

Created for Connection



"Return to Eden" by Sandra Bierman

A Grace Group exploring how the Biblical narrative invites us into a restored experience of the love we were designed to know.



Brave Space

Micky ScottBey Jones

Together we will create brave space
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space”
We exist in the real world
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to more truth and love
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be,
But
It will be our brave space together,
And
We will work on it side by side.

Group Goals

- To better understand the sacred longings, the responsive moves to protect those longings, and pivotal moments that define our relationships (Week 1)
- To be able to recognize, understand, and interrupt negative cycles that we get stuck in and that create pain and distance in our relationships (Week 2)
- To better understand our own, and our partner's, emotional responses and relational needs (Week 3)
- To be able to shape the positive moments of reaching and responding that create the secure bond we all long for (Week 4)

Created in the Image of God

Created in the Image of God, meaning at our core we are:

- Created in the image of God; inherent dignity, value, sacredness embossed upon every human heart
- Created in the image of Triune God; we were designed at our most primal level to function in relationship
- Created for Shalom; for wholeness and flourishing, the provision and safety and intimacy of the garden

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

A.R.E. you there for me?

Accessible, Responsive, Engaged

From your partner's viewpoint, are you **accessible** to him/her?

- He/she can get your attention easily.
- You are easy to connect with emotionally
- You show your partner that he/she is important.
- He/she is not feeling lonely or shut out in this relationship.
- He/she can share their deepest feelings with you. You will listen.

From your partner's viewpoint, are you **responsive** to him/her?

- If he/she needs connection and comfort, you will be there for them.
- You respond to signals that he/she needs you to come close.
- He/she can lean on you when feeling anxious or unsure.
- Even when we fight or disagree, my partner knows that they are important to me and we will find a way to come together.
- If my partner needs reassurance about how important he/she is to me, he/she can get it.

Are you positively emotionally **engaged** with each other?

- My partner feels very comfortable being close to, trusting me.
- My partner can confide in me about almost anything.
- My partner feels confident, even when we are apart, that we are connected to each other.
- My partner knows that I care about his/her joys, hurts and fears.
- My partner feels safe enough to take emotional risks with me.

Exercise: Love for a Lifetime

Remembering God's Faithfulness

Summary

To get a sense of God's faithfulness to you as a couple, create a timeline together, looking at the high points and the low points of your life together.

Instructions

Using 8.5 x 11 sheets of paper (one page for every 5 yrs of your relationship), create a timeline from the beginning of your life together to now.

Individually, write down the memories that stick out to you of high and low points in your lives together—one on each sticky note, high points in one color and low points in another.

Keep writing memories/events until you have gone through about 20 highs and 20 lows (each partner contributing about 10 highs and 10 lows). You may remember things your partner doesn't. You may consider something a high point that your partner remembers as a low point. That's totally normal and will be interesting to explore together.

Together, take turns putting the sticky notes on the timeline. Talk about the events as you stick them on the timeline. Talk about them honestly—if there's still hurt/anger/disappointment, then name it. Listen attentively...allow the time to be shaped by curiosity of one another, not the need to be correct.

Name and notice the good times and talk about the joys.

Talk about the people in your lives who have helped you and been "with you," especially through some of the more difficult times.

Talk about how you've experienced God's faithfulness through the years and where you need God's help.

Notice the places where there still may be a need for healing (with the hope of moving towards these conversations in the coming weeks).

Share with your partner about what comes up for you as you look over this timeline. What are you hopeful for as you imagine the timeline extending into the next 5 years?

If you're comfortable, end your date with a prayer together.



We appreciate your participation in this Grace Group.

Grace Groups: Living by God's grace is a paradigm shift for all of us and as a big shift, it involves study, practice, community, and the work of the Holy Spirit within each of us. All Grace Groups will this common thread: learning to live by grace in a wide variety of life. You can find this and more resources on our website: allsoulsseattle.org/resources

All Souls

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It is the smallest of all seeds,
but when it has *grown* it is
larger than all the other garden
plants and becomes a tree, so
that birds of the air come and
make nests in its branches.

Matthew 13:32