

4

WEEK



Our Story

Finding your place
in the story

Weekend Message Notes

Next Steps...

Big Idea...

Behind the story

Family Chapter (optional)

Watch DVD/Notes

In the story of redemption God wrote He has no “plan B.” The all-knowing, all-powerful God designed one way for the world to know how to be saved and transformed; and that is “US, the Church.” His confidence in us is humbling in every way. It is hard to comprehend that His plan is to use sinful, weak and ignorant people to accomplish His purposes; yet He does just that. He knows that with His grace, strength, and wisdom, we, His Church can accomplish exactly what He’s called us to do.

1. *What would it look like if a church is working right? How can “the Church” make a difference in today’s culture?*

Read Ephesians 3:7-13

2. *In these verses, what do you notice about the hidden mystery?*

3. *In Ephesians 3, God lays out His plan for the Savior to be known. Who is to reveal it, what are they revealing, who are they revealing it to, and how are they equipped to do so?*

4. *As Christians we are the Church. Reflect on these verses and share one way you are seeking to live out God's plan.*

5. *In Titus 2:11-13, we learn that grace trains us to live our everyday lives in three different ways: by living a different lifestyle, being called to a different mindset, and by the actions that we take. Which of these three responses to grace do you struggle with most?*

Why do you think that is?

6. *If we are going to accomplish God's will for the Church, we need to be unified. How can we be more unified as a group? How can we as a local church and the Church at large grow in unity?*

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:11-13

Talking to the Author

Lord,

For this reason we bow before You, the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. According to the riches of Your glory, may You grant us to be strengthened with power through Your Spirit in our inner being so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. May we, being rooted and grounded in love, have strength to comprehend with all the saints, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love that surpasses knowledge. We ask that we may be filled with the fullness of God.

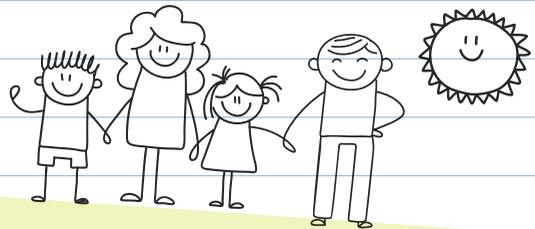
Now to you, oh Lord, who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, may You be gloried in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Group prayer requests

Unfinished reflections

Take some time and just sit in silence before the Lord. He has poured out his love and grace on you, not because of what you do but because you are His. Let the Lord fill you with his love and grace.

Family Chapter



"Do everything for the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31

Brainstorm ideas of acts of kindness and grace that your small group can do (*individually and together*) that would show others you are living out God's plan through Jesus. Write these ideas on colorful pieces of paper and add them to several jars. Send one jar home per household. Each day, pull one or two out as challenges for living a God honoring lifestyle.

Digging deeper into the story

choices

Grace Church has faced many changes, particularly in the last ten years. The one thing we've always sought to hold onto is "grace." It's our church's name and hopefully it's becoming our reputation. It's difficult to talk about a church as just one thing because it's made up of many people. So, the reputation and outworking of the church is not just in corporate efforts, but it's seen most clearly through the individuals who are a part of the church. We seek to create a culture that is God-honoring through loving one another, teaching the Word of God, and expecting God to move through our relationships and actions.

Read 1 Peter 1:1-25

Peter describes our salvation, and the grace of God that was demonstrated to us, as something even the angels wanted to learn more about. Peter then goes on to describe the life of the Church in action.

Write a few of the action words Peter uses in verses 13-20 to describe the church:

From verses 21-25, what interaction and place does Peter want the Word of God (the Bible) to have in our lives and in the Church?

What are some practical ways we can do that?

Recognize that the Church is not just a large organization, but the individuals (you!) who are a part of it. If our Church were to follow your example, what would it be like? Where would we rejoice? We are so thankful for the grace of God and we rest in knowing we don't need to perform for Him or earn His love; yet in response to His grace, we want to strive for godliness and to live His way. Think about your part in that.

Digging deeper into the story Engage!

The Star Trek movies and TV shows have been around for a while and there are certain catch phrases from it that stick with us. In *Star Trek, The Next Generation*, Captain Picard would take his seat and prepare the ship to move and then he would say, “Engage!”; that meant the engines would fire up and the motion forward would commence. This is something every church longs to see happen with everyone who attends. Somewhere along the way, “church” became a spectator sport where people show up to watch others celebrate and live out their faith. A healthy church is one where people are engaged in the mission of the Church. This doesn’t mean they applaud or encourage from afar, but they are in motion and active in seeing the church firing on all cylinders.

Read Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 4:10; Acts 4:32-37

What are some ways that God calls us to engage in the work of the church from these passages?

When we develop a friendship with someone who doesn’t know God and look for intentional ways to talk about our faith, invite them to our church, or even ask how we can pray for them, we are engaging in the work of the Church.

When we use our gifts and abilities to serve in the church, uniting with others and sacrificing time and energy for God’s kingdom, we are engaging in the work of the Church.

When we choose to give financially, regularly and progressively, so that the local and global ministry is able to be resourced, we are engaging in the work of the Church.

When we love one another, take interest in each others’ lives, serve others, provide for needs, pray for one another, and share our life with others, we are engaging in the work of the Church.

There are many other things we could mention, but just starting with these examples and those in the Scripture texts you looked at, what is ONE way you can engage more intentionally in the next few months?

