

Bible Study on Grace *4 lessons* *with questions*

Grace is God's kindness to people who have not earned it and cannot repay it. This Bible study on grace follows it through four passages: being made alive by grace in Ephesians 2, the father who runs to his son in Luke 15, the kindness of God that saves and renews in Titus 3, and grace that is enough in weakness in 2 Corinthians 12.

It suits a small group, a new believers' class or your own study, and it is a good study to invite a friend to. Each lesson prints the passage from the Berean Standard Bible, then the big idea, notes for the leader, questions to observe, understand and apply, a memory verse and a prayer.

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

— Ephesians 2:8-9 (BSB)

LESSON 1 OF 4

Saved by grace

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

The big idea: We were dead in sin, and God, rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ: salvation is His gift, received through faith, not earned by works.

Read

¹ And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you used to walk when you conformed to the ways of this world and of the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience. ³ All of us also lived among

them at one time, fulfilling the cravings of our flesh and indulging its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature children of wrath. ⁴ But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages He might display the surpassing riches of His grace, demonstrated by His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life.

– Ephesians 2:1-10 (BSB)

Notes

Paul starts with the bad news, and it is worse than we might think: not sick in sin but “dead in your trespasses and sins.” Dead people cannot help themselves. Then come two of the best words in the Bible: “But ... God.” Because of His great love, God, “who is rich in mercy,” made us alive with Christ.

Verses 8–9 say it plainly: saved by grace, through faith, as a gift, “not by works, so that no one can boast.” Then verse 10 shows what grace produces. We are not saved by good works, but we are saved for them: we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. How does Paul describe our condition before God acted (vv. 1–3)?
2. What words does Paul use to describe God in verses 4–7?
3. According to verses 8–10, what is salvation not from, and what is it for?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. Why does it matter that we were ‘dead’, not just weak?
2. What is the difference between grace and faith in verse 8?
3. If we are not saved by good works, why does verse 10 talk about them?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Do you ever act as if you must earn God’s love? Where?
2. Thank God for one way He has shown you ‘the surpassing riches of His grace’.
3. What good work might God have prepared for you this week?

Memory verse

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

– Ephesians 2:8-9 (BSB)

Pray

God, rich in mercy, thank You that when I was dead in my sins You made me alive with Christ. I could never earn it; it is Your gift. Keep me from boasting in anything but Your grace, and lead me into the good works You prepared for me. Amen.

LESSON 2 OF 4

The father who runs

Read Luke 15:11-32

The big idea: In Jesus’ story, a father welcomes home a son who wasted everything, and pleads with an older son who thinks he has earned his place.

Read

¹¹ Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger son said to him, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. ¹³ After a few days, the younger son got everything together and journeyed to a distant country, where he squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent all he had, a severe famine swept through that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his belly with the pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him a thing. ¹⁷ Finally he came to his senses and said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have plenty of food, but here I am, starving to death! ¹⁸ I will get up and go back to my father and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still in the distance, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. ²¹ The son declared, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!’ So they began to celebrate. ²⁵ Meanwhile the older son was in the field, and as he approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has returned,’ he said, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ The older son became angry and refused to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look, all these years I have served you and never disobeyed a commandment of yours. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours returns from squandering your wealth with prostitutes, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ ³¹ ‘Son, you are always with me,’ the father said, ‘and all that is mine is yours. ³² But it

was fitting to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

– Luke 15:11-32 (BSB)

Notes

The younger son asked for his inheritance early and wasted it. Starving, he came home with a speech: “I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father saw him far off, was filled with compassion, ran to him and kissed him before the son said a word, and the speech was never finished. The robe, the ring and the feast are grace: undeserved and unearned.

The story does not end there. The older son refused to come in. He had served for years and never disobeyed, yet he resented the welcome. Grace offends people who think they have earned their place. The father goes out to him too. Jesus tells the story to Pharisees who grumbled that He welcomed sinners (15:1-2).

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. What did the younger son plan to say, and how much of it did he get to say (vv. 18–21)?
2. What did the father do when he saw his son (vv. 20, 22–24)?
3. How did the older son respond, and what did the father say to him (vv. 28–32)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. What does the father’s running show about grace?
2. Why was the older son angry? What did he think he deserved?
3. Which son were the Pharisees in Luke 15:1-2 most like?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Are you more like the younger son or the older son right now?
2. Is there someone you struggle to see God welcome? Pray for them.
3. How could your home or group celebrate when someone comes back to God?

Memory verse

So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still in the distance, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.

– Luke 15:20 (BSB)

Pray

Father, thank You that You ran to me while I was still far off. Forgive me when I think I have earned Your love, and when I resent Your welcome to others. Teach me to celebrate the lost who are found, as You do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

LESSON 3 OF 4

Grace that saves and renews

Read Titus 3:3-8

The big idea: When God's kindness appeared, He saved us by His mercy, not our righteous deeds, and renewed us by the Holy Spirit.

Read

³ For at one time we too were foolish, disobedient, misled, and enslaved to all sorts of desires and pleasures—living in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

⁴ But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not by the righteous deeds we had done, but according to His mercy, through the washing of new birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. ⁶ This is the Spirit

He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by His grace, we would become heirs with the hope of eternal life.

⁸ This saying is trustworthy. And I want you to emphasize these things, so that those who have believed God will take care to devote themselves to good deeds. These things are excellent and profitable for the people.

– Titus 3:3-8 (BSB)

Notes

Paul includes himself: “at one time we too were foolish, disobedient, misled.” Then the turn: “when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared.” Salvation came “not by the righteous deeds we had done, but according to His mercy.”

Grace does more than cancel a debt. It makes people new, through “renewal by the Holy Spirit,” whom God poured out abundantly. And it changes how we live: Paul wants believers to “devote themselves to good deeds.” Grace is the root; good deeds are the fruit.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. How does Paul describe what ‘we’ were like before (v. 3)?
2. What appeared, and what did God do (vv. 4–5)?
3. What does Paul want those who have believed to devote themselves to (v. 8)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. Why does Paul say ‘we too’ instead of ‘you’?
2. What is the difference between being saved by mercy and saved by deeds?
3. How does the Holy Spirit’s renewal show in a person’s life?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. What were you like 'at one time'? Thank God for what He has changed.
2. Where do you still lean on your own righteous deeds?
3. Which good deed will you devote yourself to this week, out of thanks?

Memory verse

He saved us, not by the righteous deeds we had done, but according to His mercy, through the washing of new birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

– Titus 3:5 (BSB)

Pray

God our Savior, thank You that Your kindness and love appeared, and You saved me not because of my deeds but because of Your mercy. Renew me by Your Holy Spirit, and make me devoted to good deeds, out of thanks and not to earn Your love. Amen.

LESSON 4 OF 4

Grace in weakness

Read 2 Corinthians 12:6-10

The big idea: When Paul begged God to remove his thorn, God answered that His grace was sufficient and His power is perfected in weakness.

Read

⁶ Even if I wanted to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me, ⁷ or because of these surpassingly great revelations. So to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But He said to

me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for the sake of Christ, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

– 2 Corinthians 12:6-10 (BSB)

Notes

Paul had been given “a thorn in my flesh,” and he never tells us what it was. Three times he pleaded with the Lord to take it away. The answer was not the one he asked for: “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.”

So Paul changed what he boasted about. Instead of hiding his weaknesses, he boasted in them, “so that the power of Christ may rest on me.” Grace is not only the gift that saves us at the start; it is the strength that carries us when we are weak. “For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. Why does Paul say he was given the thorn (v. 7)?
2. How many times did Paul plead, and what was the Lord’s answer (vv. 8–9)?
3. What does Paul delight in, and why (v. 10)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. Why might God answer a prayer with grace instead of removal?
2. What does it mean that God’s power is ‘perfected’ in weakness?
3. How can someone be strong when they are weak?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. What ‘thorn’ have you asked God to take away? Have you heard His answer?
2. Where could you stop hiding a weakness and let Christ’s power show?
3. Encourage someone this week who is carrying something that has not gone away.

Memory verse

My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.

– 2 Corinthians 12:9 (BSB)

Pray

Lord, I have asked You to take this weakness away, and it is still here. Let Your grace be sufficient for me today. Let Your power rest on me right where I am weakest, so that when I am weak, I am strong in You. Amen.

Tips for leading this study

Define grace early. Ask the group for their own definition before lesson 1, then compare it with Ephesians 2.

Read Luke 15 dramatically. Use four readers: the narrator, the younger son, the father and the older son.

Invite a friend. Lessons 1 and 2 explain the gospel simply. It is a good study to bring someone who is exploring faith.

Close with thanks. End each lesson with a minute of thanking God for grace, out loud or silently.

More Bible studies

Bible Study on Forgiveness • 4 lessons

Bible Study on Faith · 4 lessons

Bible Study on Identity in Christ · 4 lessons

Bible Study on Love · 4 lessons

The Romans Road to salvation

How to share the gospel

My grace is sufficient: a prayer

The prayer of salvation

All Bible studies

Questions