

Heart of God

Session 3: God’s Heart Is Gracious

ICE BREAKER

Leader: *This session’s icebreaker is an old-fashioned Bible trivia game. The leader will pose a series of questions to teams of students whose goal is to answer each question correctly. Best score wins...or does it?*

Divide the group into teams of four to six students. The leader will proceed to ask the groups ten Bible trivia questions. Each team can consult together as a group to discuss their answers before writing them on a piece of paper.

Once all ten questions have been asked and answered, the leader will gather the answer sheets and tally each team’s score. Present the winning team(s) before the entire group...but there is a twist. The leader awards the biggest prize to the team(s) that finished the competition in last place. Notice how the students react to this display of grace or unmerited favor.

Once the “awards ceremony” is complete, students should sit, and this session can begin.

How did you feel about the losing teams receiving the biggest prize? Do you think they should have been shown grace?

The concept of God’s grace is written all over the Bible. But it’s not always an easy concept to understand and may not even be an idea we like, as we’ve just witnessed in our trivia game. In this session, Francis will show us that God’s heart is gracious and tell us why that is good news for all of us.

VIEW

Watch Session 3: *God’s Heart Is Gracious* (7 minutes).

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REVIEW

Francis cautioned us against trying to “figure out” God, especially apart from what he has revealed to us. The Bible says his ways are unsearchable—we simply can’t know all there is about God. **Why do you think it’s ill-advised to try and figure out God apart from what he says in the Bible? What are some of the wrong paths we might go down when we make assumptions about God?**

What do you think is the right way to learn about God?

Francis said, “The only chance we have of knowing anything about [God] is when he chooses to reveal something to us.” But we often try to learn more than what God chooses to tell us. We want to know what will happen tomorrow, if we will do well on our test next week, or if we will go to the right college. Sometimes, the things we want to know the most are the things God doesn’t tell us about. **What are the big questions you want God to answer? How does the Bible answer your question?**

In the last session, we touched on God’s graciousness. In this session, Francis spent more time discussing and defining grace, calling it “unmerited favor.” Put plainly, grace is “God gives you something that you don’t deserve and didn’t earn.” **What has God given you that you don’t deserve?**

To make the idea of God’s gracious nature more concrete, Francis used the example of his generous friend. **Do you have any friends like that? Who are they? What can you do to express your appreciation to them for their graciousness?**

Salvation is an act of grace. We did not earn God’s favor—as we said in the last session, we were God’s enemies before he saved us. **In what ways can we think our salvation is something we have to earn or deserve? What does it say about God that he would save us when we had nothing to offer him in return?**

Francis talked about the up-and-down reality of life. Sometimes life will be great, and other times will be difficult. But whether things are great or difficult, we can know that God loves us and is with us in every circumstance. **When things are hard, what can you do to remind yourself that God hasn’t removed his grace from**

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BIBLE JOURNEY

We may be tempted to look for answers about God or his will that haven't been given to us, which is a recipe for confusion, frustration, and even disaster. Read Deuteronomy 29:29.

What are the questions you are praying about or want answers to?

In Deuteronomy 29:29, we're told that "the hidden things"—things like the future—"belong to the Lord our God." We can't know what will happen tomorrow, but he does. **Why do you think we're so uncomfortable not having access to "the hidden things"? Do you think life would be better if you knew all the "hidden things"? How so?**

The passage goes on to say that "the revealed things belong to us and our children forever, so that we may follow all the words of this law." Not everything is hidden from us! God, in his grace, has chosen to reveal himself and his law to us. **Do you feel like knowing God and his law (how we should live) is enough? Why, or why not?**

In what ways has knowing God and the way he wants you to live changed your life?

God has revealed himself to us and given us his law so "that we may follow all the words of this law." God has given us enough knowledge to live today and trust him with tomorrow. **How would God's word encourage you to live today, even when you don't have an answer to your questions? What would it look like to trust God's graciousness as you wait for an answer to your question?**

In the New Testament, God reveals some of what was once hidden, namely, the grace he offers through his Son, Jesus Christ. For a long time, God's people did not know how God was going to bring redemption to the world, but for us, God shines a big, bright spotlight on his son. Read Ephesians 2:4-7.

According to this passage, God intends to "display the immeasurable riches of his grace . . . to us in Christ Jesus." In other words, God has a bottomless well of grace that

we can enjoy through Jesus. **Where in your life do you need some of God’s grace?**

The end of verse 7 emphasizes God’s kindness. Consider this: we are prone to think that God is disappointed in us, but when he looks at you he sees someone he can be kind to. **In what ways has God shown you kindness? How might it change your prayers if you trusted that God is kind to you?**

Often in the Bible God commands us to be holy as he is holy. Part of being like him is extending to others the grace, mercy, and kindness he has shown us. **How could your relationships with others change if you committed yourself to show them grace, mercy, and kindness? What one thing can you begin doing today to be more gracious, merciful, or kind?**

LAST WORD

One of the most precious truths in all the world is that our creator, God himself, has made himself known to us. It is an ongoing act of unfathomable grace. We don’t have to go looking for him, and we don’t have to guess at what he’s like. He has bent down to our level and told us who he is both in his Word and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

We don’t have to try and figure God out. He’s gracious, merciful, kind, and abounding in steadfast love. His heart is bent toward forgiveness. His heart should cause us to live in joy and gratitude. Life is good because God is gracious.