



Session Objective

Participants will consider grace as both characteristic and gift of God in relation to human beings and the created order.

Faith Statement

Question 1. What is God's purpose for your life?

A. God wills that I should live by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the love of God, and in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

— *Study Catechism: Full Version*



Engage

Welcome each person. Review the questions and invite youth to respond.

- What rules do you have to obey each day?
- What happens when you break a rule at school or at home?
- Where does grace come from when you break rules?
- Can you count on grace happening every time you break a rule? Why?

Explain that when the church uses the word, *grace* is a gift of God. Whenever we talk about God's grace, we are talking about God's love given freely to us. God's gifts are free. That is grace. Because it comes to us at God's initiative, we can't earn it or control it. We don't have to deserve it. What can we do? Accept that God accepts us.

Invite the group to join you in an opening prayer.



Explore

Read John 1:14–17 and Romans 8:28, 31–35, 37–39.

Invite the group to create a definition of grace as gift from God and as attribute of God based on the readings. Ask:

- Imagine that you have a friend who knows nothing of God. What do you think would appeal to your friend about the God you have described?
- How could you introduce your friend to the gracious God?



Express

Discuss the threefold cycle of grace:

All things belong to God;
God gives to us out of grace; and
We share in God's gift of grace by giving from our abundance to others.

Help the youth identify ways God's grace is alive in your congregation. Ask:

- Where have you seen or experienced the threefold dimensions of grace in our church?
- What signs of threefold dimensions of grace have you noticed? (These may include: food bank collection box, information about local outreach, prayer room, welcome signs, list of those in hospital or care homes, child care rooms, information about pastoral care, community garden, recycling box, or prayer letter from missionaries.)

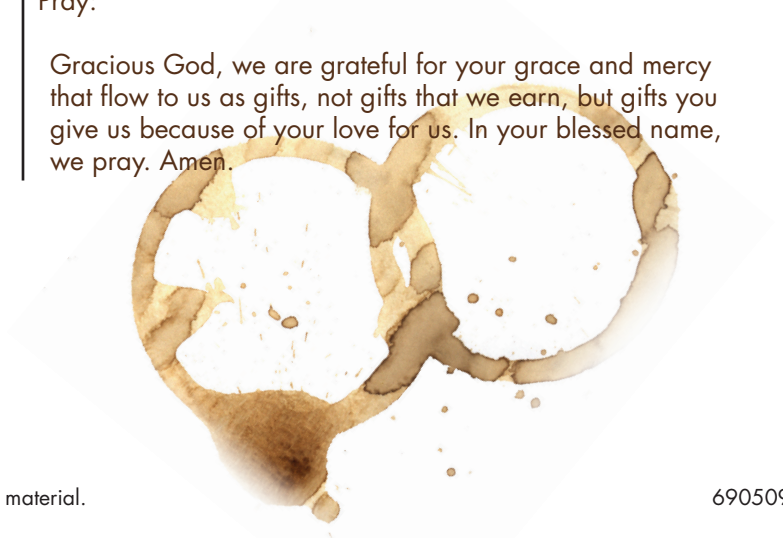


Exit

Invite the group members to memorize and repeat the answer to the *Study Catechism: Full Version*, question 1 (in the box above). Encourage them to write the question and answer in their Bibles as a reminder of God's grace.

Pray:

Gracious God, we are grateful for your grace and mercy that flow to us as gifts, not gifts that we earn, but gifts you give us because of your love for us. In your blessed name, we pray. Amen.





Session Objective

Participants will reflect on the brokenness of creation and God's commitment to act graciously through Jesus Christ.

Faith Statements

Question 80. What do you mean when you speak of "the forgiveness of sins"?

That because of Jesus Christ, God no longer holds my sins against me. Christ alone is my righteousness and my life; Christ is my only hope. Grace alone, not my merits, is the basis on which God has forgiven me in him. Faith alone, not my works, is the means by which I receive Christ into my heart, and with him the forgiveness that makes me whole. Christ alone, grace alone, and faith alone bring the forgiveness I receive through the gospel.

— Study Catechism: Full Version

Wise and virtuous men and women through the ages have sought the highest good in devotion to freedom, justice, peace, truth, and beauty. Yet, all human virtue, when seen in the light of God's love in Jesus Christ, is found to be infected by self-interest and hostility. All people, good and bad alike, are in the wrong before God and helpless without God's forgiveness. Thus, everyone falls under God's judgment. No one is more subject to that judgment than those who assume that they are guiltless before God or morally superior to others.

—Confession of 1967 (9.13)



Engage

Invite youth to recall moments of grace in the previous week. Remind them that God's grace comes through people, places, events, things, and animals. Explain that grace is present when a reward comes to us without our having worked for it; when we receive an opportunity we think we do not deserve; when we recognize an insight or a person's appearance as a gift. Discuss together ways the youth expressed gratitude for the grace.

- Why might someone ask the question "Why do I need grace?"
- What issues or other questions are at the heart of this question?
- Where do you see separation between you and God (sin)? Between God and the world?
- Where do you see God reaching out to you? To the world?

Invite the group to join you in an opening prayer.



Explore

Invite a volunteer to read Ephesians 2:1-7 aloud. Explore the following questions together:

- What does Ephesians 2:1-7 say about human beings? About God? About Jesus Christ?

Ask a volunteer to read aloud verses 8-10. Discuss:

- According to these verses, what do humans need to do to receive God's saving love?
- If our good works cannot save us, why do them?
- Based on these verses, what is your definition of *grace*?
- How might the good works God has prepared for you to do be a way of showing others God's gift of grace?

Affirm that there's nothing wrong with taking pride in our achievements, but even our most impressive achievements won't make God love us more.



Express

Ask the group to create a social media page for your group, putting together the elements that will proclaim who you are in Christ, what you believe about God's grace, and what you resolve to do to show grace to others. The primary resource is Ephesians 2:1-10. Encourage the group to choose verses that will be helpful in describing your group. Additional resources to be considered are symbols and images of faith and photos of the church's ministry. Ask volunteers to create or redesign the page.



Exit

Pray:

Saving and Forgiving God, we acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves and that we need you. We are grateful for your grace and mercy that flow to us as gifts, not gifts that we earn, but gifts you give us because of your redeeming love for us. In your blessed name, we pray. Amen.





Session Objective

Participants will explore how God's grace moves us to gratefully serve Christ and to reject the hold of sin in our lives. God's grace evokes a response of humility and great gratitude.

Faith Statement

Question 86. Since we are redeemed from our sin and its wretched consequences by grace through Christ without any merit of our own, why must we do good works?

A. Because just as Christ has redeemed us with his blood he also renews us through his Holy Spirit according to his own image, so that with our whole life we may show ourselves grateful to God for his goodness and that he may be glorified through us; and further, so that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by its fruits and by our reverent behavior may win our neighbors to Christ.

—Heidelberg Catechism (4.086)

Question 18. What does our creation in God's image reflect about God's love for us?

We are created to live wholeheartedly for God. When we honor our Creator as the source of all good things, we are like mirrors reflecting back the great beam of love that God shines on us. We are also created to honor God by showing love toward other human beings.

—Study Catechism: Full Version



Engage

Remind the youth that God's grace means that God accepts us without our own efforts or achievements. Invite the youth to echo your threefold reading of the phrase, emphasizing the italicized words. Repeat several times, encouraging the youth to commit the reading to memory:

There's nothing *you* have to do.
There's nothing *you have* to do.
There's nothing *you have to do*.

Suggest that the threefold phrase, with its different emphases, is a fitting mantra for praying the gift of God's grace. Wonder together what acts of gratitude would be fitting for such grace. Discuss:

- If grace means there's nothing you have to do, does God care what you do? Why? Why not?
- If God's grace is free, what place do good works have in responding to God's gift of salvation?

Invite the group to join you in an opening prayer.



Explore

Read or ask a volunteer to read Colossians 2:6–7. Discuss:

- How do people live and what kinds of things do they do that would be examples of people living their lives as followers of Jesus?
- What have you been taught at church and in your lives about living life as a follower of Jesus?
- What does it feel like and look like when someone is living a life that includes gratitude to God?

Ask the youth to name what they would do with ten million dollars if it suddenly became theirs. Ask them to include how they might share it. Then, ask them to name what they would do with God's grace, which is already definitely theirs in Christ Jesus. Ask them to consider how they might share that.

Remind the youth that, according to the Presbyterian-Reformed tradition, gratitude is a proper and natural response to God's grace. One way we show our gratitude to God for God's grace given freely to us is by demonstrating God's love and grace to all God's children. Brainstorm ways the group could demonstrate gratitude to God by serving in or outside of the church. Plan a service project together.



Express

You will need a small amount of olive or baby oil. Invite the youth to reflect on the following question silently.

- What things in your lives feel like barriers between you and God?

Pour a small amount of oil into a bowl. Invite each participant in turn to dip a finger in the oil and make the sign of the cross on the hand of the person on his or her right. As the sign of the cross is being made, have the group say, "(Name), God's grace makes you new. Remember and be grateful."



Exit

Pray:

God, you are the creator of amazing grace. Help us to be grateful for that grace and to live wholeheartedly for you, shining on everyone we meet the love we have from you. Amen.



How Does God's Grace Change My Life?



Session 4

Luke 5:27-32; 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Session Objective

Participants will be encouraged to live holy lives through the example of Levi, a tax collector who broke away from his former life and choices in order to follow Jesus. Following Jesus requires that we turn our lives around and embrace a new way of life.

Faith Statement

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth, praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

—A Brief Statement of Faith (lines 72-76)

... The Spirit brings God's forgiveness to all, moves people to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ.

The new life takes shape in a community in which people know that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are. They therefore accept themselves and love others, knowing that no one has any ground on which to stand, except God's grace.

The new life does not release people from conflict with unbelief, pride, lust, fear. They still have to struggle with disheartening difficulties and problems. Nevertheless, as they mature in love and faithfulness in their life with Christ, they live in freedom and good cheer, bearing witness on good days and evil days, confident that the new life is pleasing to God and helpful to others.

—Confession of 1967 (9.21-23)



Engage

Invite the youth to echo your threefold reading of the phrase, emphasizing the italicized words. Repeat several times:

There's nothing *you* have to do.
There's nothing *you* *have* to do.
There's nothing *you* have to *do*.

Ask:

- How has God's grace changed your life?
- What about your life would you hope to be changed by God's grace?
- How do you live your life in grateful response to God's grace?

Invite the group to join you in an opening prayer.



Explore

This is a fun way for youth to comprehend themes of Scripture, particularly those related to forgiveness and grace, and to practice application of biblical lessons to their own situations. Form three groups. Have the group read one of the following Scripture passages and identify the forgiven person in each: Mark 2:1-12; Luke 19:1-10; or John 8:1-11.

- How did God's grace give new possibilities to the people in these stories?
- How did they express gratitude for the new possibilities?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 aloud and discuss:

- In what sense do you know that you are forgiven by God in Christ?
- In what sense are you a new creation?
- How do you express your newness in your life? How do you slip back into acting like an old creation?
- How do you exercise the ministry of reconciliation?

Challenge the youth to look for ways to practice reconciliation as an act of gratitude to God.



Express

Invite the group to confess the faith by echoing the words from A Brief Statement of Faith as you say them:

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, (*echo*)
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks (*echo*)
and to live holy and joyful lives, (*echo*)
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new
earth, (*echo*)
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (*echo*)



Exit

Pray:

Amazing God, please help us let go of old and painful experiences, whether behaviors, people, items, or thoughts. Help us to unclench our lives so that we may receive and recognize your abundant grace. Help us turn away from what is not good for us. Thank you for making all things new, including us. We are grateful. Amen.