
MULTIPLY

april|AMAZING GRACE

gathering women of faith
#multiplygoodness

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

YOU CAN DO THIS STUDY ON YOUR OWN OR GATHER A GROUP OF WOMEN TO JOIN YOU! HERE ARE SOME WORDS OF ADVICE, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND SUGGESTION FOR THOSE MEETING WITH A GROUP OF PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT FAITH TRADITIONS

GATHER

This is a place to talk about God, encourage one another, and learn how to love. All are welcome. Bring your good intentions and a heart full of grace and you will fit in just fine. It is our hope to provide an experience where people of different faiths can gather in an effort to build bridges and create relationships of trust.

BRING YOUR FAITH

We hope people of all faiths will feel welcome here. In order for that to work best we have come up with some ground rules. First, we will **only bring to the table what is common between all**. Talk to the women attending your group to define what that is. We have found sticking to the Old Testament and New Testament gives plenty of common ground. That doesn't mean that we don't all hold onto differing beliefs that are important to us, but in this venue we are going to try to concentrate on the beliefs that we share. **Be willing to learn a different vocabulary**. Some of us use the word love, others the word charity. Ask for understanding if you come to what looks like a division and search for common ground. Remember, our utmost goal is to support you in **living your faith well**. This is not a forum for proselytizing, this is a forum for bridge building, growing new relationships with one another, and for finding similarities. There is only one agenda here, and that is love. Every time you walk into a gathering, remember our favorite phrase ...**what if your only motive was love?**

LOVE WELL

We believe you can't really love a person well until you understand their faith, because faith is the lens through which we each view the world. We all desire to be faithful, and that includes how we love others. Here is a question we have considered often, 'How can we be a display of what it means to LOVE WELL in our city if we can't love each other? How can we really love the poor and the marginalized if we can't do it amongst ourselves.' This small setting is the perfect place to practice loving well, and we hope you will take the opportunity to do that.

LEARN

Over the years we have learned that watching someone live out their own faith well actually has the power to deepen your own faith. We call this holy envy. Be willing to learn something from everyone in the group. Do you admire the way they worship? Are you impressed with their dedication to study God's Word? Did someone play a song that touched your heart? Try applying what you admire to your own spiritual journey. There is great beauty and humility in allowing someone's dedication to what they believe deepen your own belief.

REMEMBER WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER

At the very root of this study is our desire to create a safe space to build meaningful relationships with people of a different faith. Why? Because we believe those relationships will impact the world. Our purpose is to unite like minded believers in an effort to multiply goodness.

May God's blessings attend your journey.

THE BOOK OF PHILEMON

Could you imagine for a moment that you are Philemon? That would make you a very wealthy Christian who owned a large home with many servants. One of your servants was useless in every sense of the word. He never finished his work. One day he ran away, stealing from you as he left. After time you heard he was in prison and you were glad thinking that he had finally ended up in the place he deserved.

Now, imagine that on this particular day you are out working in one of your fields. You see a man approaching, walking down the path that leads to your home. As he comes closer you realize it is Onesimus, the useless servant, the one that ran away. Before either of you say anything he hands you a letter. Intrigued, you open it up and realize it is from your dear friend, Paul. You begin to read...

Philemon,

I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints...

For love's sake I appeal to you...for Onesimus. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me. I am sending him --who is my very heart-- back to you...not as a servant, but as a brother beloved. Receive him as myself. If he has wronged you, or owes you anything put that on my account; I will repay it. Let me have joy in you having confidence in your obedience...knowing that you will do more than I ask. And prepare a room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I will be given to you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Paul

(Taken from the book of Philemon ESV, NIV, and KJV translations)

The verses end, but the story doesn't end, and we are left wondering...what will Philemon do? What would you do?

This is a story that teaches the transforming power of grace. We see the transformation of Onesimus from an useless servant and prisoner into a beloved brother. But we also see the invitation for a transformation in Philemon. One that he is not capable of on his own, but one that the enabling power of grace could help him achieve. Within this story we see how the grace of Jesus met one man in a prison, and the other man in a field, how Jesus met them where they were but did not intend to leave them where He found them. We see how Jesus has the power to transform everything He touches. Through Grace.

It is not hard to recognize Paul as a type of Christ in this book. When we view this story like that, it makes the lesson of Philemon even sweeter. Think of yourself as Onesimus. Try to remember a wrong you have committed. Now, imagine receiving a letter that said something like this...

_____ (your name here)

I thank my God always when I remember you, because I hear of your love and faith...

For love's sake I appeal to you...perhaps you feel useless, but you are indeed useful to me. You are my very heart-- I see you as a sister beloved. If you have done wrong, or owe someone something, put that on my account; I will repay it. Let me have joy in you, having confidence in your obedience...knowing that you will do more than I ask. And prepare room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I will be given to you. Grace be with your spirit.

Jesus

The application becomes very personal when we imagine ourselves as Onesimus. Within the learning we begin to understand the transforming power of grace.

PHILEMON THOUGHTS TO PONDER

Find a quiet place. Grab your scriptures, a journal, and your pen. Read the book of Philemon and then ponder these questions. Maybe jot down some notes in the margins. When you are finished spend some time journaling. What does this chapter teach you about GRACE?

RECEIVE HIM AS MY OWN

PHILEMON 1:12 This verse invites Philemon to receive Onesimus as if he was his very heart, or one of his own children. That would have been very hard, considering the circumstance Onesimus left Philemon in. What made it possible for Philemon to receive Onesimus? What part did the power of grace play?

There will be times in each of our lives when we are asked to receive another person in love. Sometimes the circumstances might be such that we don't want to. Maybe because of a wrong they have committed, because we are uncomfortable with their lifestyle, or because they have different beliefs than we do. What if you were to imagine that everyone you come in contact with carries a letter similar to the one found in the book of Philemon but signed by Jesus? How would your response be different?

PHILEMON MORE THOUGHTS TO PONDER

RECEIVE HIM AS A BROTHER BELOVED

PHILEMON 1:16 Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus not as a servant, but as a beloved brother. How would that look different? Where would a servant stay? Where would a brother stay? Where would they eat? Paul understood the importance of asking someone to receive someone as a brother. Remember when he had been three days blind in Jerusalem and the Lord sent Ananias to go to his home and give him a blessing? Do you remember the very first name Ananias called Saul? (Acts 9:17) What do you learn from that lesson?

RECEIVE HIM AS MYSELF

PHILEMON 1:17 This verse is a reminder of the scripture found in Matthew 25:35-40. What does it mean to receive someone as if they were Jesus Christ?

I WILL REPAY IT

PHILEMON 1:18-19 What does this verse teach about the love of Jesus Christ? How do we see the application in our own lives?

SCRIPTURES ON GRACE

ACTS 13:43
1 CORINTHIANS 15:10
1 CORINTHIANS 1:3
JOHN 4:39, ESV
2 CORINTHIANS 9:8
MATTHEW 7:13-14
2 CORINTHIANS 12:9
EPHESIANS 3:8
1 PETER 4:10

JOHN 1:16-17
EPHESIANS 4:7
1 PETER 4:10
EPHESIANS 6:24
JUDGES 6:17
COLOSSIANS 3:16
COLOSSIANS 4:6
PSALM 94:11
2 PETER 3:18

2 THESSALONIANS 2:16
PSALM 145:8
2 TIMOTHY 2:1
JOHN 8:7
HEBREWS 4:16
HEBREWS 13:9
JAMES 4:6
1 PETER 1:2
PHILEMON 1:12 & 25

APRIL'S INVITATION

— AMAZING GRACE —

*grace
be with
your spirit*

GRACE WILL
MEET YOU WHERE YOU ARE
BUT WON'T LEAVE YOU THERE