

STUMMIN

SMALL GROUP
LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE
SCHOOL
FOCUS

BEFORE I GO

APRIL 26, 2023

Week 4 of a 4-week series
about Jesus' last words

BOTTOM LINE

God gives us grace.

SCRIPTURE

"No!" Peter insisted. "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!"

- Matthew 26:35a NLT

After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you." "Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

- John 21:15 NLT

GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To help students accept the goodness of God's grace in their lives and to reflect on how they can both receive it and give it away to others

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Students in this phase struggle to define their mistakes and mess ups. Some may know they've made a mistake right away while others may not realize it until a consequence comes. Some only recognize major mess ups while others may feel like even the tiniest mess up is a big deal. Keep this in mind as students open up about their perceived failures. While we don't want them to beat themselves up over seemingly simple things, we want to be careful not to dismiss or downplay what's a big deal to them. Be sure to remind students that the focus isn't on their mistakes. We all make them, and we'll all continue to make them. That's why focusing our hearts on God's love and the forgiveness made possible through Jesus is the best possible way to move forward.

>> DURING GROUP

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What's the funniest fail video you've ever seen?
- What are some of the most common mistakes that middle schoolers make?
- What's one thing someone might do when they make a mistake?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you deal with making a mistake? Give an example that illustrates the number you chose.
- How do you think Jesus feels when you mess up? Why?
- How does it make you feel to know that Jesus loves you no matter what?

DO THIS:

Pass out the provided "My Plan" journal pages and pens to your students and ask them to fill it out during group. After everyone is finished, talk together about the steps they'll take to get closer to Jesus when they make a mistake.

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THINK ABOUT THIS: Grace is one of those faith concepts that can be difficult to not only understand but also accept. It's counter to just about every human and cultural instinct we have. But that's exactly what makes it supernatural! Since teenagers learn through open debate and abstract concepts, be prepared to listen and ask questions as they work out how to understand grace. Questions like "What makes sense to you about grace?" "What is hard to agree with about grace?" "If you were going to define grace to your friends, what would you say?" and so forth. Provide a safe space for them to do the work of owning their own faith by discovering the concept of grace.

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What's one thing you've experienced that wasn't fair?
- On a scale from "It makes me so mad," to "I don't care that much," how do you feel when things aren't fair?
- What are some things about "life" that seem unfair?
- In your own words, tell us what grace means.
- Think back to the story we heard about Jesus and Peter. Why do you think Jesus chose to show Peter grace?
- When it comes to grace, do you have a hard time believing you deserve it? Why or why not?
- This week, what's one step you can take to...
 - Accept God's grace for yourself?
 - Show that grace to someone else?

>> AFTER GROUP

Make this the "summer of grace" with your small group. Keep a text chain going all summer and encourage your group to share stories of receiving and sharing God's grace whenever it happens!