

Grace that teaches (Leader's notes)

This is a short study, looking at just a few verses from Titus. It is designed to take 30-45 minutes maximum. It reminds us that we have been saved by grace, and that this grace is training us to live for Jesus right now because we belong to him, as we wait for heaven. As your group is reminded of the gospel, and its implications for life right now, our prayer is that it will lead to fruitful discussion about how to serve each-other in growth group this year.

Are you part of any groups that meet from time-to-time, perhaps a sports group, or a hobby, or a community group? What do you have in common? Is there anything that is important to your 'group culture'?

This question is just a chance for people to share something about their life that might help build connections between group members. The main link is that we are all part of groups, and that groups have identity and purpose.

Titus is a letter about how to 'do life' as groups of people who trust Jesus (ie, Christian maturity). As Paul writes to Titus (a church leader), he gives instructions about establishing other leaders in church groups (chapter 1), and the importance of teaching and godly character (chapter 2). In chapter 2, verses 11-14, he gives the reasons for these instructions (2:11 begins with the linking word 'for').

Read Titus 2:11-14.

Verse 11 says that the 'Grace of God' has appeared. Looking carefully at the passage, write down all the things that this 'grace' does (including the verse number).

Brings salvation for all (v11)

Trains us to 'say no' to ungodliness (v12)

Live self-controlled and godly lives (v12)

Wait for Jesus to return (v13)

These early comprehension questions are important for setting the tone of future studies. Use them to try to encourage good patterns for group bible reading and study, such as

- *Getting the answers from the passage rather than from their general knowledge or experience (asking people to say the verse or verse number that they got the answer from is really helpful eg 'where did you see that in the passage?' or "what verse did you get that from"? should be stock phrases that your group will get so bored of hearing from you that they will just give the verse automatically!)*
- *Everyone writing down the answers on the sheet. This can be helpful to engage people who might feel peripheral, is a good reminder of what has been learned, and helps people 'tune back in' if they have drifted off. Making sure everyone has a pen and study sheet at the start of the study, and leading by example are useful. In this question you can specifically ask people to write down the answers, because you can say that they will need these lists for a later question.*
- *Try to encourage a variety of people to answer these early comprehension questions. You may need to use your group management skills such as eye contact, body language etc to*

encourage wide participation.

This passage also describes Jesus as someone who will 'appear' in the future (verse 13). Looking through this passage again

What titles are given to Jesus in this passage?

Blessed hope

Great God

Saviour

Christ

?? Grace of God

What has he done?

Gave himself to redeem us from all wickedness

Purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

How is Jesus linked to the appearing of God's grace? With the person next to you, try to draw a flow diagram explaining the passage. You should try to include as many of the ideas from the lists above as possible.

This is not straightforward (have a go at it yourself beforehand), but is designed to get people thinking hard about the ideas in the passage and how they connect. So far, the questions have been basic comprehension, designed to get group members to read the passage. Encourage them to be re-reading the passage, and trying to link ideas. Give people at least 5 minutes.

It's a bit bold to do small group work in the first study, but a good thing is that it really encourages everyone to engage with the passage, and contribute something in a non-threatening pair- environment. If there's someone in your group that might feel uncomfortable, be sensitive in the way you people pair up (you can direct pairing if necessary, using core members and co-leaders to help. This is a good chance to reflect that where you and your co-leader sit within the group is a ministry opportunity too).

Share your diagrams with the group. Discuss as a group what you think the passage tells us that the goal of God's grace appearing is.

- *You can have a discussion about what the final endpoint is. Possibilities include:*
 - *Salvation of sinners*
 - *A godly people waiting for Jesus' return.*
 - *A redeemed people belonging to Jesus*

Verse 12 states that God's grace 'teaches us' (NIV) or is 'training us' (ESV).

What are we being trained to do? (or be)

Be godly while we wait for Jesus' return. Say 'no' to ungodliness. Belong to Jesus and be zealous for following him as our King.

Why might it be important that we are being trained by 'grace', rather than by the opposite?

This is a reflective question, but important I think. Some possible answers could be:

- *This side of heaven we are not perfect, and will continue to sin. We start our Christian life with forgiveness and mercy, and we never move on.*
- *God's continual forgiveness and mercy shows us his love to us, and reminds us that our righteousness never depends on our goodness or works, but on his grace. (eg 3:5)*
- *As we depend on his forgiveness and mercy, our character of showing forgiveness and mercy to others will grow (eg Matt 6:9-13;18:21-35).*

If this question is a bit too abstract for your group, or you want to spend more time exploring the gospel, you could look at chapter 3:3-8, introducing it with a statement like "Paul explains more about grace and mercy in these verses. How does this passage say that we are saved?"

How does this passage suggest that we should live right now? What should we be doing?

Relying on God's grace as sufficient for our salvation.

Taking sin seriously.

Working hard at godliness

Eagerness to use our lives to do the things that Jesus' loves, because we belong to him

Actively waiting for Jesus to return.

In light of this, share some suggestions for how your growth group can help each other do these things this year.

Things we can do:

Things we can regularly pray for:

Use this question as a launching pad for group culture discussion. Hopefully this passage has fired up your group about their identity in Jesus, and their eagerness to serve him and each other. There might be some great suggestions from your group. However, here's also a chance for you as leader to suggest 1-2 ideas of your own that you would like the group to try in promoting godliness and growth. It's worth having a think and pray about this before you lead the study. Ideas could include: personal evangelism, 1:1 ministry, faithfulness in prayer, practical service, mission support etc etc.

Pray now about these things.