

starting[®] point

PART 6: GRACE

At some time, we could all find ourselves slipping into a bargaining posture with God: “God, if you will... I promise I will...” But how often do we keep our end of that bargain? And, maybe a better question: Is that really the kind of relationship God wants to have with us?

CONNECT

Talk about a time when someone let you off the hook or forgave a debt. How did it make you feel?

DISCUSS THE PODCAST EPISODE

1. Where do you feel the effects of a performance-based world most?
2. How has this influenced your view of God?
3. Read the parable of the prodigal son together (**Luke 15:11–31**).
 - Do you relate more to the older son or the younger son in the story? What makes you feel this way?
 - In this story, Jesus portrays God as a loving father who longs for his son to return. Does this align with the way you view God?

LEARN

Watch the short video.

APPLY

After giving your group members an opportunity to share what stood out from the video, discuss the following questions as a group:

1. If God does not view you through the filter of your performance, that means you didn't earn your way into God's good graces and you don't have to perform to stay there. What's your reaction to this? Does it change how you think God views you?
2. How is obeying to get God's approval different from obeying out of gratitude for what God has done?
3. How would your relationship with God change if you believed his love for you was truly unconditional, meaning there is nothing you could do to make him love you more or less?



starting[®] point

BEFORE NEXT TIME

The good news is that we don't have to bargain with God. Christians believe God made the first move. He loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son. When you receive that gift by faith, the bargaining ends and the relationship begins. Obedience to God is a voluntary response of gratitude for what he's freely given you.

Be sure to listen to the "Faith" episode of *The Starting Point Podcast*.

PRAY

Take some time to pray as a group, thanking God that there's nothing you have done that could make him love you less and there's nothing you could do that could make him love you more. Ask him to help you live with a greater awareness of his unconditional acceptance and love this week.

