

term one 2026



the
kingdom
of
grace



leaders notes

a note to leaders

We are always thankful for you and the incredibly important ministry you do! Small Groups are central and vital to who we are as a church and how we live out God's calling on each of our lives.

In Small Groups we have the opportunity to open and explore God's word together, to serve and care for each other in prayer and practice, and to live out gospel-shaped community.

Doing all this together means that you understand your group and its members in a profound and personal way. Accordingly, we want you to see the below studies as a starting point, not a finished product. You are encouraged to edit the questions, tailor them to your group and approach each week in the way you believe will best serve your group. Each group will have a slightly different path to reaching the same main teaching point.

If at any point you would like support or prayer, please feel free to contact your Small Group Coach. Alternatively, if you need support from the staff team please contact Pat Jones or Erica Mandi Manga (YA small groups) for pastoral support and Emma Wynn-Jones for Small Group coordination and administration. We will serve and support you however we can.

A SLIGHT FORMAT CHANGE – St Paul's is blessed with a calendar full of encouraging events. However, this can at times make consistency in Small Groups difficult. On weeks when there is an event the team would like all members to attend, we will have a break in the study series. Our hope is that will help ease the pressure of fitting too much into each week and allow our people to attend the ministry events that are important to the life of SPCH.

We would also love for your group to be praying for the various ministries of SPCH so we will have a brief note outlining upcoming events each week.

the heart of small groups

St Paul's Castle Hill has three Key Ministry areas:

- Discipleship and Training
- Care and Integration
- Mission and Evangelism

Our vision is that every Small Group would be engaged in these three areas.

Every Small Group is engaged in **discipleship** as we open and apply the Word each week, and in **care** as we pray together and look after the needs of others in our group and community.

Our hope is that every small group would also be engaged in **mission**, spurring one another on in local mission and connecting with one of our link missionaries.

As a church we support ministries all around the world. One of the best ways we can empower those on the mission field is for each group to "adopt" a mission partner. This can be as simple as letting them know your group is regularly praying for them and those they minister to, reading out their updates as a group, or inviting them to Zoom in every so often. Some Small Groups may also want to help with the various needs and challenges that missionaries face.

Please contact Cathy Gravitis at cathy.gravitis@stpauls.church in the office if you would like help linking with one of our missionaries. Cathy would also love to hear from you once you have adopted a mission partner so we know which groups are supporting whom.

term one schedule

FEB 2ND Recharge Supper - 7pm in the CEC

FEB 9TH - 15TH Kingdom of Grace#1 - Grace Breaks In
What's on this week?

Feb 11th - Young Adults Night
Feb 14th - Legacy Partners Breakfast
Feb 15th - Newcomers Lunch
Feb 15th - The Commons

FEB 16TH - 22ND Kingdom of Grace#2 - Grace For Sinners
What's on this week?
Feb 22nd - Baptisms

FEB 23RD - MAR 1ST NO STUDY THIS WEEK
What's on this week?
Feb 24th - Serve Night
Mar 1st - Newcomers Afternoon Tea
Mar 1st - Confirmation Service at 6pm

MAR 2ND - 8TH Kingdom of Grace#3 - The Cost of Grace
What's on this week?
Mar 2nd - Women's Night
Mar 3rd - Seniors' Friendship Group
Mar 7th - Men's Breakfast
Mar 8th - Jesus Club Church
Mar 8th - YA Welcome Supper

MAR 9TH – 15TH Kingdom of Grace#4 – The Power of Grace

What's on this week?

Mar 10th – Prime Time

Mar 10th – Annual General Meeting

Mar 15th – The Commons

Mar 15th – Link missionaries Chris & Erin visiting

MAR 16TH – 22ND Kingdom of Grace#5 – The Grace of the Provider

What's on this week?

Mar 19th – Retiring with Purpose

Mar 19th – 22nd Kelso Mission

Mar 21st – Prayer Breakfast with Chris & Erin

Mar 22nd – Parents Day at Kids Alive

Mar 22nd – YA 25+ Hang out

MAR 23RD – 29TH Kingdom of Grace #6 – The Ultimate Grace

What's on this week?

Mar 25th – Prayer Night

Mar 28th – Easter Cantata

MAR 30TH – APR 2ND Kingdom of Grace#7 – What to do with Grace

APR 3RD – 5TH EASTER WEEKEND

What's on this week?

Apr 3rd – Good Friday Services 8am/10am

Apr 3rd – Young Adults “The Big Thing”

Apr 5th – Easter Sunday services 8am/10am/6pm

school holiday break

- **Easter Camp** will run Wed 8th-Fri 10th April.
- Our **Mission series** on Local Mission and Global Mission will be on Sunday 19th Apr, Sunday 26th Apr and Sunday 3rd May
- **Recharge Breakfast** will be on Saturday 2nd May

*note that Recharge is in week 2 of Term due to ANZAC Day.

series overview and vision

KINGDOM OF GRACE

2026 is our year of “hearts transformed by grace”.

Our prayer is that every member of St Paul’s will more deeply know the grace of God and be transformed by that grace.

God’s grace is not cheap. It is costly. As we begin Term 1 in Luke’s gospel, we will explore deeply the great cost of God’s grace in sending Jesus to save a world that rejected him. In every story from Luke, we see our God of grace reaching out to us, but also calling us to reflect his grace in the world around us.

Our prayer is that this gospel of grace will transform us to be people of grace, who participate in the kingdom of grace, and who reflect Jesus as we seek to reach every community, every household, and every generation.

introduction to the Gospel of Luke

Luke is the longest of the four Gospels. It is also the only Gospel with a sequel. The book of Acts forms the second part of Luke's work, taking us from the story of Jesus' earthly ministry (Luke) to the story of the early church and the Acts of the Apostles (Acts).

Luke, a travelling companion of the Apostle Paul, sought out and carefully investigated the testimony of many eyewitnesses in order to record an accurate and orderly account of the life and work of Jesus. His purpose is made clear in the opening verses of the Gospel:

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

(Luke 1:1-4)

Luke's use of the word "fulfilled" in his introduction signals his intent to show that the person and work of Jesus bring to completion the promises and purposes of God revealed in the Law and the Prophets. Jesus is not a departure from Israel's story, but its long-awaited fulfilment.

Taken together, Luke and Acts illuminate God's unfolding plan of salvation. In these books we see how Jewish and Gentile communities are brought together under the lordship of Jesus Christ, forming one new people of God. Luke shows that salvation is now extended beyond Israel, not by abandoning God's promises, but by expanding them to include all nations.

As Luke communicates the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's saving purposes, the reader is repeatedly confronted with Jesus' heart for the lost and his call to repentance:

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
(Luke 5:32)

"There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."
(Luke 15:7)

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
(Luke 19:10)

Luke's Gospel is therefore not only about what God has done in Christ, but about how people are to respond. Throughout the book, Luke teaches us what it means to live as disciples of Jesus — the commitment discipleship requires, the cost it entails, and how followers of Christ are to live together as a community shaped by repentance, grace, and faith.

Above all, Luke shows us that God has revealed himself most clearly in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and that God's saving purposes are for all people. Luke invites us to see who Jesus is, what God has done through him, and how his followers are to live as faithful disciples within God's **KINGDOM OF GRACE**.

RECOMMENDED COMMENTARIES

1. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament by Darrell L. Bock (in 2 volumes), Published by Baker. 1994. (The notes above are gleaned from the introduction of the first volume.) A more comprehensive and deeper study of Luke's gospel with scholarly interaction with the Greek text.

2. Focus on the Bible Commentary series. Luke volumes by Dale Ralph Davis. (in 2 volumes), Published by Christian Focus Publications Limited. 2021. A shorter and easier read with very practical application.

KINGDOM OF GRACE STUDY #1

grace breaks in

LUKE 4:1-21

check-in

Do you have any thoughts or reflections from church on Sunday?

What movie, book, or TV show do you quote more than any other?

unpack

Brief context:

The first two chapters of Luke focus on the miraculous birth of Jesus alongside the birth of John the Baptist. Chapter 3 is years later, with John preaching repentance and baptism as he prepares the way for the Messiah. In chapter 4, we witness Luke's first account of Jesus' public ministry.

Read Luke 4:1-13

1. What stands out to you from this passage?

Anything encouraging, confusing, surprising, intriguing or noteworthy? We are simply aiming to get the group talking at this point.

2. Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit" and was "led by the Spirit" into the wilderness. Why do you think Luke emphasises the work of the Spirit?

Luke emphasises that Jesus' obedience, mission, and victory over temptation are Spirit-enabled. This signals that a Spirit-filled life involves both empowerment and testing. It is important to distinguish between the Spirit leading Jesus and Satan tempting Him to sin. God does not tempt us to sin (James 1:13).

3. Jesus faced temptation and fasted for 40 days. "40" is a familiar number biblically, what events does this point us to and why is it significant?

- *Israel wandered the desert for 40 years and failed to remain faithful, facing temptation on the verge of entering the promised land.*

- *Moses fasted for 40 days on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:28) as God established a new covenant with His people.*

- *Elijah fasted for 40 days on the way to Horeb (1 Kings 19:8) before God reaffirms His covenantal promises and establishes a new chapter of prophetic ministry.*

In each of these cases, the 40 represents an opportunity for faithfulness, before a significant movement from God. These "40" moments precede major revelations or covenantal renewal.

Bonus: Jesus, Elijah, and Moses are the three individuals recorded fasting for 40 days, and they are later found together at the transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36)

4. Jesus faces 3 temptations from Satan. Read the following passages, how do they add depth and understanding to the responses of Jesus?

Turn stone to bread - Deuteronomy 8:1-3

Jesus quotes Scripture to remind us of God's provision and Israel's failure to trust God in the wilderness.

Inherit all kingdoms - Deuteronomy 6:10-13

Jesus references Israel's temptation to forget God in the face of abundance.

Test God - Deuteronomy 6:16 and Exodus 17:5-7

Israel demanded proof of God's presence at Massah, showing distrust despite God's faithfulness.

The point: Jesus is the faithful Israel, succeeding where God's people failed.

Read Luke 4:14-21

5. This is Luke's first account of Jesus' public ministry. He reads from Isaiah 61:1-3. How does this reading bring the concept of grace to Jesus' mission?

Jesus immediately shows that His ministry is good news for those facing hardship or failure, offering hope, restoration, and liberation.

explore

6. In v21 Jesus says, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". With all of Jesus' ministry in mind, is this truly fulfilled? *Yes, salvation is available for all people regardless of circumstance. However, full realization – where every wrong is set right – awaits Jesus' return.*

7. In these 21 verses, Jesus speaks five times: four quotations from the Old Testament and a fifth statement highlighting fulfillment. Why is this significant?

Jesus demonstrates that He is both the faithful Israel and the fulfilment of God's promises. His ministry does not replace Judaism; it fulfills God's covenant with Israel while extending salvation to the nations.

8. If Luke 4:1-21 is the prelude and the launch of Jesus' public ministry, what does this tell us about faithful discipleship and ministry?

Being Spirit-empowered and Spirit-led, shaped by hardship, proclaiming that salvation has come, and ministering to the poor, imprisoned, oppressed, and blind.

apply

9. Luke 4:16: "on the sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom". Jesus participated in the ordinary practices of faith. What routine practices could you adopt to strengthen your faith?

10. Each time Jesus was tempted, He responded with God's Word. Biblical conviction formed the foundation of His resistance. What sins are you tempted toward, and what passages can speak to those temptations? Remember God's grace, forgiveness, and restoration when we fall.

You may need to dig past the surface of a temptation into the root cause to find passages that speak to it. Feel free to google passages on the topic. As people respond, explicitly remind the group of forgiveness and grace.

11. Jesus announced a new covenant of grace for all people. Which areas of your life fail to reflect the reality of this Kingdom of grace?

pray

Take time to share and pray together in response to the passage, for each other's needs, for your group's link missionary, the events below, and the weekly ministries at St Paul's.

what's on this week?

Feb 14th - Legacy Partners Breakfast

Feb 15th - Newcomers Lunch

Feb 15th - The Commons

Coming up on **Sunday 22nd Feb** we have our baptism services - please contact Pat Jones if you haven't been baptised and would like to be.

KINGDOM OF GRACE STUDY #2

grace for sinners

LUKE 5:17-32

check-in

Do you have any thoughts or reflections from church on Sunday?

What is the best meal you have ever eaten and who did you share it with?

unpack

Brief context:

In the passages between our readings, Luke's account showed Jesus removing spirits, healing the sick, and calling the first disciples. Luke regularly reminds us that Jesus is also devoted to preaching in synagogues and elsewhere:

But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."

And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Luke 4:43-44

Read Luke 5:17-26

1. What stands out to you from this passage?

Anything encouraging, confusing, surprising, intriguing or noteworthy? We are simply aiming to get the group talking at this point.

2. News of Jesus' healing and teaching ministry had spread, and crowds had begun to gather. What is significant about this crowd?

This is the first time Luke highlights the presence and number of Pharisees and teachers of the law, creating an early opportunity to see how Old Testament fulfilment and Gentile inclusion play out. Jesus' ministry is now being publicly examined – and contested.

3. Why does Jesus' first statement to the paralysed man (v20) cause such a reaction and be considered blasphemy (v21)?

Jesus has made known; He is the one fulfilling what was promised in Isaiah. He has shown His' power over evil spirits and sickness and He has taught powerfully in the synagogues. However, to act with the authority to forgive sins is to put yourself in the place of God.

4. As Jesus asks a question in v22, He reveals the unspoken hearts of his audience. In pairs, share how would you answer Jesus' question.

Jesus is addressing the Pharisees' unspoken objection. Humanly speaking, it is easier to say "your sins are forgiven" because it cannot be verified. Jesus forces the question of authority: if He can do what is visible, what does that say about the invisible?

Read Luke 5:27-32

5. What is the significance of a tax collector and why do the pharisees and teachers of the law group them with sinners? Is there a modern equivalent?

Tax collectors were seen as collaborators with Rome, enriching themselves by exploiting their own people. They were seen as ceremonially and morally unclean, cut off from respectable Jewish life. By grouping tax collectors with "sinners," the Pharisees and teachers of the law were marking them as outside the covenant community.

explore

6. This term, we are looking at the Kingdom of Grace. Spend some time discussing how each of these three moments help us understand the grace of Jesus and the shape of His Kingdom:

MOMENT 1 – Jesus explaining that He has the power and authority to forgive sins (v24)

Jesus shows that He has the authority to rule the kingdom and teaches how we can enter the kingdom, through His forgiveness.

MOMENT 2 – Jesus calling Levi, a tax collector, to be his disciple, saying “follow me” (v27)

The call of Levi is not merely inclusion but discipleship – closeness to Jesus and participation in His mission. Grace draws from outside the covenant community into closeness not just acceptance.

MOMENT 3 – Jesus enjoyed a banquet with “tax collectors and sinners” (v29)

Jesus’ willingness to eat with them signals that God’s grace is reaching those written off as lost. To share a meal was to share community. These are Jesus’ people

7. Jesus states “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”.

Take 5 minutes to yourself, reflect on how this statement should shape your view of your belonging in the Kingdom of Grace and your individual mission?

This brings humility – all we brought was our sickness, and Jesus, in love and grace, did the saving work. This also frees us from sin’s power and draws us into His mission, shaping our posture toward others.

8. Back together as a group, how should the same statement shape our view of Church and our collective mission?

Jesus’ statement tells us what our Church should look like, it should be filled with people in need of healing, it should be open to those who need grace. The same is true of our mission, we need to be reaching those who are in need of the grace of Jesus.

apply

9. What does it look like, practically, to live as someone whose sins are forgiven?

Encourage the group to consider if the grace of Jesus has profoundly impacted their day to day lives, big decisions and small habits.

10. Levi is called to be a disciple directly from a place of public shame. Where do we still rank people by respectability before or even after receiving the grace of forgiveness? Who would it feel uncomfortable for Jesus to call today, and what does that expose in us?

Help the group explore whether they would be comfortable trusting or following someone whose past brought the reputation of the church into question.

11. Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners, showing them that they belong. What does your table communicate about who belongs?

Does this come at any cost to comfort, control, reputation or relationships with those who would rather a smaller table?

pray

Take time to share and pray together in response to the passage, for each other's needs, for your group's link missionary, the events below, and the weekly ministries at St Paul's.

what's on this week?

Feb 22nd – Baptisms at 10am and 6pm.

important note

There is no bible study for next week. We are having a church-wide event called **Serve Night**. We would love to see you all there.



SERVE NIGHT

EVERY MEMBER CONNECTED

Tuesday 24th February

WHAT IS SERVE NIGHT?

An event for **EVERYONE** who serves in **ANY** ministry at St Paul's, along with those who call St Paul's home and haven't yet stepped into serving. Serve Night is an opportunity to come together as one team, to be encouraged, to be invested in and to consider God's heart for us collectively as His Church.

Wondering if this is for you? This is your official invitation; we would love to see you there!

Time/Date: 24th Feb, 7-9pm

Location: St Paul's Castle Hill main church building.

If you are not yet serving in a volunteer role at St Paul's, but would like to find out more, we encourage you to chat with Emma Wynn-Jones who is our Integration Co-ordinator. She can help you to discover where you might best be able to use your gifts. You can contact her at **emma.wynn-jones@stpauls.church**

KINGDOM OF GRACE STUDY #3

the cost of grace

LUKE 9:18-36

check-in

Do you have any thoughts or reflections from church on Sunday?

unpack

Brief context:

Jesus has had a growing public ministry. In this chapter the story shifts, Jesus' journey turns toward Jerusalem, and the tone moves toward suffering, costly discipleship and glory.

There is an incredible amount to unpack in the readings this week. The questions below are focused on one thread that carries through the three stories: Jesus' identity, what that means for Jesus (suffering) and what that means for His followers (take up your cross). Please feel free to focus and explore where your group may benefit, there is much gold to be mined from these passages.

Read Luke 9:18-26

1. Peter confesses Jesus as "God's Messiah." What does his answer mean and how does it compare to the answers of the crowds?

The crowds see Jesus as a prophet, someone significant, powerful, and sent by God, but still safely within familiar categories. Peter goes further by naming Jesus as God's Messiah, the long-awaited king.

2. How and why does Jesus immediately redefine what Peter's confession means?

Popular expectations of the Messiah were shaped by victory, power, and restoration without suffering. Jesus immediately speaks about rejection, death, and resurrection to prevent His identity being misunderstood. Jesus will not allow a correct confession to stand while carrying wrong expectations. Messiahship, in God's plan, necessarily runs through suffering.

3. If this is the moment where Jesus makes the cross unavoidable, what does it rule out about the kind of Messiah we would prefer him to be?

4. Which part of Jesus' description of discipleship (vv23–26) most clashes with how people commonly imagine following him? Why?

Help the group to avoid equating the costs of being a disciple with small things. "take up your cross" is not minor inconvenience, "lose your life" is not a busy schedule, "ashamed of me" is not private faith.

Read Luke 9:27–36

5. In v18–26 Jesus establishes His identity as God's Messiah and explains that means suffering and sacrifice. How does Luke's depiction of the Transfiguration influence how we understand those realities?

Allow the group to wrestle with these links without resolving quickly as they may not be immediately apparent.

The Transfiguration shows Jesus' identity, divine affirmation and future glory breaking into the present. The suffering servant is the promised conquering king. Glory is revealed to strengthen obedience, not to replace it, even obedience to the call to take up your cross.

6. Moses and Elijah speak with Jesus about His "departure" (exodus). Why is it significant that glory is linked to suffering, not relief from it?

Moses and Elijah represent, law and prophets, exodus and restoration, covenant foundation and covenant crisis. Crucially, they speak with Jesus about: "his departure" (Greek: exodos) (v31). This is massive: Jesus' death is framed as a new exodus, liberation will come through suffering, not escape from it.

7. The voice says, "Listen to Him." In context, what have the disciples just been told that they now need to listen to?

God's voice calls us to listen to Jesus, not explain Him or manage Him. In context the disciples are being told to listen to Jesus' teaching on suffering and self-denial.

explore

8. Peter was correct in his confession but lacked understanding of what it means for Jesus to be “God’s Messiah”. In what ways might we be guilty of having the right label for Jesus but the wrong expectations of what that means for our lives?

It is possible to affirm all the right truths about Jesus while still expecting a version of discipleship shaped by comfort, success, or control. We may confess Jesus as Lord while resisting his call to self-denial, loss, or obedience when it costs us something. Luke presses us to see that correct belief does not automatically produce faithful following.

9. We are in a series called the Kingdom of Grace, how do you reconcile passages like what we have read today about Jesus and His followers suffering, with the idea of grace?

Grace does not mean the absence of cost; it means Jesus bears the ultimate cost on our behalf. The call to suffer is not a way of earning grace, but the shape of life for those who have received it. Luke shows that grace is not opposed to sacrifice – it creates people willing to lose their lives because they trust the One who will ultimately save them. Grace redefines suffering, not by removing it, but by giving it meaning and hope.

apply

10. What kind of Messiah does Jesus insist on being – and what kind of disciples does that create?

Luke 9:18–36 teaches that Jesus’ identity can only be rightly understood through His suffering, and His glory is revealed to strengthen faith for the road to the cross, not to avoid it. This creates disciples who will follow in the footsteps of Jesus, through suffering into glory.

11. Luke fuses three moments together to form one argument: if this is who I am (messiah), then this is what must happen (suffering), and this is the cost of following me (take up your cross). Does your life reflect the cost of following Jesus as He describes it in this passage? Why / Why not?

This question often brings forward the tension of living in a "tolerant" society. Are we free from suffering because we are not persecuted for our faith, or are we free from suffering because we are not bold enough in our faith? Try not to let this point dominate the discussion or lessen the personal reflection, it would be good to allow our people to wrestle with the parts of their lives that haven't taken up the cross.

pray

Take time to share and pray together in response to the passage, for each other's needs, for your group's link missionary, the events below, and the weekly ministries at St Paul's.

what's on this week?

Mar 2nd - Women's Night
Mar 3rd - Seniors' Friendship Group
Mar 7th - Men's Breakfast
Mar 8th - Jesus Club Church
Mar 8th - YA Welcome Supper

KINGDOM OF GRACE STUDY #4

the power of grace

LUKE 10:25-37

check-in

Do you have any thoughts or reflections from church on Sunday?

Have you ever experienced a random act of kindness, or a moment of kindness from strangers?

unpack

Brief context:

Just before this passage, Jesus has sent out the seventy-two and rejoiced that God reveals His kingdom not to the wise and learned, but to the humble and receptive. Luke has been emphasising that participation in the Kingdom of Grace does not depend on status or expertise, but on rightly receiving God's truth in Christ. This tension frames the expert in the law's approach to Jesus.

LEADERS NOTE: I have included some optional questions in this study. This passage is meant to unsettle us. You do not need to work through every question. If the number of questions gets in the way of the group wrestling with discomfort, move past them and prioritise the EXPLORE and APPLY sections. Deep engagement with one or two questions is far more valuable than answering them all.

Read Luke 10:22-29

1. What is the difference between the lawyer's first question and his second – and what does that difference reveal about what he is really trying to justify?

Luke tells us explicitly that the second question is asked "to justify himself." The first question sounds sincere and theological; the second narrows the demand. Help the group notice the shift from seeking life to defending oneself.

2. Jesus affirms the lawyer's first answer as correct. Why might that answer feel inadequate or unsettling if we were asked to explain salvation today?

Jesus is comfortable affirming the Law rightly stated. We often aren't. This question is meant to surface our discomfort with salvation language that sounds costly, comprehensive, or beyond our ability to manage. Don't rush to resolve the tension with grace

Read Luke 10:30-37

3. Why do you think Jesus includes a priest and a Levite at all? What might the story lose if they weren't there?

The priest and Levite are not to be seen as bad guys. They represent the things the lawyer values. Their presence keeps the story from becoming abstract and forces the question of whether righteousness or position can produce mercy.

4. Why is it important that Jesus makes the rescuer a Samaritan rather than someone more acceptable or familiar?

The Samaritan is meant to shock before he is admired. He disrupts expectations about who acts faithfully and who embodies neighbour-love. Help the group feel the offence of this choice before moving to application.

OPTIONAL EXTRA: Why do you think Jesus includes so much detail about the Samaritan's actions?

The detail slows the story down and pays attention to the cost, time, and personal sacrifice required. Mercy here is deliberate and disruptive, guarding against reducing the parable to sentiment.

explore

5. What does Jesus' final question (v36) do to answer the questions that prompted the parable?

Jesus reframes the issue. He does not answer "Who is my neighbour?" but shifts the focus to who acted as a neighbour. This moves the conversation away from defining boundaries.

6. Where does this parable make righteousness feel less manageable than we might like and why is that uncomfortable? *This question intends to expose the limits of righteousness we can control or measure. If the group feels uncomfortable here, that's appropriate. Avoid translating this too quickly into "try harder".*

OPTIONAL EXTRA: In which character do you see traits of Jesus in, and in which do you see traits of yourself in?

apply

7. Jesus' answer seems to ignore the question of "who is my neighbour," and speaks instead to what loving your neighbour in a gracious, messy, costly, and plan-altering way looks like. The simple command that follows is "go and do likewise".

-Spend some time reflecting on how you measure up to this command and what reasons do you most naturally reach for to excuse yourself from costly mercy?

-What kinds of people or situations most quickly trigger your instinct to step back, pass by, or justify not getting involved – and how does the parable expose those instincts?

pray

Take time to share and pray together in response to the passage, for each other's needs, for your group's link missionary, the events below, and the weekly ministries at St Paul's.

what's on this week?

Mar 10th - Prime Time

Mar 10th - Annual General Meeting

Mar 15th - The Commons

Mar 15th - Link missionaries Chris & Erin visiting

KINGDOM OF GRACE STUDY #5

the grace of the provider

LUKE 12:22-40

LEADERS NOTE: Today's passage speaks directly about worry and anxiety. Please handle this section with pastoral care. The passage addresses ordinary human worry, not diagnosable anxiety disorders. Take time to help the group distinguish between the two. If you or someone in your group needs additional support, please reach out to your Small Group Coach, the care team, or a member of staff for guidance toward appropriate care.

check-in

Do you have any thoughts or reflections from church on Sunday?

unpack

Brief context:

Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem and is continuing to teach what it means to be His disciple. Today's passage is part of a long public sermon in which Jesus speaks to growing opposition and misunderstandings. Our passage follows Jesus speaking to the rich fool, warning him, the crowd, and the disciples to avoid greed and false security.

Read Luke 12:22-34

1. Jesus commands His disciples not to worry, then gives multiple reasons for that command. As a group, create a physical list of the arguments Jesus uses.

Please make a physical list with your group.

Do not stress about making the list exhaustive, Jesus repeats and overlaps intentionally. Let the group notice the cumulative effect rather than identifying every argument.

2. Jesus links worry to faith (v28) and fear (v32). How does that reframe the way we usually think about anxiety?

Jesus does not dismiss worry, but he does locate it theologically. *Help the group notice that worry is framed as something connected to trust and fear rather than merely emotion or circumstance. We can avoid turning this into a judgment on people's experiences by letting Jesus' framing do the work.*

3. How does this passage portray God's relationship and interactions with people — and how does that compare with your own experience of God?

This question aims to bring our reflection, not to correct people. The passage portrays God as attentive, generous, and purposeful. Let the group sit with any dissonance they notice between Jesus' descriptions and the God they assume in practice.

Read Luke 12:35-40

4. If the first reading calls us not to worry, what does this reading call us to be?

Jesus is not calling for passivity or detachment. The movement is from anxious control to active readiness. Encourage the group to focus on the posture we are called to rather than behaviours.

5. What is unexpected or reversed in verse 38, and how does that shape what readiness looks like?

The master serves the servants. Readiness is motivated not by fear of punishment, but by the promise of grace that exceeds expectation. Spending some time landing this point will shape the group well for the deeper questions and application.

explore

6. According to Jesus, what does worry reveal about what we are trusting God with or struggling to trust him with?

This question is diagnostic; we want to consider the places where our trust is fragile. Aim to keep it focused on the logic Jesus presents in the passage.

7. If readiness for Jesus' return is meant to shape ordinary discipleship, what kinds of decisions, big and small, should it influence?

We are encouraged to connect our future hope with our daily present life. As a group, avoid reducing readiness to end-times speculation. The emphasis is on how expectation of Jesus' return shapes present discipleship.

apply

8. Looking back at the list, which of Jesus' arguments speak most directly to your own worries and why?

9. Do we treat our "modern worries" as exceptions that allow us to sidestep Jesus' teaching here?

Explore how easily we assume our circumstances are uniquely exempt from Jesus' commands. This may lead to a conversation around other areas where we do the same.

10. Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." One helpful way to consider where our treasure lies is to ask what we would struggle most to have taken away from us. With that in mind, where would you say your treasure is?

This question is intentionally weighty and best left open-ended. It is right to love and grieve the loss of the good gifts God gives us. The aim here is not guilt, but to explore where our deepest security and hope ultimately lie.

pray

Take time to share and pray together in response to the passage, for each other's needs, for your group's link missionary, the events below, and the weekly ministries at St Paul's.

what's on this week?

Mar 19th – Retiring with Purpose

Mar 19th – 22nd Kelso Mission

Mar 21st – Prayer Breakfast with Chris & Erin

Mar 22nd – Parents Day at Kids Alive

Mar 22nd – YA 25+ Hang out

KINGDOM OF GRACE STUDY #6

the ultimate grace

LUKE 15:11–31

check-in

Do you have any thoughts or reflections from church on Sunday?

What is the most valuable item you have lost? Did you find it again?

unpack

Brief context:

This parable is not standalone; it follows two shorter parables about what has been lost and then found, which illuminate both God's joy and the resentment of the religious. Jesus tells the parable of the lost son in response to the Pharisees and teachers of the law criticising the way He welcomes and shares meals with sinners and tax collectors.

Read Luke 15:11–31

1. What is so offensive about "Father, give me my share of the estate"? Can you think of a modern equivalent?

In the first-century setting, this is not impatience or immaturity; it is severing of a relationship. The son is treating the father as if he were already dead. Before moving to modern equivalents, be sure the group feels the weight of that original offence.

2. Why do you think v15–16 hit hard for Luke's audience?

The story slows here as the son is stripped of dignity, security, and agency. For a Jewish audience, feeding pigs signals not just poverty but covenantal collapse, along with social, moral, and religious exclusion. For this question, stay with the degradation rather than anticipating restoration.

3. What difference do you notice between the son's planned confession (v18–19) and what he manages to say to his father (v21–22)? Why might Jesus include that difference?

This interruption is deliberate. The son prepares a speech aimed at negotiation; the father cuts it off with restoration. The point is not whether the repentance is sincere, but that grace overtakes and disrupts rehearsed repentance. Jesus' emphasis is less on the son's act of repentance and more on the extravagance of the father's grace.

explore

4. The father's response to the younger son's return is costly, public, and extravagant. If you imagine yourself in his place, what would keep you from responding that way, and why?

The father's response is intentionally excessive, and the text invites us to feel how unreasonable grace can appear.

5. Do you think any of the older brother's frustrations or actions were justified?

Let the group share their feelings before weighing them against the father's response in the next question.

6. Why would the father's words to the older brother (vv31–32) have landed so powerfully with Luke's original audience?

Luke's audience, along with Jesus' immediate audience, includes people who look far more like the older brother than the younger. The father's words don't expose rebellion, but resentment toward grace. This parable is aimed as much at religious insiders as at obvious sinners.

apply

Leaders Note: If you don't have time to cover all the application questions, please feel free to pick the one or two that will best serve your group, with preference given to the final question.

7. Where do you recognise the younger son's posture in your own life, particularly the desire for freedom, control, or distance from the father, and what does repentance look like there now?

Repentance in this passage is not self-improvement or moral strength, but an honest return to the father without conditions.

8. Where do you recognise the older son's posture — obedience without joy, resentment toward grace, or a sense of being owed — and how does the father's invitation challenge that posture? *The father affirms the son's obedience but exposes his joylessness. Help the group notice that proximity to the father does not automatically mean sharing the father's heart.*

9. We often assume God's feelings for us mirror the way we feel about ourselves. When you come to God in repentance, what posture do you expect from Him toward you, and how does the father in this parable challenge or confirm that?

This question exposes the gap between how we expect God to respond and how the father actually responds. Let the contrast sit, allow the parable to challenge those expectations

pray

Leaders Note: This may be a good week to lead your group in prayers of repentance and absolution. If you are confident to lead this yourself then please do. If you would like some traditional prayers to follow, I have included a small appendix at the end of this study.

Take time to share and pray together in response to the passage, for each other's needs, for your group's link missionary, the events below, and the weekly ministries at St Paul's.

what's on this week?

Mar 25th – Prayer Night

Mar 28th – Easter Cantata

prayer guide

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER LORDS SUPPER FORM 1

Confession:

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you made all things, and you call everyone to account.
With shame we confess the sins we have committed against you, in thought, word and deed.
We rightly deserve your condemnation.
We turn from our sins and are truly sorry for them; they are a burden we cannot bear.
Have mercy on us, most merciful Father.
For the sake of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us all that is past.
Enable us to serve and please you in newness of life, to your honour and glory,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Absolution (edited):

Almighty God our heavenly Father,
who has promised to forgive the sins of all who turn to him with
repentance and faith, have mercy on us;
pardon and deliver us from all our sins, strengthen us to do your
will, and keep us in eternal life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance:

Hear these words of assurance for those who truly turn to Christ.
Jesus said: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest'.
Matthew 11:28

Assurance (continued)

'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.'

John 3:16

The apostle Paul said: 'Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'.

1 Timothy 1:15

The apostle John said: 'If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.'

1 John 2:1-2

THE VALLEY OF VISION

"CONFESSON AND PETITION"

I have sinned times without number,
and been guilty of pride and unbelief,
of failure to find thy mind in thy Word,
of neglect to seek thee in my daily life.
My transgressions and short-comings
present me with a list of accusations,
But I bless thee that they will not stand against me,
for all have been laid on Christ;
Go on to subdue my corruptions,
and grant me grace to live above them.
Let not the passions of the flesh nor lustings
of the mind bring my spirit into subjection,
but do thou rule over me in liberty and power.

KINGDOM OF GRACE STUDY #7

what to do with grace

LUKE 15:11-31

check-in

Do you have any thoughts or reflections from church on Sunday?

unpack

Brief context: This parable is told as Jesus nears Jerusalem. It comes immediately after Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus, where salvation is declared to have come today and a tax collector is named a son of Abraham. Jesus is speaking to those travelling with Him as expectations about His mission continue to sharpen.

Read Luke 19:11-27

1. Luke tells us why Jesus gives this parable in v11. What expectations are present in the crowd at this moment, and why do they matter as Jesus approaches Jerusalem?

Luke includes v11 to frame how the parable should be heard. The issue is expectation; the crowd assumes they know where this is heading. As Jesus approaches Jerusalem, they expect the kingdom to appear immediately.

2. What role does the delay play in the story?

The delay sits at the centre of the parable. Luke tells us the kingdom is not appearing immediately, and Jesus reframes what faithfulness looks like in the meantime.

3. How does the third servant understand the king, and how does that shape his response?

The third servant explains his actions by describing how he understands the king. He describes the king as harsh and demanding, and that belief, in his mind, justifies his inaction.

explore

4. What does the king entrust to his servants during his absence, and how does he distinguish between different responses to his authority?

The king gives them wealth to work with. Avoid framing the King's distinction in terms of effort, effectiveness, or visible results. Keep attention on how the king evaluates the servants' responses during his absence; it is according to their faithfulness.

5. What uncomfortable questions does this parable raise about authority, judgment, and accountability?

This parable refuses to separate Jesus' mercy from his authority. As Jesus approaches Jerusalem, He is claiming kingship, and kingship necessarily involves judgment. If Jesus is who He claims to be, accountability cannot be avoided. Let the group name the discomfort without softening it or resolving it too quickly.

6. What is striking about the king's response to the servants who act faithfully during his absence, and how does that shape the tone of the parable?

The king's response is marked by approval and expansion rather than suspicion or restraint. Faithful action is met with increased responsibility, not withdrawal or punishment. While this may appear prosperous, the parable frames the reward as deeper participation in the king's rule, not personal gain or security. This sets a contrast with the responses later in the parable and helps frame the seriousness of what follows.

7. How does v27 relate to the rest of the parable, and why does Jesus end the story this way?

v27 returns to the group introduced in v14, those who explicitly reject the king's rule. The parable is therefore not only about servants entrusted during the king's absence, but also about subjects who refuse his authority altogether. As Jesus approaches Jerusalem, the verse sharpens what is at stake: rejection of the king is not neutral, and grace does not remove the reality of judgment. Avoid softening this verse. Let it stand as the final word of the parable and allow the discomfort it creates to remain.

apply

8. If this parable describes life during the king's absence, what does it expose about how you relate to Jesus' authority in this time and the judgment to come?

This question invites reflection on how authority is received when obedience does not produce immediate clarity or reward. Let the tension between Jesus' authority and delayed outcomes remain exposed.

9. If this parable describes the time between Jesus' departure and return, what has He entrusted to us as his followers, and what would faithfulness look like when His authority is real, but His rule is not yet visible?

Rather than importing assumptions about talents, productivity, or results, the focus is on responsibility under authority during absence, not on visible success. Are we faithful and active with all we have in the absence of the king's visible rule?

pray

Take time to share and pray together in response to the passage, for each other's needs, for your group's link missionary, the events below, and the weekly ministries at St Paul's.

what's on this week?

Apr 3rd - Good Friday Services 8am/10am

Apr 3rd - Young Adults "The Big Thing"

Apr 5th - Easter Sunday services 8am/10am/6pm