

GATHER A GROUP FOR



# STORIES OF GRACE

GATHER A GROUP  
by take up and read

## WELCOME

“I’ve always wanted to do a Bible study with a group of young moms,” she said, looking up at an older woman who was long past the stage of juggling journals and juice cups. “But I’m new to the area and I only know two women who might join me.”

“Then you have a group,” said the older woman firmly, with a triumphant smile. “Absolutely. That’s a group.”

And it is. Where even two women are gathered, He is there, delighted to be invited and eager to bless. Whether you are gathering with one friend in a dorm room at 10:00 every Wednesday night or you’re gathering ten women and thirty children at the park on Friday mornings, He’s there.

And He’s so glad you asked. (Matthew 18:20)

## TIPS FOR CREATING A GROUP:

Keep it simple. Begin and end the gathering with the same prayer/scripture reading so that no matter who is hosting the gathering, the format remains simple and clear.

Have an established leader for your gathering time. It can be a different individual each meeting, but it helps to have one person to lead the study session.

Set a beginning/ending time for the gathering. Encourage promptness in arrival so that you can utilize the full amount of time you may have to gather. Start on time, even if you have stragglers. They can join in when they arrive. Always be respectful of the hostess’ time.

When it comes to personal sharing, having an egg timer set is a huge help. It may sound rather silly, but when you have a specific amount of time to gather, you want to be respectful of each person present and to not have one voice override the rest.

Send out a reminder 48 and 24 hours in advance, especially if the group is filled with young mothers who are at times easily overwhelmed with the details of daily life and need a little encouragement to leave the house and spend time filling their own hearts and minds with the Word and good fellowship. You may also want to try and get a headcount 24 hours before to assist the hostess for the evening to be properly prepared.

Have someone in the group bring the dessert/snack so that the hostess is simply preparing her home and providing drinks. It makes it easier all the way around to divide up the tasks so no one person carries the full burden.

Remember that people are coming to share in prayer and community, not to judge the state of tidiness in your home. Don't let the clutter stop you from hosting. Simplicity is your friend. You have a spot for sitting and having a productive conversation. If there is a basket of laundry next to the sofa, don't stress. The women gathering are there for you, not your home.

Treat this gathering like a vault. What is shared in small group, stays in small group. This is a place of trust among your spiritual sisters. You must treat the struggles shared and prayers asked for with the utmost respect and discretion.

Keep your eye on the numbers. With a larger gathering (more than five) you will need to break up into smaller groups to discuss the scripture so everyone has an opportunity to share how God is working in their life.

Always try to remain positive in your small group responses. Life is difficult and sometimes one (or more) in your small group may be experiencing a crisis. Remember to listen with your heart and hold judgement, especially in a group setting. If there is something the Holy Spirit has placed on your heart to share with this individual, make time after small group to share it privately. You always want to lift up and encourage each other.

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Bible studies and small groups take time to cultivate. It's OK if there is fluctuation in attendance. We must strive to meet each other right where we are in life. God is pleased that you are making the effort to know Him better, so just keep going friends.

Praying with you,

The Take Up and Read Team

Please note: the questions correlate with the devotions in *Stories of Grace*. At least one person in your group should have the book with her for reference. You'll find that the first question in each week's suggestions lines up with Monday, the second with Tuesday, and so on. The primary Scripture reference for the question is noted, but all the Scripture listed in the book is necessary for the fuller study of God's Word. Most groups won't get to every question in a session. We've just given you plenty with which to get started. Let your conversation go where the Holy Spirit leads.

# STORIES OF GRACE

GATHER A GROUP

by take up and read

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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# STORIES OF GRACE

GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : WEEK ONE

## QUESTION 1

Can you share a memory of a time when a story changed your life? (Matt 13:10-17)

## QUESTION 2

“Women with shallow hearts initially react with hope and enthusiastic happiness to the idea of following Jesus, but never stop to see the cross, to count the cost, to weigh the commitment to follow Him even unto death.” In some seasons, even if for just a moment, we are all this woman. How can we support one another in making good on our commitments to follow Jesus, even when the unforeseen burdens are heavy? (Matt 13:3-8, 13-23)

## QUESTION 3

Where and what are the weeds in your life right now, the things around which you have to dig deep and grow good wheat anyway? How is God’s grace sufficient in this challenge? (Matt 13:24-30)

## QUESTION 4

Do we believe that nothing is impossible for God? Does that change the way we get out of bed in the morning? If we really believe that nothing is impossible for us does that inform our steps and our speech? (Matt 13:31-32)

## QUESTION 5

The kingdom of God is within you, in a place hidden from everyone but Him~hidden even from you. Who are the people and what are the practices that reveal God's plan for you? How can this group reveal to one and another the Kingdom hidden within each member? (Matt 13:33)

## QUESTION 6

Following Christ necessitates giving up something~often relationships. What are your best ideas for how to continue to love even in a relationship where your commitment to Christ is a sore spot? (Matt 13:44, 6:21)

# STORIES OF GRACE

GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : WEEK TWO

## QUESTION 1

What are some things you have forsaken for faith? How has God met you in the loss and provided beyond what you would have imagined? (Matt 13:45-46)

## QUESTION 2

He chose us relatively early to work in His vineyard. What a precious gift, to labor for the Lord! How do we keep our perspective and remind ourselves that toiling for God in this life is a reward in itself? (Matt 21:28-32)

## QUESTION 3

Do you have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart? What does it take to soften you so that you know what God wants you to do and do it right away, with willingness, and gentleness, and good cheer? (Matt 21:28-32, Ezekiel 3:7, Ezekiel 18:21-32)

## QUESTION 4

What is your “One Job?” Okay, maybe you need to consider your top three jobs, but limit it to no more than those. What do you need most from God to those well? What distracts you from those critical, non-negotiable jobs? How do those jobs define your vocation? (Matt 25:1-13)



## QUESTION 5

Have you buried a gift? Does fear keep you from using that gift? What happens when you step out, despite the fear? Has He ever met you there? Can you share that in order to encourage someone else who might be hesitating before unearthing buried talents? (Matt 6:25-33)

## QUESTION 6

When we consider Jesus' clear mission for us to be His hands and feet in the world, who are we most certain He has put in our lives so that we can serve? (Matt 25:31-46)

# STORIES OF GRACE

GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : WEEK THREE

## QUESTION 1

Think of a time when you were on fire for Jesus. What your plans? In hindsight, were they His plans? Did you accomplish for Him what you wanted to in that season of your life? Is it time to revisit those plans and ask Him to renew them for here and now? (Mark 4:21-25)

## QUESTION 2

God always hears our prayers. And He always answers them. Sometimes, the answer is “wait.” Share experiences of growth in the wait. What can we do, while waiting, to nourish the seed that seems latent? (Mark 4:26-29)

## QUESTION 3

How is the study of God’s Word changing you? How does it animate you? How can the habit of Bible study be improved? How do Word and Sacrament work together to fully equip you? What does the parable of the two foundations look like in your modern life? (Luke 6:46-49)

## QUESTION 4

In the story of the Good Samaritan, who are you? Each of those men hold a part of the whole of Jesus' story. Truly, who are you? Does your role look different depending on the road where you find yourself, maybe even changing over the course of a day? (Luke 10:30-37)

## QUESTION 5

Is there a need that you have brought continuously before the Lord and that He seems to have not yet heard and answered? Can we all pray for that with you today? (Luke 11:5-8)

## QUESTION 6

What does Jesus want you to understand about humility and hospitality? (Luke 14:7-14)

# STORIES OF GRACE

GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : WEEK FOUR

## QUESTION 1

Do you, too, worry about who will take care of you? Do you trust that Jesus has you~and all those dear to you~safely in His care, all the time? Is there a story of God's rescue you can share? (Luke 15:4-7)

## QUESTION 2

Jesus is looking for you in the grit and the dust. Can you make yourself known to Him? How can you make it easier for Him to find you? Is it time to return to confession? What is stopping you? (Luke 15:8-10)

## QUESTION 3

Who are you in the story of the prodigal son? Where is God in that? Can you see Him always with you? (Luke 15:11-32)

## QUESTION 4

Are you persistent in the pursuit of God's mercy? (Luke 18:2-8)

## QUESTION 5

What stands between you and God immeasurable mercy? How will open yourself to His fullest expressions of grace? (Luke 18:10-14)

## QUESTION 6

How do you see Jesus as both gate and shepherd in your own life and the lives of people you love? Have you seen Him rescue the lost? If so, will you share that story with someone who might be despairing over a lost sheep? (John 10:1-21)

## QUESTION 7

Have you had plans slip through your fingers? Can you see now how that severe mercy was a mercy all the same? (John 12:24)

## QUESTION 8

Do you struggle with comparisons and competition? How can we help each other with that struggle? (John 14:2-7)

# RECIPES



# STORIES OF GRACE

GATHER A GROUP

Take Up & READ

## RECIPES

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# STORIES OF GRACE

GATHER A GROUP : RECIPES

## APPLE OAT CRISP

### FILLING INGREDIENTS

5 pounds Granny Smith or Fuji apples  
Grated zest of 1 orange  
Grated zest of 1 lemon  
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice  
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice  
1/4 cup granulated sugar  
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

### TOPPING INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups flour (white, whole wheat, oat\*, or gluten-free)  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
3/4 cup light brown sugar, packed  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 pound cold unsalted butter, diced  
1 cup rolled oats



## DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Filling: In a large bowl, combine all filling ingredients. Spread mixture in a greased 9x13" baking dish.

Topping: Using a fork, combine all topping ingredients until the mixture is crumbly and the butter is the size of peas. Evenly layer the mixture over the filling.

Bake uncovered for 60 minutes.

# STORIES OF GRACE

GATHER A GROUP : RECIPES

## PUMPKIN PANCAKES

### INGREDIENTS

2 1/2 cups milk, or non-dairy milk of choice  
4 cups rolled oats  
15-ounce can pumpkin  
2 eggs  
2 tbsp maple syrup  
2 tsp vanilla extract  
4 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp pumpkin pie spice  
1 tsp salt  
butter or vegetable oil

### DIRECTIONS

Heat skillet or griddle over medium heat.  
Combine all ingredients in a blender until smooth. (Mixture will thicken as it sits.)  
Brush hot skillet with butter (or oil). Pour 1/4 cup of batter per pancake on skillet. Flip when edges are beginning to brown.  
Serve with maple syrup.

# STORIES OF GRACE

GATHER A GROUP : RECIPES

## PUMPKIN BARS

### INGREDIENTS

4 eggs  
15-ounce can pumpkin  
1 cup vegetable oil  
2 cups all-purpose flour or all-purpose, gluten-free flour blend  
2 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp baking soda  
2 tsp ground cinnamon  
1/2 tsp ground ginger

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.  
Grease a 10x15" or 9x13" baking dish or line with parchment.  
In a large bowl, combine sugar and wet ingredients. In a separate bowl, whisk dry ingredients to combine.  
Add the wet ingredients to the dry and combine.  
Bake 40 minutes.

# STORIES OF GRACE

GATHER A GROUP : RECIPES

## APPLE CRUMB CAKE

### CAKE INGREDIENTS

2 1/2 cups all-purpose or all-purpose flour, gluten-free flour blend  
1 1/3 cup light brown sugar  
1 tsp salt  
2 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp baking soda  
2 tsp ground cinnamon  
1 tsp ground allspice  
1 tsp ground ginger  
1/4 tsp ground nutmeg  
4 eggs, beaten  
1 cup vegetable oil  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
1 cup apple sauce

### CRUMB TOPPING INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup light brown sugar  
3 tbsp all-purpose flour or all-purpose, gluten-free flour blend  
3 tbsp melted butter or vegetable oil  
1 tsp ground cinnamon

## DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Grease a 9" cake pan or baking dish or line with parchment.

In a large bowl, whisk the dry cake ingredients to combine. Add the eggs, oil, and vanilla extract. Beat to combine. Add in the applesauce and combine. Pour batter into prepared dish.

Combine topping ingredients and mix with a fork. Spread crumb topping over cake batter. Lightly press down.

Bake for 40 minutes uncovered. Cover with foil and bake another 10-15 minutes. Allow to cool completely before slicing.

# STORIES OF GRACE

## GATHER A GROUP : RECIPES

### PUMPKIN BREAD

#### INGREDIENTS

15 oz can pumpkin puree  
1 cup sugar  
1/2 cup melted butter  
2 eggs  
1 1/2 cups flour (GF is fine, if you like)  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon nutmeg  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 cup chopped walnuts (optional)

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a large bowl combine the pumpkin, sugar, melted butter, and eggs. Stir until well blended. In another bowl combine the flour, baking soda, baking powder, and spices. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the pumpkin mixture. Stir until well blended but don't over mix. Pour mixture into a well greased loaf pan or a muffin pan lined with papers. Bake at 350 degrees for 50 minutes for a loaf, 20-25 minutes for muffins, or until an inserted toothpick comes out clean.