

VII

Gracious
S p a c e

Not Infinite Space

Introduction

Welcome to the “*Gracious Space*” Study Series produced for FBC in conjunction with our 2019 Fall Sermon Series.

This 8 week study can be done in a small group, as couples, or as an individual reflection, and is best done in order along with the Sunday sermons... but doesn't have to be.

You will notice through this guide where we suggest an optional “RESOURCE.” To find these additional resources, you will need to use your computer, tablet, or smart phone, go to the church website www.fbcpg.ca and click on the “Gracious Space” logo.

If you are leading a group it is important that you pre-read the guide in order to properly manage time. It is best not to rush through any one question, allowing for multiple people to give their perspectives.

This study is anywhere from 30mins to 2 hours.

We pray you will enjoy the journey into *Gracious Space*...

Wayne & David

Gracious Space: Not Infinite Space

Taking some time to “be still” and recognize God is with you,
around you, before you and after you,
positions your heart and mind to receive the
wisdom and discernment of the Spirit.

Now is the time to lessen the distractions, and to recognize the
stressors and “to do” lists can wait for tomorrow.

Try meditating on scripture by using the online resource,
or maybe you have a favourite Psalm you could read and spend
a few minutes praying and reflecting on.

RESOURCE: Psalm 46 Meditation (7mins)

Continue now, giving space for yourself and others
to journey into the Father’s Words,
the Spirit’s Presence,
and the love, grace, and passion of the Son.

Gracious Space: Not Infinite Space

The theme this week is understanding theological boundaries.

Or, another way of thinking about is,
what are the things that we need to agree on,
in order to get along?

What are some stories from your life that could be examples
of setting boundaries?

What might be some consequences
of not having boundaries?

What about if your boundaries are very tight and rigid?

Gracious Space: Not Infinite Space

At FBC we believe that as Christians (loyal followers of Christ and His way of life), we not only are called to live a certain way, but we are called to live for a certain purpose. Sometimes we may disagree on those “certain ways” of living, but we may still agree on *Who*, and for *what*, we are living for.

What may be some of those “certain ways” of living and practising the Christian faith that we may not all agree on?

What might be difficult about applying specific Biblical instructions on Christian living to our lives here and now?

Has your understanding of what it means to foster *gracious* space changed at all over the course of this study?



Scripture:

Read Romans 14

You may remember this scripture from week one of this series.

Again, the Apostle Paul is commenting on the ethnic & cultural barriers that seem to be causing division in the church in Rome.

Has your perspective on this scripture changed at all over the course of this series?

What do you think Paul is trying to do in this scripture?

Paul may be calling for church unity, but how?

In verse 1 Paul introduces the concept of disputable matters (dialogismōn - matters of one's own reasoning)

Check out verse 17 again, is it any clearer what Paul is trying to teach the believer's in Rome?

Gracious Space: Not Infinite Space

It seems Paul was trying to help the church in Rome differentiate between matters of primary concern, and matters that are not so black and white.

The Jewish Christians strongly thought that *avoiding unclean meat and circumcision* were primary concerns when it came to practising their faith.

Imagine the Apostle Paul was alive today and writing to us in our current cultural context.

What might be some things that Christians today have made *primary* matters of faith, but that Paul might consider secondary?

Would Paul still hold a position on these matters?

What does Paul point to as the *only* primary concern?
Maybe check out verse 17 again,
is it any clearer what Paul is trying to teach the believer's in Rome?

Gracious Space: Not Infinite Space

Some things we may never fully figure out,
it doesn't mean they're not important or that these kind of
matters should be ignored.

But we may need to learn how to be comfortable in the "grey"
so we don't get bogged down in debate.



Take a close look.

The dress is exactly the same colour in both pictures.
(This will be especially mind-blowing for committed blue & black-ers)

RESOURCE: What Issues Should Divide/Unite Christians?
(4mins)

Gracious Space: Not Infinite Space

Gracious space is all about giving space for people to journey differently from one another.

But *gracious* space is not *infinite*.

Why not?

Based on the entire, whole, big God story found in Scripture, what are some of the primary matters that define our faith?

What can we all agree on about the mission of the church?

Gracious space is built on a foundation of core beliefs.

In another sense,
these beliefs are what set the *boundaries*
of our faith community.

What does it look like to have *gracious* space within the boundaries we have set as a faith community?

Why might it be extremely important to place most of our focus and teaching on our core beliefs?

Scripture:

Read Matthew 22:34-40

The Pharisees are trying to trip up Jesus by asking an age-old, long debated question.

Jesus answers the expert Pharisee in a fairly traditional manner. However, what *is* radical, is what he adds at the end.

What could Jesus mean that all the Law “hangs on these two”?

The final questions on the next page may not have clear answers. It is REALLY important to take time to ponder and/or discuss them humbly and prayerfully.

It may be a good idea to journal your answers or think about them over the course of a few days.

Gracious Space: Not Infinite Space

Why might it be important to heed the words of Jesus above other voices from the Bible?



Jesus definitely taught a way of behaving, but what was different about his “rules”?

Bring to mind those things that divide the church. Especially the divisive issues that have caused your own believing community tension, anxiety, and emotional debates.

How do differing positions on these issues affect your belief about Almighty God as Creator of the universe?

What about your other core beliefs?

What would it look to have conversations about commonly divisive issues within a church culture of *gracious* space?
(same-sex marriage, young earth vs old earth, women in ministry, and alcohol and marijuana use, etc.)

How does condoning & condemning fit into gracious space?

Gracious Space



Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16



This booklet was produced and written by pastors Wayne and David in conjunction with the 2019 Fall Sermon Series: *Gracious Space*, at First Baptist Church Prince George, BC.