



MESSY
GRACE



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Published in Louisville, Kentucky, by City on a Hill Studio.
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INTRODUCTION 4

WEEK ONE: *Love* 6

WEEK TWO: *Truth* 46

WEEK THREE: *Grace* 83

WEEK FOUR: *Identity* 123

What is Messy Grace?

Very few issues in Christianity are as divisive as the acceptance of the LGBT community in the church. Many Christians are lured toward two extremes: Sacrificing truth for the sake of love and grace, or sacrificing love and grace for the sake of truth. Jesus was able to love all kinds of people and yet still hold onto his beliefs. So can you. Even when it's messy.

Caleb Kaltenbach was raised by LGBT parents, marched in gay pride parades as a youngster, and experienced firsthand the hatred and bitterness of some Christians toward his family. Then Caleb surprised everyone, including himself, by becoming a Christian...and a pastor.

Caught between new convictions and parents he loved, Caleb had to face this issue with courage and grace. He learned to live in the tension between love and truth, and he shares his insights in *Messy Grace*. The *Messy Grace* line of resources combines Caleb's Biblical teaching with powerful testimonies from Christians who've been personally affected by LGBT issues and identity. These resources will inspire and empower Christ followers to truly love all their LGBT "neighbors" — or any neighbor — while maintaining fidelity to the Scriptures.



SERIES The Series contains four cinematic video episodes that feature dramatic testimonies paired with Biblical teaching. They are ideal for entertainment and edification.



JOURNAL The Journal is the participant's guide to the Series. This daily guide helps you go deeper through personal devotions, thoughtful questions and bible verses for reflection.



LEADER'S GUIDE The Leader's Guide is designed to facilitate meaningful discussion when using the Series within a group setting. It is easy to follow and includes helpful tips on how to lead a small group.



SMALL GROUP The Small Group Study contains everything needed to host a group, including the Series, Leader's Guide and Journal.



PASTOR'S KIT The Pastor's Kit includes everything needed to plan a sermon series: a special video message for pastors, video guide for implementing a church-wide program, sermon transcripts with notes, video clips to accompany sermons, sermon bumpers (short video clip to introduce each week's sermon), and digital art files to use in creation of bulletins and other promo materials.



MESSY
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WEEK ONE:

Love

Watch



Please play Episode 1

(If you've already seen Episode 1, skip to Day 1.)

WEEK ONE: LOVE

Day 1

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”

Philippians 3:12

Read Philippians 3:12-14. What main point do you think Paul is making in these verses?

Rephrase verse 14 in your own words.

As Christians, we must continually follow Jesus by taking step after step after our Master. This process of following involves learning more about Jesus. It also involves serving in God’s Kingdom. Another part of our continual following is growing deeper in the community of God’s people. However, there is one area of growth that may be the most important as it pertains to what it means to be a follower of Jesus – our continual transformation into His image.

This is partly what Paul is referring to in the Philippians passage. Paul admits he has not achieved full transformation into the image of Jesus, but he also acknowledges his desire to continually be transformed. Paul ultimately is telling us that

MESSY GRACE

he does not focus on where he falls short, but his focus is on moving towards Christ-likeness.

Just like Paul, all of us as followers of Jesus are on a journey of transformation. But just like Paul, none of us have been fully transformed yet. All of us have different areas of our lives that need to be transformed more into the image of Jesus. And just like Paul, all of us must put our focus on the fact that God, through the Holy Spirit, desires to transform us more and more into the image of His Son.

Take a couple of minutes and think through what transformation you desire to get out of this series. Think through why you chose to go through this series. Think through how you could be more like Jesus when it comes to messy grace.

In the space below, write down what you desire to get out of this series and in what ways you desire to be different at the end of this journal.

Week 1 Memory Verse

ABOVE ALL,
LOVE EACH OTHER DEEPLY,
BECAUSE LOVE COVERS
OVER A MULTITUDE
OF SINS.

1 PETER 4:8

Take a few minutes and pray over the things you wrote. Ask God to reveal to you the areas in which He wishes to transform you. Thank Him for being faithful to transform us whenever we open our hearts to Him.

WEEK ONE: LOVE

Day 2

“Each of us is either more grace-oriented or truth-oriented, but the tension (between the two) draws all to the middle. Embracing the tension shows that we love God and people (and won’t stop loving either).”

Caleb Kaltenbach

In this Series we will be discussing how we, as followers of Jesus, are to treat people we may see as “messy.” These are people whose sin and lifestyle make us uncomfortable. Specifically, we will be addressing how we treat the LGBT community.

What are your gut reactions when it comes to the LGBT community? Write down some thoughts that come to mind and emotions that are evoked when you think of “LGBT.”

Throughout this journal, we will often be talking about the tension between grace and truth. Think of grace and truth as a line. On one side of the spectrum is truth. By truth we mean that those on the far end of the truth side believe the most important thing we must do is to tell others the extent of their sin.

On the other side of the spectrum lies grace. People on the far end of this spectrum believe we are never to judge anyone's sin. All believers need to do is have grace on others. There is no need to help people see the truth of their sin, because all sin is forgiven anyway.

The fact is, all of us lie somewhere on this spectrum.

On the next page, mark where you currently lie on the spectrum when it comes to interacting with those in the LGBT community.

TRUTH ○.....○ **GRACE**

In the space below, share some reasons why you put yourself on that particular spot on the spectrum.

On the spectrum below, based on Jesus' interactions with others, mark where you believe Jesus lies.

TRUTH ○.....○ **GRACE**

What does that say about you?

What does that say about Jesus?

Week 1 Memory Verse

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BECAUSE LOVE COVERS
OVER A MULTITUDE
OF SINS.

1 PETER 4:8

Spend a few minutes in prayer as you ask God to use this Journal to align your heart with Jesus' heart. Ask Him to help you surrender to His will in your life, specifically in the area of your attitude towards messy people.

WEEK ONE: LOVE

Day 3

“There is tension between grace and truth.”

Caleb Kaltenbach

Tension is defined as a force that causes something to be stretched. Tension is just a part of our lives. There is not much we can do to avoid it. It is also a part of our Christian faith journey. Another thought about tension is that it’s not necessarily a bad thing. A lot of things are possible only because of tension.

What is your immediate reaction to the word tension? What thoughts and feelings does it evoke?

Why do you think we try to avoid tension?

In the Series, we heard about the tension between grace and truth. Take some time to reflect and then write down in the space below some other tensions that we deal with as Christians.

How can some of the tensions you wrote above actually be seen as positive?

Why do you think we don't like tension in our faith?

In what ways is tension necessary to help us grow?

What are some things we can do in our relationship with God to allow us to be more inviting of tension in our faith?

   **SOCIAL RESPONSE**

When things get tense, most of us feel the need for what we call "breathing room," otherwise known as space to call our own. What is your favorite "space?" How does God fit into this special place? Use [#MESSYGRACE](#) to tag your response on social media.

Week 1 Memory Verse

ABOVE ALL,
LOVE EACH OTHER DEEPLY,
BECAUSE LOVE COVERS
OVER A MULTITUDE
OF SINS.

1 PETER 4:8

Spend a few minutes in prayer. Share with God your feelings about tension in your life. Ask Him to give you strength, courage and trust to live in the tension. Thank Him for walking every step of your spiritual growth journey with you.

WEEK ONE: LOVE

Day 4

"...and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."

Colossians 3:10

If you had to choose just five words to describe Jesus, what words would you choose?

A 2007 study by David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group and author of the book *Unchristian*, found that 91% of young people ages 16-29 identified Christians as anti-gay.

How do these stats make you feel?

The study went on to say that in addition to anti-gay, an overwhelming majority of people also find Christians to be judgmental, hypocritical, boring and insensitive.

How are these five words different from the five you chose for Jesus?

How do you think Jesus feels about this discrepancy?

Why do you think it is important to change the way people view Christians?

What are some things Christians can do to start reflecting Jesus better?

   **SOCIAL RESPONSE**

Think of a situation where you were confronted with a need to either share truth or show grace to someone who didn't share the same values as you. Describe what you needed to share — either truth or grace. Then, describe how it actually unfolded. Use **#MESSYGRACE** to tag your response on social media.

Week 1 Memory Verse

ABOVE ALL,
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OF SINS.

1 PETER 4:8

Take a few minutes to pray. Spend some time in silence to start your prayer time. Think about how we are to be reflections of Jesus to a dark and dying world. Pray and ask God to help you be a better mirror to reflect Jesus' image. Ask Him to clean the parts of you that need to be cleansed. Ask Him to help you put on the image of Christ. Ultimately, pray that God would help you continue to put off the old self and put on the new self.

WEEK ONE: LOVE

Day 5

“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 3:18

What does it mean to you to reflect God’s glory?

What do you think it looks like for you to be transformed into the Lord's image in the area of dealing with messy people and people who are LGBT?

According to this verse, who is behind our transformation?

All of us have biases and presuppositions towards people who are different than us. This may be one of the biggest barriers to loving people the way Jesus loved others. This is especially true when it comes to Christians and the LGBT community. There are many different reasons that we have these opinions and prejudices. One of the most helpful things we can do to open our minds and hearts to the Holy Spirit's transforming work is to understand the root of our biases.

Many of our biases are a result of our experiences in the different areas of our lives. Sometimes those experiences are simply biases that have been passed down to us.

In the space below, write down some experiences that may have led to your current opinions towards the LGBT community.

Family

Friends

Church

Co-workers

Media

Week 1 Memory Verse

ABOVE ALL,
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BECAUSE LOVE COVERS
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OF SINS.

1 PETER 4:8

End your journal time in prayer. Pray that God would continue to reveal to you the things in your life that are not from Him. Remember, spiritual growth is all about taking earthly things out of our lives and replacing them with the things of God. Pray that God would make very evident the things that you need to let go of in order to receive more of the things of God.

WEEK ONE: LOVE

Day 6

“Love is the tension between grace and truth.”

Caleb Kaltenbach

One of the most prevalent yet misunderstood themes in human life is the concept of love. There are more books, poems and songs written about love than any other subject. Maybe that has something to do with it being so misunderstood. This is even more true when it comes to the English word “love.” We say things like, “I love my children,” as well as, “I love chocolate cake.” Obviously those two statements depict completely different emotions. Nevertheless, we use the word “love” to describe them both.

Today we want to redefine love in our own minds. Instead of getting our definition from songs, poems or culture, we want

to allow the Bible and Jesus' example define love for us.

Take a few minutes and think how each of the people listed below would define love based on their life stage. Write it down on the appropriate line.

A child between the ages of 4-12

A teenager

A person in their twenties

A person in their forties

An elderly person

How would you define love?

Read the following verses:

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Colossians 3:12-14

Luke 6:35

John 15:13

In the space below, write a definition of love based on the verses you just read.

Read John 13:35. Why do you think loving others is the greatest test to determine if one is a follower of Jesus?

   **SOCIAL RESPONSE**

Having love for your neighbor is bound by your primary allegiance to God. Share one way you will show love for a neighbor this week that also demonstrates God's love. Use **#MESSYGRACE** to tag your response on social media.

How does John 13:35 challenge you when it comes to your treatment of the LGBT community?

What are some steps you can take in your life to show more love to:

Your friends and family?

Your co-workers?

The LGBT community?

Messy people in your life?

   **SOCIAL RESPONSE**

What helped Margaret and Carly establish and maintain a healthy relationship with each other in spite of their different viewpoints? What were the the sources of their strength? Use **#MESSYGRACE** to tag your response on social media.

Week 1 Memory Verse

ABOVE ALL,
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1 PETER 4:8

End your time in prayer. Spend a few minutes looking over the things you wrote down today. Ask God to help you become a loving person. Ask Him to help you love like He loves.

WEEK ONE: LOVE

Day 7

As you close the first week out, spend some time going back through your Journal. Use the space below to write down the main ideas, themes, certain things you want to remember and anything you'd like to bring up in your small group.
