"To be made in God's image is to be a person who needs rest." How do you engage in rest?

When has a moment of resonance been so rich with meaning that you were drawn in and fully present?

Week Five
The Relief from Productivity,
The Relief from Captivity (and Death) and Conclusion

Tell about something you enjoy that feels like a guilty pleasure because you are not being productive or you are "wasting time."

Grace is "an invitation to creative and joyful risk taking." What would you do if you undertook something for the sheer joy of doing it, rather than any outcome it might produce?

Why might someone go from one captivity to another, like trading substance abuse for another addiction? How have you seen someone break that cycle to be truly free?

Zahl notes the afterlife is, "a subject that by definition is both speculative and otherworldly." But many people have perceived something like a glimpse behind the curtain or of being in a holy or "thin" space. Is there an experience or a moment you can share that expanded your understanding of the world with a sense that there is more to life than what we see?

As a human institution, churches fall short, but when have you seen a congregation be all we hope for as the Body of Christ? When have you seen a church be an agent of sharing God's grace?

Episcopal Diocese of Georgia
1Book1Diocese - Lent 2026



The Big Relief

The urgency of Grace
for a worn out world
by Dave Zahl

Dave Zahl helps readers understand the beauty and depth of grace, outlining how it provides relief from the guilt, status anxiety, and accelerating demand that characterize so much of modern life. He helpfully invites us to embrace Christianity as a refuge rather than as a project, a beacon of hope instead of a vehicle of shame, and a harbor of refreshment in a worn-out world.

While your schedule may vary, this study is designed with weekly meetings in mind, starting the week after Ash Wednesday through the week before Holy Week.

Questions for each week
A discussion group may use the following prompts as an icebreaker: Where have you experienced grace in your life this week? *or* What was your moment closest to Christ? As time permits, close in discussing: What else stood out in this week's reading?

Week One
Introduction and The Relief from Deserving

What is a go-to way for you to wind down, carve out space, blow off steam, or refuel after a long day or difficult week?

Share when you have seen faith in Jesus be a burden for

someone or when you have seen the opposite and someone finds their faith is life-giving for them?

Tell about a time when you received a gift, of any kind, that you felt was more than the occasion called for or much more than you expected.

How does the idea of "deserving" impact how people relate to someone going through cancer treatment versus struggling with a mental health issue? In what ways is this different from how deserving plays into sharing news of a promotion or a job loss?

Do you know of someone who experienced a second chance and fully lived into that new opportunity or do you have a story of when you gave someone a second chance?

Week Two

The Relief from Regret and The Relief from Rejection

The widow whose husband and most of her children were killed by a neighbor, reconciled with him. Do you know of other times someone has forgiven the seemingly unforgivable? How did others react to that forgiveness and reconciliation?

Clinging to past hurts can end any loving relationships, while letting go can bring healing. How can one discern when to forgive but move on and when to stay in relationship without holding on to the grudge?

Loneliness is at epidemic levels for people of every age. What fuels this greater loss of connection? How might one counteract that?

When have you seen belonging to a group change someone's actions? How does the sense of belonging assist in that shift?

How does a restaurant favoring difficult diners speak to God's grace as you have experienced it? Tell about other examples of "unreasonable hospitality" you have experienced or heard about.

Week Three

The Relief from Control and The Relief from Guilt

What is a life hack—a trick, shortcut, skill, or novel method for doing some essential task in your everyday life—you wish you knew earlier?

Scripture describes the paradoxical power that comes in seeing that we are powerless. Tell about a time when you observed someone experience "the hope of surrender" in the face of a difficult time, rather than seeking to control the uncontrollable.

Why might a decline in religious practice fail to create a corresponding drop in the "strange persistence" of guilt?

"Atonemement" has its non-religious forms. Have you known someone who did wrong and then found a way to make it right? Why did their actions work in making amends?

Zahl says the doctrine of the Holy Trinity reveals Jesus' death as a self-sacrificial act of love rather than "divine child-abuse." Does this change how you see the cross or does it confirm the understanding you already had?

Week Four

The Relief from Status Anxiety and Relief from Keeping Up

When you were a teen, what were the markers that showed who the "cool kids" were? What status symbol(s) did you want?

Why is it so difficult to avoid the "insanity of achievement culture?"

A desire for fame, success, or approval of some person has us outsourcing our self-esteem to others. Why does the knowledge that God loves you as you are fail to bring relief from this treadmill of concern for how others see us?

In what way have you experienced the acceleration described in the book whether in media or technology or the pace of life? In what area of life have you ever felt left behind?