

DANCE

THE GOD-INSPIRED MOVES

STAND

OF A WOMAN ON

RUN

HOLY GROUND

STUDY GUIDE

SIX SESSIONS

Jess Connolly

 ZONDERVAN®



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CONTENTS

<i>How to Use This Guide</i>	7
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PART 1: Dance in Grace

Session 1 Let's Go Back	11
Session 2 We've Been Found Out	35

PART 2: Stand Your Holy Ground

Session 3 Why and Really?	55
Session 4 The Privilege Is Ours	73

PART 3: Run on Mission

Session 5 The Struggle Is Real	95
Session 6 In the Light, We Can Run	113

Part One

DANCE IN GRACE

Session One

LET'S GO BACK

It's okay if we've had some misconceptions about grace, holiness, and mission. But it's time for us to go back to the beginning of our faith and sort them out.

Suggested Reading in *Dance, Stand, Run*:

INTRO, CHAPTER 1

INTRO

(To be read by facilitator)

Ladies, friends, sisters: are you ready? This week, we're not going to ease in gently but jump in with both feet and get started. We believe that Jesus went all the way to the cross for us, so let's follow His lead and go all the way to an honest place with ourselves and one another.

This first session is called "Let's Go Back," and it's going to be a gospel-filled refresher about who God is, who we are, and how we're meant to relate to Him. While we'll be covering some basic tenets of our faith, you might find you don't have such basic and straightforward feelings toward these principles. Thank goodness that this group is a safe place where you can process, repent, shift, and go forward in grace. Let's go.

PRAYER PAUSE

Take a minute now before you begin the video and ask God for the boldness to go confidently into the throne room of grace (Hebrews 4:16), and thank Him that He gives wisdom generously without finding fault in us for needing it (James 1:5).

WATCH VIDEO TEACHING, SESSION 1 (17 minutes)

Use the space on the following pages to respond to some of these questions and statements as you hear them in the video. Don't worry about the right answers; go for the honest ones.

Video Notes

Who is God, and what are we here for?

Have you ever tried to hide your holiness?

2 Timothy 1:7 says we've been given a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline.
Which, if any, of those are difficult for you to believe you've been given?

What is holiness, anyway?

What is God's stance toward us?

What are we here for?

GROUP TIME

Divide into small groups if you have not done so already. It's your turn to answer some questions and let the Lord start to change the world via your vulnerability and community with one another.

Open Up

Take 10–12 minutes to share your answers to the questions Jess asked her friends in the video.

What do **you** picture when you worship? Where is your mind? What do you see or what are you thinking about? Literally, no answer is a wrong answer!

Grace. Holiness. Mission. Which feels the most familiar and easy to understand? Which, if any, of those topics feels tender or a little murky to you?

Video Quote

Select one participant to read aloud the following quote from the video.

What I've found is that we can all be the experts on grace and holiness if we're believers in Jesus. We're all covered in the same grace and given the same image-bearing identity. Who would you count as the expert on going to the moon—the guy who has read the most books about it or the guy who has actually gone there?

Read God's Word Aloud Together

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

ROMANS 5:1–11

Group Discussion

(Discussion to be led by facilitator; cover as many questions as time permits.)

1. Using the Romans 5 passage, take some time as a group to list 4–6 observations of what is true about us and what is true about God.

2. Compare the observations you made about God's truth to your own personal perceptions of how you relate to God and how He relates to you. What is different? What is the same? (If you can, use the answer you gave earlier about how you picture worship.)

3. This week's video teaching took us back to some basic tenets of our faith that are easy to minimize as elementary or inessential since they are so countercultural to our current world. Let's just start with these three:
 - ♦ God is continually leaning in with His grace because we are continually needing it.
 - ♦ God has made us holy because we're made in His image.
 - ♦ God has given us one clear mission on earth: to make other disciples of Jesus.

Discuss these truths with one another, identifying what the Romans 5 passage says about our relationship with God and what that means for each of us personally. (If you'd like to consider a few other passages, use these: Matthew 28:19; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 2:9.)

4. On a scale of 1–10 (10 being easiest), rate how easy it is to believe the following statement: *I am already holy because of who God says I am, and I belong exactly where I am because I belong to the kingdom of God.*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Share your ranking and why with the group.

Take a minute and share how you think your life would look differently if you believed that declaration with your whole heart, your whole mind, and your whole life.

Let's Move

(To be read by facilitator)

We are not a people called only to pondering. We are women who've been set free and have been given a commissioning to *run* on mission. Each session we are going to encourage one another in a little project—some sort of action step we can take to live out what we're learning. It's incredibly important that we remember these God-inspired moves are our privilege and our get-to, not something we have to do. Report back to one another about how your project goes the next time you meet. Check in with each other while you're apart (by text, email, or drop by your friend's house to encourage her). This session's project is on the next page.

Session 1 Let's Move Project

Take some time and go back to the beginning with God. Remember the story of when you met Him, what drew you to Him, what it felt like, and how He changed you. Whether it was thirty years ago or three months ago, describe what it was like when you first experienced His grace.

You could chart it out on a timeline or write a little story. You could make a video sharing your testimony or make a piece of art that reflects how you felt. Whatever it looks like for you to take time to remember and recount that season, do it—even if it just entails laying on the ground and thinking for a few moments.

A bit of space has been provided here, but definitely feel free to use separate space that allows for more room or creativity.

The Anthem

So much of what we're covering in this study has the potential to feel basic or elementary, but we know better, don't we, friends? We know that going back to the simple gospel frees us up to experience the extravagant grace that gets choked out by our day-to-day lives. We know that reminding one another we stand on holy ground is sacred stuff, and it changes how we live and interact with those around us. We also know that running on mission is the one thing we were put on earth to do and that it's worth taking our time to learn more about that calling, so we can do it in an effective way that changes not just our own world but eternity.

I'm preaching to the choir, but I do that for one reason only: to get us to sing!

End each week of your time together by reading the anthem of *Dance, Stand, Run*. You don't *really* have to sing it—that might be weird—and you don't even have to read it in unison unless you want to. But definitely take turns reading these words over your group each week and send one another out in this truth-filled declaration:

*We are the daughters of God. We delight and dance in God's grace,
and we don't want to take it for granted. We've been found out,
found needing Him, and we won't go back into hiding again.*

*We are the daughters of God, and we stand firm on holy ground.
We didn't get here by merit. We were bought and brought by the blood of
Jesus. Here we stand, and here we'll stay. Our positioning and proximity
to God mean something, and both invite direction over our daily lives
and decisions. We are here on purpose, a part of the world, set apart to
be used by God to bring change. We don't conform to our environment
or seek its approval. We spiritually grow while our bodies groan, and
we live in this now-and-not-yet reality as saints in a fallen world.*

*We are the daughters of God; we are compelled by His grace and held by
His holiness imputed to us through Jesus. We don't soak up the abundance
of intimacy with God mindlessly, but we grab hold of all He has to
offer us so we can give it away to everyone else. We run on mission,
because when you hold the keys to light and life, you don't hide them.*

(cont.)

*We are the daughters of God, and we are ready to dance,
stand, and run in faith for His glory and our good.*

Close

Review the Let's Move Project for this week, pray, and dismiss.

PERSONAL STUDY

Session One

PART 1

Intro

You're going to hear it now too.

You'll hear it in worship songs and prayers. You'll hear it in the voice of your friends, and you'll hear it in sermons. There's an incredibly faint whisper of a work-for-it gospel that has woven its way into our thinking, and once you hear it, you'll begin to perceive it everywhere.

The fact is that if we've accepted the grace of Jesus by having faith in Him, then we're made holy. According to Scripture, it's black and white, as if a switch has been flipped and we've been made saints—called holy—redeemed, rescued, and restored back to who we were made to be. And yet? That idea gets less airtime than the slight whisper of work that has migrated its way into our hearts.

And it's natural! It's not that we want to believe lies, and it's certainly not that we want to speak them to one another, but these little mistruths sneak into our hearts and lives and take root nonetheless. We may even have heard them so often that we mistake them for Scripture; Lord knows I've done that so many times! I'm going to list a few (see next page); circle any that you've heard, believed, or shared yourself.

“Grace has its limits!”

“God helps those who help themselves!”

“She has the purest heart.”

“You’ve got to give yourself grace!”

“I mean, I’m no saint.”

I can’t help it. My ears are ultimately pricked when I hear mistruths spoken about our holy standing with God, and I’m willing to bet you hear them all the time too. When I first started to share with friends that I was writing a study about holiness, the thing that broke my heart the most was when people would respond, “Oh I’m so glad! I really want to become more holy. We all need to become more holy.”

I knew what they meant, and they meant well, but it still made me want to immediately grab their sweet faces and say, “YOU’RE ALREADY HOLY! God said so!” Usually, no matter how awkward it was, I would say it anyhow, just because it’s hard to let that mistruth go uncontested.

Essentially, anything that pits the grace of God against the holiness that He has written over our lives makes me cringe inwardly. But what helps me the most is knowing *why* it doesn’t sit right in my soul. So this week, I’d like to build some truth in our hearts that we can encourage our own selves with as well as the people around us.

Pray

Use the space below to write a prayer to the Lord. Ask Him to make your heart soft and to keep your mind sober. Ask Him to be loud. Ask Him to do the supernatural work of binding anything the enemy would use to keep you from receiving and standing in truth.

And if you're into praying Scripture over your study, here is a verse to use this week:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.

EPHESIANS 1:17-18

Read the Word

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other."

JOHN 15:1-17

Truths

There is no sliding scale determining how much grace you need or how holy you currently are.

Look up Romans 3:23. What does this verse tell us?

There are no verses in Scripture that talk about God's identity, His holiness, or the imputation of His righteousness being *given in varying amounts*.

Look up 1 Peter 4:10. What does this verse tell us about God's grace?

There are not special cases in the kingdom of God of people who need extra help. There is not a host of believers who hold more of God's affection because they sin less. *There are not **less holy** or **more holy** people.* The Bible refers to varying *forms* of grace—not varying *amounts*.

We've **all** sinned. And if by grace, we have faith, we have all been made clean because of His work, not ours.

Write a personal statement of your understanding of holiness as it is right now.

Define areas in your life where you feel less holy or more holy.

- ♦ Where am I hiding my holiness?

- ◆ Where am I pretending I am holier than I feel?

Let these thoughts remain on these pages and see how they might change in the days to come.

PART 2

Word Study and Questions

John 15 is rich, rich, rich with nuggets of truth and declarations of God's love, but I want us to dig deep into three specific verses. We'll then look at the Greek root of a few words as well as other places in the Bible where those same words are used.

“You are already clean because of the word
I have spoken to you.” (John 15:3)

ALREADY: ἤδη (*édé*) – now, already, at length

Look up another verse that uses this word so you can get even more familiar with it; write out the phrase where the word “already” is used:

Luke 11:7

In this verse, you'll see that the evening has *already come*. It's not twilight. It's not dusk. Nighttime is certain.

In Luke 11, the door is *shut*. Already shut, in fact. Not in the process of being closed, not slightly ajar; the door is closed.

“Already,” *édé*, is not an in-process word. It’s a completed word. Look up and record one more use of it:

Luke 12:49

This one is impactful because it’s Jesus telling us something He wishes were already happening. So, we know for sure that Jesus is not scared of making a black-and-white distinction between things that are going to happen and things that will eventually happen.

What He’s telling us is that the words that follow “already” in John 15 are already *real*. They’re already *truth*. So let’s look at what He says is real and true:

CLEAN: καθαρός (*katharos*) – **pure, clean, unstained**

Let’s see where else in the New Testament these words are used. Write these verses:

Matthew 5:8

1 Timothy 1:5

In both of these verses the Greek word for “clean” is translated as “pure,” but it’s the same word. Did anyone do a “Thank You, Jesus” praise dance after reading Matthew 5:8 in light of John 15:3?

I’ve always read that verse of the Beatitudes and thought, *I’m disqualified; I’m not pure of heart!* But when paired with Jesus’s word about our hearts *already* being made clean, I awaken to the *truth* and *reality* that I am *included!* You are too!

What changes as you realize that you are capable of the commissioning command of this passage, all because Jesus says your heart is pure?

Describe what this realization relieves in your heart.

Can I send you to one more incredibly interesting usage of this particular word, “clean,” in the New Testament?

Read Matthew 27:57–60 and summarize it below.

This Greek word “clean,” *katharos*, is used often in the New Testament to describe our hearts, but it’s rarely used to describe objects. This passage is one of those exceptions, and it’s one of those connections that reminds us God does not do coincidence.

The cloth that was used to ceremonially wrap our sinless Savior was *clean*, just as His Word spoken over our lives has made our hearts. This is the picture of imputation—His righteousness, His holiness, His cleanliness has been made *ours*.

WORD: λόγος (*logos*) – word, Word, speech, divine utterance

This phrase, certainly as used in John 15:3, is more than just your average statement. It preeminently describes the words of Jesus, expressing the thoughts of the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Summarize the following verses that also include context about Jesus's divine utterances:

Matthew 8:8

Matthew 19:11

Having a little more context for just these three words, now rewrite the statement Jesus made in John 15:3 with a little more detail.

By the power of His death and resurrection, purity has been written over your life with authority. How does knowing that Jesus has spoken the divine word that declares you are already clean change the way you live? If this is new insight for you, how do you think the way you live will change now?

Keep studying.

“Remain in my love.” (John 15:9, 10)

REMAIN: μένω (*menó*) – to stay or wait, to abide, remain

Although “remain” denotes some patience and stillness, it is a verb—this is *active staying*.
Let’s get some context for this word. Look up and summarize how this word is used in:

John 1:32

2 Timothy 2:13

What do you notice in common or underlying in Scripture where “remain”/**menó** is used?

What would it look like for you to **remain** in His love?

Sometimes it helps me to consider the opposite of what God is offering me, because I know that answer so much clearer. What would it look like for you to *not* remain in His love?

Let's break down another word here:

LOVE: ἀγάπη (*agapé*) – preference for; benevolence, esteem, good will

Agapé love speaks to one's *esteem* for another as well one's *preference* for another.

Mark where you'd rate God's affections or feelings toward you on the scale below, based on how you feel.



Isn't it good that we get to stand and remain on what we *know* to be true, not just what we feel?

How does it change your life and your day today knowing that the God of the universe doesn't just cover your sin, He doesn't just entertain you, and He hasn't just let you into the back door of the kingdom of God because He feels sorry for you, but that He loves you, He prefers you? Think here. Be specific. What changes knowing God **prefers** you?

One more verse to break down.

“I have called you friends.” (John 15:15b)

CALLED: λέγω (*legó*) – to call or speak of; to say, report

This word denotes a speech that is in progress, or the naming of something. It also refers to something Jesus says or speaks.

You know the drill by now; let's look at other Scriptures to help us better understand the meaning:

2 Corinthians 12:9

Hebrews 13:5

And let's skip right to the next incredibly pertinent word in this verse. For this Greek word, I want to give you the actual letter-by-letter definition, taking a quick pause to soak in what Jesus is calling us here.

FRIEND: φίλος (*philos*) – a friend; someone dearly loved (prized) in a personal, intimate way; a trusted confidant, held dear in a close bond of personal affection

I realize that this particular passage of Scripture doesn't speak specifically to grace or holiness, but it is our friend, Jesus, giving us some very intentional and direct statements regarding how He feels about us and what He has called us.

The grace here is implied because Jesus knows *you*. He knows that you reside in a fallen world where you feel the effects of sin every single day. He knows that you're going to miss the mark, and He is not surprised. We are reminded that He has called us *clean* based on *His* righteousness. He is only expecting us to stand still and *remain in His love*. Then, He hits us with that final whammy: *you're my friends*. You're the prize. You're the ones I dearly love.

To understand grace, holiness, and mission, we have to build on this foundation: His love. His affection. His grace making a way for us to be called His friends.

Define what, if anything, is keeping you from dancing in this truth.

PART 3

Give, Worship, and Read

Each week we will spend the final day(s) of personal study less academically and more actively. So often we forget how to live out what we are learning; it is never intentional, it just happens that way. It's so much easier to sit around and talk about or think about how we want to change, and less easy to be changed.

So, before you meet again with your group, carve out intentional time to give, worship, and read.

The transliteration of Ephesians 4:23 "be made new" is an active and ongoing process; it means to "be being" made new. It never ends.

Let yourself be becoming something new . . . the redeemed and restored version of who God created you to be.

Give It Away

I've found that one of the easiest ways to receive a truth for myself is to give it away to someone else.

This week, I want you to: *Partner with the Lord to creatively and passionately give away the truths you've received this week to someone else.*

Act. Engage. Express.

Live Out of the Truth That You Are Already
Clean and Called Friend by His Word!

Here are some examples, but don't be scared to reach out to the women with whom you are in community to brainstorm other ideas.

- ◆ Tell your kids about Jesus's love and friendship.
- ◆ Use social media to share what you're learning.
- ◆ Write a letter or an email to a friend you know is struggling.
- ◆ Think of someone who seems lonely and could use the good news that Jesus has extended friendship to them.

Worship with Me

Each session I'll offer suggestions of some of my favorite worship songs that are applicable to what we've studied. Let yourself dance (either figuratively or physically) to these songs, however you listen to music!

- ◆ "Simple Gospel" by United Pursuit
- ◆ "No Longer Slaves" by Bethel Music
- ◆ "A Little Longer" by Bethel Music
- ◆ "How He Loves" by John Mark McMillan
- ◆ "Good, Good Father" by HouseFires

Read

Find a quiet corner. Grab your favorite blanket. Set out your lawn chair on the deck. Make some tea. Whatever your personal reading ritual looks like, put it into practice today and read chapter 1 of *Dance, Stand, Run*. Give yourself permission to just read.