

In View of God's Mercy Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Describe a time you got off the hook for something you did wrong.
2. If you are at a restaurant and your dish does not come out to your liking, are you more likely to send it back or to just deal with it?

Read the following passages: Romans 12:1-2.

The first eleven chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans detail how God has shown mercy to us through the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, so that we can experience true life with God. For some of us, our familiarity with the Gospel may lessen our sense of wonder and awe concerning what God has done on our behalf. The eternal Son of God took on a human nature and allowed wicked human beings to give full vent to their anger and rebellion. Jesus Christ was subjected to the most shameful and painful death known in the 1st century: crucifixion. His closest friends, the apostles, deserted him. And most significantly of all, God the Father punished Jesus for the sins of humanity. In the middle of this hellish ordeal, Jesus cried out from the cross in the words of Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus experienced the complete rejection of the Father on our behalf.

Three days later Jesus was resurrected bodily from the grave, and he now reigns with God in glory. Jesus continues to extend mercy to all who humbly come to him. In fact, the apostle Paul argues in Romans 8: "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" God's mercy is always available to us, but how do we keep it in view?

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Why is it important to keep God's mercy in view in our lives? How do you think keeping God's mercy in view might affect our perspective and decision making?
2. Read Psalm 103. What are some of the ways David speaks about God's goodness and mercy? What are some ways God has been merciful to you? What does David tell himself to do in the first two verses of this psalm? Do you choose to speak about God's mercy in your life? Do you take time to remember the ways God has been merciful to you?
3. Many of us take a passive approach to experiencing God's goodness and mercy: "I will experience God's mercy when he chooses to extend it to me." But God has provided his people with what some theologians refer to as "means of grace;" that is, trustworthy ways we can regularly experience God's grace and mercy. One of the most important of these means of grace is our relationships with other believers. What are some ways we can experience the grace and mercy of God through other people? Do you reach out to others when you are facing hardship? When you are

considering doing something new or difficult do you deliberately gather a few others who can be a source of strength and encouragement to you as you face the inevitable challenges and setbacks that will come? What difference might this make?

4. Discuss the roles the following “means of grace” (see question 3) can play in our lives to help keep God’s mercy in view.

- Reading the Scriptures
- Prayer
- Gathering with other believers in worship
- The Lord’s Supper

5. Parts of the apostle Paul’s testimony appear in a number of places in the New Testament including Acts (three times), 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and 1 Timothy. Why do you think Paul so regularly referenced his own story? (See 1 Timothy 1:15-16). If you are a follower of Christ, do you share your salvation story with others? What is your story?

6. How can you keep God’s mercy in view this week? How do you expect this to impact your perspective, your interactions with others, and your decision making?

Pray