

LIVING GODLY VALUES

An eight week course for church small groups



INSIDE:
DVD WITH 8 EDITED
HEARTLINES FILMS

HEARTLINES
values that connect

LEADERS GUIDE

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HEARTLINES

values that connect

A value is any deeply cherished principle, belief or conviction held by an individual or group of people. What people really value becomes apparent in observing their behaviour. We may say we believe in 'good values' – but do our everyday lives actually reflect Godly values such as honesty or perseverance?

At the heart of many of the problems facing our country and our continent is a gap between the positive values that we profess and our actions. HEARTLINES is a project that uses television, radio and print media to get the nation to talk, think about and act on these values. "Living Godly Values" (accompanied by the DVD of eight short films in the back inside cover of this book) is a resource for teaching and discipleship, designed to challenge us as Christians to live out good values.

No Christian perfectly practises or even understands all of God's ways. But as believers in the Lord Jesus, we are on a journey with our Creator to discover the principles that make life work best. We trust that through study, prayer and by the power of the Holy Spirit, God's values will become our own and that we will see our lives - and those around us - transformed.

The Church and Social Issues: Are we making difference in our nation?

If ever there has been a place and time for followers of Christ to make a difference, it is now and it is by living out the values we believe in. HIV&AIDS is probably the biggest challenge that the African continent is currently facing. The HIV&AIDS epidemic is not about sex, it is about our failure as a society to put our values into practice. This failure to live values such as self-control, honesty, responsibility and perseverance, results in behaviours such as people having many partners, sex out of marriage, cheating on partners, and a lack of perseverance in relationships. These behaviours lead to unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, broken lives and AIDS.

By teaching from God's Word and encouraging people to move from merely professing these values to living them out in our daily lives, the HIV&AIDS epidemic and many other social problems can be directly and positively impacted.

Never before in Africa have so many people been faced with such a crisis.

AIDS has already resulted in the death of more than 25 million people, most of them in Africa. Over 40 million people are infected with HIV, of which 28.5 million live in Sub-Saharan Africa. In South Africa there are about 5.5 million people living with HIV. It is the number one cause of death amongst adults, and children under 5. AIDS has already left an estimated 600 000 children without parents in South Africa.



How to lead a discussion group around the eight values

These notes provide a useful outline how to facilitate a discussion group in your community. They are not in any way meant to be prescriptive, but are merely a guide. A discussion group is a powerful platform for teaching and internalisation of concepts and ideas that have been triggered by the HEARTLINES stories.

PURPOSE of the Discussion Group

- To have meaningful interaction in the group around each value.
- To help each person have a greater understanding of what the Bible says about each value
- To challenge each person to live out the value

A *key objective* should be kept in mind for each discussion as indicated. This will help steer the conversation in the right direction, and keep the focus of the group's conversation clear.

SIZE of the Group

Between 6 and 10 people. If your group is larger than this, it is recommended that you form smaller groups and appoint one facilitator / discussion leader for each group.

LENGTH of the Discussion

1 hour and 30 minutes.

For each discussion, preparation is needed so that the facilitator knows how much time to set aside for viewing the films, going through the discussion questions, for viewing the clips and for reflecting on some of the Bible verses and personal application.

If you choose to have the discussion over two sessions (for example do 'perseverance' over two weeks, one discussion per week), a summary of the film is provided for you to review the story before you start the second session.

PREPARATION

- Spend time in prayer for the group.
- Expect God to work in people's lives during and after the discussion.
- Decide which of the discussion questions to use ahead of time. This will depend on the needs of the members of the group and the time available. A consideration in choosing the questions could be, "Where are the people in my group struggling the most; what aspect of this value do they need to believe and apply in their lives?"
- Read the 'go deeper' notes, which give biblical background on each value
- Make sure your DVD player is working, and test the DVD / VHS beforehand to avoid any delays

VIEWING the Films

The discussion questions are designed to follow each HEARTLINES story. A DVD is provided on the inside cover of this Values Book so that the film, as well as the short clips may be shown to the group to trigger a conversation about the value concerned.



LEADING the Discussion

Your main objective is to get people to talk and to direct the conversation with the 'key thought' in mind.

- Facilitate the group by ensuring that as many people as possible participate in the discussion.
- Assist shy members of the group to find their voice without fear of getting it "wrong".
- Ensure that the discussion is not dominated by only one or two people.
- Resist the temptation to speak too much. Leaders are there to facilitate and encourage others to speak.
- Create an environment where people feel free to express their opinions. Therefore allow a full range of answers. Often there is not just one "right" answer.
- Allow people to share life examples that could enhance the learning experience.

[leader's note]

God's love for us helps us cope with our fears. Through prayer, faith in God, and the support of friends and family we can face our own fears.

[time to think...]

Read the following and ask each person to think about perseverance in their own lives.

If you are going through a time of suffering and you don't feel that you can persevere through it...

Personal Notes

How to practise **Perseverance**

A "Leader's Note" is sometimes given in the guide to assist the leader in steering the group to answers where "right" answers are important.

Sufficient time needs to be allocated to the practical sections such as "How can we practice this value..." and "time to think" in order to get maximum benefit from the discussion.

In the "At home this week" section there are suggested Bible passages for reading as well as memorising of a Scripture verse for group members to do in their own time.

Learning Scripture verses by memory

is a powerful tool for transformation. As the psalmist says "*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you*" (Psalm 119:11)

Personal notes may be photocopied for group members to make their own notes during the "How can we practise this value?" discussion (see pages 68 to 75).

You will need additional time to talk about HIV&AIDS and the value, and to discuss the ideas to make a difference in your community (these sections are optional and with the given time indications will exceed 1 hour 30 minutes).

There is no better way to encourage learning and discovery of how to live out a value than through discussion.

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible.

Talking about Grace

HEARTLINES film – Grace

Preparation for the discussion

Read the notes “Leading a discussion group around the eight values” on pages 2 & 3. It is recommended that you also read the Bible notes on Grace in the ‘Go deeper’ section on page 8.

KEY THOUGHT to keep in mind when leading a discussion on grace:

The central theme of the Gospel is that of grace. God’s second chances are undeserved and His unconditional love has the power to redeem even the most hardened person.



Manyisa



Jacob and S’bu

1) Introduce the discussion 3 Minutes

Briefly introduce the film “Heartlines” and the value of “grace” that the film highlights. Read the following Scripture from Ephesians 2:8-9: *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

2) Show the film 19 Minutes

Show the HEARTLINES film “Heartlines” as provided on the DVD in the back inside cover of this book. If you are extending the discussion over 2 sessions, and have already watched the film, read the summary at the start of the second session.

3) Start the film discussion 20 Minutes

1. If you were in the same position as Jacob, what would your initial reaction be?
2. How would you have reacted to Jacob’s decision as his wife or son?
3. What do you think about Sibusiso’s efforts to make Manyisa feel accepted?
4. Do you think Manyisa tried hard enough to stay out of trouble with the law?
5. Who in the story most displayed acts of selfless love? Give reasons.
6. Do you think Manyisa should have gone back to jail or should he have been forgiven?

[film summary]

Manyisa, released from prison, is given a second chance when a local pastor (Jacob) takes him into his home. This places challenges on Jacob’s family as they seek to help Manyisa forge a new life. Jacob’s wife especially struggles with these challenges and is concerned about the friendship that their young son, Sibusiso, strikes up with Manyisa. Jacob helps Manyisa to find employment, but Manyisa has difficulty fitting into his new environment. His past criminal life pulls back at him, and he finds himself exploited and eventually wrongly accused of theft at work. Pressurised into helping his old gang comrade to rob Jacob of the church’s offering, things go horribly wrong when young Sibusiso is shot and wounded. Manyisa, instead of fleeing, goes back to help save Sibusiso. He returns Jacob’s family car making it possible to get Sibusiso to the hospital in time to save his life. Manyisa finds himself back in prison, but with a new outlook on life.

4) Discuss the film quotes *15 Minutes*

Show the following clips as provided on the DVD and use the relevant quote as a discussion starter:

[CLIP 1] Jacob preaching in church

"...if I have not love I am nothing"

[CLIP 2] Manyisa in prison speaking to Jacob

"Tell me, what are you trying to prove?"

[CLIP 3] Jacob encouraging Jabu (Manyisa) not to get involved in crime again

"I'm trying to give you a chance to start again."

[CLIP 4] S'bu talking to his father in Sporo's (Manyisa's) defense

"You told me that God never gives up on anyone."



Jacob

[film discussion summary]

After some time in prison, Manyisa's release becomes **an unexpected opportunity for transformation**. In this HEARTLINES film - the opportunity comes to him, not rooted in his own efforts or in the law, but in the open arms extended to him by the pastor, Jacob. However, other people that he encounters on his release are not as gracious. Many are skeptical, mistrusting or feel that he should continue to "pay" for his the wrong he has done.

We will see, however, that the second chances God extends to us are different. A second chance is another way of talking about grace. Grace, in Scripture, means "undeserved favour". God's second chances are unconditional, lavish and generous. For not only does He give us another chance, His second chances are characterised by honour and favour. And God's second chances are always undeserved.

"God's second chances are unconditional, lavish and generous."

5) Discuss: How can we practise grace? *25 Minutes*

1. If there was one wrong thing you have done that you could go back and change, what would it be? And how do you feel about the fact that you can't change it? (People should not have to share their answer if they prefer to keep it private)
2. What do you understand by the word "grace"?

[leader's note]

Grace has many facets but in simple terms it can be described as "undeserved favour". (GRACE: God's Riches At Christ's Expense)

3. Why do we need God's grace? Refer to Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Group discussion on Grace

4. If God has given us so much that we do not deserve, how does He expect us to treat others? Refer to Luke 6:32&35: *“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”*

[leader’s note]

Loving others through compassion and caring should be a key characteristic of the Christian life. It is in showing compassion or kindness to those who are hard to love that Christ’s heart can be revealed. Selfless love has its risks but it also has its rewards and it is what is needed most in today’s world.

5. How does Christ’s death on the cross demonstrate God’s grace for us? Refer to Romans 5:6-8: *“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*
6. In what ways should Christ’s example of grace and selfless love challenge us to show grace and acts of selfless love to others?

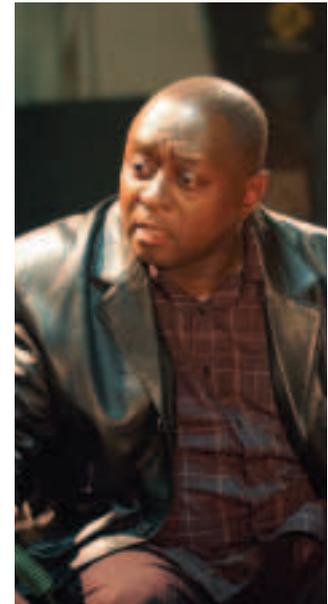
[grace through Christ]

It is hard to extend grace to a person who is unaware of their offence. It is harder still to extend grace when the offence they have committed is against us personally. And yet it is precisely in this context that God extends His grace to us: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). God’s second chances are generous without limit and His grace is available to us as a free gift.

Grace is the foundation of every dimension of our lives as Christians. The whole point of God’s gift of second chances is that it takes away our constant focus on ourselves and our repeated attempts to control our own lives, and replaces them with dependence on Him.

Grace is entirely God’s invention. All other belief systems in this world are based on “karma” - that you get what you deserve. But grace distinguishes Christianity from the other religions of the world, **God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense**.

7. Do you think most people think of the church as a place of grace - of second chances? If not, why not? What needs to change if this is not the case?



Bra Sol

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.”

[time to think...] 10 minutes

Read the following and ask each person to think about grace in their own lives.

Spend time in prayer and reflection on Jesus' supreme act of grace and selfless love towards you when He died on the cross. Read John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Consider what your response should be. Are there people who you know to whom you should show grace, give a second chance or show selfless love? Ask God for the strength to do this.

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."
Jim Elliot, martyred missionary to the Waodani people (Auca Indians)

At home this week:

Read the story of Peter's denial of Jesus in Luke 22:31-34 and Luke 22:54-62 and the grace that Christ shows Peter in John Chapter 21 and think about the grace that Jesus extends to Peter. How can Jesus do the same for you? How can you do the same for others? **Encourage everyone to memorise Romans 5:8: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."**



Bra Sol and Manyisa

"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

6) Talking about HIV&AIDS (Optional) 10 minutes

- How does Jesus' grace extend to people who are HIV positive? What can we do to undo the negative effects of stigma for people with HIV&AIDS?

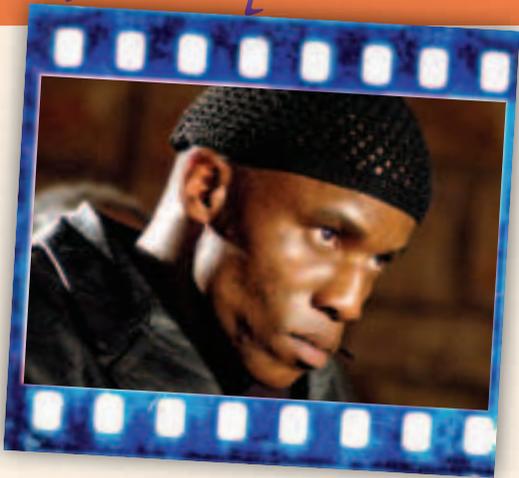


7) Grace in Action: Ideas to make a difference in your community

1. Is there a prison which your group can visit, or where needs may be identified and you can be of service? If there is no prison nearby, could you get in touch with those who you know are in prison and see if you can identify needs / show love and grace to these individuals? This could be through:
 - Written correspondence
 - Food parcels
 - Sending Christian reading material or music
 - Correspondence Education
 - Offering to get in touch with prisoners' families and find out what their needs are.
2. How can your church reach out to those suffering from the effects of AIDS?



S'bu and Thando



What God says about Grace

HEARTLINES film – Grace

After some time in prison, Manyisa's release becomes an unexpected opportunity for transformation. In the HEARTLINES film – Grace – this opportunity comes to him, not rooted in his own efforts or in the law, but in the open arms extended to him by the pastor, Jacob. However, other people that he encounters on his release are not as gracious. His foreman thinks that, while Manyisa has been given an opportunity to work, he nevertheless should remember where he comes from (prison) and asks him to do the dirty jobs in the workshop.

We will see, however, that the second chances God extends to us are different. A second chance is another way of talking about grace. Grace, in Scripture, means “undeserved favour”. God's second chances are unconditional, lavish and generous. For not only does He give us another chance, His second chances are characterised by honour and favour. And God's second chances are always undeserved.

THE NATURE of Grace

It is hard to extend grace to a person who is unaware of their offence. It is harder still to extend grace when the offence they have committed is against us personally. And yet it is precisely in this context that God extends His grace to us: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). It is also the context in which we see Jesus exercise the gift of grace - undeserved favour.

When Jesus was arrested by the Jewish and Roman authorities and put on trial, some of His disciples were present including Peter, one of His closest friends (John 18:15-26). When Peter was pressed by other spectators to admit that he was one of Jesus' disciples, he denied it: “I am not” (18:17).



Jacob

“God’s second chances are unconditional, lavish and generous.”

Only hours before Peter had heard Jesus say that “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (15:13). Yet three times in a row Peter betrayed his friendship and closeness to Jesus in order to save himself (18:17,25,27).

We might therefore wonder how Jesus would relate to Peter when, after His crucifixion and resurrection, He encountered Peter by the Sea of Galilee. Peter and the other disciples were fishing when they spotted Jesus on the beach. Although they had seen Him only a few days earlier it seems the reality of the resurrection hadn’t yet sunk in - perhaps it had just been a dream. But here was Jesus in the flesh, cooking breakfast on the beach! When one of the disciples realised it was Jesus, Peter immediately “jumped into the water” and made his way a hundred metres to the shore (John 21:1-9)! Clearly he was excited to see Jesus.

Do you think Jesus was excited to see Peter? After all, Peter had betrayed him!

Clearly Jesus was glad to see Peter and extended grace to him very tenderly. Three things happened in His conversation with Peter that each reveal dimensions of God’s grace as we consistently find it in Scripture.

Firstly, Jesus gently faced Peter with his past and his wrongdoing. He did not say anything outright. Instead, he echoed the bitter experience of Peter’s betrayal by asking him three times “do you love me?” (John 21:15-17). Being faced with our past offences is not easy: “Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’” (21:17). Nevertheless, taking advantage of God’s second chances is only possible when we acknowledge why it is we have such a need.

Secondly, Jesus renewed their friendship on the basis of love. It was clear that He loved Peter and He wanted to know if Peter loved Him. Peter was emphatic: “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you” (21:17). God’s grace is not an act of duty. It is not simply an act of forgiveness, although it involves forgiveness. God’s grace - His second chance for us - is an act of reconciliation; a renewal of deep, loving friendship.

Thirdly, in restoring Peter, Jesus gave him a high calling: “Take care of my sheep” (21:16). Jesus is referring here to Peter giving caring leadership to other Christians. When a shepherd gives care of his sheep to another person, it is an act of enormous dignity and trust. When others are placed into our care it is a great honour, for it says that the person giving us the job thinks we are capable of it. Furthermore, it shows that they trust us.

[from the word]

“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

John 21:15-17

And here perhaps is where God's grace is most amazing: Peter did not deserve this honour. Peter had disgraced himself and shown himself to be unreliable when under pressure. Yet Jesus gave him not only a second chance, but an amazing second chance with honour, without condition and without holding back.

God's second chances are therefore generous without limit. We can also safely say that God not only gives second chances, but third chances, and fourth and fifth chances, and so on, "seventy-seven times", which is the Bible's way of saying, "without limit" (Matthew 18:22).

ONE STEP to Grace

There is nothing we can do to earn God's grace. That is why the Bible's understanding of grace is "undeserved favour". There is a step we have to take, however, that is not a condition but nevertheless keeps the door of our lives opened or closed to grace. Returning to Paul's words that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" we see that they come within the context of his declaration of God's grace: "righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" and those who believe "are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:22-24). In contrast with Peter's (and our) self-serving habit, Jesus laid down His life for us: "when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). In other words, God's grace came at a cost, but not to us - it is available to us as a free gift. Whether we accept the gift or not is up to us. If we do not take it, there is no second chance available to us, not because God is unwilling, but because we are unwilling.

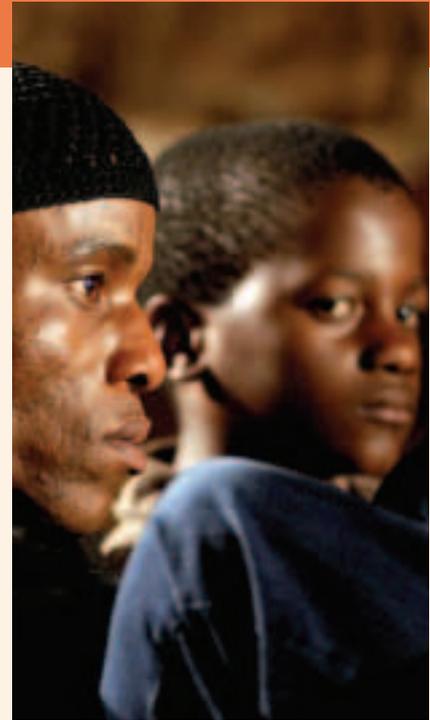
GRACE and consequences

It is common to hear people say, "God forgives sin, but there are still consequences!" The "but" here implies that God's grace stops at forgiveness and doesn't deal with the consequences. This is a skewed understanding that short-changes grace. It fails to see that Christ's accomplishment on the cross for us is total, not partial, and that His grace works powerfully, even within the consequences.

Paul says that, in Christ, God "... has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14). Paul is not speaking of grace simply in terms of a legal act of forgiveness. He is saying that Christ's work on the cross has freed us from bondage to "darkness" and that all darkness in our lives becomes a place in which God works His "redemption". To redeem something is to make completely good a situation that before, was completely bad.

Paul then says that Christ, "having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (2:15). Whatever Satan has achieved in our lives through our sin, God, in Christ, makes this a point at which Satan is made a "public spectacle" - a mockery.

So although Manyisa had to face consequences that arose from his evil behaviour, God's redemptive power was now at work in those consequences. The same truth applies in our lives. When we enter into relationship with Christ and accept His work for us on the cross, Satan reaps no benefits whatsoever from our sin nor its consequences.



Manyisa and S'bu

**"The Church -
a place of
second chances"**

The consequences may remain in this life, but “in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28). The Bible does not say God works for our good “in some things” or, “up to a certain point” or, “on certain conditions”. God’s second chances are filled with His power to make good out of all evil things - the things we have done to ourselves and what others have done to us.

GRACE AS THE BASIS of Christian living

Grace is the foundation of every dimension of our lives as Christians. The whole point of God’s gift of second chances is that it takes away our constant focus on ourselves and our repeated attempts to control our own lives, and replaces them with dependence on Him.

Some people think grace is dangerous. They worry that it will cause us to be casual about sin. Even Paul said, “Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!” (Romans 6:1-2). Nevertheless, more dangerous still is when we put our “confidence in the flesh” - our own abilities or heritage (Philippians 3:3). Paul’s own heritage and abilities were quite remarkable, but here is what he had to say about them:

[from the word]

“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss ... I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own ... but that which is through faith in Christ ... Not that I have already ... been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”

Phillipians 3:7-12

This means that the Church - God’s community of Christians - is not to be understood primarily as a place of moral perfection, but as a place of second chances. We are to be known for the grace seen in us; for grace is the only reason we are together!

There is much room for extending grace to one another in South Africa. There is no end to the list of grievances we have committed against each other, whether during Apartheid, or in the present when it comes to crime, abuse of power (the “gravy train”) and persistent racism.

Second chances are risky, but as we see in the life of Peter, Jesus’ grace opened the door to tremendous new life; and a successful new life, at that. If we do not offer second chances to one another, we close the door to transformation, both for ourselves and those around us.

GOD is love

It is obvious from the above that grace is entirely God’s invention. When asked what distinguishes Christianity from the other religions of the world, CS Lewis replied: “grace”. The world-renowned lead singer of U2, Bono notes that apart from Christianity, all belief systems in this world are based on “karma” - that you get what you deserve. As he sings:

What once was hurt

What once was friction

What left a mark

No longer stings

Because Grace makes beauty out of ugly things.

How can we practise Grace

1. If there was one wrong thing you have done that you could go back and change, what would it be? And how do you feel about the fact that you can't change it? (Don't share your answer if you prefer to keep it private)

2. What do you understand by the word "grace"?

3. Why do we need God's grace? Refer to Romans 6:23 *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

4. If God has given us so much that we do not deserve, how does he expect us to treat others? Refer to Luke 6:32-35: *"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."*

5. How does Christ's death on the cross demonstrate God's grace for us? Refer to Romans 5:6-8: *"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

6. In what ways should Christ's example of grace and selfless love challenge us to show grace and acts of selfless love to others?

7. Do you think most people think of the church as a place of grace—of second chances? If not, why not? What needs to change if this is not the case?

At home this week:

Read the story of Peter's denial of Jesus in Luke 22:31-34 and Luke 22:54-62 and the grace that Christ shows Peter in John Chapter 21 and think about the grace that Jesus extends to Peter. How can Jesus do the same for you? How can you do the same for others? **Encourage everyone to memorise Romans 5:8: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."**