



PARENT GUIDE

LESSON ELEVEN: GRACE

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LESSON ELEVEN: GRACE

OBJECTIVE: To help families understand how to follow Jesus by accepting grace from God and showing grace to others.

FOCUS ON FOLLOWING JESUS

Jesus showed grace to those who believed him – we should show grace to others as Jesus did because we have been shown much grace!

(Ephesians 4:7 “But each one of us has received a gift of grace. These gifts are given to us by Christ.”)

GRIP ON THE GOSPEL

To follow Jesus we must admit we need Jesus and that we cannot earn God’s gift of salvation. God’s grace to us is poured out through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We cannot save ourselves; we need grace.

(Ephesians 2:8 “God’s grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn’t come from anything you do.”)

WHAT DO I DO?

- Read the [For Parents](#) article. Spend a few minutes thinking and praying.
- Read over the [Discipleship Lesson](#) and decide when you will do it with your family.
- Gather your family, a Bible and any supplies listed on the lesson sheet. Use the script provided to teach a [Discipleship Lesson](#) to your family, adapting as needed.
- Use the 5 mini-lessons as [Daily Bible Time](#) prompts through the week.
- Select one or more [Discipleship Activities](#) to incorporate into your week.



FOR PARENTS

Is grace hard for you? It can be difficult for many of us. In some of our homes, growing up we may have come to believe that love is earned rather than given freely, or we may have developed an incorrect idea that God's love for us is only for our 'good days', and our sin or shame makes us undeserving to come before God.

Of course, we know that the Bible tells us differently. While we live in a world where virtually every action belongs to a transactional economy (I must have something to offer in exchange for anything I receive), God works in a relational economy instead (what we give and receive we do so because we are in a specific kind of relationship to one another). The word we translate 'grace' is the Greek word *charis*, which in New Testament times had a very specific, non-religious meaning originally. In those days, unequal business relationships were common, where one person had a great amount of power, wealth and prestige, but those who followed and served them had little. The powerful person was known as a *patron* and all those who benefited from their power were *clients*. What did clients receive? It was different in every situation – but a patron could offer jobs, protection, food and goods, connections to other beneficial relationships, access somewhere, anything the clients needed. The more powerful the patron, the more likely they could meet the needs of their clients. But what did the clients have to offer in return? Since they didn't have money to offer in return, clients would repay the patron socially, with their honour and faithfulness (the word *pistis* – we translate it 'faith' in our Bibles today). The clients would publicly praise the patron for what they had done, and if they had a problem in the future they would go to that patron first.

Why would a *patron* offer anything to someone not equal to them, who could never repay? What could they possibly get out of it? Consider this – when they were able to do something amazing for someone who could never return an equal gift, what happened to their power and honour in the society? They would be seen as a greater patron, and maybe attract even more followers. They would have *honour, influence, and a great name*. Those were things that were of immense value in that society which money alone couldn't provide. In that society, this wasn't just the way the economy worked, but also the moral system. People who had much were obligated ethically to care for those who followed them, who gave them *pistis*, or faithfulness.

Can you see why the biblical writers borrowed those words from their world to describe how God gives gifts to us? This was a relationship between unequals, where one party had nothing to bring to the table except faith. Yet, that system is foreign to many of us in the western world today. We prefer to shop at a store, buy from the salesman and enter into a relationship of equals where we also have power and something to bring to the table. Unfortunately, we sometimes treat our relationship with God this way too. Our faith becomes a transaction. We think, if I pray and give and show up at church, and do all these things, God *has to* give me what I ask for. It's only *fair*. But a great patron isn't fair. That's the point. And that is our only hope.

Grace is something that not only transforms our relationship with our Heavenly Father – but our relationships with our family, and our roles as parents.



Have you ever had a day where your kids are just not behaving the way you want them to and you're almost ashamed to take them to church or the grocery store? Have you felt like people might judge you on your ability to 'control' your little ones? I've been there. We believe the lie that our worth as people is related to how well our kids behave, or how many verses they have memorized for Sunday school or what grade they get on a report card. But in God's economy, that's not where our worth comes from. Our worth comes from the fact that we are HIS. We don't have to 'achieve' honour, we have it ascribed to us by the one to whom we belong. When we understand that, we can give our own children grace even on the days they least 'deserve it'. That is the beginning of parenting with grace.

Parenting with grace also requires us to stop believing the lie that our kids are 'pretty good' or basically perfect. We all come face to face with this at one point – when a child outright lies to us, or steals, or acts like a bully to others, disobeys teachers or even stops wanting to go to church. We must realize that God doesn't need perfection of them any more than he does of you – and we must certainly expect that our children will sin. They need Jesus just like we do. Every failure on their part is an opportunity to point them to the Saviour they need, and for us to display what grace looks like to them.

When we truly have a handle on grace, it frees us up to stop judging others, to stop our frustration and anger at them because maybe they aren't trying as hard as we are, or they have disappointed us one too many times. This can be a breath of fresh air as a parent. God doesn't love you more when your kids are perfect angels. He doesn't love you less on that day when your patience runs out. We don't need to wait for others to be perfect or meet all our expectations in order to love them.

Grace is not given amongst equals; therefore, we do not have to be more than we are to receive it. Grace frees us, but grace is hard. When we create homes that model grace, we show our children that they don't have to hide their failures. They don't have to be afraid one wrong move will separate them from our love or the love of God; it gives us freedom to truly be ourselves – and to share this grace freely with others.

Consider these Questions:

- What is the greatest picture of grace you've seen?
- When has someone done something with grace for you that you did not deserve?
- What opportunity do you have in your family to show grace to your kids?
- Is grace easy or difficult for you to grasp? Why?



DISCIPLESHIP LESSON

Instructions:

- Read or teach the text using your own words
- *Text in italics is a note to the adult leading*
- This icon  indicates a question you should ask
- This icon  tells you there is a Bible verse to read
- **Text inside a grey box is a tip or idea for you!**
- **Text inside this box is a short activity or task**

The lesson should take about **45 minutes** to complete.

Supplies Needed:

- **Bible**
- A sheet of paper for every child and drawing materials
- Three disposable water bottles or drinking glasses. One with lots of dirt in it, one with a little dirt and one with bleach or smelly cleaning product added.

GRACE IS GOOD NEWS!

Gather your family for the family Discipleship Lesson. Remind your family that this is something exciting to do together, to look at the Bible and Jesus and learn what it means to be a disciple!



You could review some 'big' words or some Christian words your kids already know – or some big ordinary words like Hippopotamus! Kids can learn big words at all ages.

There are lots of words that Christians use that have special meanings – short words, long words, some really simple, some complicated! But you're smart kids who can learn what words mean – you learn new words all the time!



Can you think of any special words that Christians use that you have had to learn?

Today we're going to talk about the word "GRACE".



What do you think of when you hear that word?

Many people use the word 'grace' to talk about a short prayer we might say before we eat a meal to thank God for the food we have. Grace can mean a few other things too – like graceful. *(Ask kids to stand up and demonstrate*



how they might move if they were graceful) Having grace can mean you move gracefully – in a special way that is very lovely and more beautiful than the way most people move! A dancer might be graceful.

But Christians use the word ‘grace’ to talk about something that God gives us. It has a LOT to do with following Jesus, so we’re going to explore grace this week!

When I say that God has given me ‘grace’ I don’t mean that he told me what to say before a meal, or that I move like a ballerina. What I mean is the good news that God gives us.

Many of us get our news from the internet or maybe the radio. A long time ago people got news from newspapers that came to their house.



What do you think would be the BEST good news you could wake up to and read in the newspaper or on the internet? It can be silly or fun, but it has to be REALLY, REALLY good news. Ready?

Grace is good news. Now there are two parts to what Grace means. When we talk about grace we mean ‘the good gifts that God gives us’. We all like getting gifts, right? That’s the first part of grace – EVERYTHING good that is from God.



What are some of the things that God gives us?

God gives us so many things! When we become Christians, and part of God’s family and God’s Church, many amazing things happen. All the wrong things we’ve done are forgiven, we get God’s Holy Spirit as our helper, God becomes our Father and we join his forever family, we don’t have to be afraid of death because we are promised life forever with God, we have God’s help following Jesus and living a life of loving others and amazing purpose. We are saved from living a life just for ourselves that ends with being separated from God forever. That’s called salvation.



Why does God do all of that for us? Is it because we have earned it?



Take any honest answers – you’re not looking for spiritual answers here, encourage something fun like an amusement park being built across from your house or you get to eat ice-cream for breakfast.



Take answers from kids, remind them that God doesn’t give us presents to open on our birthday, but we do have our families, the world we live in, love, things that make us laugh, etc.



Some people make the mistake of believing that in order to get all the good things from God, they have to be very, very good. That good people get to go to heaven, and that is a reward for them. **But here's something crazy – that's not what the Bible says at all!**

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

According to that Bible verse, do we get good things from God because WE are good?

No, it's a gift! This is where the second part of the definition of grace is important. Grace isn't just the good gifts that God gives us. It is also "the good gifts that God gives us which we don't deserve."

That's a bit statement, and you might wonder what that means and what it has to do with good news – so I'm going to tell you three reasons why Grace is Good news that might help you understand!

Ask kids to divide a piece of paper in half. On one half, draw a person being very 'good'. On the other half, draw a person being very 'bad' (symbols will work if drawing people is difficult!). What do you look like on a good day? What do you do on a bad day?

If God was going to divide up all the people in the world into good people and bad people, there wouldn't be a single person in the 'good' person group. Because having one good day doesn't make a person good.

You and I might do good things sometimes – we might even want to be good – but even one bad thought or one bad thing puts us in the 'bad' category.

We are like these bottles of water on the table.

The first bottle is like people who know they are sinners (they break God's rules, they do bad things). They like the bad things they do. Or they figure they always end up doing the wrong thing anyway, so they might as well do it on purpose. They might know there is a God but they don't want to follow him.

We wouldn't want to drink from this bottle, would we? God can't even have a little sin in his family, because God is perfect. If we poured this bottle into a bowl of clean water, it would become dirty and spoil ALL the water!

**Object Lessons**

Most of today's lesson is an object lesson. For most children, object lessons make ideas and concepts more memorable. This one is important because it has to do with understanding grace and salvation. Even if you're confident in your child's salvation it helps them to hear the Gospel again or see a new way to explain it to others.

**DIRTY AND CLEAN**

Set up 3 water bottles on the table for your object lesson. The first is very visibly dirty water, the second much less dirty, the third containing water and bleach, and a pitcher of pure clean water- adapt this object lesson as needed for your audience, or just describe it if you can't prepare the materials.

Bottle 1 = "Bad on Purpose" people

Bottle 2 = "I'm not as bad as others" people

Bottle 3 = "I do good things to cover up my bad" people



The second bottle is like people who have decided they don't care if God has rules or standards – they are going to make their own. They have decided what they think is good enough. They aren't as bad as the first group of people, so they feel pretty good about themselves. Sometimes people are like this too! They make up rules for themselves and think as long as they follow those rules they are living a pretty good life, and they don't need to follow God. But they still have yuckiness and sin inside them. Even though this water is a bit cleaner than the first, it's still not good to drink!

These people might even do some good things. But what happens when you add clean water to dirty water? Does it clean up all the water? Nope. There's now just more dirty water.

This third bottle of water looks pretty good... but I'm not sure if it's good. Ask for a volunteer to come up and smell the water to see if it's good. Note that it smells like it has chemicals in it! That wouldn't be safe to drink. It looks clear on the outside, but it would actually make you very sick! It's still dirty, just in invisible ways. The chemicals make it look clear, but it isn't clean. Sometimes people are like this too – they act just like a Christian, they do all the things they are supposed to, but they still have sin inside them. They haven't asked Jesus to take away their sin. They think that acting the right way is enough. That's like adding lots of chemicals to water to make it look clean when it isn't!

All of us have sin inside. None of us are perfectly good and clean. None of us are acceptable to God. So what can we do?

The good news is – God KNOWS we sin. He knows that even if we tried our very hardest we couldn't stop sinning on our own, even if we wanted to! So God did something to solve the problem. He sent Jesus His Son to come to earth, to pay the punishment our sin deserved so that God could make us clean inside. *(Demonstrate pouring out the gross bad water in one of the bottles – that is what happens when we ask for forgiveness, God takes our sin out, and then he fills us with the goodness of Jesus – demonstrate pouring clean clear water into the bottle)* Every time we sin, God will forgive us if we ask. When we become Christians, all the sins we have ever done are poured out – they were washed away when Jesus died. God will fill us again and again.

It's good news that God knows we don't deserve being saved and all the good things He gives us because that means we can't lose them if we do something bad! It's not based on what we do.

**Romans 5:8, John 3:16****Why did God do these verses for us? What does the Bible tell us?**

Now take the pictures everyone drew before. Draw a heart on the picture where you think God loves you more. Ready? Have children hold up their papers. Some children will get it and draw a heart over both, some will not.

It isn't just on our good days when we are doing everything right that God loves us! He loves us on BOTH our good days and our bad days! We can't lose God's love, or our salvation, just by having a bad day or making a mistake. That's grace – something we totally don't deserve!

In our family, you are loved on your good days and bad days, even when you make mistakes, or do bad things on purpose. This week we will learn more about grace in our family, and the grace-gifts of God.

Close by praying together. Thank God for his grace to us which lets us be disciples of Jesus.



DAILY BIBLE TIME

Take a few minutes each day this week to spend some time together reading from God's Word and discussing it together. Questions and verses are provided for you below. Use the Bible version your children are used to. NIV is a good one for very young children. Spend time praying together too!

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| 1 | <p><u>Romans 3:24</u></p> <p><u>Romans 6:23</u></p> | <p>We are going to talk more about how grace is good news this week.</p> <p>What are you looking forward to buying one day once you have enough money? Car? House? Rocketship or Disneyland? You might be able to GO to Disneyland, but you won't have enough money to buy all of Disneyland. It's too much money! Some things in life we have to earn to have them, unless someone gives them as a gift.</p> <p>What have you 'earned' and received? What have mom and dad 'earned' and received?</p> <p>The Bible says that what we 'earn' is separation from God. All the good things we do are still selfish and sinful. So we can't earn a place in God's family. The only way to become part of God's family is to be given it as a gift! It's good news because we don't get what we deserve.</p> <p>Why is grace good news?</p> |
| 2 | <p><u>Psalms 145:9</u></p> <p><u>Matthew 5:45</u></p> <p><u>James 1:17</u></p> | <p>Who gets gifts from God? (Take some answers, older children should support their answers with Bible verses or stories from the Bible.)</p> <p>Some gifts God gives to EVERYONE on earth. Every person, whether they love and follow Jesus or not, gets life from God, gets to enjoy what God has made, and experience joy and love here on earth. Those are good gifts, and gifts we haven't earned.</p> <p>SOME gifts of God (not all) are for everyone. SOME gifts are just for God's family.</p> <p>Can you think of other gifts that all or many people on earth get from God?</p> <p>How can we thank God for his gifts to everyone?</p> <p>How can we help people who don't know God know these gifts came from him?</p> |
| 3 | <p><u>John 1:12-13</u></p> <p><u>Psalms 84:11</u></p> | <p>What are some good things we all get from being a part of this family?</p> <p>What are some good things we get from being part of the family of God?</p> <p>How does a person get to be in the family of God?</p> <p>Is the grace that saves us from sin for everyone, or just for people in God's family?</p> <p>Does God need us to be perfect for him to love us and do kind things for us?</p> <p>What makes you most happy about being a Christian and part of the family of God?</p> <p>What does it mean that we don't have to earn our place in the family of God?</p> |



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| 4 | <p><u>John 14:15</u></p> <p><i>For older kids:</i> <u>Romans 6:1-3,</u> <u>15-18</u></p> | <p>God's gifts to us that we don't deserve are called 'grace'. We don't earn grace, we just get to have it. If we don't <i>earn</i> anything by being good, why should we be good?</p> <p>When we obey God, what good does it do?</p> <p>When the people in the Bible obeyed God, what did they receive? (Think of a Bible story or two together where someone obeyed and received blessings, or was able to help others, etc.)</p> <p>Obeying God is how we show love to God and others, how we demonstrate what we believe and how we help others follow Jesus too. There is joy and goodness in obeying.</p> <p>When is it hardest for you to obey God?</p> <p>How does knowing God loves you and has given you so much help?</p> |
| 5 | <p><u>1 Peter 3:8</u></p> <p><u>Colossians 4:6</u></p> <p><u>2 Corinthians</u> <u>4:15</u></p> | <p>When we follow Jesus, we can have grace for other people too!</p> <p>Do other people do things that don't deserve our forgiveness and grace?</p> <p>If God has been gracious with us, and given us good things we don't deserve, what should be our attitude towards other people?</p> <p>When does our family need to have grace with each other?</p> <p>How can we show grace to one another in our family?</p> <p>Grace looks like treating other people better than they treat us. It looks like not thinking that we are the most important but wanting good things for everyone, it looks like giving people new chances.</p> |



DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Use any of the following activities to extend the learning and disciple your child in everyday life.

- **Pray Together:** Pray that God would help you to be gracious to others, and to receive the grace of God without trying to earn it.
- **Memorize:** [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) together as a family.
- **Missions:** Talk about the prophet Jonah and how he gave grace and mercy to the people of Nineveh, even when they didn't deserve it and he struggled to do so. Talk about how missionaries bring good news to people all over the world – in their own neighbourhoods and in faraway countries.
- **Daily Life:**
 - An excellent family devotional on this topic is “Exploring Grace Together: 40 devotionals for the Family” by Jessica Thompson and Elyse Fitzpatrick. It uses very relatable examples for children to help them understand how God's grace changes their daily lives.
 - Talk through difficult problems your children face with their friends and siblings, and help them to see what grace would choose. Grace doesn't require us to compare ourselves to others, to compete, to earn our place in God's family. It is difficult sometimes to get over the 'us vs. them' mentality of the world. We are not in competition with one another for God's good gifts, he withholds no good thing from us.
 - Extend grace to your children by forgiving quickly and giving gifts even, and especially, when your children are least deserving – even if it is just the gift of your time and attention. Demonstrate the lavish gift of God to us.
 - Regularly practice thanking God for his good gifts, mention evidences of grace that you see all around you in daily life.