

LIFE GROUP NOTES:

SERIES: Disciple

PART FIVE: Balancing Act

"You are the salt of the

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1-14



INTRODUCTION

We all think we know something about love- and all of us have experienced love to some extent. But Jesus tells us to love one another *the way he loved us*. When we look at how Jesus loved, it's a bit terrifying. We discover that it was a bit messy, and sometimes it seemed inconsistent. At times he seems to be forgiving; at other times he seems to hold everyone accountable. Occasionally he's harsh and points out sin; on other occasions he seems to ignore it.

Whenever we open the Scriptures and take seriously the teaching of Jesus, there's a tension. We dare not walk away from this tension, even though it's messy and confusing. If we try to resolve it, however, we give up something really important.

DISCUSSION STARTER

As you've read or heard about the way Jesus treated people, what has most surprised or puzzled you?

MESSAGE SUMMARY

In his Gospel, John wrote that Jesus, as the Word "made his dwelling among us" and that he "came from the father, full of **GRACE** and **TRUTH**" (John 1:14). There's the tension. We think we know what **GRACE** is and what **TRUTH** is. **TRUTH** says "Hey, you're accountable!" **GRACE** says, "You're forgiven." **GRACE** says "You're fine!" **TRUTH** says, "No, you're broken." **GRACE** says, "It's going to be OK." **TRUTH** says, "you're going to have to work on that."

But John says that Jesus was absolutely full of **BOTH** grace and truth. To further emphasise this, John adds, "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17). Grace and truth showed up as a full package in the person of Jesus- not as a balance between the two, but as the full measure and embodiment of both. This is what made the love of Jesus so messy and confusing. Jesus brought all of grace and truth to bear on everyone he talked to and into every situation he encountered. If you want to know what Jesus meant when he said "love one another as I have loved you." Watch how Jesus loved. He lived us by calling sin "sin"- and then he paid for it. Having paid for it, he declared, "I don't condemn you."

We can't let go of **TRUTH**. God is constantly saying "here's what is true; here's how you've got to live; here's how you've got to treat people; here's what you have to do with your morality and your ethics; and here's why you have to be accountable. Sin is destructive, and I don't want it to get you."

We can't let go of **GRACE** either, because to some extent sin already has us (if claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us 1 John 1:8), and grace is our only way back home. Grace is the only way we'll know that we've connected or reconnected with our heavenly father.

We need **TRUTH** and we need **GRACE**. If Jesus is the embodiment of both, and if the church is his body- then we are the best expression of Jesus others will ever know. So we have to be comfortable with the mess and unfairness and inconsistency, and everything else that goes along with managing and hanging onto the tension around truth and grace. The church is at it's best when it embraces both and refuses to let go of either. The church is to be the dispenser of both.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) When you read or hear the bible taught to you and experience the tension in your understanding of Jesus and how he lives and loves, is that tension something you try to resolve or something you are comfortable with?
- 2) What is your understanding of the word "grace" and what it represents- both as coming from God and as conveyed by us to other people?
- 3) What is your understanding of the word "truth" and what it represents- bot as coming from God and as conveyed by us to other people?
- 4) What are the ways you recognise or experience tension between grace and truth (i.e. are there any issues- homosexuality- divorce- ethical dilemmas)? In which direction do you tend to lean?
- 5) In what ways have you experienced bot grace and truth?
- 6) Why is a 'balance' between grace and truth the wrong way to think of what's being taught in this session? What is a better way to think of the relationship between grace and truth?

KEY POINTS

- When examining how Jesus loved, we find unpredictability and apparent inconsistencies. If we try to resolve this tension, we lose Jesus.
- In all his encounters with people, Jesus was always the full embodiment of both grace and truth. We, however, tend to see these two in tension.
- We must never let go of either grace or truth; we need both. The church is at it's best when it embraces both and dispenses both.

Moving Forward

Think about your own commitment and intention to extend to others both grace and truth in full measure. What does that actually mean to you? What will it require from you? We recommend that you make it your goal to reflect deeply on the full manifestation of both grace and truth in the life of Jesus. As you continue reading about him in the New Testament, try to embrace whatever tension arises as you see the love of Jesus in action and as you seek to put it into practice in your relationships.

Preparing for session 6

To help you prepare- use these suggested devotions during the week leading up to your next life-group.

Focus this week on the brief stories (parables) that Jesus told in Luke 15. What is especially important to note in the background for these stories as indicated in 15:1-3

What stands about to you in the stories Jesus told in Luke 15:4-7, 15:8-10 and 15:11-32? What do you relate the most to in this story? What do you enjoy the most?

What do you see as the strongest ways in which the three stories in Luke 15 link together?