

SESSION 4:

MINISTERING GRACE AND LOVE

'We love because he first loved us.'
1 John 4:19

Key Question: How might I minister grace and love to people on my frontline?

Aims of the Session: In light of the grace that God has shown to us, to see how we might minister grace and love to those we interact with on our frontlines.

Core Text: Luke 10:25-37

Materials Required: Bibles



Thinking Back (5 mins)

In the last session we looked at Making Good Work,

- Take a minute to think back to what was covered – has anything that you talked about as a group had particular significance this week as you have been back on your frontline?
- Does anyone have a story to share of good work on their frontline that the group can celebrate?

Pre-Film Discussion (5 mins)

Today, we turn to Ministering Grace and Love – two characteristics ultimately demonstrated by Jesus through his radical act of love and grace on the cross. In common modern usage, however, the meaning of the words 'grace' and 'love' are easily watered down.

- Can you think of a time when someone has powerfully shown you grace and love in a way that you think captures the real meaning of these words?





PLAY FILM to end - approx. 9 mins

Questions to discuss after the film (20 mins)

- In the film Mark argues that sometimes we set the bar too high for what counts as 'ministry'. Do you agree?
- What small-but-costly things might you already do on your frontline that you might not have ever considered to be 'ministry'?
- Peju went out of her way to generously minister love and grace to a fellow busy mum. How does her story inspire you and what might you do on your frontline?
- Imagine Peju were to find herself having a conversation with one of the non-Christian mums. What difference might her actions make to her verbal witness?

Bible Reflection - Luke 10:25-37 (20 mins)

This is a powerful parable of a Samaritan man, who would have been despised by the Jewish people, ministering grace and love to someone considered to be his enemy. Jesus told this provocative story in response to an expert in the Jewish law who was trying to draw lines around the people to whom God expected him to show love. Through the story, Jesus seems to set an impossible standard for inheriting eternal life - we're not always going to succeed in loving others in this way. This passage is therefore an encouragement to radical love, but also a reminder that we will never be good enough to earn eternal life. Like the injured man, we too rely on mercy.

- Who are our difficult 'neighbours' on our frontlines and what are some of the reasons we find not to minister grace and love to them?
- If our actions are a reflection of what is in our hearts, in what ways did the heart of the Samaritan differ to the hearts of the priest and the Levite?
- In what ways were the actions of the Samaritan costly to himself? What can it cost us to minister generous love and grace to those on our frontlines?
- How do you think the expert in the law may have felt after Jesus command to "Go and do likewise"? (v. 37)



Praying Forwards (10 mins)

Like the man by the side of the road, we have been shown lavish grace by Jesus – the ultimate Good Samaritan. Our love and grace towards others therefore springs from a place of thankfulness for the grace that we have been shown.

- Pray that God would reveal more of his grace and love for us.

Take a moment to reflect on what it might mean for you to “go and do likewise” on your frontline. Listen to God’s prompting.

- Pray that God would give you a deeper awareness of how you could respond.
- Pray that, like Peter with his newspaper clippings, you would find increasing ways to support one another on each other’s frontlines.

Takeaway Action

Each member of the group might like to allocate a budget of £3 to be used this week to show love and grace to someone on their frontline. You could perhaps buy somebody a coffee or write a kind note in a card. How might you bless someone with your £3?



“Love is not a possession but a growth. The heart is a lamp with just oil enough to burn for an hour, and if there be no oil to put in again its light will go out.

God’s grace is the oil that fills the lamp of love.”

Henry Ward Beecher





FRUITFULNESS ON THE FRONTLINE.

SESSION TRANSCRIPTS



Actually, you've probably had the experience of someone coming up to you and telling you about something you said years ago that was so helpful or telling you about a card you wrote when they were going through a hard time, and actually you have no memory of it at all. You think they've got the wrong person, when did I ever do that? You just did it...and God used it.

It's not always like that, of course. Sometimes we know we're going to have to go out of our way and we do need to consciously ask for God's grace, his empowering presence to help us keep going or even just to get started.

Still, ministering grace and love is at root about generosity. Generous living. It's about taking the focus off ourselves and proactively thinking about how we might help someone. It's about pricking up our ears and opening up our eyes, being on the look-out for opportunities to serve someone. At the school gate for the new parent who looks lost or the colleague who is clearly not doing that well, or the person who's been absent for a while...

So, yes it's about acts of kindness, but love is more than kindness. Love is about wanting and seeking the best for someone else.

And love is expressed in a whole variety of ways: it could involve taking the risk of helping a difficult person see that they are being difficult...it could involve praising a colleague who's your rival in front of the team because actually they did do a good job... it could involve being kind to someone who is habitually unkind to you... loving your enemy... loving the ogre of Buckinghamshire... it could involve... well, here's what Peju did...

When Peju first started turning up at the school gate with her oldest child it was a pretty dispiriting experience: It's often the way isn't it? Everyone else standing around chatting gleefully in cosy little clusters. She felt really lonely but she didn't want to force herself on anyone else, so she prayed to God and she asked him to show her the people that he wanted her to be friends with; and over time he did. Grateful for that grace, she decided that she wanted to be someone who would reach out to the other people standing on their own. She didn't have to but she did. And that's how she came across Ade. Ade who always seemed to be in a rush, Ade who would briskly drop off her son and scuttle away with her little daughter. Ade who always seemed to be on her own. Peju discovered that Ade's husband was overseas working in Rwanda and that she really didn't have much close family around... that must be exhausting. And then she realised that half term was coming, nine straight days without a break. Peju thought: "Someone needs to give her a break."

Now Peju didn't really know Ade that well but still she said: "Give me your kids for a day." And she invited Ade over to spend some time with her and a friend, so she came, they chatted, they cooked, they sent a Western Union Wire Transfer, they relaxed, they laughed and as the day drew on, Peju gave Ade a hand massage. She said, "mums do so much with their hands – peeling potatoes, doing the laundry, wiping bottoms, and they need to recognise their hands are a gift from God, a gift to their children." So as Peju massaged Ade's hands, praying as she did so it was a way to honour all that Ade had ever done with her hands and a way to put life, bring life back into those hands...

Peju didn't have to do any of that. Nor did she have to start a regular discussion group for mums – and not just Christian mums – in her home... grace is like that...it doesn't have to. But it does.

I suspect that there have been times you've given people on your frontline the equivalent of a glass of water, and not really thought much about it. But I wonder whether God might show you some particular way you might extend grace and love: perhaps inviting that misfit of a work colleague for a drink, calling up a person who's been sick to make sure they're OK, offering to weed your neighbour's front garden cos you know they can't do it anymore.



I began with a story about a man who cut out newspaper articles to help me in the work God has given me to do and I began there because it reminds us that we can probably all find ways to support each other on our frontlines. Yes, in prayer but perhaps in some practical way too. One woman and her daughter baked a big batch of her spectacular brownies for her husband's work team when they were going through a crisis. They didn't have to ... grace doesn't have to... love doesn't have to... but it finds a way.

Grace to you this week.

Grace through you this week.

These do look rather good I have to say.

