

Num. 21:4–9
Ps. 107:1–3, 17–22
Eph. 2:1–10
John 3:14–21

God's Gift: Grace

Goal for the Session

Children will listen to Paul's teaching about God's grace and express their joy in receiving this gift.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Ephesians 2:1–10

WHAT is important to know?

— From "Exegetical Perspective," John M. Vonder Bruegge

The key lies in the author's deliberate evocation of the experiences of Christ (1:20–21) in the experiences of the believer (2:5–7). They were dead in sin, but they have been "made alive together" (v. 5; cf. Col. 2:13) with Christ. Whereas God "raised" (*egeiras*) Christ from the dead and "seated" (*kathisas*) him "in the heavenly places" (1:20), the one who has been saved by grace is "raised with him" (*synēgeiren*) and "seated with him" (*synekathisen*) "in the heavenly places in Christ" (2:6). Just as Christ's exaltation was for both "this age" and "the age to come" (1:21), so also God will reveal his grace and kindness in "the ages to come" (2:7).

WHERE is God in these words?

— From "Theological Perspective," Ian S. Markham

God gets all the credit. We did not deserve the love while we lived life wallowing in our self-preoccupation, being manipulated by the forces around us (v. 5). God provides the agent of our transformation. We are not responsible for the dramatic miracle made possible by Christ's resurrection (v. 6). Nor can we take any credit for the role we will play as witnesses to the kindness shown to us in the ages to come. We are recipients of a remarkable gift from God—the gift of absolutely everything. The goal is a transformed life (one created for "good works," v. 10), which God has created in Christ Jesus. We are playing a privileged role in God's plan (v. 10).

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From "Pastoral Perspective," Adam E. Eckhart

A redemptive ethic encourages faithful people to share their stories of how powers influence them. Verse 3 shifts from second person "you" language to first person plural "we" to admit that "all of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh." This admission enables Gentile and Jewish Christians to share their common submission to powers and therefore to unite them in Christ's redemptive work. As part of our Lenten confessional discipline, our liturgy can encourage people to name aloud or silently specific powers that haunt us or loved ones, inviting us to witness to internal and social struggles that have distorted God's creation.

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From "Homiletical Perspective," Jeff Paschal

"Passions of our flesh" [2:3] refers not just to what we do as individuals, but to what we do corporately. It can apply to our complicity in poverty, war, unfair conditions for the poor, and in political choices that make life easier for us but bring hurt to the weak and persons on the margins of society. Instead, we are to live out who we truly are, "alive with Christ," following his example of love and placing our ultimate trust in God through Christ.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE
Ephesians 2:1–10

Focus on Your Teaching

Children first learn about God's grace through the words and actions of caring adults. As you set boundaries and expectations for learners in your class, frame them with respect for each child. When children do not honor these, allow natural consequences to occur but resist taking the unwanted behavior personally. This will make it easier to listen to why a child made the choice that he or she did and to find meaningful ways to model grace and forgiveness. Grace is an important concept in the journey of faith, and it is learned over time.

Merciful God, help me to be a model of your grace. Give me patience, a vision for the bigger picture, and a sense of humor. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- Colors of Lent booklets (from March 7)
- small table or large box
- purple cloth
- Bible
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- Color Pack 1, 4, 5, 28
- paper, marker
- large box, gift wrapping supplies
- stickers or other small gifts

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 1, pencils
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2 on card stock, fine-tipped markers, hole punch, narrow ribbon or yarn, scissors
- option 3: paper streamers or ribbon; *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player; Color Pack 30

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, roll up Color Pack 4, place it in a box, and wrap it in gift wrap. Print “To: God’s people / From: God” on a piece of paper and tape it to the box. Make a worship table by covering a small table or large box with a purple cloth and placing Color Pack 1 on it. If you are using option 2 in Responding, cut 8" pieces of narrow ribbon or yarn, three per child. If you are using option 3, cut 18" pieces of paper streamers or ribbon, two per child.

Take a moment to visit with each child as he or she arrives about good things that happened during the past week.

Gather with learners around the worship table and give each child a Colors of Lent booklet. Remind learners that the church is in the season of Lent. Have learners turn to each color as you do and repeat each statement after you:

(Purple) *Remember that Jesus is our king!*

(Green) *Remember how people waved leafy branches / to welcome Jesus.*

(Brown) *Remember how Jesus died on a cross.*

(Yellow) *Remember that God raised Jesus / from death on Easter / and gives us new life too.*

(White) *Remember that in Jesus’ name, / God forgives our sins.*

Thank you, God, for loving us. Amen.

Sing “You Shall Love the Lord Your God” (Color Pack 28; track 22 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Save the booklets to use next session.

Invite learners to tell about times they received something they weren’t expecting or didn’t deserve. Tell a story from your own experience. Comment that the Bible reading is about an unexpected gift from God.

You Shall Love the Lord Your God

You shall love the Lord your God, alleluia!
You shall love the Lord your God, alleluia!
With all your heart and soul and mind, alleluia!
With all your heart and soul and mind, alleluia!

The learners will not fully grasp the meaning of God's grace and its importance in their lives. Assure them that Christians spend a lifetime learning about God's grace and giving thanks for it.

EXPLORING

Bring out the wrapped box and read the tag in unison. Invite a child to open the box and hold up Color Pack 4. Read the words aloud and say they will learn more about this gift.

Show Color Pack 5 and introduce the man as Paul, one of Jesus' followers. Explain that Paul often wrote letters to the people in the first Christian churches. Some of Paul's letters are part of the Bible. Show learners Ephesians in your Bible. Say that one letter Paul wrote was to Christians who lived in Ephesus, a large city by the Mediterranean Sea. Paul had lived in Ephesus for a time, teaching the people there about being Jesus' followers.

Tell what Paul wrote, using the following version (based on Ephesians 2:1–10):

Paul wrote to the people in Ephesus:

In the past you were a very different kind of people. You didn't believe in Jesus Christ and you fought against living in God's ways. You copied what the people around you were saying and doing. You did not listen to God. It's no wonder God was angry with you. It would have served you right to be punished.

But surprise! God's love for you is great. You are God's child, and God cares for you and forgives you even when you don't deserve it. This love and mercy is called grace, and it is God's gift to you.

Jesus is our brother in God's family, and Jesus shows us what God's amazing love is like. God has planned for each one of us to do good things with our lives, and Jesus shows us how.

"You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. It isn't something you have earned" (Ephesians 2:8–9, CEV).

Teach the following words to sing to the tune of "Bingo." Invite learners to clap one time for each letter as they sing "G, R, A-C-E."

O God gives each of us a gift
Of loving care and mercy.
G, R, A-C-E,
G, R, A-C-E,
G, R, A-C-E,
God's gra-ace is the gift-o.

O we do not deserve this gift,
God gives it to us freely.
G, R, A-C-E,
G, R, A-C-E,
G, R, A-C-E,
God's gra-ace is the gift-o.

Look again at Color Pack 4 and read the words in unison. Discuss what Paul taught about God's grace:

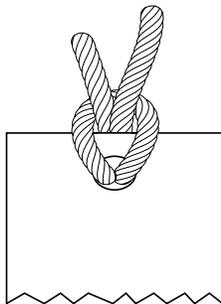
✠ What does it mean that God's grace—God's love and mercy—is a gift to us? How is this good news?

☘ How might we show our joy that this wonderful gift is for us?

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

**EASY
PREP**



I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy
down in my heart,

Down in my heart, down in
my heart;

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy
down in my heart,

Down in my heart to stay.

- 1. Grace Maze** This activity invites learners to consider God's grace and formulate a response to this gift. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Grace Maze) and pencils. Invite learners to trace the path from the entrance to the center with a finger before doing it with a pencil. Read the directions aloud and help them as needed to complete the sentence with the word *gift*. Ask: When you think about God's gift of grace, what do you feel like doing? (For example, jumping for joy, saying thanks, telling someone else, cheering for God.) Invite learners to take turns leading the group in expressions of joy.
- 2. Grace Bookmarks** Children will make gifts to spread the joy of receiving God's gift of grace. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Grace Bookmarks). Read the words in unison. Comment on how the children can express joy in receiving God's gift of grace by giving unexpected gifts, like these bookmarks, to tell other people. Ask: Why is it important to remind people about God's grace? With whom might we share these bookmark reminders? Set out fine-tipped markers for learners to use to decorate the bookmarks. Have learners cut out the bookmarks and punch a hole in each one as indicated. Demonstrate how to attach yarn or ribbon and have them do this on their bookmarks. Plan how you will give away the bookmarks.
- 3. Sing a Joyful Response** Children will rejoice in God's gift of grace through music and movement. Comment on how God's gift of grace—God's love and mercy—fills us with joy. Give each child two streamers or pieces of ribbon. Invite them to stand apart from one another and practice moving the streamers to express joy. Play the first stanza of "I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy" (Color Pack 30; track 12, *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021) and invite learners to move their streamers each time they sing the word *joy*. Next, substitute the word *grace* for *joy* and invite them to wave their streamers each time they sing the word *grace*. Option: Arrange for your group to sing this new version of the song during worship.

CLOSING

Gather with learners around the worship table. Sing the song about grace learned during Exploring. Invite learners to tell what they will remember about God's grace.

Pray aloud, asking learners to repeat each line:

Be with us, Lord, through Lenten days.

Be with us, Lord, in work and play.

Be with us, Lord, through day and night.

Be with us, Lord, 'til Easter shines bright. Amen.

Say to each learner: "God blesses you with grace, (*name*)."

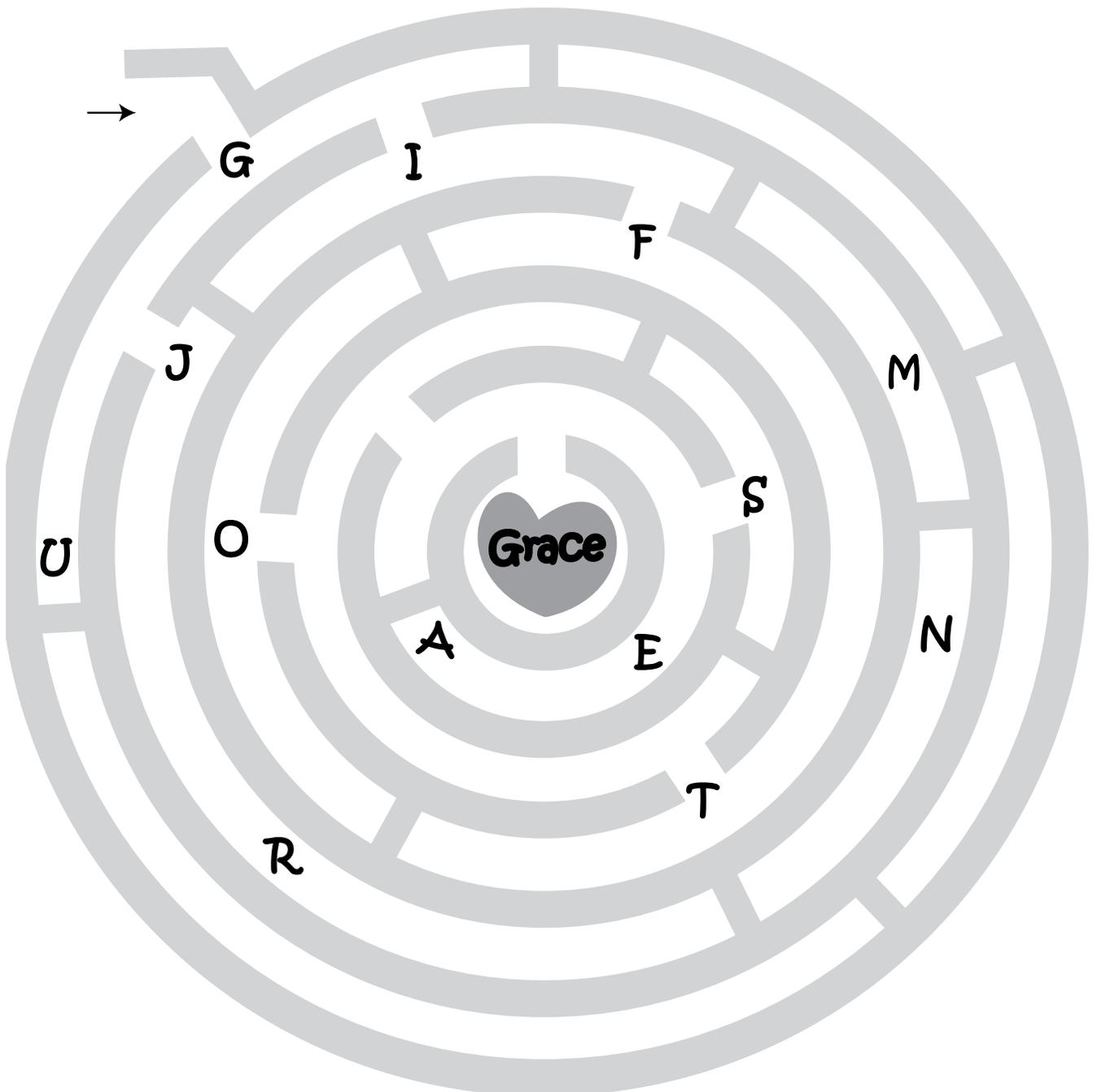
March 14, 2021
God's Gift: Grace

Grades K-2
Resource Sheet 1

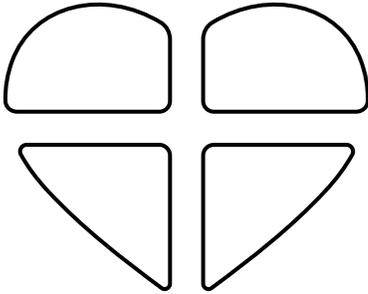
Grace Maze

Directions: Circle the letters you find along the path to the center of this maze. Make a word from these circled letters to complete the sentence under the maze.

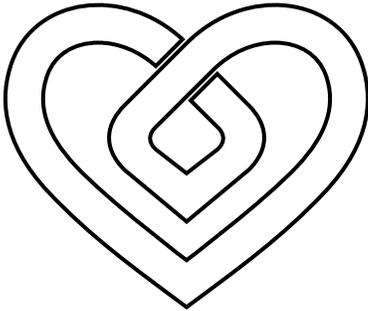
Grace is God's great ___ ___ ___ ___ of love and mercy.



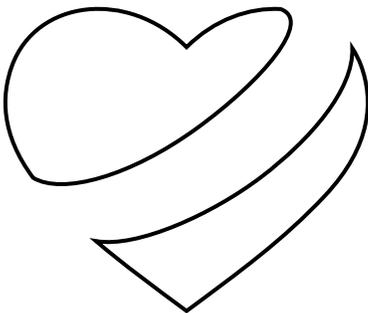
Grace Bookmarks



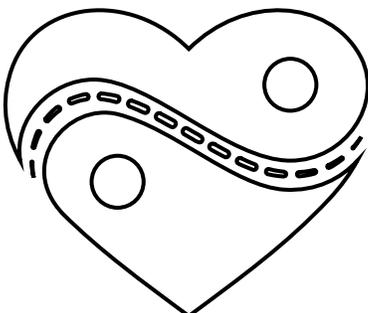
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