



grace
church

PRESENCE

Discussion Guide

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Presence

Discussion Guide

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Purpose of This Guide

This study explores the unusual gifts people give and receive at Christmas. Unusual could mean strange, rare, or highly valuable. The goal of the series is to encourage people to give four “unusual gifts” to their friends and family this season.

You may choose to use this guide:

- with your Grace Group
 - with any group of people interested in knowing more about giving unusual gifts to friends and family
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1-Listening

Icebreaker: Can You Hear Me Now?

Discuss times when you have had to go to extreme measures to get a friend or family member to listen to you. Discuss times when others have had a difficult time getting you to truly listen to them.

Discussion Questions

- When you listen to God's Words for the heart behind what He says, your reaction will be to apply what you hear. This shows that you have listened to Him (**2John 1-6**). What can we do to be sure our reactions to the words of our friends and family demonstrate that we are listening to them?
- Writing can be an effective form of communication, but there's nothing like looking someone in the eyes to demonstrate that you are listening to them (**2John 12**). What can we do to arrange for time to deeply listen to our family and friends?
- When you hear that friends or family members are faithfully following Christ, what can you do to express your joy to them (**3John 1-4**)?
- Discuss different ways to spend quality time with friends and family (**3John 13-14**).
- Describe the joy that you experience when you spend time with fellow Christians.

Going Deeper: Show That You Love Them

Make a list of ways to show people that you love them. Which of the following are you likely to do to show love?

- Help someone who is struggling
- Give to your church
- Give to someone who needs help
- Serve at your church
- Serve in your community
- Listen carefully to someone
- Spend quality time with someone
- _____
- _____

Application Exercise: Lord, Remind Me

For the next seven mornings, begin your day praying, “Lord, remind me to love You and others today.”

2-Reconciliation

Icebreaker: Can't We All Just Get Along?

What thoughts and feelings do you have when you see conflict between your Christian brothers and sisters.

Discussion Questions

- When we consider whatever is taking place in our lives right now, what does Paul tell us that can help us keep things in perspective (**Php 3:20-21**)?
- What do you see in **Philippians 4:1-3** that tells you how concerned Paul was about the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche?
- How can unresolved conflict hurt the church? How can unresolved conflict hurt your family?
- In the following verses, what instructions does Paul give us that can help us live in unity? How can you apply these in your life?

Php 4:4
Php 4:5
Php 4:6-7
Php 4:8
Php 4:9

Going Deeper: Unity

Read **Philippians 2:1-8** and note the instructions that Paul gives for agreeing with each other in the Lord. Meditate on these verses about the dangers of lack of unity.

- **Matthew 12:25**
- **Mark 3:24-25**
- **Romans 16:17-18**
- **1Corinthians 1:10-13**
- **1Corinthians 3:1-4**
- **James 4:1-2**

Application Exercise: Plan to Live in Unity

During the coming week, write your personal plan for living in unity with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

3-Another Chance

Icebreaker: Do Over

In what kinds of games do you think, “Do Overs” are a good idea? Why?

Discussion Questions

- Even though Paul and Barnabas were spiritually mature, they were human, like us. In a situation like the one they faced, what could they have done differently that might have eased the conflict [[Acts 15:37-39](#)]?
- Consider that God may have been using the vastly different reactions of Paul and Barnabas to challenge and grow Mark [[Rom 8:28-29](#)].
 - ▶ Discuss how a stern response to your failings may prompt you to make necessary changes.
 - ▶ Discuss how encouragement after you have failed can give you a sense of acceptance that can help you get back on track.
- How do you react when you have a conflict with a key person in your life?
 - ▶ Do you allow your discomfort to get in the way of you serving God as He desires or do you continue to serve Him regardless?
 - ▶ If you must part ways with a person, what can you do to part on good terms?
- If a person who has previously disappointed you comes looking for a second chance, what would it take for you to give that person a second chance [[Col 4:10](#) and [2Tim 4:11](#)]?

Group Prayer

Spend time praying in your group. Include some of these:

- Thank God that He gives us second chances.
- Ask God to help you give others second chances and to know when people are truly repentant.
- Thank God for those who have given you second chances.

Application Exercise: The Real Enemy

In times of disagreement, ask yourself:

- What is the real nature of the difficulty? Could it be that God, by placing you in a situation with a person whose personality grates on you, is giving you an opportunity to develop your patience and kindness?
- Who is the real enemy? (Hint: It's not the person with whom you are having a clash.)

4-Grace

Icebreaker: You're Too Good to Me

Discuss times when someone has done something for you that you didn't feel you deserved.

Discussion Questions

- Jesus gave us “grace,” God’s unmerited favor (**John 1:14-17**). In what ways can our words give grace to people? What can help us stop before we say something and consider how our words may affect the people that hear our words?
- We are to ensure that our lives spread God’s grace to people (**2Cor 4:15**). Which of the following are you likely to do to spread God’s grace?
 - Pray for grace for yourself (**Heb 4:16**).
 - Pray for grace for others (**2Cor 13:14** and **Eph 6:24**).
 - Pray that you and others do not abuse grace (**Rom 6:1-6**).
 - Point out to others how God has shown them grace (**Acts 11:23** and **1John 1:3-4**).
- God wants us to ensure that we are good stewards of His grace as we serve people (**1Pet 4:10**). How can the grace that God extends to us help us serve others? How can we be outward focused with the grace we receive?

Going Deeper: Three Keys to Grace

Meditate on the following keys to grace:

<i>Faith</i>	<i>Repentance</i>	<i>Humility</i>
Rom 5:1-2	Gal 2:16-21	1Pet 5:5-6
<p>Heb 11:1 and Heb 11:6, We can't please God without faith.</p> <p>Eph 2:8 and Rom 12:3, God and His Word save us by grace through faith.</p>	<p>Heb 6:1 and Gal 2:21, Nothing we "do" can save us, not good works, not baptism, not following rules. We must lean on God rather than our own effort.</p>	<p>Rom 14:7-9 We must remember how sinful and powerless we are, regularly admitting our shortcomings to God.</p>
We have access by faith to this grace in which we stand.	If righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.	God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.
Hindrance = unbelief	Hindrance = dead works	Hindrance = pride

Application Exercise: Grace Be With You

When you say goodbye to someone, instead of simply saying, "Bye," how might it be helpful to use an expression such as, "Grace be with you until we meet again"? During the coming week, see how many times you can use that expression instead of, "Bye."



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