



# THE MEANEST MAN IN THE WORLD

Disciples & Early Church • U2#3 1st-3rd Gr. • July 28, 2024

## Concept

The grace of God changes lives. Ask God for His grace and He will bless you with His amazing gift.

## Goal

Students will learn that Christians continue to sin but God's grace works in their lives to change them.

## Passage

Acts 9:1-15; 1 Corinthians 15:9,10

Key Verse: "But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me – and not without results..." 1 Corinthians 15:10 (NLT)

## Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p><b>Learning Activity #1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Small bottle with an eye dropper lid of Providone-Iodine 10%</i></li><li>• <i>Clear plastic cup (16 oz), 1/room</i></li><li>• <i>Denture cleaner tablets, 2/class</i></li></ul>	<p><b>Activity Station:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Laminated Optical Illusions sheet</i></li><li>• Face parts printed on full sheet label, ½ page/student</li><li>• Skin-tone paper printed w/face shape and NLT key verse, 1 face/student</li><li>• Crayons</li><li>• Scissors</li></ul>

### \*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

# Background Information (for the teacher)

Disciples & Early Church • U2#3 1st-3rd Grade • July 28, 2024

Of all the amazing things in this world, perhaps God's grace is the most amazing of all. Christ suffered what He didn't deserve to give us what we don't deserve: complete forgiveness and a new changed life. It is God's grace that saves us, and it is also His grace that gives us exciting and meaningful lives serving Him.

The story of Paul's conversion is a dramatic illustration of God's grace and the intention of God, not only to grant us justification, but also to grant each of us a significant role in the shaping of eternity. God took a man in bitter opposition to Himself, confronted him with his wrong thinking, and immediately put him to work for the Gospel! There was no probationary period given to Paul before God would use him. God brought Paul through a great deal of suffering to teach him to do all things in dependence upon God. And yet God had a gracious plan and a purpose for each stage of Paul's life.

The same is true for each believer in Christ. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..." (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

It is a deeply exciting truth that we have a new life freely given to us by God. And yet, as believers we are often sidetracked, forgetting that grace is the basis for our new life. We look instead at our own performance and become defeated. "Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" was the rebuke that Paul directed to certain such performance-oriented believers (Gal. 3:3). Some kids, like some adults, are more prone to a guilt and failure focus than others, but we all need to be continuously reminded of the dynamic power of God's grace.

Hebrews 13:9 says: "It is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace." Before teaching this lesson, take a few minutes with God meditating on what He has saved you from and how His grace has changed your life.

Additional reading: 1 Corinthians 15:10-11; Galatians 2:19-21; 2 Corinthians 5:15-21

## Set Up

For the Object Lesson, fill the clear cup  $\frac{1}{2}$  full of water before class begins.

## Incorporation Lg. Group

### Activity Stations:

- **Craft – “Changing Faces”**
  - **Instructions:** Give each student a half-sheet of skin-tone paper and of sticker-backed face parts. Cut out the face parts and make changing faces with the face parts.
  - As the students work, tell them that you will be learning about a man named Paul who changed from the inside out. Like these faces, we can change the expression on our faces, but only God can change us from the inside out.
- **Optical Illusions**
  - **Instructions:** Have students look at the laminated Optical Illusion handouts and follow the instructions for each illusion. Discuss that people often see things differently. While many things can and should be seen from various viewpoints, the truths about Jesus remain the same. Paul saw Jesus from a false perspective and when Jesus made it clear that he was thinking wrong, his heart was changed completely.

## Introduction Lg. Group

Today we're going to learn what happened to a guy named Saul who was committed to stamping out the Christian movement. Acts 8:1-3 tells us that Saul was involved in the stoning of a Christian named Stephen. Then Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Saul was on a mission to Damascus to find some more Christians to arrest when he met Jesus in a huge blaze of light. What do you think a man like that deserves? Could God ever forgive him for his evil acts? Let's open our Bibles to Acts 9 and find out.

## Lesson Lg. Group

### Listen as I read Acts 9:1-22.

What happened to Saul on the road? Did he get what he deserved? What do you suppose Saul thought when Jesus asked him why he was persecuting Him? What a shock! Perhaps he realized he had been wrong. But whatever he thought, Jesus had confronted him with his sin. Then God forgave him, sent Ananias to restore his sight and to tell Saul, now Paul, that he was God's chosen instrument. And from that day on, Paul went everywhere preaching that Jesus is the Son of God.

Have you ever felt really guilty about some bad thing that you have done? The Bible teaches that we are ALL sinners and deserve God's anger. But Jesus has paid for our sin on the cross so we can be forgiven. If you admit that you sin and ask for His forgiveness, Jesus will give you His love and grace instead of the punishment and death you deserve.

## Lesson Continued

And in addition, He will give you a new life, too. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that when someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand-new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun! If you ask Jesus to come into your life you will be forgiven for all your sin and God will change you from the inside out.

Before he met Jesus, Paul killed Christians. After he met Jesus he became a Christian and spent the rest of his life traveling all over the world telling people about Jesus. God used him to write most of the New Testament. He became one of the greatest men of God who ever lived.

Do you know what is it called when God gives us something really great that we don't deserve? (It is called grace.) Listen while I read 1 Corinthians 15:9, 10. Our key verse today is, "But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me – and not without results..." (1 Corinthians 15:10). Paul admitted that he was a sinner. As a matter of fact, in 1 Timothy 1:15, he called himself the worst of sinners. But by God's grace he was forgiven, made acceptable to God, changed into a new man and given an amazing new life of purpose and significance.

## Transition

We've learned about how God changed Saul's mind and heart. Now we're going to do an experiment to give us an idea of what that change looks like.

## Learning Activity #1 Lg. Group

### Object Lesson—

**Instructions:** Make sure the clear cup with water is visible to all the students. Put one drop of iodine in the water to begin. Have the iodine and denture cleaner tablets readily accessible. Follow the additional instructions in GOOD NEWS to add more iodine and the tablets as you teach.

Some of you looked at optical illusions and made face pictures when you first came in to class. When you looked at the pictures a different way, the pictures completely changed. When you changed the face parts, the faces were completely changed, weren't they? Before Paul became a Christian he killed Christians. When he met and believed Jesus he was a changed man. I am going to do an experiment that will give you a picture of how God changed Paul and continued to change him as Paul chose to depend on God.

### Good News

Like Paul, everyone is born sinful. This jar of colored water represents our sinful hearts. Each sin we commit darkens our hearts. Sins include lying, being mean to our brothers, sisters and friends, disobeying parents, teachers, etc. (With each sin named, add a drop of iodine until the water is discolored.)

## Learning Activity#1 Continued

But just like Jesus saw Paul's sin, He also sees our sin and wants to forgive us. When He shows us our sin and we ask Jesus into our lives, He forgives us and begins to change us from the inside. (Drop the tablets in the water.) The tablets I dropped into the jar are like Jesus coming into our lives. When He comes into our life we begin a friendship with Him that will last forever. From God's point of view we are completely forgiven and are promised that we will go to heaven to live with Him after we die. Nothing will ever change that. But even though Jesus is in our life, does that mean we will never sin again? No, it doesn't. We still have a sin nature and will continue to sin every day. We won't completely stop sinning until we are in heaven with Him. But God gives us the ability to choose not to sin and continues the process of changing us so that we desire to follow Him. As we cooperate, He changes us so that we become less selfish and sinful and more loving like He is. The water in the jar is starting to get lighter. This is a picture of the gradual process of God changing us from the inside.

## Transition

Let's get into small groups to talk about the process of God's grace and how it changes us.

## Learning Activity#2 Sm. Groups

Our key verse is, "But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me – and not without results..." (1 Corinthians 15:10). Paul killed Christians and then he met Jesus. He received God's love and forgiveness even though he didn't deserve it. It was by God's grace that Paul became a great man of God. It was not because of who he was, but because of who God is and the changes He made in Paul. Like Paul we all do things that we know are wrong or sinful.

- Do you admit it when you are wrong or do you blame other people?
- Do you know that when you ask Jesus to forgive your sin, you are forgiven forever and nothing will ever change that? That means you can admit when you are wrong because there is nothing you can do that will change God's love and forgiveness.
- What happens when you admit you are wrong? (Have to take the consequences, but free of guilt.) It sure makes me thankful for His love and grace and makes me want to let Him change me to be more like Him. It makes me want to tell others that He is a very good God.

**Missions Prayer:** Talk about and pray for the Oasis Giving Campaign.

Let's talk to God now in prayer. Let's ask God to show us where He wants to change us. Let's ask Him to help us understand His grace so we will really want Him to change us.

## Transition

Let's play a game to see if you can figure out what changes have occurred.

**Learning  
Activity #3  
Lg. Group**

**Game—Quick-Change Artist [1]**

**Instructions:** Pair off the students. After the partners have had a chance to observe each other, each person turns his back to his partner and makes one or two changes in his appearance, e.g., untying a shoe, removing a barrette, etc. The partners then turn around and try to detect the changes in each other. The game can be repeated a few times before trying it with a new partner.

[1] Adapted from *Non-Competitive Games For People of All Ages*, Susan Butler, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1986, p. 82.