



A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Theme of the month:	Extreme Discipleship: Living into Our Mission
Text for the Week:	Colossians 2:8-23
Message for the Week:	Growing In Grace
Theme for the Week:	Embracing and Reflecting God's Amazing Grace

Week 6

Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

Do you have an unbelievable grace story? Share a story of grace.

Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [Colossian 2:8:23](#) out loud. (Clicking this link will bring you to multiple translations.)

As you read and/or listen to it being read, circle, take note of, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

Respond / Reflect:

What is grace? How would you define it? What does it involve?

What is your experience of God's grace?

Pastor Doug noted in his message that "Grace is not immunity to the consequences of one's sinful living or an opportunity to disregard the spirit's leading. Grace helps people come home to face the Father." How does this compare with your understanding of grace?

What are some hollow and deceptive philosophies, human traditions, or elemental forces that we sometimes turn to for spiritual and personal fulness? Are they able to make us alive, forgive our sin, take away our sin, disarm the powers and authorities of this world? How do these compare with the grace and fulness that Jesus offers?

How can we be more gracious and make our church community more gracious?

"Try It!"

Embrace and try our missional practice for the month as an opportunity to share the grace of God with someone.

Read through the book of Colossians once a week during this series. Consider using different translations.

Memorize Colossians 3:17:

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you.

Father in heaven, thank you for revealing yourself to us in Jesus Christ. Jesus graciously died for our sins. Jesus graciously rose to bring us life. Jesus graciously shows us how to live. Help us to remain steadfastly focused on Jesus as we grow in maturity. Help us grow in faith so we can distinguish the leading of your Spirit from the counterfeit enticements of the evil one. Help us to remain in your grace as we extend your grace to one another. In the name of the exalted Christ. Amen.

Missional/Spiritual Practice for the Month: Loving our Neighbor

During the month of September, we prayed every day for five (one for every finger on your hand) of our neighbors and five of our coworkers/classmates by name. During the month of October, try and learn something new about 3 of these people by being present with them and asking good questions and listening well.

Colossians 2:8-23

New International Version

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces^[a] of this world rather than on Christ.

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh^[b] was put off when you were circumcised by^[c] Christ,¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you^[d] alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.^[e]

Freedom From Human Rules

¹⁶ Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.¹⁸ Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind.¹⁹ They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

²⁰ Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules:²¹ "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"²² These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings.²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Colossians 2:8-23

The Message

⁸⁻¹⁰ Watch out for people who try to dazzle you with big words and intellectual double-talk. They want to drag you off into endless arguments that never amount to anything. They spread their ideas through the empty traditions of human beings and the empty superstitions of spirit beings. But that's not the way of Christ. Everything of God gets expressed in him, so you can see and hear him clearly. You don't need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him. When you come to him, that fullness comes together for you, too. His power extends over everything.

¹¹⁻¹⁵ Entering into this fullness is not something you figure out or achieve. It's not a matter of being circumcised or keeping a long list of laws. No, you're already *in*—insiders—not through some secretive initiation rite but rather through what Christ has already gone through for you, destroying the power of sin. If it's an initiation ritual you're after, you've already been through it by submitting to baptism. Going under the water was a burial of your old life; coming up out of it was a resurrection, God raising you from the dead as he did Christ. When you were stuck in your old sin-dead life, you were incapable of responding to God. God brought you alive—right along with Christ! Think of it! All sins forgiven, the slate wiped clean, that old arrest warrant canceled and nailed to Christ's cross. He stripped all the spiritual tyrants in the universe of their sham authority at the Cross and marched them naked through the streets.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ So don't put up with anyone pressuring you in details of diet, worship services, or holy days. All those things are mere shadows cast before what was to come; the substance is Christ.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Don't tolerate people who try to run your life, ordering you to bow and scrape, insisting that you join their obsession with angels and that you seek out visions. They're a lot of hot air, that's all they are. They're completely out of touch with the source of life, Christ, who puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us. He is the Head and we are the body. We can grow up healthy in God only as he nourishes us.

²⁰⁻²³ So, then, if with Christ you've put all that puffed-up and childish religion behind you, why do you let yourselves be bullied by it? "Don't touch this! Don't taste that! Don't go near this!" Do you think things that are here today and gone tomorrow are worth that kind of attention? Such things sound impressive if said in a deep enough voice. They even give the illusion of being pious and humble and austere. But they're just another way of showing off, making yourselves look important.