

Grace



Romans 3:23–24; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:8–9



In this session the young people will explore the meaning of grace and what it means to be accepted by God. As they explore what the Bible shows us about God's character, they will see that grace is rooted in who he is and demonstrated through Jesus. As they reflect on their own lives, they will be encouraged to consider what it means to live knowing that they are already accepted by God, not because of what they do, but because of his grace.

You will need:

- Paper and pens
- 'Grace' handout



Beat

Leader's notes:

Give each member of the group paper and a pen. Ask them to write down their answers to the following question:

If getting into Heaven worked on a points system, what do you think would score highly?

Give them 1-2 minutes to write the list and then share the responses together.

Ask:

- What kind of things do you think would lose you points?
- Do you think most people see their relationship with God like this? Explain your answer.
- What might be the problem with viewing our relationship with God in this way?

 **Bridge****Ask:**

In what way do you recognise this kind of point-scoring thinking in how people approach God?

 **Amplify****Say:**

Over the last couple of sessions we've been exploring what it means to say, 'Because he lives ...' In our first session we saw that through Jesus' death and resurrection, a way back to God has been opened. In our second session we saw that God doesn't leave us to find that way on our own. He comes to us, and as we trust him he brings us back into relationship with him. Today we're going to take that one step further.

Ask:

If we've been brought back to God, what do you think our acceptance is based on? Is it what we do or something else?

Say:

That's the question we're going to explore today. To help us understand it, we'll start by looking at what the Bible shows us about God's character.

Watch:

God's Consistent Posture Toward All Humanity (stop at 4:10)**
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABPVVw_aw44

Ask:

- In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for grace is khen. In what different ways is this word used?
- What examples of God's grace do we see in the Old Testament?
- In the New Testament, the Greek word kharis is used. What does it mean?
- How is the death and resurrection of Jesus described as a gift in the clip?

Say:

Throughout the Bible we see that God is gracious. He chooses to show favour, not because people have earned it, but because that is who he is.

Ask:

- If God is gracious, what do you think that means for our relationship with him?
- Do we have to earn our place in God's family, or does it happen another way?

Say:

Instead of giving us what our sin deserves, God chooses to forgive us and bring us back to him. He does this through the sacrifice of his only son, Jesus.

Ask:

- What do you think our sin actually deserves?
- Why do you think forgiveness is something that we can't earn for ourselves?

Say:

In Romans 3:23, Paul says, 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.' Fortunately, we are not left in a state of sin and separation. Later in his letter, Paul writes, 'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans 5:8).

Ask:

- What stands out for you in these verses?
- When did God choose to act?

Say:

God didn't wait for us to get everything right or prove ourselves to him. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. That is what God's grace looks like in action.

In our first session we said that the way back to God has been opened. Jesus' death dealt with sin and made that possible; but the story didn't end there.

Read:

²⁵ **He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.**

— (Romans 4:25)

Ask:

What do you think 'raised to life for our justification' means?

Say:

Justification means being made right with God. Jesus' death deals with sin, and his resurrection opens the way for us to live in a right relationship with God. All of this comes from God's grace. It is not because we deserve it or because we have earned it. It is because of who he is and what he has done. That means that when we trust in Jesus, we are accepted by God.

Ask:

- Why do you think it can still feel like we need to prove ourselves to God?
- What difference does it make to know that you are already accepted by him?

Say:

The Salvation Army Doctrines say that 'we are justified by grace through faith'. This means that we are made right with God through his amazing grace. We receive that gift by placing our faith in him.

Because he lives ... we are accepted by God, not because of what we do, but because of his grace. This means we don't have to spend our lives trying to earn his approval. We are already welcomed, already forgiven and already brought into relationship with him through Jesus.

 **Bridge****Ask:**

What is your response to the following quote?

'If you have a small view of your sin, God's grace will be small to you.'

– Timothy Keller

 **Sound Check****Say:**

We've seen that because Jesus lives, we are accepted by God because of his grace, not because of what we do. However, in real life it's easy to slip back into thinking we have to earn that acceptance! We're going to explore the difference between those two ways of living.

Leader's notes:

Divide the group into small groups (2-4 people). Each group will need a large sheet of paper, marker pens and a 'Grace' handout. Using the verses and quotes they have been given, they need to create a visual representation showing the difference between trying to earn God's acceptance and living knowing they are accepted by grace.

They can present their ideas however they like.

It might be:

- A split page (earn it / grace)
- Two different paths
- Two voices or thought bubbles
- A journey

Bring the group back together to share their ideas and discuss the following questions:

- What differences did you notice?
- Which side do you think people naturally drift towards?
- What might it look like to live life from a 'grace' perspective?

Say:

It's so easy to drift towards trying to earn our place with God. That way of thinking can shape how we see ourselves and how we see him. However, because of Jesus, that isn't the story we have to live in. Because he lives ... we are accepted by God, not because of what we do, but because of his grace.

Bible References

²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

– (Romans 3:22-24)

⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

– (Romans 5:8)

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

– (Ephesians 2:8-9)

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

– (Romans 5:1-2)

⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

– (Titus 3:4-7)

Grace Quotes

'I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. I am not what I hope to be. But still, I am not what I used to be. And by the grace of God, I am what I am.'

– John Newton

'And you know, when you've experienced grace and you feel like you've been forgiven, you're a lot more forgiving of other people. You're a lot more gracious to others.'

– Rick Warren

'God doesn't just give us grace; he gives us Jesus, the Lord of grace.'

– Joni Eareckson Tada

‘Those who believe they have pleased God by the quality of their devotion and moral goodness naturally feel that they and their group deserve deference and power over others. The God of Jesus and the prophets, however, saves completely by grace. He cannot be manipulated by religious and moral performance – he can only be reached through repentance, through the giving up of power. If we are saved by sheer grace we can only become grateful, willing servants of God and of everyone around us.’

– Timothy Keller

 **Bridge****Ask:**

What one quote or Bible verse particularly spoke to you today?

 **Selah****Leader’s notes:**

Display or write out the following three statements clearly so that everyone can see them. You may wish to write them on a board, flipchart or screen. Encourage the group to write them down or take a photo so they can reflect on them later.

- Atonement – Because he lives ... the problem of sin is dealt with and a way back to God is opened.
- Salvation – Because he lives ... we are brought back to God as we turn to him and trust in him.
- Grace – Because he lives ... we are accepted by God, not because of what we do, but because of his grace.

Say:

Over these three sessions we’ve explored what the death and resurrection of Jesus means for us. We have aimed to complete the simple sentence, ‘Because he lives’.

Leader’s notes:

Ask for volunteers to read the three statements aloud.

Say:

As we listen to this version of ‘Because he Lives’, take a moment to reflect on these three statements. You may want to focus on which one stands out to you the most or reflect on the following questions:

- Which one do you find easiest to believe?
- Which one is the most challenging to believe?
- What might it look like to live in the truth of these three statements?

Leader's notes:

Use the following clip for a time of prayer and reflection.

Watch:

Phil Wickham – 'Because He Lives (Moment)' (Official Lyric Video) (1:50)***

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OXSpbBBDXM



Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

- As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?
- What is the one thing that you have discovered about grace today?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.





Grace

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