



GRACE - GOD'S GIFT

Disciples & Early Church • U3#3 1st-3rd Gr. • Sept.1, 2024

Concept

Grace is God's free gift of forgiveness and acceptance paid for by Christ's death on the cross and available to everyone who accepts it.

Goal

Students will learn that because of God's grace we can come to Him without fear because we have been forgiven for all our sins, past, present and future.

Passage

Galatians 2:20-21; John 3:16; John 5:24; Romans 3:23, 6:23; Hebrews 4:16
Key Verse: "I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die."
Galatians 2:21 (NIV)

Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p>Learning Activity #1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>4' Butcher paper</i> • <i>Kid Washer sign</i> • <i>"GRACE" detergent box</i> • <i>"Plain" detergent box</i> <p>Lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencil tops, in white tissue paper w/curling ribbon, 1/student • <i>Basket for tissue-wrapped gifts</i> <p>Learning Activity #2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>One quart glass jar with lid</i> • <i>Two 1-liter bottles *</i> • <i>Red food coloring</i> • <i>Vegetable oil, 1 cup/CT class</i> 	<p>Activity Stations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Various colors of construction paper, 2 sheets of each color/class</i> • <i>Shape punches</i> • <i>Decorative-edge scissors</i> • <i>Various colored cardstock paper "stains," 2-3/student</i> • <i>White lunch bags, 1/student</i> • <i>Glue sticks</i> • <i>Markers</i> • <i>Yarn for handle, 15"/student</i> • <i>Hole punch</i>

*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 • U3#3 1st-3rd Grade • Sept.1, 2024

“I am not saved by believing—I simply realize I am saved by believing. And it is not repentance that saves me—repentance is only the sign that I realize what God has done through Christ Jesus. The danger here is putting the emphasis on the effect, instead of on the cause. Is it my obedience, consecration, and dedication that make me right with God? It is never that! I am made right with God because, prior to all of that, Christ died. When I turn to God and by belief accept what God reveals, the miraculous atonement by the Cross of Christ instantly places me into a right relationship with God. And as a result of the supernatural miracle of God’s grace I stand justified, not because I am sorry for my sin, or because I have repented, but because of what Jesus has done. The Spirit of God brings justification with a shattering, radiant light, and I know that I am saved, even though I don’t know how it was accomplished.”[1]

We live in a very performance-based world. Good grades, job promotions and raises, even relationships, can all hinge on fulfilling the expectations of others. It can be as blatant as kissing up to the boss or as subtle as the expectation of a reciprocal dinner invitation. Many times this performance standard is transferred to the spiritual realm. Even though the Bible declares salvation a free gift, not a result of works (Ephesians 2:8,9), we feel compelled to jump through hoops to gain and maintain God’s acceptance. God is omniscient, He knows our faults and shortcomings but loves us anyway (Psalm 103:14-17; Psalm 139:1-8). He loves us so much that He has given us the gift of His Son. There is nothing we can or will ever do to earn or keep His forgiveness and love. Therefore, it can only be accepted and retained as a free gift.

The free gift of forgiveness extends to past, present and future sins. Although we know Christ has paid for our sins, we often live as though we have to do good and obey the law to maintain a clean slate. It is only the life at rest in the finished work of Christ that experiences the grace, peace and fulfillment that is ours from the moment of salvation. As we appropriate God’s grace we will extend grace to others. We are called on to be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving each other just as Christ forgave us (Eph. 4:32). This is impossible unless we acknowledge our sin and the depth of our need for forgiveness. For he who has been forgiven much, loves much (Lk. 7:47). Pray that the Spirit will give you deeper insight into grace for your life. Ask Him to show you how to extend it to others.

[1] Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest, Copyright © 1992 by Oswald Chambers Publications Association, Ltd. Original edition copyright © 1935 by Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc. Copyright renewed 1963 by Oswald Chambers Publications Association, Ltd., October 28.

Set Up

Instructions: Stretch the butcher paper between two chairs and tape it to them. Tape the "KID WASHER" sign to it. As students enter the classroom, tape "stains" onto their backs. Don't tell them what they are!

Activity Stations:

- **Craft – Gift Bags**

- **Instructions:** Give each student a white paper lunch bag. Decorate the bag with markers, die-cut and punched shapes, and crayons. Cut the top edge of the bag in a pattern with the decorative-edge scissors and fold over to create a border edge. Punch two holes in each side. String a piece of yarn for a handle through the holes.
- As the students work on this craft, discuss what a gift is. A gift is something that is offered for free with no strings attached. All you have to do is to accept it. They can take this bag home and put a gift in it for someone.

Today we are going to talk about grace. Can anyone tell me what grace is? (It is a free gift given by God.) We can't earn it. It's free to us, but cost Jesus everything. Our key verse today is, "... I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die" (Galatians 2:20b, 21). We are saved from separation from God because Jesus took the punishment we deserve. He took all God's anger when He died on the cross. Jesus didn't have to do that for us, so why did He do it? Because Jesus loves us and knew we couldn't keep the law by living perfectly, He took the punishment we deserve. John 3:16 tells us that God loved the world so much that He sent His only son to die for us. Whoever believes in Him will not be lost but have eternal life. In other words, Jesus died for us because He loves us, not because of anything we have done. The forgiveness we receive is a free gift called grace. Once we ask Jesus to apply to us the punishment He took, we become Christians, all the guilt for our sin is washed away, we are totally forgiven, we are totally accepted by God, we have a new identity, we will live eternally with God, etc.

You've all seen commercials on TV. Let's make up a commercial of our own about GRACE laundry detergent.

Drama-“Commercial” performed by teachers and class

Instructions: Have all the students line up to go through the KID WASHER. A teacher will stand above the KID WASHER and shake the box of "Plain" detergent while the first few go through. The children will come out with "stains" still taped to them. They don't come clean.

Incorporation Lg. Group

Introduction Lg. Group

Transition

Learning Activity#1 Lg. Group

Learning Activity #1 Continued

Teacher will wail and moan. "Oh no, what will we do?! Stop the machine. Nothing is getting clean!" Another teacher will come in with "GRACE" laundry detergent and say, "Here, try something that has been on the market since the beginning of time, GRACE Laundry Detergent. It is guaranteed to wash ALL stains away." First teacher will be skeptical and resist; "Nothing will work on these stains. I have used the best detergent I could find, also guaranteed to wash all stains clean." Second teacher says, "What do you have to lose? This is GRACE Laundry Detergent." First teacher finally relents reluctantly. Now have all the students go through the KID WASHER again. Have second teacher shake GRACE Laundry detergent over the KID WASHER while students go through. She should say, "The greatest thing about this detergent is that it is FREE!" Have another teacher remove the "stains" as the students crawl through. First teacher responds ecstatically as they come out clean! Encourage the students to make up some of their own lines.

Transition

We've talked a little about grace and made a fun commercial. Now let's sit down to learn what the Bible has to say about grace.

Lesson Lg. Group

Instructions: Have the tissue-wrapped gifts available.

In the commercial the GRACE detergent washed away the dirt, the mud, the grime and the filth. Those stains represent our sin. Why do we need grace? Let's read **Romans 3:23 and 6:23**. We are all sinners; we fall short of God's perfect standard. The result of our sin is spiritual death or separation from God.

Therefore, we don't have a relationship with Him and we can't be in heaven with Him when we die. The good news is that Christ paid the penalty for us. He died in our place and extends the free gift of forgiveness to all who will receive it.

Read **John 5:24**. So, what we are "saved" from is punishment from God. This offer of eternal life is available to everyone who believes. Not only don't you have to earn it, you CAN'T. That's why God sent His Son to die for us.

It's like a gift. I have a gift for each of you if you want it. (Offer gifts. Have each student physically take the gift from you. Don't pass them out because the point is that salvation is a free gift, but we must ask for it.)

Did you deserve this gift because you did something really good? Do you think I offered it to you because of something you did? (No.) What did you have to do to get the gift? (Ask for/receive it, take it from your hands.)

What if I was to tell you that in order to keep the gift you now have to promise us that you will save \$5 out of your spending money in the next month to put in the giving globe? What would you think about this gift? (It's not a gift.) God's gift of grace does not work this way.

Lesson Continued

Let's review the key verse, "... I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die" (Galatians 2:20b, 21).

So, in order for God to offer His gift of forgiveness and eternal life what do you have to do? (Nothing; He offers it because He loves us. He offers it because of who He is and what He has done, not because of what we've done.) What do you have to do to get this gift? (Receive it, accept it, believe, trust.) Once you have received the gift, what do you have to do to keep it? (Answers may vary here – many don't understand that grace and forgiveness extend to future sin as well as past and present sin. The correct answer is NOTHING.) A gift is free and unearned. Therefore, God's gift of grace is always available without any strings attached. It is given once for all time.

Listen while I read **Galatians 3:1-3**. We see here that the Galatian church added to the gift of salvation. Some teachers taught that they were saved by grace but then had to follow the Jewish laws in order to continue to be accepted by God. Paul says this is not true. As Christians, after we sin we know we are wrong. But instead of admitting that we're wrong and thanking God that we are forgiven, we try to do things to make up for our sin. What are some things you do? (Promise that you'll never do it again, go to church every week, try to do extra good things, etc.) Is it wrong to do things to please God? (No, we should want to please Him because He loves us.) But rather than do something, He wants us to come to Him and accept His grace for our sin. In Hebrews 4:16 it says, "Let us come boldly to the throne of God's grace." God wants us to come to Him without fear because we have been forgiven for all our sins, past, present and future.

Transition

Last week we talked about the purpose of the law. Today we are talking about grace, a free gift. As we receive forgiveness by grace we also live as Christians by grace. Grace and law don't mix. They are incompatible. Let's do an experiment to illustrate this.

Learning Activity# 2 Lg. Group

Object Lesson

Instructions: Have two 1-liter bottles, one with a cup of oil and one with a cup of water. Pour the water into the large glass jar.

This water represents us as sinners apart from God. When we accept Christ, the blood He shed covers all our sin.

(Add a few drops of red food coloring and stir or shake lightly to mix.)

God now sees Christ's blood rather than our sin. All our sin—past, present, future—is covered. Because of Christ's blood God now forgives us forever. But we often want to try to do things to assure that we are acceptable to God.

Learning Activity# 2 Continued

(Add the oil to the jar.)

This oil represents the rules we make up to try to gain God's favor and approval. For example, I feel guilty because I made fun of a kid on the playground yesterday so I will be extra nice to her during recess this morning. Notice that the oil and water don't mix. They are like law and grace. They don't mix. God forgives me for my sin because of what Christ did on the cross, not because I'm extra nice to her for one recess.

(Shake the jar a little and see how the oil always rises to the top.)

When we choose to accept God's gift of forgiveness through Christ, we will always have that grace. We have to fight against the desire to think we can make ourselves acceptable to God. We have to let Christ's blood make us acceptable. We as Christians may try to mix law and grace again and again, but they are like oil and water, "unmixable." It's crazy to try to work our way back into God's favor when we already have it.

Transition

Let's get into small groups to finish up and pray.

Learning Activity# 3 Sm. Groups

Discussion Questions:

- After we become Christians we still can't live perfect lives. So what happens with our relationship with God when we sin? (Allow students to respond.) Our relationship with God is affected, but He still loves and accepts us because our acceptance is not based on what we do, but on what Christ has done. That is grace.
- Someone read/recite Galatians 2:20b, 21, our key verse for today. "... I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die." What does this verse mean? (God's forgiveness is a free gift.) But often when we sin we act as though we have to regain God's love and acceptance by being good and doing the "right" things. Is that true? (No, our acceptance before God is based on His work not ours.)
- So does grace mean that we just forget about our sin? Is it enough to thank God that you are forgiven? What about the illustration of deciding to be nice to someone that you have made fun of? Is that person supposed to just forget it? What happens to our relationship with God and others when we disobey, are selfish or unkind? (Relationship broken, feel lonely, get angry)
- So when a relationship is broken, how do you restore it? Do you have any responsibility? (Because of grace we have been forgiven and our acceptance is guaranteed forever. We don't have to fear punishment from God. We can freely admit our sin and willingly take responsibility for it. When we have hurt others we do our part to restore the relationship when we admit our sin to them and ask forgiveness and forgive.)

**Learning
Activity#3
Continued**

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

Let's pray now for the people you know who haven't accepted God's free gift.
Let's also pray that as Christians we will remember God's grace and ask Him to help us learn to live by His grace.