

DAVID'S MEN

SEEKING THE HEART OF GOD



Problem 2: Bondage

Treasure: FIND FREEDOM

Key: Learning

Have you ever had a time in your life where you thought that everything was going quite well for you, but you just couldn't shake that sense of "low-grade sadness"? Maybe everyone around you may have thought you were lucky, well off, looked great, and had a bright future. Yet you struggled in sharing their optimism.

At times like this, our mind draws on the experiences we have had and the things we have been taught. We can analyze it logically and everything looks positive. Then our heart refuses to go along and the emptiness remains.

In order to find a solution to this problem, we start looking for something to provide a relief or balance. Many people turn to relationships, alcohol, work, illegal drugs, entertainment, sports, pornography, video games, endless therapy, or any of a large number of other methods the world gives us so that we can remain numb, distracted, or medicated. Soon we find ourselves in bondage and filled with a growing sense of sadness, depression, frustration, and helplessness. The irony is that the very thing that was supposed to make us happy became the thing that robbed us of the happiness we already had.

How did this happen? What went wrong? We started with the wrong set of values and assumptions. The world tells us that it's all about me. That includes my happiness, my belongings, my friends, my job, my money, my respect, my goals, my...my...my...on and on. But when we learn that it's not about me, but it's about God, then we can find genuine freedom. When it's about God then the pressure is off of you to perform and meet unrealistic expectations.



When we start from the wrong place we end up in the wrong place. Our minds become prisoners to our faulty assumptions, incorrect choices, and shortcomings. We get trapped and we never even saw it coming because we were doing what everyone else was doing. But it's only once we have learned to be free that can we see the shackles that bind those around us. Those around us didn't intend to set a bad example. They were doing the only thing they know how to do because they are lost too.

Consider it, if you were born in a prison and were surrounded by prisoners, would you think something was odd? Likely you would have a vague notion that things are not as they should be, but you probably would have no way to explain what the right way to live would look like. Now one day your savior arrives at the prison and starts a jailbreak. He kicks in the door and you are free for the first time. Walking into the world outside of the prison would be exciting and disorienting. Eventually, you would learn how life outside of the prison works. Once you realize that life outside the prison was the way we are supposed to live you can come to a genuine appreciation of your freedom. Only once you have freedom can you truly begin to understand the bondage you suffered while in prison.

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Learning the truth of any subject will free you from the bondage of your false beliefs about that subject. When we learn and understand how the false ideas of the world work we are freed from those false ideas. Once free we can pursue the life that God has always intended for us.

Matthew 23:15 (NIV)

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.”

Teachers in bondage teach others how to be in bondage. We cannot assume that they have a malicious intent but they cannot be a source of truth. God is the source of truth and we need to ensure that the teachers we are listening to teach God's truth.

John 10:10 (NIV)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

The bad news is that we are born in bondage and that our jailor (Satan) intends us harm. The good news is that our savior (Jesus) loves each of us. If we are willing to learn about our enemy we can be free of him and if we learn about our savior we can accept Him. Then He will teach us truth so that we may embrace new attitudes, priorities, and perspectives. In other words, He will make us a new creation.



GRACE IS GREATER

The title of this month's book is "*Grace is Greater: God's Plan to Overcome Your Past, Redeem Your Pain, and Rewrite Your Story*". If you recall, this month is about the treasure FINDING FREEDOM and the key of learning. You may be wondering why we will be reading a book about grace.

Notice the tagline "*God's Plan to Overcome Your Past, Redeem Your Pain, and Rewrite Your Story*". Overcoming your past, redeeming pain, and rewriting your story is what we want to do and they all three of them require you to FIND FREEDOM first before you can start the journey.

What may not be obvious is that grace has everything to do with learning and FINDING FREEDOM. In our treasures analogy FINDING FREEDOM is the treasure in the treasure chest and learning is the key to opening the chest. To further extend the analogy, grace represents the keyhole in the treasure chest. It is through grace we are allowed to take what we learned and FIND FREEDOM.

Once I learn that I'm a sinner and that I am in bondage to sin and lies I can call upon God to save me. Because God is willing to give me grace, I am released from bondage, even though I don't deserve it. Once I have experienced God's grace I will realize I am now free of the bondage that I was once held in. It is God's grace and not my own knowledge that sets me free.

As you read the book you will see example after example of people following a process that has been with us since the Fall of Man.

- First, we live in ignorance and bondage.
- We come into contact with God's truths.
- We accept those truths (learning).
- We call upon and accept God's grace.
- We FIND FREEDOM.
- We continue to mature in our relationship with God.



LEARNING IN GRACE IS GREATER

Here are some of the ways you may see learning in action while reading *Grace is Greater*:

- You may learn that you are the worst sinner you know but God's grace is greater than your sin. That should help you to FIND FREEDOM from fear, anxiety, and guilt.
- Some common false assumptions are "Jesus wants nothing to do with me", "Jesus is more interested in religion than me", "Jesus is making an offer that is too good to be true". Once you learn to spot them you can FIND FREEDOM from the false places they lead you.
- You may learn that confronting and dealing with regret will allow you to FIND FREEDOM to live the rest of your life without being controlled by that regret.
- Learning about other may allow you to walk along with them so they can also FIND FREEDOM.
- You may learn that there is a difference between being offended and being hurt. Once you learn the difference you can FIND FREEDOM to quickly address offenses and gently seek healing for hurts.
- You may learn that you will never be asked to give more grace to others than God has already given to you. This will allow you to FIND FREEDOM to pursue forgiveness.
- When you learn to forgive others you will FIND FREEDOM to be more like Christ.
- You may learn to follow Christ's example as Steven did, even to the point where he was able to FIND the FREEDOM to ask God to forgive his killers while they stoned him to death.
- You cannot FIND FREEDOM from something you are unwilling to learn the truth about or acknowledge.
- Learning that the end of your life is near allows you to FIND FREEDOM from life's monotony, boredom, and the tyranny of ungratefulness.
- Learning to focus on what you have instead of what you don't have will allow you to FIND the FREEDOM from negativity, brooding, and possibly offending God.
- When you learn to accept your limitations you will FIND FREEDOM to explore the strengths God gave you.
- By learning to acknowledge and accept your weaknesses it helps you FIND the FREEDOM to be open and honest with others.
- When you learn to accept your human limitations you can FIND FREEDOM to depend on God's limitless supply of power, strength, and peace.

As you read through *Grace is Greater* Kyle Idleman will be recounting many of his personal experiences and stories he has heard from others. It is likely that you will be reminded of similar situations in your life. Take time to write down any experiences in your life that come to mind. Be prepared to share them with the group. What you share may help others learn and FIND FREEDOM through you.



Current Month Assignments

- Read *Grace is Greater* by Kyle Idleman and prepare a book summary to share with the group. We will do this for each book.
 - The summary should be one page with the following info:
 - List the big ideas.
 - List your key takeaways.
 - List how you will apply to your life now.
 - Provide a copy for each guy at the meeting.
- Complete the **Learning Word Challenge**.
 - As you read *Grace is Greater* underline every “learning word” (learn, learns, learning, & learned) that you find (pgs. 9 - 185).
 - Using the included Learning Word Challenge Worksheet write down the invitation word, the page (or Kindle location) you find the word on.
 - Consider the word in the context of how the author is using it. Can you see how this instance of the word relates to the treasure of FINDING FREEDOM? Write any comments or insights in the comments column.
 - During the meeting, the actual number will be revealed. The man who is closest to the correct number will be the challenge winner.
- Memorize the four scripture passages under Topical Memory Verses. Be prepared to quote topic – reference – verse – and brief context.
- Meet with one other guy in the group. This would be a great opportunity to practice saying your verses.

Topical Memory Verses

Galatians 5:1 (NIV)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV)

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Timothy 2:25-26 (NIV)

Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.



NOTES: