



# DISCIPLES & THE EARLY CHURCH

## Unit 6 • The Ephesian Church

### UNIT DESCRIPTION

Paul, the author of the book of Ephesians, wrote this letter while he was in prison in Rome. The great theme of this book is God's eternal purpose to establish and complete His body, the church of Christ.

"J.A. Robinson captured Paul's mood when he explained that his mind was now free "for one supreme exposition, noncontroversial, positive, fundamental of the great doctrine of his life--that doctrine into which he had been advancing year by year under the discipline of his unique circumstances--the doctrine of the unity of mankind in Christ and the purpose of God for the world through the Church". Yet Paul's objective was not purely inspirational. He sought to relate his vision to the practical demands of Christian living in a hostile society."<sup>[1]</sup>

The life of the believer is lived out on earth as a response to all that God has done for us and offers to us through the cross."...the practical daily life of the believer continues to work out the purposes of God...The unity of the church under the headship of Christ foreshadows the uniting of 'all things in heaven and on earth' under Christ (1:10). The new life of purity and mutual deference stands in contrast to the old way of life without Christ (4:17-6:9)."<sup>[2]</sup>

God's grace reconciled individuals to Himself and to each other. "Christ brought Jews and Gentiles together by 'breaking down the wall of hatred' that separated them (2:14) and he united them all as part of that holy temple where God's Spirit lives (2:22)...There is only one Lord, one Spirit of God, and one God, who is the Father of all people (4:4,5). This means that Christians must let the Spirit keep their hearts united, so they can live at peace with each other (4:3). The idea of all Christians being one with Christ is so central to this letter that it occurs twenty times. There is one faith and one baptism by which believers become one body."<sup>[3]</sup> Paul concludes his letter with the admonition to "put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (6:11). "What Paul writes here concerning Christian warfare is the external counterpart of his emphasis on the inward growth and edification of the church (4:12-16). The body of Christ must be united and built up so as to be ready for the inevitable encounter with evil. Each believer needs to be prepared for the fight."<sup>[4]</sup>

[1] The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Ephesians, Zondervan Reference Software.

[2] NIV Study Bible, The Zondervan Corporation, 1985, p. 1790.

[3] The King and the Beast, Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1991, p. 496.

[4] The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Frank E. Gaebelin, The Zondervan Corporation, 1978, Vol. 11, p. 85.



# GOD'S RICHES AT CHRIST'S EXPENSE

Disciples & Early Church • U6#1 1st-3rd Gr. • Dec.1, 2024

## Concept

God's unfathomable grace reconciles individuals to Himself.

## Goal

Students will learn how God's grace continues to apply to their lives.

## Passage

Ephesians 2:1-9

Key Verse: "... by grace you have been saved, through faith... it is the gift of God... so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8, 9 (NIV)

## Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p><b><i>Learning Activity #1:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>4 balls</i></li><li><i>Novelty prizes, 1/student</i></li></ul> <p><b><i>Learning Activity #2:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>"WHAT'S THE COST?!" sign (shared by grades for skit)</i></li></ul> <p><b><i>Lesson:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>"Spread of the Early Church" laminated map</i></li></ul>	<p><b>Activity Stations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>The Awesome Book of Bible Facts, Sandy Silverthorne</i></li><li>Grace box top pattern on cardstock, 1/student</li><li>Grace box bottom pattern on cardstock, 1/student</li><li>Scissors</li><li>Glue sticks</li><li>Markers</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)

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"The Gospel of the grace of God awakens an intense longing in human souls and an equally intense resentment, because the revelation which it brings is not palatable. There is a certain pride in man that will give and give, but to come and accept is another thing. I will give my life to martyrdom, I will give myself in consecration, I will do anything, but do not humiliate me to the level of the most hell-deserving sinner and tell me that all I have to do is to accept the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

"We have to realize that we cannot earn or win anything from God; we must either receive it as a gift or do without it. The greatest blessing spiritually is the knowledge that we are destitute; until we get there Our Lord is powerless. He can do nothing for us if we think we are sufficient of ourselves, we have to enter into His Kingdom through the door of destitution. As long as we are rich, possessed of anything in the way of pride or independence, God cannot do anything for us. It is only when we get hungry spiritually that we receive the Holy Spirit."<sup>[1]</sup>

"Most Christians make the mistake of trying to walk in order to be able to sit, but that is a reversal of the true order. Our natural reason says, If we do not walk, how can we ever reach the goal? What can we attain without effort? How can we ever get anywhere if we do not move? But Christianity is a queer business! If at the outset we try to do anything, we get nothing; if we seek to attain something, we miss everything. For Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE. Thus Ephesians opens with the statement that God has 'blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ' (1:3) and we are invited at the very outset to sit down and enjoy what God has done for us; not to set out to try and attain it for ourselves."

[1] Chambers, Oswald, "The Bounty of the Destitute, November 28th," My Utmost for His Highest, ©1963, Oswald Chambers Publications Association, Ltd.

**Activity Stations:**

• **Ephesians Research**

- **Goal:** Help students learn the history and sequence of Paul's journeys; see how the New Testament fits together.
- **Instructions:** Read with the students about Paul's journeys on pages 90-91 of The Awesome Book of Bible Facts. Discuss Paul and his missionary journeys. Talk about the connection between the book of Acts and all the Epistles; (i.e., Acts tells about Paul's missionary journeys and what happened in each of the cities or regions; the Epistles are letters from Paul to the churches in each of these areas).

• **Craft – GRACE Gift Box**

- **Instructions:** Give each student a gift box bottom and a gift box top. Follow the instructions on the sheets. As they work on their gift boxes, have students tell you about their most favorite gift ever. Ask them if they know the greatest gift God has given us. This box will help them remember God's greatest gift.

**Game – "Through the Tunnel" Relay**

**Goal:** An object lesson to demonstrate grace (since grace is an undeserved gift, it isn't fair any way you look at it).

**Teacher Instructions:** Divide students into 2 - 4 teams. Line them up, front to back, about two feet apart from each other. Each student should stand with his legs shoulder width apart (or spread further apart or closer together). The person at the front of the line has the ball. He bends forward and rolls the ball back between the legs of all the team members. The object is to get the ball all the way to the back of the line without touching anyone's legs. (If the ball touches anyone's legs, if anyone touches the ball as it rolls through their legs, or if the ball doesn't make it to the end of the line the "roller" has to start again.) When the ball makes it all the way through the line the player at the end of the line grabs the ball, runs to the front of the line and proceeds in the same manner. After every team member has had a turn to roll the ball, the team sits down. The first team to sit down wins. Tell them there will be a prize at the end of the game. **FIRST**, award the **LOSING** team the novelty prize. Wait until it is clear that the others believe this is unfair and then offer everyone a prize.

**Debrief:** Those of you who worked hard to win probably think that the others didn't deserve the prize because they didn't do as well as you did. If I gave them out based on how well you did then you would be right, they wouldn't deserve them. But, that is not why I offered prize to everyone. The prize had nothing to do with how you played the game. It was a gift from me to **ALL** of you. You thought you had to do something to get the prize because I said there was a prize at the end of the game. I didn't tell anyone they had to do anything to get the prize.

## Learning Activity#1 Continued

### Transition

You assumed that the prize was for working hard to win the game. None of you did anything to deserve it; it was an UNDESERVED gift. The prize was never offered as a reward to those who did the work. This is a picture of the grace of God.

The drama team has a skit for us about the cost to get to heaven. See if you can figure out what this has to do with an undeserved gift.

## Learning Activity#2 Lg. Group

### Transition

#### DRAMA - "What's the Cost?!" skit performed by Drama Team

Return to the classroom and sit down for our lesson.

## Lesson Lg. Group

Today we're beginning a new unit on the church in Ephesus. The book of Ephesians in the Bible is Paul's letter to the church in the city of Ephesus. Ephesus is here. (Point to Ephesus on the map.) Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison in Rome. (Show Rome on the map.) Unlike in the other books we have studied, there were no particular problems in this church. Paul wrote this letter to assure that the Christians in Ephesus understood how much God had done for them and how to live the Christian life.

Let's read **Ephesians 2:4-10**. Our key verse today is Ephesians 2:8,9, "... by grace you have been saved, through faith..., it is the gift of God..., so that no one can boast." What does it mean to be saved? (Allow students to give their responses.) To be saved means that you are saved from the punishment you deserve for your sin, the punishment of separation from God forever. When you are saved you are forgiven for all your sin- past, present and future- and you have a relationship with God that will last forever. Look at this passage again and tell me what saves us. (Grace.) Who can tell me what grace is? (Allow a few responses.) Grace is an undeserved gift.

A quick way to help you remember the meaning of grace is (write these letters on the white board as you say them) **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. The first letter of each word spells grace. The skit we saw earlier was about the cost to go to heaven. What is the cost to us? (The cost is nothing but to accept the gift of God's grace.) Did it cost anybody anything? (Yes, it cost Jesus EVERYTHING!) What is everything? (Everything includes His home in heaven, separation from the Father, God's wrath and punishment that we deserve, painful death, etc.) The next time you think that life isn't fair, ask God to remind you what an awesome thing Christ did for you on the cross. It certainly wasn't fair for Him! He was punished for sins that He never committed.

## Lesson Continued

What's our key verse? God's grace is His gift of Jesus Christ. He sent Christ down to die on a cross for payment of our sins so we can be saved and have eternal life. There is nothing we can do to earn God's grace. It's God's gift to all of us. It's up to us to decide whether or not we want the gift. To receive it we simply pray to God and tell him we know we need His forgiveness and ask that His death to pay for your sins. You can talk with a teacher if you are not sure about this. If and when you do accept God's gift of eternal life, He says it's yours to keep forever.

Some of you probably still think it was not fair that everyone got a prize after we played the game. Grace is not about being fair. Do you think it was fair that Jesus went to the cross to die for the sins we committed? He never did anything wrong, but He was crucified and God's wrath was poured out on Him. God's Son, Jesus, paid the penalty for our sins so that we can have a relationship with God and eternal life in heaven. That is grace. He gives us forgiveness that we do NOT deserve. "... by grace you have been saved, through faith..., it is the gift of God..., so that no one can boast"(Ephesians 2:8, 9).

If you are a Christian, you have been forgiven even though you don't deserve it. But after we receive God's grace for eternal life we still sin. I am very grateful that grace is for Christians, too! The cool thing is that we will experience God's grace when we:

- **take responsibility** for our sin and admit what we did wrong,
- **thank God** that He has already forgiven us,
- ask **what Jesus would do** in a given situation,
- ask **God to help** us do what He wants us to do and to continue to work in our lives to help us.

## Transition

Now let's get in small groups to practice explaining what the letters of the wristband mean and how they can apply to our lives. Get your beads to use now.

## Learning Activity#3 Sm. Groups

### Role Play

**Instructions:** Using their gift boxes, have students pair up to explain the meaning of grace and how they receive it. Instruct them to emphasize: a) the gift of grace is free to us, but it cost Jesus EVERYTHING; b) to have the gift for your own, you must personally accept it.; c) how to experience His grace as His child. Review the GRACE acronym – God's Riches At Christ's Expense. If there is time, have the students role-play the situations below.

**Situation #1 – Tom and Jim**

Tom is an okay kid. He enjoys his video games and basketball. He's fun to be with and is a good friend. He tries hard and does well in school. He helps his mom with the dishes every night and he mows his elderly neighbor's lawn every week for free. He even goes to church regularly. Therefore, Tom believes in his heart that because he is such a good person he will definitely go to heaven. Tom notices Jim's GRACE wristband and asks what it is. Pair up and take turns being Tom and Jim.

**Teacher Notes:**

**Verses:** Ephesians 2:8,9; Galatians 2:21; Titus 3:5; Romans 11:6; 1 John 5:11-13.

**Goal:** The goal of this situation is to get the kids to verbalize exactly why good works do not get us to heaven. We can only get to heaven by allowing Christ's death on the cross to count for our sins and personally asking Him into our heart. If being good is all that is necessary, Christ died needlessly.

**Situation #2 – Jenny and Sarah**

Jenny and Sarah have gone to the same Christian school together since kindergarten. They're nice girls. They are saved by grace and will go to heaven. However, they have a problem including new people in their group of friends. A new girl, Amy, came to their Oasis class. Jenny and Sarah rudely ignored her. Sarah looks down at her GRACE wristband and is convicted because she knows she has been unkind to Amy. Sarah goes to Jenny to talk about this. Pair up and takes turns being Sarah and Jenny.

**Teacher Notes:**

**Verses:** Matthew 5:46-48; John 13:34; Phil. 2:4,5; Colossians 4:5; James 4:17; I Peter 5:6; Heb. 4:16.

**Goal:** Realization that Christians sin, need to admit their sin and apply God's grace. Believers must learn how to apply grace in their lives.

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

Let's pray now in small groups and ask God to help us to remember His grace. If you have any questions about what grace means, please ask a teacher! Those who have accepted His grace for eternal life can pray that we will learn to apply grace to our lives and other's lives each day.

## Optional Activity

### Game – Hot Potato

**Instructions:** Play this game like hot potato. Use a ball from the "Through the Tunnel" relay game for the hot potato. Have the kids form a circle. Put the laminated memory verse in the center of the circle. As they pass the potato around the circle cover up one word of the verse. (Use items at your disposal, e.g., strips of paper, hat, shoe, to cover up words in the verse.) When the teacher says, "STOP," the teacher will say the verse omitting the covered word. The student with the potato must say the omitted word/s in the correct sequence. If they can't say the word/s, they are out. As the game continues, cover up one word at a time until the verse is entirely covered.

If there is additional time, have a teacher pick up the verse so the students can't see it. The teacher will read the verse omitting the words "grace," "saved," and "faith" and the students will need to fill in those words.