messy by forcing us to believe in Him and to behave righteously all the time, our world would be very different, for sure, but would we even be individuals or truly be happy? How could we be? We would be robots forced to perform, without a will, and without any real life. That's not freedom. But God decided to give us freedom. That freedom, like much of life on this planet, can be used for good, or it can be used for bad. The fact that He gave us the choice is a beautiful act of grace. God risked us not choosing Him for the magnificence of those of us who do. I am thankful that God gifted me the freedom to choose His grace or not. The alternative would negate the very life He gave me.

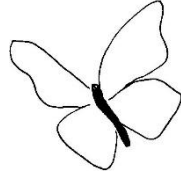
Discussion

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 9 – Freedom*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?
3. Why is this topic, *Freedom*, helpful for you to define God's grace as radical?
4. Many doctrines about choice have been created by people since the time of Jesus. Some people say we don't have the ability to choose Jesus or not and that God makes that choice for us. From my study of the Word, I cannot agree with this view. I see too much evidence that God gives us a choice in many matters. The fact that we get a choice to receive Him or not, to me, makes that choice more precious. What do you think?

5. Discuss these statements from the lesson: While we might vacillate from flesh to spirit, our righteousness never wavers. Additionally, when we walk in that new spirit, everything we do is holy. Those holy works can't be tarnished or diminished by our carnal self or fleshly works.
6. Discuss this statement from the lesson: Yes, you can keep on sinning and still be loved by God, not lose your salvation, and still be righteous and holy.
7. What are your thoughts about Paul saying that all things are lawful, but not all things are helpful? How might the extent that you enjoy your freedom in Jesus be dependent on the extent that you understand grace?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapters are: 17-18



Chapter 10

Gospel of Radical Grace

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Note From the Author

Dearest friends,

Usually, our testimony of what Jesus has done for us is how we share the good news of the Gospel with others. This is what it means to be a witness for Jesus; we share what we know and have experienced. Our testimony is powerful for others to hear. However, in my experience, I have often heard people present the Gospel simply as, “Jesus died for my sins.” This statement is true, for sure, but it lacks so much about who Jesus is and the magnitude and breadth of what He has done for us. This simplified gospel message is doing more harm than good because without knowing the full and correct Gospel, people are easily being drawn into a works-based method of religion rather than being freed into a grace-based new life that reflects the power of the Spirit and the joy of the Lord as a newly created child of God through Jesus’ resurrection.

In my experience, it seems Christians are in a continual conversation about sin, shortcomings, failures, and shame. The emphasis is on our unrighteousness which denies and neglects the beauty of what Jesus has done for us. This is why I believe that it is crucial for us all to know the complete Gospel, which is about our new abundant life, the indwelling Spirit, Jesus’ easy yoke, our imputed righteousness and holiness, freedom from the chains of our sin, and Jesus’ new command of love which is partnered with our new ability to do so. All these great and positive things are what make the Gospel one of good news and one that is all about grace.

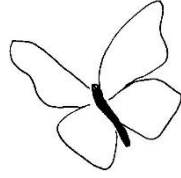
Discussion

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 9 – Gospel of Radical Grace*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?
3. Why is the *Gospel of Radical Grace* important to understanding God’s grace in general?

4. Why do you think it matters that you understand the full truth of the gospel including not only the reason for Jesus' death, but the benefits of His resurrection?
5. How can different presentations of the gospel change the way you approach your relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit? Can you give examples?
6. In the subtitled section **The Grace of Romans Road**, I give a few scriptures that are rarely included in Gospel presentations. In what ways, if any, do these verses change the typical Gospel that you have heard?
7. I define the pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps gospel as any gospel that focuses on your efforts to gain righteousness or holiness through your own effort. In what ways can you defend against being drawn into such a works-based religious system?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapters are: 19-21



Chapter 11

Keys

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Note From the Author

My friends,

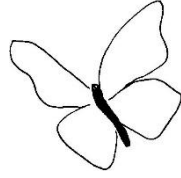
The keys presented in this chapter have helped me in my study of the Bible. They are beneficial because they can keep us from being led into believing a false doctrine. If one of these keys fails in any given article, sermon, book, speech, or song, it would be prudent to think critically of the message that is being offered. For example, if a song is mostly about the truth of the Gospel, but it also talks about someone else also being a god, then you would automatically know that song was blasphemous. My example is absurd for the purpose of you getting my point. Most bad doctrine is subtle, which is why we need to keep these keys in mind. They have saved me from going down dangerous paths and I pray they help you as well.

Discussion

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 11 – Keys*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?
3. Why is the information in this chapter, *Keys*, important to learn and use?
4. Can you give any examples of bad or false doctrine that you have caught because you knew the information conflicted with a truth of the Bible that you knew?
5. Is there a specific key or keys that are new to you? Share your thoughts about them with the group.
6. What do you think would be the most effective keys to identify legalistic teaching?
7. What do you think would be the most effective keys to help people who struggle in their marriage?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapters are: 22-24



Chapter 12

Radical Grace

Prayer

Open the group meeting with prayer.

Note From the Author

Beloved friends,

You have built a solid scriptural foundation of the complete Gospel of Radical Grace, brick by brick. My prayer is that I have helped to clarify some things for you and shown you the beautiful freedom that you own in Christ Jesus. His revolutionary grace means that you may be resolute in your faith, rest from dead works, rejoice in His love, replicate His grace with others, and reflect the power and joy of His grace in your lives.

Thank you for spending your time with me in this study. God bless you as you live free and unashamed in God's Radical Grace.

Discussion

Introduce the following questions to the group for discussion.

1. Are there any questions or comments about *Chapter 12 – Radical Grace*?
2. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?
3. Why is the discussion in this chapter about *Radical Grace* important to your daily life?
4. How does grace help you to be resolute in your faith?
5. Discuss the idea of resting in God's grace. What does that mean for you?
6. What are ways in which you may replicate God's grace with others in your life? Give examples.
7. What are your thoughts on the study as a whole? How has this study changed your thinking about God's grace or any other topic?

Note: If you are reading along in *Radical Grace: Live Free and Unashamed* while completing this study, the assigned chapters are: 25-26