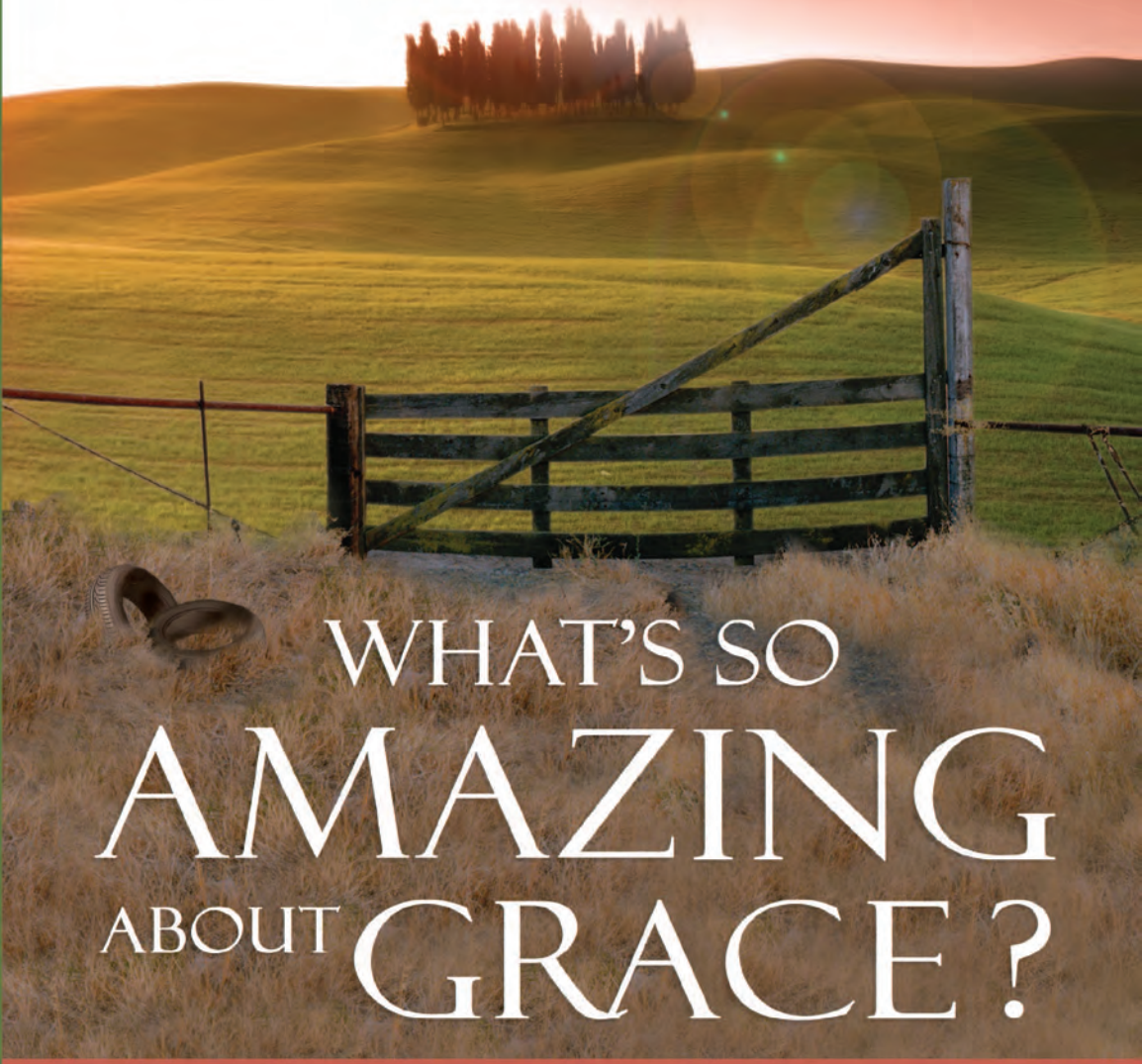
groupware™

AUTHOR OF *THE JESUS I NEVER KNEW*

PHILIP YANCEY



WHAT'S SO AMAZING ABOUT GRACE?

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

SESSION ONE

THE MISSING INGREDIENT

A BEAUTIFUL WORD, A POWERFUL CONCEPT

Questions to Consider

- What does the word *grace* mean?
- In what ways do we see the power—and the absence—of grace in our everyday lives and in our world?
- How did Jesus model grace?
- What impact *should* grace have on our world?

A Word Packed with Meaning

What comes to mind when you hear the word *grace*?

- A religious word that draws a blank
- A word that makes me uncomfortable
- A word that gives me hope
- The story of my life
- A yearning I feel inside
- Other

What words or phrases can you think of that contain the word *grace* or some form of this word?

How would you define the word *grace*?

Video Notes

Philip Yancey: "I'm convinced that the future of the church in this new century depends on how well we master this notion of grace."

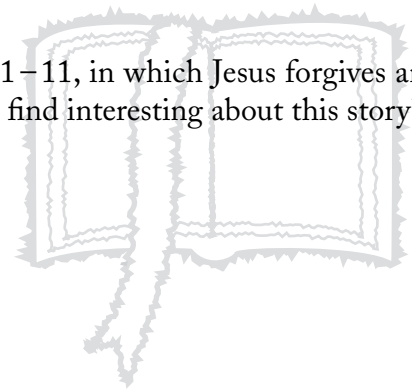
Philip Yancey: "I wrote this book because *grace* is not the first word that comes to mind when people think of Christians."

Philip Yancey: "Gordon MacDonald once said, 'Grace is the one thing the church has that you can't get anywhere else.'"

Philip Yancey: "Never, ever, underestimate the power of grace. It is a gift from God, and it holds within it a supernatural power."

Philip Yancey: "Grace is a gift, free of charge, on the house. You only have to do one thing to receive a gift: open your hands."

Bible Study



1. Read John 8:1–11, in which Jesus forgives an adulterous woman. What do you find interesting about this story?

2. Read Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22, in which God's law regarding adultery is given through Moses. Who else should have been punished according to God's law?

3. In the passage from John, what new attitude toward the law does God show through the person of Jesus?

4. What effect does Jesus' grace have on the crowd? On the woman?

A Modern-Day Story

Philip Yancey heard this story from a friend who works with the down-and-out in Chicago:

> A prostitute came to me in wretched straits, homeless, sick, unable to buy food for her two-year-old daughter. Through sobs and tears, she told me she had been renting out her daughter—two years old!—to men interested in kinky sex. She made more renting out her daughter for an hour than she could earn on her own in a night. She had to do it, she said, to support her own drug habit. I could hardly bear hearing her sordid story. For one thing, it made me legally liable—I'm required to report cases of child abuse. I had no idea what to say to this woman.
>
> At last I asked if she had ever thought of going to a church for help. I will never forget the look of pure, naive shock that crossed her face. "Church!" she cried. "Why would I ever go there? I was already feeling terrible about myself. They'd just make me feel worse."

Small Group Discussion

1. Why is it so difficult to extend grace in this type of situation?

2. In what ways would our response to this modern-day prostitute parallel the Pharisees' response to the adulterous woman? How should it differ?

3. What might it look like if an individual or a church responded with grace to the prostitute's plea for help?

4. How does our church currently reach out in grace—to our members, to our community, to our world?

5. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17. What impact should this verse have on our interactions with those around us?

Summary

In this session we:

- Began to think about the meaning of the word *grace.*
- Were introduced to Philip Yancey and his initial thoughts on the power of grace—and the absence of grace—in our world.
- Studied Jesus' example of grace as he interacted with the woman caught in adultery.
- Explored some of the ways we *should* be experiencing grace in our world.

Suggested Reading

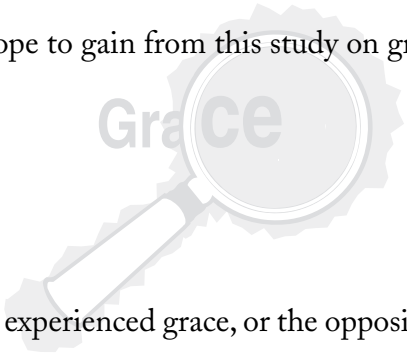
For more thoughts from Philip Yancey and more stories about grace, read:

What's So Amazing About Grace? chapters 1–3.

These chapters include some details about Philip's personal pilgrimage toward God and grace, a retelling of the short story and movie *Babette's Feast,* an excerpt from Erma Bombeck, and an account of Philip's first experiences of grace through, surprisingly, music, nature, and romantic love.

Looking for Grace Inside Myself

1. What do I hope to gain from this study on grace?



2. When have I experienced grace, or the opposite of grace, in my life?

3. Who has modeled a grace-filled life for me? To whom do I need to extend more grace?

4. In what area of my life is God's Spirit nudging me to address an issue of grace?

Pray that God would open your heart to the areas of your life where there needs to be more grace.