

UNIQUE

Life Group Leaders Guide

Directions

This packet contains the background information, series information, and weekly curriculum you will need to lead a life group during our *Unique* series. Everything on this page is to help you stay connected to the series as a whole. Behind this page is the individual curriculum to help you point people to Jesus. The *Purpose and Move* sections of the curriculum are for the leader to read or paraphrase to the group. The *Notes and Commentary* section is for the leader to get background information and go deeper into the passages before leading the life group. The curriculum was designed with your freedom in mind. Read through the curriculum and decide what will work best for your group. SOAP the passages with the group, use only certain questions, write your own questions, or use the curriculum verbatim. As the leader, you know what will point your people to Jesus.

Series Overview

Google estimates that there are roughly 4,200 religions currently being practiced around the world. That means a person could practice a new religion everyday for almost 12 years without repeating one. With all these religions, what differentiates our religion from the others? What sets us apart? With so many other religions, why should an individual choose to follow Jesus? That is what we will be talking about during *Unique*. We will be taking three weeks to walk through what makes Christianity and its followers unique to the religions of this world. By looking at grace, love, and diversity; which are all distinct to Christianity, we hope this will be a time of affirmation and discovery for you and your family.

Life Group Overview

During the *Unique* series our life group curriculum will cover the same topic that was covered from stage but using a different passage or set of passages. Each curriculum will begin with an unpacking of the previous Sunday's service to help the leader open up the topic for the study and also see how people responded to the Sunday teaching.

Unique Series Schedule

Week	Sermon Date	Topic of sermon	Topic of life group
Week 1	8/13	Grace	Romans 3:20-24 & Romans 6:1-4
Week 2	8/20	Loving Others	John 15:9-17 & John 13:34-35
Week 3	8/27	Diversity	Revelation 7:9 & Acts 10:9-48

The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

Unique - Week 1 - Grace - Romans 3:20-24 & Romans 6:1-4

Purpose of Study

One of the most important questions many religions attempt to answer is: How do we get into a right relationship with God? Many people believe that by our good works we are accepted by God. However, Christianity has a different and unique answer to this question: A right relationship with God is a gift that cannot be earned through *our* good works. It is through *Christ's* atoning sacrifice on the cross that God accepts those who put their trust in Him. This is Grace. This underserved acceptance leads some to believe that while under Grace, our works don't matter. By no means! Following Christ means dying to our sin and rising with Christ to a new life where good works are not the means to salvation but rather an outpouring of God's love in us. This week we'll consider two passages in Paul's letter to the Romans to find out what Grace means to the believer and how it should transform the way we live.

Flow of Study

Optional Icebreaker: Describe a time when you forgave someone who didn't deserve it or when you were forgiven for something even before you apologized. How did this affect your relationship with that person?

Move #1: Since the sermon series and life groups are covering the same topics, it might be a good idea (both for content and time) to begin the discussion with some unpacking questions from this Sunday's sermon.

1. Did anything stand out to you from the sermon this weekend?
2. What is one thing from the sermon that you want to apply this week?
3. Why is an understanding of grace necessary for the believer and something that sets us apart from other faiths?

Move #2: In our first passage, we will explore the meaning of grace. Paul's letter to the Romans shows us that righteousness is *given* through faith, not *achieved* by works. The goal of this move is to affirm the truth that all have sinned and are only justified by the grace of God through faith.

Read Romans 3:20-24 (NIV)

²⁰ Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. ²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?

2. Some religions believe that our works justify us. Have you ever tried to justify yourself in God's sight through works? Why is this a trap?
 - a. **Hint:** See verse 23: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." No matter how hard we try we fall short of perfection.
3. Have you ever become conscious of a particular sin through the law? Have you felt personally convicted by a sermon or a passage of scripture? Did you experience grace and forgiveness? How so?
4. Receiving grace often inspires gratitude. How is being conscious of our sin and receiving grace important for us to feel this gratitude towards God? How does trusting in our own works rob us of gratitude towards God?
5. You have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. You are in need of forgiveness. Your righteousness is given through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Why are these truths hard to believe at times?
 - a. **Hint:** We often think of ourselves as "good people". Our culture often values hard work but does not value faith. In school, work, and even in our families, good work is rewarded. We are taught the virtues of self-reliance and independence. It is easy to assume that the same would be true of our relationship with God, but God's heart is different.
6. Is there a danger in taking grace too lightly? When Paul says, "justified freely" does he mean that nothing is required from us?

Move #3: Now that we've seen that grace is a gift to all who believe, this next move explores how accepting this gift should *transform* the life of the believer. Paul answers the question: if righteousness does not depend on our works, can we just do whatever we want and keep sinning? By no means!

Read Romans 6:1-4 (NIV)

¹What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Paul states emphatically that those under grace should not go on sinning. That's obvious, but why do we sometimes act differently? Have you ever thought about grace before you sinned, knowing that you would be forgiven? What happened as a result?
3. None of us are perfect. What is the difference between *living in sin* and *dying to sin*? What does that look like in your life? What should it look like?
4. What does it mean to be baptized into Christ's death? What parts of us die? For the baptized, how would continuing to live in sin make us like zombies, allowing the dead body to rule over our new life?

5. Jesus Christ is unique in His claim to be the Son of God and in His resurrection from the dead. What does it look like in a practical way for us to be raised from the dead with Christ and to live a new life? How is the new life different?
6. Later, in **Romans 6:15-18**, Paul states that we used to be slaves to sin but have become slaves to righteousness. Have you ever felt like a slave to sin? What was that experience like? Do you live as a slave to righteousness? What does that look like?

Move #4: Romans 3 warns of the danger in placing our trust in our own good works and **Romans 6** warns of the danger of living in sin as if good works were irrelevant to the believer. The goal of this final move and Next Steps is to discuss ways to apply what we've learned to our own faith, sin, and work in practical ways.

1. What is something that stood out to you tonight that you are going to take with you?
2. Gandhi famously said, "I'd be a Christian, if it were not for the Christians." In other words, it was not the Bible or Jesus's teachings that drove him away, but rather the behavior and attitudes of Christians. How might the spiritual landscape of the Triangle be different if more Christians lived into **Romans 6**, dying to ourselves that we might live for Christ and live as Christ lived and love others as Christ loved?

Next Steps: The following are things you could challenge your members to do in order to take what you studied in this curriculum farther.

1. Are there any truths in the passages we read that are hard for you to accept? Consider meditating on **Romans 3-6** this week and come back next week with any lingering questions or doubts you may have.
2. Let's say, hypothetically, there are recurring sins in your life that you just can't seem to let go. Would you be comfortable sharing those in Lifegroup? How can we make this a safer place to spur each other on? Another place to go deeper is a core group of four or fewer people of the same gender who help to hold each other accountable on a weekly basis. If you aren't already in one, please consider joining or forming one.
 - a. **Note to Leader:** If someone chooses to share, be sure to encourage that and if possible, share your own current or past struggles, as appropriate.
3. Do you find yourself trying to earn your way into heaven through your good works? Go to God in prayer this week seeking an attitude of gratitude. Consider memorizing **Romans 3:23-24** as a reminder of God's grace.

Prayer: End your study with a time of prayer where people can share prayer requests and be prayed for before they leave. If possible, please steer some prayer towards what your group talked about during this study.

Notes and Commentary

The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.

- The supreme problem of life is: how can we get into a right relationship with God? . . . The answer offered by Judaism was: 'You can attain to a right relationship with God by keeping meticulously all that

the law lays down.’ But to say that is simply to say that there is no possibility of anyone ever attaining to a right relationship with God, for it is not possible to keep every commandment of the law. (Barclay)

- But the point about our relationship to God is that we are utterly guilty, and yet God, in his amazing mercy treats us, reckons us, accounts us as if we were innocent. That is what justification means. When Paul says that ‘God justifies the ungodly’, he means that God treats the ungodly as if they had been good men and women. (Barclay)
- That is what justification by faith in Jesus Christ means. It means that we are in a right relationship with God because we believe with all our hearts that what Jesus told us about God is true. We are no longer terrorized, strangers from an angry God. We are children, erring children, trusting in their Father’s love for forgiveness. (Barclay)
- The way of obedience to the law is concerned with what we can do for ourselves; the way of grace is concerned with what God can do, and has done, for us. Paul is insisting that nothing we can ever do can win for us the forgiveness of God; only what God has done for us can win that; therefore the way to a right relationship with God lies not in a frenzied, desperate, doomed attempt to win acquittal by our performance; it lies in the humble, penitent acceptance of the love and the grace which God offers us in Jesus Christ. (Barclay)
- In this passage (Romans 6:1-11) lie three great permanent truths. (1) It is a terrible thing to seek to trade on the mercy of God and to make it an excuse for sinning. . . (2) Those who enter upon the Christian way are committed to a different kind of life. They have died to one kind of life and been born to another. . . (3) There is more than a mere ethical change in our lives when we accept Christ. . . We are *in Christ*. (Barclay)