

Justifying Grace 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. What is one of the most impressive sights you have ever seen?
2. Were you a good liar as a child? Explain.

Read the following passage: Titus 3:3-7.

Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to help stabilize a church that desperately needed some foundations. Crete was a notoriously difficult place to build a church. The reputation of the Cretans was well known throughout the region: “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” It was a challenging environment for a young leader like Titus. So what did Paul do? He reminded Titus of the grace of God they had experienced in their own lives.

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

1. Based on this passage, summarize the Gospel message that Paul, Titus, and others were proclaiming throughout the Roman Empire.
2. Why do you think Paul reminded Titus, “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved... But... [God] saved us”? How was that relevant to Titus’ circumstances?
3. Paul’s phrase, “having been justified by his grace,” uses terminology related to the legal world. “Justified” refers to a judgment made by God in which we are declared righteous and forgiven of our sins. How does this concept emerge in Jesus’ famous parable of the prodigal son? (See Luke 15:21-24.) In your own words, what does it mean for us to be justified by God’s grace?
4. Choose five words to describe yourself and share those five words with the others in your group.
5. Who are some of the people to whom you are prone to look for approval? Why is the approval of others often so important to us? If, as followers of Jesus, we have been declared righteous by God, should we then ignore the approval or disapproval of others? Explain. How do we recognize an inappropriate dependence on the approval of others?
6. In addition to justification, Paul describes God’s salvation as “the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” Why do we need “rebirth” (or “regeneration,” as some translations put it)? What is the difference between justification and “rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit?”

7. Because of God's saving work, we can "become heirs having the hope of eternal life." What does it mean to become God's heirs? Do you regularly think about the next life? Explain. Do you find it difficult to draw strength from this future hope as you face daily challenges? How should "the hope of eternal life" affect our lives in the present?

Pray