

Amazing Grace (Lesson I) Grace That Leaves You Speechless (Part I)

Sharpening Your Ax Allowing a Message to Grip You

I'm in the first stages of my study of grace as I write this introduction. I began by plunging into the Bible dictionaries and lexicons to understand the crucial grace words. Then I began to read the wealth of bible passages that expound the multifaceted themes of grace. And as I read passage after passage after passage, the wonder of it all began to slowly build until today it simply overwhelmed me. This morning, alone before God in my home, listening over and over to Steven Curtis Chapman singing "*Speechless*," I just lost it. With tears streaming down my face (I don't often cry), sometimes dancing (I *never* dance), sometimes falling on my face in awe of His majesty, sometimes joyously singing along with Steven, I was overwhelmed by the grace of God lavished on such an unworthy worm as myself. I'm left speechless, amazed, astonished, before my gracious, kind, loving Father, who has allowed me to catch a glimpse of His incredible grace.

In that light, the following messages are not "Saturday Night Specials" that you throw together at the last minute in order to have something to say to the kids tomorrow morning. Please don't present the grace of God casually, without being gripped by it your self. Listen to grace songs (such as "*Speechless*") that move you. Read a book like Philip Yancey's *What's So Amazing About Grace?* Begin meditating on the passages early each week. Confront in all its horror the judgment that your sinful, depraved, status deserved before a just and righteous God. Remember the anguish of being without hope, without God in the world. Only against that black backdrop will the brilliance of God's grace truly astonish you. Then allow the compassionate, longing expression of the prodigal son's father become your picture of how God looks down upon you. Only then will your heart be broken enough to teach this lofty theme.

PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS MESSAGE, I WANT MY STUDENTS TO WALK OUT OF THE ROOM ASTONISHED AND SPEECHLESS AT THE INCREDIBLE SAVING GRACE OF GOD AND TO APPROPRIATE HIS SAVING GRACE IF THEY HAVE NOT.

Introduction

I'm introducing this new series with a question:

"How would most students picture a person whose life is totally devoted to God?"

(You may want to have students actually answer this question out loud.)

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How you would personally answer that question says a lot about how you view God and the Christian life. You see, I believe that most students think of a committed Christian as one who doesn't do certain things. Like, "Real Christians don't smoke, drink, or have premarital sex." And if they were to draw a picture of such a person, she would probably not have a stern, joyless expression, because basically she's missing out on all that's fun of life in order to live a disciplined, sacrificial life for God.

But the Bible paints a radically different picture of the committed believer. I need some volunteers to read verses for me. (Put them on an overhead or Power Point after they have been read.)

"For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete." (Deut. 16:15)

"Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Ps. 37:4)

"...no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless." (Ps. 84:11)

"I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches." (Ps. 119:14)

"...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (Jesus, in John 10:10)

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...." (Gal. 5:22)

From these verses, what picture do you get of a devoted believer? (Full of joy, contentment, and peace.) Then where have most people gone wrong? I think that most non-Christians, and many Christians, have never grasped one of the central messages of the Bible: GRACE.

Let's pray that God will open our eyes. (Have Prayer.)

A. Grace: What it means

Leader: It's usually best not to read a story like this to your students. Instead, in your preparation, read over and over the story, sometimes out loud, until you know the details of the story. (You don't have to memorize it word for word. You might highlight a few places if it helps.) Then tell it to your students as you would tell any interesting event that you have experienced. This will make the story come alive.
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ILLUSTRATION: (This could be a skit) This story never happened, but if you can place yourself in the story and experience the feelings of Sean, you'll begin to grasp today's topic. Sean is a 9th grader who's secretly crazy about (name the latest dream girl that guys generally concur is a babe) Brittany. He keeps track of her concert schedule so that he can snatch up the best seats whenever her band plays in a nearby town. He knows he has no chance to go out with her. He's a nobody—a lowly freshman in a nowhere town with no connections. He might as well be invisible at school. If he were to transfer out tomorrow, no one would care or even notice. He's not athletic, academically inclined or physically attractive. Sean can't even get the attention of the middle school girls in his neighborhood, much less a star. He knows he's a loser. But hey, when it comes to Brittany, it never hurts to dream.

So one evening after supper he's listening to a CD on his bed when he gets this phone call from a girl who claims she's Brittany. Now Sean may not be that bright, but he's no idiot. He knows that the freshman cheerleaders are probably having a sleepover and making prank calls. His little sister must have ratted on him about the Brittany posters in his room. So he just plays along with the gag.

The girl says, "Hey Sean, I've seen you at several of my concerts and for some reason I couldn't get you off my mind. So I had one of my bodyguards trace you down and get the scoop on you. He tells me you're a pretty nice guy. I know this must seem weird with me calling you and stuff. But this Hollywood crowd is so artificial, so plastic. For just once I'd like to go out with a decent guy, talk about normal stuff and not have to worry about someone just using me to break into a music career."

So after about 20 minutes of small-talk, she makes her move. "So Sean, would you like to get together sometime?"

Sean, deciding to play along with the gag, replies "Well, let me look over my DayTimer". (He flips some pages of a phone book to make some noise.) "I've got Friday night free the week after next."

There's a pause and she says, "Looks good on my schedule too. I suppose you're too young to drive. Mind if I pick you up at your place?"

"Sounds great!" says Sean.

After they hang up he starts getting depressed. What kind of a future could a guy have who is always the end of someone's joke?

After a couple of weeks he sort of gets over it, although every time he hears some girls laughing in the lunchroom, he assumes they're laughing at him.

So come Friday night he's at home trying to find a quiet room away from his 13-year-old sister's friends, who are having a sleepover. Then the doorbell rings. His sister answers and all the sudden the giggly girls go silent. It's one of those silences that's so silent that it's loud. You know what I mean? Sean walks into the living room to find Brittany standing there, surrounded by a bunch of speechless 13-year-old girls. She looks over to see Sean and asks, "Well, are you ready?" A million thoughts race through his mind. "Just a moment," he says. Mm...mmm...make yourself at home. "And Sis, could you and the girls keep Brittany company while I finish getting ready? He walks casually to his room, which becomes a tornado of activity to prepare for a date his wildest imaginations could have never dreamed possible.

<u>Defining Grace</u>
1) Old Testament Usage: The two primary Hebrew words are
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hesed: mercy, kindness, lovingkindness, goodness • Hen: undeserved favor, used of the action of the superior or stronger coming to help the inferior or weaker.
God's grace was often seen in the Old Testament, but more prominent in the New. (NBD, TDNTT)
2) New Testament Usage: The main Greek words are
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charis: a noun that appears 155x in the NT, meaning either a) graciousness, attractiveness (as in "gracious words") b) favor, grace, gracious care or help, goodwill c) the practical application of goodwill, a (sign of) favor, gracious deed or gift, benefaction d) exceptional effects produced by divine grace, sometimes almost identical to "the power of God" (or knowledge or glory) e) Thanks, gratitude. • Charisma: a noun meaning "a freely and graciously given gift" or "a favor bestowed" • Charizomai: a verb meaning to "show favor or kindness," "give freely or as a favor," "to be gracious to someone," "to remit, forgive, pardon" • Charitoo: a verb meaning "endue with grace," "bestow favor upon," "favor highly," "bless." (TDNTT, BAG)
<i>Remember: The context determines which meaning the biblical writer intended in any given passage.</i>

Idea: If you know a good real life story similar to Sean's you may want to use it. I remember a teenage girl named Melany from our community who was diagnosed with cancer. Through an organization like the "Make a Wish Foundation," she requested the opportunity to meet the then-current teen heartthrob, actor Kirk Cameron. Not only did Kirk (a professing Christian) invite her to his California home, but he introduced her to other movie stars, flew to Georgia to go to a local "Six Flags" amusement park with her and some friends, and kept in touch with her up until the time she died.

Do you know what Sean just experienced? The biblical word is "grace." There are several ways the word grace is used in the Bible, but one way is when a great, important person is willing to step down and help a lesser person who is in need.

And what do you think is Sean's emotional response when the girl of his dreams, a girl who's totally out of his league, actually accompanies him on what turns out to be the first of many dates? (He's totally blown away. He's astonished. He's amazed. He's speechless.)

And you know what? One of the foundational keys to living the Christian life is to understand just how much lower, how much less deserving we are than Sean, how much greater God is than Brittany, and how much more God went through to find us and have a relationship with us. If we truly grasp that, we'll

understand why John Newton wrote a song and named it "Amazing Grace." You'll be so astounded, dumbfounded, and speechless that your life will never again be the same.

So, what is grace?

Grace is when someone does you a favor by helping you or giving you something, even though you did nothing to deserve it and nothing to earn it.

And get this. The word grace is used *over 155 times* in the New Testament and *over 190 times* in the Old Testament. Do you think God might be trying to get our attention? Most of the books of the New Testament (18 of 27) either begin with grace (e.g., "**Grace to you and peace...**") or end with grace (e.g., "**Grace be with you.**"). Do you get the impression that God's saying, "*If you miss everything else, don't miss the grace thing!*"?

So with the story of Sean and our definition of grace in mind let's check out the most incredible demonstration of grace that the world has ever known.

B. The Ultimate Demonstration of Grace

The grace that Sean received from Brittany was pretty amazing. So what is it that makes God's grace even more amazing?

- **The Highest Came Down to Help the Lowest (Phil. 2:6,7)**

"Who (Jesus), being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."

<p>HINTS: 1) If your students aren't into guitar heroes, illustrate this with whatever interests your students have (soccer heroes, etc).</p> <p>2) Consider using a clip from the movie, "Waynes' World," (or just describing the scene) where Wayne and Garth (starting at c. 3820 through 3886) saw rock legend Alice Cooper in concert. Being rock fanatics, they get incredibly pumped at the concert and then head backstage, waving their back stage passes around. Incredibly, they happen upon Cooper in a room where he's hanging out with his crew. Garth can't say a word. He's speechless before this legendary rock star. Then Cooper casually asks if they want to hang out with him. Wayne and Garth simultaneously look at each other, fall on their knees and begin crying "We're not worthy! We're not worthy! We're not worthy! We're not scum!"</p> <p>I think a lot of people feel that way when they meet a personal hero. All the sudden they forget everything they had prepared so long that they would say. Their mind goes blank and they find themselves speechless in the person's presence. How much more should we stand speechless when we come before the throne of the awesome Creator of the universe, as we realize how small and unworthy we are, and are awed by His invitation to come hang out with Him.</p>

(Leader: Make sure that some youth read each of the Scriptures out loud.) Who here is into rock guitar? Who are your guitar heroes? Imagine them calling you up and saying they want to hang out with you, give you personal tips, and help you break into the music business. Do you think that would be unheard of, wild, crazy? Then imagine the God of the Universe loving you, wanting to know you intimately (every hair on head), and becoming a man to die and pay your way to heaven. That's not just grace. That's AMAZING Grace.

• **His Grace Was Incredibly Expensive (Phil. 2:8, Cr. II Cor. 8:9)**

“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!”

The only price Brittany paid was to risk her pride among her Hollywood buddies. But the price Jesus paid was a lowly life and a tortured death.

GROUP ACTIVITY: As I read to you Matthew's account of Jesus' final hours, raise your hand and stop me when I come to a new type of suffering that Jesus endured. Then tell me what the suffering was. And remember, this is the Son of God who is going through all this *for you personally*. I need a volunteer to write each aspect of Jesus' suffering on the overhead as we find it.

IDEA: Either instead of, or following the group activity, show a clip of the crucifixion in the “Jesus” film. (Purchase for \$17.95 through Gospel Films at www.1-800GospelDirect.com)

(Read Matthew 27:26-50.) (Types of suffering include: 1) vs. 26 – flogged, 2) vs. 28 – stripped, 3) vs. 29 – crown of thorns, 4) vs. 30 – spit on, 5) vs. 30 – struck repeatedly on the head, 6) v. 31 – mocked, 7) vs. 35 – crucified, 8) vs. 39 – insults hurled at him, 9) vs. 41 – mocked, 10) vs. 44 – insults heaped upon Him, Vs. 46 – forsaken by His Father.)

(Describe scourging and crucifixion using some of the insights from the text box.) Now you can begin to see why the Roman historian Cicero called crucifixion *“the most horrible torture ever devised by man.”* And as we understand the extent of Jesus’ suffering on the cross, we realize just how awesome His grace is toward us.

Responding To God’s Incredible Grace

But as we stand in awe of His grace, our natural question is *“Why? Why did He have to go through all that for me?”* I need several volunteers to read some verses that will tell us why Jesus went through all this suffering. After each verse is read, someone put the verse in your own words.

- **Romans 3:23** – *“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*

(We’ve all sinned and don’t meet up to God’s standard.)

- **Romans 6:23** - *“For the wages of sin is death...”*

(Since we’ve all sinned, we’ve got to pay the penalty of death.)

- **Romans 5:8** – *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

(Jesus paid the penalty of death that we deserved to pay.)

- **John 3:16** – *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

(We must trust Christ for our salvation.)

According to these verses, Jesus didn’t just come to earth to be just a good example. He came to die on the cross for us, so that we could be put back into a right relationship with God and have eternal life. I heard it put something like this:

**If our biggest problem were a lack of friends, God would have sent us a companion.
 If our biggest problem were a lack of education, God would have sent us a tutor.
 But since our biggest problem is that we are lost, God sent us a Savior.**

Mt. 27:26-50:
 v. 26 – “Scourged” = “...often...meant being ‘flayed to the bone’...” “This verse...apparently covers a more complex (and brutal) sequence than appears at first sight.” (France) The whip consisted of “leather thongs with small pieces of metal or bone tied to them.” (NBD) “So hideous was this punishment that the victim usually fainted and not rarely died under it.” (ISBE)
 v. 35 - “The probability is that Jesus had been stripped absolutely naked.” (EGT)
 “crucified him” = “The whole body was strained.” Since hands and feet are “a mass of nerves and tendons,” the nails would lacerate them and cause excruciating agony. (NBD, ISBE) Victims experienced “insufferable thirst” and “literally died a thousand deaths.” (ISBE) “After awhile, the arteries of head and stomach would be surcharged with blood, causing a throbbing headache, and eventually traumatic fever and tetanus would set in.” (NBD)
 39 – The imperfect tense pictures “a continual defaming.”
 “shaking their heads” = “a sign of scorn and derision” (BAG). Probably like “flipping someone off” in American culture.
 46 – “forsaken” = “to abandon, to leave in the lurch” (Key)
 “Cried” = “a strong verb indicating powerful emotion or appeal to God. This is no dispassionate theological statement, but an agonized expression of a real sense of alienation.” (France)

Action Points

There are two types of students here today:

1) **Those who are not secure in their relationship with God.** You either know that you don't know God, or you're not sure where you stand with Him. Could you follow me in a prayer to receive that incredible gift of salvation that Jesus is offering you?

2) **Those who know God and are secure in their faith.** Your action point for today is to reflect on all Jesus has done for you and begin to get caught up in His grace. Spend some time praising Him this week in your times alone. The God of the Universe loves you and wants to spend personal time with you! If you will allow that truth to grip you, you will see what it means to be speechless before God.

**Amazing Grace
(Lesson I)
Grace That Leaves You Speechless (Part I)**

"How would most students picture a person whose life is totally devoted to God?"

A. Grace: What it means

"Sean Experiences Grace"

Grace is when someone does you a favor by helping you or giving you something, even though you did nothing to deserve it and nothing to earn it.

The word grace is used *over 155 times* in the New Testament and *over 190 times* in the Old Testament. Do you think God might be trying to get our attention? Most of the books of the New Testament (18 of 27) either begin with grace (e.g., "*Grace to you and peace...*") or end with grace (e.g., "*Grace be with you.*"). Do you get the impression that God's saying, "*If you miss everything else, don't miss the grace thing!*"?

B. The Ultimate Demonstration of Grace

- The Highest Came Down to Help the Lowest (Phil. 2:6,7)
- His Grace Was Incredibly Expensive (Phil. 2:7,8, Cr. II Cor. 8:9)

Digging In...Matthew 27:26-50

Roman historian Cicero called crucifixion "the most horrible torture ever devised by man."

Responding To God's Incredible Grace

- *Romans 3:23* – We've all sinned and don't meet up to God's standard.
- *Romans 6:23* – Since we've sinned, we've got to pay the penalty of death.
- *Romans 5:8* – Jesus paid the penalty of death that we deserved to pay.
- *John 3:16* – We must trust Christ for our salvation.

**Amazing Grace
(Lesson I)
Grace That Leaves You Speechless (Part I)**

"How would most students picture a person whose life is totally devoted to God?"

A. Grace: What it _____

"Sean Experiences Grace"

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B. The Ultimate _____ of Grace

- The _____ Came Down to Help the _____ (Phil. 2:6,7)
- His Grace Was Incredibly Expensive (Phil. 2:7,8, Cr. II Cor. 8:9)

Digging In...Matthew 27:26-50

Roman historian Cicero called crucifixion "**the most horrible torture ever devised by man.**"

Responding To God's Incredible Grace

- **Romans 3:23** - We've all _____ and don't meet up to God's standard.
- **Romans 6:23** - Since we've sinned, we've got to pay the _____ of death.
- **Romans 5:8** - _____ paid the penalty of death that we deserved to pay.
- **John 3:16** - We must _____ Christ for our salvation.

Amazing Grace (Lesson II) Grace That Leaves You Speechless (Part 2)

PURPOSE: AT THE END OF THIS SESSION, I WANT MY STUDENTS TO WALK OUT SPEECHLESS AFTER TASTING OF THE INCREDIBLE SAVING GRACE OF GOD.

Introduction

***ILLUSTRATION:** (Leader: It would be more effective to use this actual clip. It is a powerful scene.) In a scene from the movie “Les Miserables,” a released prisoner appears at the door of an elderly couple’s house, needing a place to stay. They allow him to spend the night. But during the night a vivid dream about the horror of his time in prison wakes him, leaving him in a state of panic. In desperation, he steals their silverware in order to have enough money to make it to his destination. The old man awakes, catching him in the act. The thief knocks him to the floor, unconscious.*

In the next scene the police arrive at the old couple’s home with the stolen silverware and the hopeless thief in handcuffs. The police tell the old man the thief’s unbelievable story: that the silverware was given to him. The old man responds, “I’m disappointed in you.” (And we all assume that his next words will condemn the man to return to the horrid prison. But instead, the old man shocks us with his response.) “I’m disappointed because I told you to take the candle holders as well.” The police respond incredulously, “So he was telling the truth?” “Of course,” the old man replied. In shocked disbelief, the prisoner regains his freedom on the word of the old man.

Review: Last week we talked about grace. How does this movie clip illustrate grace? What is grace?

Last week I began showing just how incredible God’s grace is toward us - how understanding it should leave us speechless. We said that some human acts of grace amaze us, like the grace of the old man toward the thief. But that grace doesn’t even compare with the extent of the grace of God. Why? Last week we showed that God’s grace was greater because:

- **The highest came to help the lowest.** No one else could ever dip that low to help people so undeserving.
- **God’s grace was incredibly expensive.** We saw how Jesus allowed Himself to undergo what one historian called “*the most horrible torture ever devised by man*” – crucifixion. And just think, all that humiliation and suffering for people who didn’t deserve His great sacrifice in the least.

But there’s more that astounds us about God’s grace. Let’s pray as we get into it. **(Prayer)**

- **The *Most* Deserving Rescued the *Least* Deserving**

We can’t understand the extent of God’s grace unless we understand the extent of our sin. I see lots of ads that say stuff like, “*Get the service you deserve.*” Or “*You deserve a break today.*”

Listen to me carefully. If you think you deserve *anything* good, you will never be astounded at God's grace. Believe me, the last thing you want to get is what you deserve.

Jesus told a story that used to bother me in Luke 7:36-44. Who'll read this for us?

ILLUSTRATION: *Now that makes sense. If my teacher catches me picking my nose in class and doesn't punish me, I'm grateful but not awed by her grace. But if she catches me changing my report card grade in her computer and blowing up her science lab, then she lets me off the hook, I'd run any errand she asked for and take her an apple every day for the rest of my school years. You see, the larger the debt forgiven, the more you love the forgiver.*

Why do you think this passage bothered me? Because I never saw myself as that bad a person before I was saved. It was like the passage was saying I didn't have as much potential to love God as someone who had really screwed up his life before coming to Christ. But then I saw Jesus' teaching from a different angle:

Luke 7:36-44 –

v. 38 "Kissing the feet was a common mark of deep reverence, esp. to leading rabbis." (Key)

vss. 41-43 – "denarius" = a day's wage for a laborer.

vss. 44-46 – Simon failed to give Jesus the treatment of an honored guest.

oil = Olive oil was plentiful and cheap. *Perfume* was rare and expensive.

v. 47 – "...Her love is proof that she had already been forgiven. It was her response to God's grace." (Note v. 50, "Your faith has saved you.") (Morris)

The more I realize how bad and undeserving I was and am, the more amazed I will be at God's grace in saving me and the more I'll love Him.

ILLUSTRATION: *If you're sitting around playing video games and mom asks if you want a glass of water, you could take it or leave it. No great thirst; no great desire. But have a water boy offer you that same glass of water after running gut sprints in a sweltering football camp all afternoon and that water will look and taste like heaven.*

In the same way, until we realize the blackness of our sin, we have no real appreciation for a Savior. And if we don't think of ourselves as being all that bad, we think that we almost deserved heaven without Jesus and don't fully appreciate what He's done for us.

Only against the backdrop of the blackness of my own sin can I see the brilliance of God's glorious grace.

So the big question is, "Just how bad and undeserving are we? Even the best of us?"

1 – We're All Dirty Rotten Scoundrels

Now I want to warn you, the first half of this message is not going to make you feel good. But you've got to feel really bad before you can feel really good. So don't walk out on me in the middle, okay?

Think you're a pretty good guy or girl? Think again. Who will read Romans 3:9-18 for us?

“What do we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes.’”

So, according to these verses, how many of us are righteous, clean before God, deserving heaven because of our own good deeds? (Let them respond.) That’s right, none. Not even Mother Theresa? None. Not even Billy Graham? NONE.

2 – The Rationalization Game, and How We Play It

If some of you were honest about it, you’d object, *“Give me a break! I’m not all that bad!”*

BRAINSTORM: How do people rationalize their sin, so that they don’t think they’re really so bad? (Consider breaking into small groups and having one person from each group report their conclusions. The following can just elaborate on what they came up with.)

Here are some reasons that we don’t see ourselves as dirty as we really are.

- We compare ourselves with fellow sinners, not a holy God**

<p>IDEA: Transform this illustration into whatever sport or activity your kids can relate to. Examples: 1) You think you’ve got an impressive physique. Then you go to a school where every guy is built like Arnold Schwarzenegger. 2) You think you’re good at soccer... 3) You think you’re a great guitar player....</p>

ILLUSTRATION: *Imagine that you live in a neighborhood where the kids you play basketball with are all younger and smaller than you. Since you can dominate them, you feel pretty good about your talent. In your leisure moments you imagine yourself playing on the school team and strutting your stuff before the awed cheerleaders. But let’s imagine that you move to a new neighborhood. The first day there, you and your inflated ego start strutting your stuff on the neighborhood court, hoping that some locals will see you playing and come out to challenge you. But as the bus from the high school stops at the corner, out step these huge teenage clones of Michael Jordan, Larry Bird and Magic*

Johnson. You overhear one say in a husky voice to the other two, “Hey look! The new guy plays basketball! Now we can play two on two!”

You swallow hard, try not to look intimidated, and hang onto your ego with the thought, “I’ve played against tall guys at school. I wasn’t so bad.” But as they start warming up, consistently shooting three-pointers from farther than you can even throw the ball, passing flawlessly behind their backs and between their legs, effortlessly slam-dunking the ball at will, you realize that you

<p>IDEA: Consider substituting names of students in your youth group in these illustrations. It makes it more fun and personal.</p>
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are totally outclassed. Suddenly you see your “talent” through different eyes. You realize that even your best shots look incredibly awkward in comparison to these guys. Even your dribbling looks stupid. You’re a worm. And not just a worm. A fat, slow, stupid worm. Not wanting anyone to see what just five minutes ago you

thought was talent, you excuse yourself, explaining that you're suddenly feeling sick.

Do you get the point? What does this have to do with how we see our goodness? (Let them respond. When we compare ourselves to other sinners, we may look pretty good. But compare ourselves with those incredibly greater than us, and ultimately God, we don't see ourselves as so great.)

ILLUSTRATION: *If Rick grows up in a rough neighborhood where he is known as the “goody-goody” because the hardest drug he uses is marijuana and he never uses knives when he beats up strangers, then he can't see his bad points as all that bad. Sheila comes from a nice, but not religious family. She sees herself as incredibly spiritual because she hangs out with the church crowd and reads her bible occasionally. But place Sheila and Rick in a home with the apostle Paul as a father and mother Theresa as a mother and they'll both feel they are wicked creeps.*

Now take that a huge step further and let the brilliantly white, spotless, totally pure Son of God appear in their home. You are there visiting. Even Mother Theresa's and the apostle Paul's white clothes look like coal miner's clothes in comparison. Suddenly they all realize how black their pride, unforgiving spirits, and secret sins appear before God. You feel worse than a spiritual worm. You're a dirty, fat, stinking worm.

- **Other people's sins are big; ours are little.**

ACTIVITY: Categorize these sins as you see them. Put a “B” by what you consider big sins, and an “L” by the little sins:

- ___ Murder
- ___ Theft
- ___ Cleaning only part of your room and telling your parents you cleaned all of it.
- ___ Killing an animal for no reason
- ___ Not believing God
- ___ Secretly hating a person who did you wrong
- ___ Getting proud of your accomplishments
- ___ Gossip
- ___ Boasts about stuff
- ___ Greed
- ___ Practicing Satanism

ILLUSTRATION (OPTION 1): *Our idea of which sins are little and which sins are big is often influenced by our families, friends, and culture. For example, A family from another country moved into an affluent Atlanta suburb and ran into trouble with the neighbors because they kept a goat in the back yard. Not having lived in this culture, I'm sure they had no idea that this would be offensive, so in order to solve the problem with their neighbors, they promptly slit the goat's throat and cooked it. Then the animal activists had a fit. They quickly discovered that what was fine in their home culture was looked down upon in another.*

ILLUSTRATION (OPTION 2): *For a person of drinking age in America, drinking a small amount of alcohol and then driving in America may not be considered all that bad. If the alcohol level in your blood is slight, the police won't hassle you. But don't assume that all countries think the same. In some countries, legal alcohol levels are less than here, and driving while at these*

levels is punishable by death by hanging or death by firing squad. And don't call momma to get you out of jail. You're under their laws now.

So, before we go to meet God, we'd better check out what God thinks, in His heavenly culture, about what we see as "little" sins.

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY: Divide into groups of four or five. Have someone read each passage out loud. Each verse lists sins that either God really hates, or the ones that He says are characteristic of those deserving death or hell. Discuss which sins you are surprised to see there.

Romans 1:29-32 (Included as characterizing those deserving death: disobedient to parents, gossips, boasters)

Revelation 21:8 (Included as those who will go to the fiery lake of burning sulfur: cowardly, unbelieving, liars)

Proverbs 6:16-19 (Listed as things God hates, are detestable to Him: haughty eyes (haughty = arrogant, exhibiting great satisfaction with oneself and disdain for others), lying tongue, one who causes dissention.

Prov. 6:16 – “detestable” = “something disgusting, an abhorrence,” (Strong’s), abhor, loathe, detest, abominable (TWOT)
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Some of you will object, “*Those things can’t be all that bad. Everybody does them.*” But just because everybody does it doesn’t mean it’s not terrible. But you’re right about one thing: Everybody does it. And that means we’re all sinners. In fact, we’re all bad sinners. How bad? (Real bad.) Let’s say it together:

I’m a dirty, rotten scoundrel (have them repeat it) who deserves only death and hell (have them repeat it).

Along that line, I’ve got a confession to make. I’m guilty of adultery, murder and have verbally assaulted people so badly that I deserve hell. Hard to believe? Well, according to the Bible, if I’ve ever hated my brother, I’m a murderer (I Jn. 3:15; Mt. 5:22) If I’ve ever lusted in my heart, I’m an adulterer (Mt. 5:28). Guys, do you ever think the wrong thoughts about girls? Then you’re an adulterer too. If I call a brother a fool, I’m guilty enough to go to the hell of fire (Mt. 5:22). Ever refer to someone as a fool or idiot or geek? You are in major trouble. And by the way, if I break one commandment, I’m guilty of breaking them all (Jms. 2:10).

With that in mind, probably everyone in here is an adulterer and murderer like me. Compared to a holy God, we are incredibly evil.

3 – So Let’s Face It, We’re In Major Trouble!

If God were to throw everyone of us into hell, he would be perfectly just. We have done plenty to make us worthy of death and hell. The apostle Paul says that humanity is lost, dead in our sins (Eph. 2:1), objects of His wrath (Eph. 2:3) without hope and without God in the world (2:12; cr. Rom. 5:6-11). And no matter how good I do from here on out, I’m still guilty. A righteous judge would declare us all guilty and condemn us all to hell.

Do you really believe that? If you have now faced how dreadfully black your heart is, then you’re finally ready to see the brilliance of God’s grace.

4 – Grace to the Rescue!

So far, you're probably sorry you came today. But all we've done is to paint the black backdrop to the picture. Now you're prepared to understand grace. In the midst of all our pride and jealousy and icky sin, even when we hated or ignored God, Jesus came to our rescue. Because we deserved it? No. Someone read about it from Ephesians 2:4-9:

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 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.”

You see, no one's going to walk into heaven boasting about all he did to deserve it. Salvation is not a works thing. It's not an earned thing. It's a God's grace thing.

ILLUSTRATION: *Imagine that Sunday you spend night with a friend whose parents are out of town. You get into his father's liquor, party all night, and begin ranting and raving about how the school's a boring prison and someone needs to liven things up. So early Monday morning, thoroughly drunk, you break into the father's gun collection and head to the school. You go into the principal's office and make an announcement over the intercom that classes are cancelled but a party is taking place in the cafeteria. You take the principal hostage and publically humiliate him, covering his face with chocolate pudding and making him crawl over the lunch tables, barking like a dog. You exit through the computer lab, shooting up all the computers, spray painting obscenities against the principal as you leave.*

From that point on, most everything's a blur until the next morning when you wake up in the local prison. You quickly realize that the party's over. An officer stops by to inform you that although fortunately no one was injured, you and your friend did about \$1,500,000.00 damage to the school and you so humiliated the principal that he didn't come back to school the next day.

Now close your eyes and try to picture yourself sitting in the holding cell. As you sober up and realize what you've done, you shudder. You know that you'll spend a good portion of the rest of your life in prison. And to make matters worse, your scuzzy-looking cellmate has been looking you over a little too fondly. Just when you think matters could get no worse, the officer stops back by and says, “Hey, I just got word of who your judge is gonna be. It's judge Griffiths, fondly known around here as ‘The Hanging Judge.’ No one ever gets a break from him. You may not know him, but you probably know his son. He's the principal at your school! That's right, the one you totally humiliated in front of the students and faculty!” Whatever hope you had of getting off the hook has now been dashed.

But then the Principal shows up with an officer, wanting to speak to you alone. He looks at you kindly and says, “I've always believed in you, and I still believe in you. I've refused to press charges. I'm a wealthy man and will pay for all the repairs. You're a free man.” In a moment of time, you go from hopeless despair to ecstasy. You deserved everything bad, but he gave you everything good. How would you treat that principal from now on?

So, we are all miserable sinners who deserve punishment. What do we expect when we come before the righteous Judge? Punishment. But what does he offer? Grace and forgiveness. But it goes way beyond what the gracious forgiveness that the principal showed. But you'll have to read about it yourself to see the incredible grace that God offers us in salvation.

What God Offers In Salvation

ACTIVITY: Bible Search. Keeping in mind how much we deserve only punishment and everything bad, divide into small groups and read the following verses, letting a secretary list each thing that God gave us in our salvation. Try to make as many sentences as you can with this format, “**When we ..., He...**”

Example: Col. 2:13,14 – **When we were spiritually dead, He made us alive.**

- When we were filthy, He washed us and made us whiter than snow. (I Cor. 6:9-11; II Cor 5:19,21; Titus 3:7, Rom. 4:25)
- When we were enemies, He took us back as friends. (Romans 5:10; 3:20-24; II Cor. 5:19)
- When we deserved death, he canceled the debt and gave us life. (Rom. 6:23; 3:23; Titus 2:13,14)
- When we were helpless, He came to our aid. (Rom. 5:6; Eph. 2:1,2,5,12)
- When we were blinded by Satan and slaves to sin, He opened our eyes and set us free. (II Cor. 4:3,4; Jn. 8:34-36; cr. Titus 3:3; II Tim. 2:26)
- When we couldn't pay our way to heaven, He gave us a free ticket (Eph. 2:4,5,8,9 ; Romans 6:23)
- When we had nothing to look forward to, and He gave us hope and promised us heaven. (Titus 3:7)
- When we deserved His wrath, He gave us His love. (Jn. 3:16, cr. Rom. 5:8,10)

I Cor. 6:11 “Justified” = “a legal term used of acquittal, ‘reckon as righteous’, ‘declare righteous’, ‘acquit’. Paul uses it for the act of God whereby, on the basis of Christ’s atoning death, he declares believers to be just, and accepts them as his own.” (Morris)
Titus 3:7 - “In the New Testament <i>hope</i> does not indicate merely what is wished for but what is assured.” (Guthrie)

Conclusion

Now you see why some people have defined grace in this acrostic:

GRACE = God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense

CLOSING ACTIVITY: It’s hard to find a word powerful enough to describe God’s grace. John Newton used the word “*Amazing*” when he wrote “*Amazing Grace*.” Others use “*awesome*.” But today people say stuff like, “*That’s a totally amazing t-shirt*.” Or “*That was an awesome hamburger*.” Awesome isn’t as awesome as it used to be. Perhaps that’s why, in Steven Curtis Chapman’s latest CD he searched for another word to describe his response to God’s grace. He said it left him “*speechless*.” I want to play the song for you now as you reflect on the words on the overhead. As you pick up the melody, sing along on the chorus. (Speechless CD, 1999)

If you’ve never accepted God’s amazing gift of His Son and eternal life, this would be a great day to do it. If you have, then spend the week reflecting on the riches of His grace and thanking Him for all He has done for you. And begin to respond to God like you would respond to that principle who paid your way out and let you off the hook. No task would be too small, no sacrifice too great.

**Amazing Grace
(Lesson II)
Grace That Leaves You Speechless (Part 2)**

"A Former Prisoner Experiences Grace"

- **The *Most Deserving* Rescued the *Least Deserving***

Jesus told a story that used to disturb me in Luke 7:36-44. Who'll read this for us?

The more I realize how bad and undeserving I was and am, the more amazed I will be at God's grace in saving me and the more I'll love Him.

Only on the backdrop of the blackness of your own sin can you see the brilliance of His glorious grace.

1 – We're All Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (Romans 3:9-18)

2 – The Rationalization Game, and How We Play It

- **We compare ourselves with fellow sinners, not a holy God (reverse this pt w/ the next?)**
- **Other People's Sins are Big. Ours are Little.**

So, categorize these sins as you see them. Put a "B" by what you consider big sins, and an "L" by the little sins:

- _____ Murder
- _____ Theft
- _____ Cleaning part of your room and telling your parents you cleaned all of it.
- _____ Killing an animal for no reason
- _____ Not believing God
- _____ Secretly hating a person who did you wrong
- _____ Getting proud of your accomplishments
- _____ Gossip
- _____ Boasts about stuff
- _____ Greed
- _____ Practicing Satanism

Activity: Which sins don't seem to fit in these lists of "biggies"? Romans 1:29-32; Revelation 21:8
Proverbs 6:16-19.

3 – So Let's Face It, We're In Major Trouble! (Eph. 2:1,3,12)

4 – Grace to the Rescue! (Ephesians 2:4-9)

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Amazing Grace (Lesson III) Grace Busters

PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS LESSON, I WANT MY STUDENTS TO SEE HOW THEY HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD GOD’S SAVING GRACE AND TO BEGIN TO SEE IT BIBLICALLY.

PREPARATION: Look over the conclusion and make sure you have secured enough nails and papers (with the verse on top) for this closing activity. You may also want to prepare to use Steven Curtis Chapman’s song, “*The Great Adventure*,” at some point in this lesson.

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION: *In a story that I’ve heard attributed to the great church reformer Martin Luther, some of Satan’s demons came to report in to their master, bragging about the havoc they were raising among Christians on earth. The first boasts: “A group of Christians were meeting in a building, and I started a fire that killed them all.” “So what!” scowled Satan. “They are now all in heaven. You have accomplished nothing.” Another came before him and reported, “I discovered that a large number of Christians were taking a voyage on a ship, and I arranged for the ship to sink, killing them all.” “You fool!” Shouted Lucifer. “Now they are all safely in heaven. You have accomplished nothing.” Finally a third, sly demon came before him and reported, “I slowly influenced a zealous believer until now he is lukewarm at best.” “So what did you do with him?” inquired Satan. The demon replied, “I left him in the church, so that he could influence the rest of the believers.” And then Satan and his demons danced and laughed in delight for the great victory that had been won.*

Along that line, someone has said that the greatest threat to Christianity is the unexcited believer. I suppose that’s why Satan loves to place people that I’ll call “*Grace Busters*” in the church. You see, for the past two weeks we’ve talked about how God poured out His incredible grace on us to offer us His Son, forgiveness, and heaven even though we deserved only hell. That’s exciting, life-changing stuff!

So Satan knows he must confuse people about these awesome truths. And in a lot of people’s

IDEA: Play “*The Great Adventure*,” by Steven Curtis Chapman. It speaks of God’s amazing grace in the context of the adventure of a dynamic Christian life, in which dull religion is left in a cloud of dust behind. (Make sure you have the words up on an overhead/powerpoint for them.)

lives, he’s succeeding. You can tell it by the lack of joy and peace in their lives. You can tell it by the way their spiritual life is such a drudgery to them. You can tell it by the way they treat other people.

If the Christian life doesn’t seem very exciting to you, maybe you’ve fallen for one of the “*Grace Busters*.” Let’s pray as we look at some of these problems that rob Christians of their joy.

PRAYER

The last thing Satan wants Christians to understand is God’s grace. Christians who understand God’s grace fall in love with Satan’s archenemy and get so excited about life that they impact others. From Satan’s perspective, they’re dangerous. So, he’s called on the “*Grace Busters*” to make sure people can’t see God’s grace. Listen with your heart and you may discover that you’ve fallen for one of these deceptions.

• **GRACE BUSTER #1 – “*Legalist Luther*”**

Here’s a true story of a teenager who grew up as a legalist, trying to earn his way into heaven. Can you see yourself in his struggle?

ILLUSTRATION: *A short, stocky teenager named Martin Luther was like a lot of other boys. He enjoyed a good time, loved music and the beautiful outdoors, played an instrument, and worked hard enough at his studies to be able to make it into law school. You’d have thought he had everything going for him. But no matter how good things looked on the outside, he couldn’t find peace in his heart. You see, his parents and the folks at church had taught him that in order to make it to heaven he had to 1) do enough good deeds and 2) pay off his bad deeds. But no matter how hard he tried, doubts and fears plagued Martin because even though he was a good kid, he could never be certain that he’d been good enough deserve heaven.*

After feeling really down for about six months, he was walking to the university one day when a storm suddenly developed and a bolt of lightning struck him to the ground. Assuming that God was trying to get his attention, he decided to do the most sacrificial thing that he could in order to be on God’s good side. He vowed to become a monk. It didn’t matter that the decision enraged his dad and disappointed his teachers. He figured you don’t fool around with God. So he didn’t waste any time. In two weeks he entered a monastery. And not just any monastery, an especially strict monastery. And Martin wasn’t just any monk. He was an especially strict monk. Martin wanted to do everything possible to make sure he could avoid hell and achieve heaven.

He wore rough clothing and limited his food, sometimes not eating at all for three days straight. He worked by day, had devotions at night, prayed seven times a day, and committed not to marry. Do you get the picture? This was no Carnival Cruise Ship. If anyone could have worked his way to heaven, Martin could have. But do you know what? Even after ten years of incredible performance for God in the monastery, he still couldn’t find peace. How could he ever know if he had remembered to confess every single sin, or if he had confessed each one sincerely enough? Eventually, he began to hate God – this all-powerful judge that he could never satisfy.

But everything changed when Martin was given the responsibility of teaching the Bible. By listening more to what the Bible said about God than believing what other people told him about God, he began to slowly discover what he had totally missed his whole life – the grace of a loving God. His change of mind began when he was teaching Psalms. In one prophetic psalm showed him that the Son of God came to earth and experienced what it’s like to be forsaken by God. Jesus had experienced the same forsaken emotion that Martin felt! Finally he began to see the mercy of God.

Then he began to teach the book of “Romans” and discovered that salvation didn’t come by our own good deeds. Instead God forgives us only by His grace because of Jesus’ death for us. Now it all made sense. He no longer had to work for his salvation! He no longer had to wonder if he had done enough to earn heaven. Jesus had already paid his way!

“Most Americans believe that
spiritual salvation is an outcome to
be earned through their good
character or behavior. Six out of
ten people (52%) believe that ‘if a
person is generally good, or does
enough good things for others
during their life, they will earn a
place in Heaven.’” (From 1999
survey of Americans by George
Barna, found on Barna Website at
www.barna.org [Copyright Barna
Research Group, Ltd.)

Martin Luther was never again the same. Finally he could get excited about his gracious God. Finally he could find the peace he had always sought. In fact, he got so excited that he stood against the corrupt, powerful church of his time. He put his life on the line by defying both his religious and civil authorities, starting a spiritual revolution that has impacted us to this day.

A lot of his life reads like an action/adventure movie. He sometimes had to disguise himself to avoid being murdered. Once his friends kidnapped him and took him to live in a castle for his own safety.

One day the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire ordered him to appear before a meeting of princes and other important people, who demanded that he deny his teachings. But he stood his ground before the Emperor and said,

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason...I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise.”

Today, over 400 years after Luther’s death, he is considered one of the most influential men who ever walked the face of the earth. He’s in your school history texts because you can’t understand Western Civilization without understanding Martin Luther. He changed the course of religious history, both for the Catholic and Protestant church. He wrote songs that are still sung today. People still study his books. Web sites are devoted to him. But he would have never left his mark on the world had he failed to discover God’s grace.

*Do you want to be a mover and shaker and leave a mark on the world like Luther? Do you want to have his boldness to make your stand when it seems everyone else is falling? To share his impact and power, you’ve first got to tap into his discovery of grace. (Sources: Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, pp. xii-63; *World Book Encyclopedia*)*

You probably haven’t gone to the lengths Luther did to try to please God. But one survey found that most people believe that they have to earn their way to heaven. Do you think that if you can do enough good deeds to outweigh your bad deeds, then God will look over the computer printout of your deeds on judgment day and let you into heaven because of them? If that’s your idea of salvation, you probably have a hard time understanding why some people actually *like* God and *enjoy* serving Him. To you, God’s just like a strict employer who’s watching you every second to catch you goofing up. And you probably go to sleep at night fearing that you may have not done enough to deserve heaven.

DISCUSSION: How would you counsel people who have fallen for this “Grace Buster?”

Like Luther, the apostle Paul grew up in the works thing. But after he met Jesus Paul wrote this about his new understanding of salvation: (After I read each verse, tell me what you think it says to “Legalist Luther.”)

“I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!” (Galatians 2:21)

“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” (Titus 3:4,5a)

“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; cr. II Tim. 1:9; Rom. 3:19-30; 4:4,5; 5:17; 11:6; I Pet. 1:13; Heb. 2:9; Gal. 3:21,22; Acts 15:11.)

Here’s an important grammar question. Is the action of the phrase “*have been saved*” past, present, or future? (It’s past, something that for the Christian has already happened, not something we’re slowly earning over time.) That’s why it’s possible to know that you have eternal life. (I Jn. 5:13).

Apparently God’s not into gathering a bunch of people into heaven so that He can listen to them sit around bragging about how hard they worked to deserve being there. By offering salvation as a gracious gift, the whole works thing is done away with. So heaven will be full of grateful people who know that the only reason they got in was because of Jesus. Do you understand Grace Buster #1 and how to overcome it?

- **GRACE BUSTER #2 “*Hang in There Harry*”**

Harry knows that he was saved by grace through faith. But now he thinks he’s got to keep his salvation with good works. *How would you counsel Harry?* (Give them time to respond.)

Harry desperately needs to understand I John 5:13. Who will read it for us?

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Did he say, “*that you may have the potential of one day achieving eternal life?*” No! He said that you may *know* that you *already possess* eternal life.

And check out Romans 5:1. What does it say to Harry?

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,…” (Cr. I Cor. 6:9-11)

Look carefully at the tenses of these verbs. He’s writing to Christians and says that they *have been* justified through faith. Why is it significant that the justification took place in the past? (Because it’s something that has already happened to us. We’re not working toward it.) And notice that “*having been justified*” is in the passive tense. Does anybody remember from English class what *passive tense* means? (It is something that someone else [God] did for us. Not something we did for ourselves.)

Romans 5:1 – “Justified” = “be acquitted, be pronounced and treated as righteous (upright, just) and thereby become righteous, receive the divine gift of righteousness, to be justified (BAG). The King James rendering, “ <i>being justified</i> ,” doesn’t bring out the force of the Greek passive as clearly as the NIV.

And if I’ve already been justified by God, then there’s no need to pay for my sins after this life in a place that some call Purgatory. That’s why Jesus could say to the thief on the cross who called on Jesus in faith, “*...today you will be with me in paradise.*” (Luke 23:42,43) Not, “*I’ll see you in paradise after you purge your sins for a few hundred years.*” But *today*.

- **GRACE BUSTER #3 – “*Keep Praying That Prayer*” Patty**

The same verses we just discussed should help Patty. Every time the youth minister gives an invitation to receive Christ as Savior, Patty thinks she needs to get saved again. *How would you counsel Patty?* (Let them respond.)

She doesn't understand that you don't need to be born again every week. When I was born into my physical family, I wasn't disowned by the family every time I messed up, having to get re-adopted every time I asked forgiveness and got back right. In the same way, I'm still God's child, even when I blow it.

Look how Paul addressed a group of Christians who had blown it big time. They were full of pride about their wisdom (I Corinthians chpts. 1,2). They had made all kinds of divisions in the church (chpt. 3) and had brought lawsuits against each other (chpt. 6). And it's bad enough to get drunk at a party. But some of the Corinthians were getting drunk at the Lord's Supper! (ch. 11) But when Paul corrected them, he didn't tell them that they needed to get saved again. Instead, look at how he referred to them in the letter:

“to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling....” (I Corinthians 1:2, NASB)

When we sin as Christians, we don't need to be born again, *again*. Instead we need to confess our sins to keep that close fellowship with God. My *relationship* with God (as His child) is secure. But my *fellowship* with Him can be broken. (I John 1:9)

Sanctified = “make holy, consecrate, sanctify, dedicate” (BAG) “Being set apart for God” (Morris)
Saints = “Christians as consecrated to God” (BAG)

• GRACE BUSTER #4 – *Scumbag Scotty*

IDEA: A great illustration to use here would be of John Newton, who wrote the song *Amazing Grace*. His life story is incredible and I tried to capture some of it in an illustration I put under the topic “forgiveness” (in the “Illustrations” section of our site, type “Newton” into the Search Box and click “go.” Illustration title is “Newton’s Rebellion.”). I didn’t use it here because I had already used it in the series on “Authorities.”

Scotty can't imagine God ever wanting him in His heaven. He's been too rotten. His parents say he'll never amount to anything in life. Scotty tends to agree. He thinks he's too far down the wrong road to turn back now.

What would you say to Scotty? (Get a response.) Scotty doesn't understand the extent of the grace and love of God. If Scotty thinks he's the chief of all sinners, he's never met the apostle Paul. Someone read for us what Paul said of himself in I Tim. 1:13-15:

“Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.” (Timothy 1:13-15; cr. II Chron. 30:9; Titus 2:11; Jn. 3:16)

So, in what way is Paul saying that his case is an example to others? (If God showed mercy on him, being the worst, then other bad sinners can know that God wants them to have eternal life as well.)

Next time you think you've been too bad for God, just remember a guy named Paul, the chief of all sinners, who God forgave and made into one of the most powerful warriors for Himself that the world has ever known.

Action Points (Getting Into Grace)

Some of you may have seen parts of yourself in today's message. Perhaps you've been trying to earn your way into heaven like "Legalist Luther" trying desperately to stay saved by your deeds like "Hang In There Harry," or think you've got to get resaved every time you sin like "Keep Prayin' that Prayer Patty" or feel too sinful for God to love, like "Scumbag Scotty."

I've got great news for every one of you.

God's love is so high that you can't get over it, so wide that you can't get around it, so deep you can't get under it.

No matter how mixed up or sinful you've been, God's grace is greater still. To try to help you visualize this, I'm handing out a nail and a sheet of paper to each of you. At the top of the sheet of paper is what Paul, the chief of sinners, wrote in **Colossians 2:13,14**:

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross."

Some of you think that there's a written list of wrongs that God's holding against you. A list that you've got to either pay for or make up with a longer list of good deeds. To help you visualize this verse I want you to write under this passage the initials of some sins that you think God is holding against you. (Give them a few minutes.) Now fold your paper in half so that no one can see what you wrote. Bring your nail and your paper with you and form a line to the front of the room. At the front you'll find a wooden cross and a hammer (have several if your group is large.) Nail your list of sins to the cross as an act of worship, realizing that if Jesus is your Savior, then he's paid the penalty for all your sins when he died on the cross for you.

(End in a prayer of thanksgiving, letting students express their thanks for God's grace and forgiveness.)

**Amazing Grace
(Lesson III)
Grace Busters**

Introduction

“Demons Report to Satan”

• **GRACE BUSTER #1 – “Legalist Luther”**

“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)

• **GRACE BUSTER #2 “Hang in There Harry”**

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 Jn. 5:13)

• **GRACE BUSTER #3 – “Keep Praying That Prayer” Patty**

“to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling....” (1 Corinthians 12, NASB)

• **GRACE BUSTER #4 – “Scumbag Scotty”**

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst.” (Timothy 1:13-15)

God’s love is so high that you can’t get over it, so wide that you can’t get around it, so deep you can’t get under it.

Action Points

“He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:14)

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Amazing Grace (Lesson IV) Our Gracious God (Part 1)

PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS LESSON, I WANT MY STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN ANTAGONISTIC TO GOD TO BEGIN TO LIKE HIM.

Leaders: In order to accomplish this purpose, pray for God to give you ways to move beyond head knowledge into the emotional and heart level. It's hard to take people from hating God to loving Him by simply presenting a logical argument. Ideas:

- **Expose them to God's grace in His Word.** For Luther, his journey from hating God to loving Him began by an exposure to the truth of God's Word in order to clear up his misconceptions.
- **Pray for God to break through.** Ultimately, we're fighting a spiritual battle with the forces of darkness which blind our students. God sometimes opens people's eyes in a flash. A scientist had studied the universe for years without finding God there. But while driving along a highway he suddenly saw design in the universe and knew there must be a designer.
- **Take your praise time up a notch.** Praise through song is more than a warm up to your message. Cassie Bernall's friend said that the singing at the retreat that melted Cassie's hard heart (See illustration in next lesson). Choose songs in a style that moves your students. Choose songs with lyrics that allow students to praise God. Make sure that it is done with excellence. Consider moving the praise time to the middle or end of your lesson. Or intersperse praise songs throughout your message so that students can express back to God what they are learning.
- **Allow them time to thank God** out loud for the specific things He has done for them.
- **Let them share ways in which they have seen God's grace.** Perhaps some students from another youth group with dramatic testimonies would like to come share.
- **Prepare a slide show** (or PowerPoint Presentation) **of beautiful scenery** to show in the background while they are singing praises. Perhaps appropriate portions of the "Jesus Film" could be shown with no audio as they sing praises.
- Find practical ways to **show kindness to your students**. Write a note. Make a call. Follow-up on a prayer request. Students flock to one of our Sunday School teachers. One of his practices is to give a cheap sucker to each student each Sunday. It's a small way he show God's love to them. (Plus, it keeps their mouths shut when they shouldn't be talking!) If you talk about God's grace but fail to demonstrate grace, don't be surprised if your students don't get it.

Introduction

Last week I told the story of Martin Luther, who grew up clueless about God's grace and felt he could never do enough to please God. After living this way for years, do you remember how he began to see God? (A stern judge who provoked fear in everyone.) So what were Luther's feelings about God? (He hated Him.)

A lot of students, and probably some of you, can identify with Luther. When you see people who get excited about worship and smile toward heaven as they sing, you don't get it. When you think of God, if He exists at all, you despise Him. You view Him as a powerful, pushy authority who always wants to get His way and throw those who don't like it into hell.

IDEA: Consider using the chilling song, "Angel of Light," by Petra ("Never Say Die" album), to show how Satan disguises himself as an angel of light in order to deceive people.

I'm convinced that there's an evil force in this world who's not just out to get you into drugs. His primary mission is to blind you to the love and grace of his archenemy: God.

ILLUSTRATION: *Since a lot of students were going nuts over Metallica, I decided to surf to some of their sites on the web and see what they were trying to communicate through their lyrics. Although their music is awesome, I found that their lyrics were obsessed with death, destruction, and the spiritual enemies of God. I began to wonder why these guys seemed to hate God so much.*

I may have found at the Metallica Encyclopedia site, which not only gave their lyrics, but also supplied information on what was behind the songs. One of the songs that especially caught my eye was titled "The God That Failed," from their "Black Album." According to the site, James wrote the song about his mom's death from cancer. She belonged to a cult that didn't believe in using doctors. She believed so strongly that her faith in God would heal her that she refused any medical aid and died. I suppose in James' mind, when his mom needed God the most, He didn't come through. Maybe that explains his dark attitude toward life and his antagonism to God that comes across so clearly in his lyrics.

Now today's message is not meant to clear up all your questions about why God allows bad things to happen to good people. (See my series on "Mastering Your Circumstances" where I deal with this issue.) All I want to say is that your view of God makes a major impact on how you view life. If this message helps to change your view of God, it could very well change your life.

Let's pray as we try to repaint the picture of God that many people have.

PRAYER

BRAINSTORM: 1) What are the popular conceptions of God (What God is like. His character.) that you think students have today? (This could be done in small groups and reported back to the large group.) 2) For each conception of God you come up with, discuss how it affects the life of the person who holds it.

I. The Gods that Don't Exist (Popular Pictures of God)

(Leader: I've listed the following as a few that they may come up with. You can add any that they might miss.)

"The Cosmic Scrooge": *a stern, busy accountant who keeps a precise list of all your sins, constantly tallying the difference between your bad deeds and good deeds, and treats you accordingly.*

How does this image of God affect the people who hold it? This was Martin Luther's view of God. How did it affect him? (Felt he could never please God. Began to hate God.) If that's your picture of God, I can tell you that you have a hard time getting excited about Him, and you are baffled by people who worship Him w/ excitement and awe.

***“The Cosmic Killjoy”*: a celestial party pooper who looks over the earth for people having a good time, so that He can make them stop.**

How does this image of God affect the people who hold it? (They see a relationship with Him as a boring drudgery.)

So what is God like? How does He look at us?

II. The God I Never Knew

A. The God Who Throws Parties

Can you imagine a God who throws parties? I couldn't either until I began to reflect on some interesting Bible passages.

1. An Annual *“Bring Your Favorite Food and Wine”* Party

Today I'm letting you in on something that's beyond most people's comprehension. Most think of the Old Testament as a time of drudgery where a smileless God ordered people to keep a lot of picky commandments so that He could swat Him when they messed up.

If that's your idea, you've never actually read the Old Testament. Let's try to erase from our minds for a moment all these conceptions of God that we've learned from other people and from our own imaginations. Instead, let's go back to the Bible itself to find what it says about God.

First, check out the instructions for the yearly tithe of the farmer's produce in Deuteronomy 14:22-27. Now stay with me, because some of you are already thinking, *“There God goes again, making people take their hard-earned stuff and throw it in a fire somewhere. Sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice.”* But let's take a closer look at the passage.

“Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always.”

Deut. 14:22-27 - Scholars differ as to whether this is the same tithe prescribed in Numbers 18 or an additional tithe. In the third year, the entire tithe was given locally to the Levites and those in need. (vss. 28,29) Try not to get sidetracked on the drinking issue . But if you get cornered into it, you could mention that drunkenness is sin (Pr. 20:1; 23:29-31; Eph. 5:18) Should students drink at all? Here are some biblical principles involved: <i>Would you be disobeying your parents?</i> (Eph. 6:1-3) <i>Would you be disobeying your governing authorities?</i> (Rom. 13:1-7) <i>Would it be a positive influence on others?</i> (Phil. 4:9) <i>Will it harm your body?</i> (I Cor. 6:19-20) <i>Could it be a stumbling block to either believers</i> (Rom. 14:13,19) <i>or non-believers?</i> (I Cor. 9:19) <i>Could it harm your reputation?</i> (Titus 2:6-8; I Tim. 3:7,10)
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Did you catch that? You don't take the tithe and burn it as a sacrifice. You take it and eat it at a big feast! This sounds a little more upbeat. So let's continue...

“But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose.”

Are you following what God's saying? If it's not practical to take one tenth of all your cattle and produce travel 100 miles to the feast, then just exchange it for silver. And what do you think they are to do with the silver? (Let them respond.) Dedicate it to the temple? Read on...

“Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish.”

So you take your silver and go on a shopping spree to buy *whatever you want*. He didn't say “pray and fast to determine exactly what God wants you to get.” He already specified what He wants you to get: ***“anything you wish.”*** NOW you throw it all into a big sacrificial fire and burn it before the LORD, right? Let's read on...

“Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice.”

So let's get this straight. You take a tenth of your crops and herds, sell them for silver, travel to an appointed place, go on a shopping spree to buy whatever food or wine or anything you want, then you go eat it with all the other folks in a huge celebration that God wants you to enjoy.

All through the book of Deuteronomy I keep finding these party words: “rejoice” (Deut. 14:27, 16:11,14), celebrate (16:13), gladness (28:47). What's His purpose in all this? Look at one of the feasts in Deuteronomy 16:15:

“Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you shall be altogether joyful.”(NASB)

I hope this is blasting an incredible lie that the Enemy has foisted on the world: That God is a big celestial bully who sits around thinking of creative ways to make people miserable. Listen, when God gives us laws, they are for our good. When he says be faithful to your marriage partner, He's not trying to stop all your fun. He's trying to keep us from getting hurt. He wants to free us from the tragedies that are ruining student's lives. When you understand God's laws from that perspective, it makes perfect sense why an Old Testament Jew could write,

“O how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long.” (Ps. 119:97)

Now it's true that God hates sin and often corrects us when we get out of line. But many can't see His mercy, how He delights in you, how He wants to experience great joy. Is it hard for you to picture a God who throws parties? Then get your thinking in line with the truth.

2. A “Pull Out All the Stops” Home Coming Party

Let’s look at a New Testament party passage. In Luke 15 we find Jesus talking to whoever will listen and eating with people that the religious big shots despised: tax gatherers and sinners. The religious crowd grumbles about it and Jesus tells them a story in verses 11-32 to explain God’s heart for sinners. I’ll put it in a modern setting, reading it as part of a letter that a young 19-year-old named Neal writes to his brother about his previous year.

Alternative: Instead of reading this “letter,” play the “*Prodigal Son Suite*” by Keith Green. This powerful song goes through the life of the Prodigal Son in a way that only Keith Green could present it.

Dear Brother,

I want you to know exactly what happened to me over the past year, so that you can avoid the hell I went through. After my high school graduation, I sat down with dad for a little father-son talk about my future. I wore a conservative pair of khaki pants and a collared knit shirt. You know, the routine we always did when we wanted

something from dad. I convinced him that a few of my friends and I had been planning to launch a computer business for some time and we felt it was time to strike now while the market’s hot. Then I gave him that apologetic look, like I didn’t feel quite right about asking this, but then looked him in the eye and asked, “Could I take the money you set aside for my college and my portion of the inheritance and use it to pursue this dream?”

I knew dad’s emotions would be mixed. You know how much he wanted us to do the college thing. And he really didn’t want to risk me losing that money that he hoped I would use take care of him in his old age. But I reminded him about how he always told us of his regrets that he played it so safe in life, managing someone else’s print shop instead of taking the risk to set up his own.

Perhaps just seeing his oldest child sitting there in the living room, nicely dressed, speaking to him man to man about a feasible business simply overwhelmed him. Whatever the case, after spending a few days looking over the business plan (that I’d found on the internet), he took me to the bank and transferred an incredible \$600,000.00 over to my name. I looked him sincerely in the eye and said, “I won’t let you down.” At that moment dad probably relished in what he considered one of those father-son moments that he’d always look back on fondly. His son’s transition into manhood. The beginning of a business venture that would surely make him proud to be my father.

But behind a sincere expression my hard heart was saying, “Stupid old man. He’s worked fifty hours a week making his employer rich while he’s lived a frugal life in order to save for a retirement that might never happen. Somebody needs to enjoy this wealth before it all disappears into a nursing home.”

I was already packed, so I lit out of town without even calling to say goodbye. I thought of no one but myself. My whole world centered around me. As I left the Baxley city limits, I rolled down my window, clinched my fist and shouted defiantly, “In five years I’ll return rich and famous! You wait and see. You’ll be lined up for my autograph.” My dream was to break into Chicago’s nightclub business so that I could spend my nights hearing great bands and hanging out with the party crowd while I built my fortune.

Oh yea, I picked up a few “necessities” along the way. For me, image was everything. So I traded in the ailing Ford Taurus for a brand new Porsche. Then I bought some clothes worthy of my new image. With all that money and my natural charm, I quickly broke into Chicago’s social world of the local movers and shakers. At one party I met an incredible brunette named Veronica who worked for a financial firm. As I explained my dream of owning a club, her eyes lit up. She had been thinking of leaving her job to start up something of her own. We hit it off so well

that within a few weeks we had moved into an upscale apartment near some of her acquaintances.

Her friends treated me like an equal, listening intently to my ideas. I thought I had them wrapped around my fingers. And since they had lots of business experience, their advice to form a business partnership sounded wise. Together, we could make some serious money out of his inheritance. Within a few months, I was riding on the clouds. I was 19 years old, owned a hot club that pulled in top emerging bands, partied with incredible people, spent money wildly on whatever my eyes desired, had Veronica to manage the finances, and every chick adored me. Just six months out of nowhere land, and life was unbelievable.

Things went great for another six months. But suddenly the bottom fell out. It started one morning over breakfast when I noticed that the roots of Veronica's brunette hair were starting to emerge blonde. I panicked and checked the financial records personally for the first time. Sure enough, Veronica was clueless about the finances. But her friends weren't clueless. They had been slowly draining my bank account dry by billing Veronica for exorbitant consulting fees and borrowing money in my name from the local Mafia.

Now it was payback time, and I was dead broke. Veronica left in the Porsche to get her nails done and never returned. But the mafia arrived the next day, offering me three choices: pay up immediately, work for them, or die. Needless to say, I accepted their generous job offer. During the day, I did their dirty work, making dangerous drug transactions and threatening people who were behind on their payments. My paycheck was a bowl of soup and enough cocaine to keep me going for a day. At night I slept in an abandoned building with other addicts. I lived in constant fear - fear of the mafia, fear of the police, fear of those who beat me and abused me at night. Finally my drug habit got so bad that the mafia gave me a serious beating and threw me out. Later that night, as I was going through my favorite garbage can looking for food, I began to think of how good I had it back home – my own bedroom, security, hot meals, a family that loved me. Then it occurred to me that dad occasionally employed homeless people through the Salvation Army. They didn't get much pay. But at least they had food and a safe shelter.

I wrote dad a letter explaining to him what had happened. I had lied to him, humiliated him, wasted his money, and certainly didn't deserve any favors. Nor did I even dream of him allowing me back home as a son any more. I just wanted a lowly job with food and shelter. I would try to get home over the weekend and I hoped he'd be willing to consider hiring me.

That Saturday morning I persuaded a former employee from the nightclub to drive me home. I cleaned up as best as I could. But my ill-fitting clothes couldn't hide all the scars and needle marks. The whole way I rehearsed what I was going to say: "I've messed up bad. I know I don't deserve to be your son. Please could you find it in your heart to let me be an errand boy at the print shop. I promise to do a good job for you." But just before we turned onto our street, I told the driver to stop so that I could look and make sure none of my neighbors or old friends were around. I didn't want anyone to see me looking like this. But as I looked down the street toward my house, I choked up with tears. There was my aging dad, anxiously piddling around in

The Prodigal Son: The context
provides the key to interpreting this parable. The religious elite grumble because Jesus receives sinners and
eats with them (15:1,2). In response, Jesus tells three stories, of which this is the last, to show
God's love for lost people.
v. 15 – "For a Jew no occupation could have been more distasteful. A rabbinic saying runs, 'Cursed be the man who would breed swine.'" (Morris)
v. 20 – "In that part of the world it was generally not considered dignified for an elderly man to run; yet, he runs."
v. 22 – "Best robe" is a status symbol. "Ring" is probably a signet ring...an indication of authority." (Hendriksen)

the front yard, pulling a weed here or there, and then gazing intently, hopefully at every passing car. Draped on the front of the house was a huge banner that said, "Welcome Home, Son."

I began to instinctively walk down the tree-lined sidewalk toward the house. When dad spotted me, I immediately began my little prepared speech, but he broke into a run, then grabbed me by the neck as he sobbed uncontrollably, saying over and over, "You're alive! You're alive! We had almost lost all hope but now you've come home alive. Come inside, get you a decent bath, then put on some nice, warm clothes from your closet. I'm taking you with all my associates and relatives to the most expensive restaurant in town. It's time to celebrate. I just can't believe that you're really home!"

Now remember, I didn't make up the story. Jesus told the original version 2000 years ago. Who does the father in the story represent? (God) Who does the son represent? (a person who's rebelled against God) What point was Jesus making? (God loves sinners and wants to receive them.)

Listen to me as we close. God loves you. He *really* loves you. He doesn't wait till after you've cleaned up your act to love you. He just loves you. His love is so high that you can't get over it, so wide you can't get around it, so deep you can't get under it. As incredible as it sounds, He thinks about you, longs for you, and has gone to incredible lengths so that you could know Him intimately. If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it.

Action Points

So how do we respond to a God like that? (Leader, determine which of these applications you will primarily aim for in your group.)

- **Accept Jesus as Savior.** God loves us sinners. No matter how much you've rebelled, He stands there like the father in the front yard, longing to take you back into his arms. But our sin deserves to be punished. As a just God, he can't just let us off the hook. That's why Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. God wants you to trust in His son to forgive you and give you eternal life.
- **Commit yourself to follow Him. (Titus 2:11-14)**

ILLUSTRATION: *Imagine that you're Neal (from the above story). You deserved to be a target for your dad's spit, but instead you got a warm embrace, a major party, and received back into your family. It's the day after the party and you're settling back into life as a son. An old friend calls you up and says, "Hey, instead of working at the old man's print shop tomorrow, how about coming over to my house and getting wasted?" How would you respond? (Get their input.) "How could I do that to my father? I've been that road. It ends in misery." Did you notice? No one said anything about fear of punishment. You see, now we're operating out of a relationship w/ a God who loves us. Not out of fear of judgment. It's a totally different world, a totally different view of the Christian life. When you've been graciously loved, forgiven and accepted to the extent that Neal was in the story, you naturally want to please the One who save you. He's got good plans for you. You can trust your life with a God like that.*

- **Become a gracious person.** Since you were loved when you were unlovely, love the unlovely around you. Since you were forgiven when you deserved to be punished, forgive those around you who deserve your punishment. Since God throws parties for the

undeserving, be nice to those that most people refuse to talk to. Get outside of your little click and open your heart to others who are hurting.

Overhead

Amazing Grace (Lesson IV) Our Gracious God (Part 1)

Introduction

"The God That Failed"

I. The Gods that Don't Exist (Popular Pictures of God)

"The Cosmic Scrooge": a stern, busy accountant who keeps a precise list of all your sins, constantly tallying the difference between your bad deeds and good deeds, and treats you accordingly.

"The Cosmic Killjoy": a celestial party pooper who looks over the earth for people having a good time, so that He can make them stop.

II. The God I Never Knew

A. The God Who Throws Parties

1. An Annual "Bring Your Favorite Food and Wine" Party (Deuteronomy 14:22-27)

"Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you shall be altogether joyful." (NASB) (Deuteronomy 16:15)

2. A "Pull Out All the Stops" Home Coming Party

Action Points

- **Accept Jesus as Savior.**
- **Commit yourself to follow Him. (Titus 2:11,12)**
- **Become a gracious person.**

**Amazing Grace
(Lesson IV)
Our Gracious God (Part 1)**

Introduction

"The God That Failed"

I. The Gods that Don't _____ (Popular Pictures of God)

"The Cosmic _____": *a stern, busy accountant who keeps a precise list of all your sins, constantly tallying the difference between your bad deeds and good deeds, and treats you accordingly.*

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2. A "Pull Out All the _____" Home Coming Party

Action Points

- **Accept Jesus as Savior.**
- **Commit yourself to follow Him. (Titus 2:11,12)**
- **Become a gracious person.**

Amazing Grace (Lesson V) Our Gracious God (Part 2)

PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS LESSON, I WANT MY STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN ANTAGONISTIC TO GOD TO BEGIN TO LIKE HIM. AND I WANT TO MOVE MY STUDENTS WHO ALREADY LIKE HIM TO BEGIN TO FALL IN LOVE WITH HIM.

INTRODUCTION

Many people get their picture of what God is like from their own family experience and what they hear about God from others. For example,

***ILLUSTRATION:** Bill Bailey experienced a horrific childhood. He was abused and abandoned by his real father, then beaten and sexually abused by his stepfather. He felt rejected by his mom. To make matters worse, his hypocritical parents claimed to be very religious. He later adopted the stage name “Axl Rose,” and became famous in the band “Guns N’ Roses.” It’s no surprise to me that his lyrics so often reflect hate and rebellion. How do you think his background affected his lyrics? How do you think his background influenced his view of authorities and his view of God? (Sources: <http://www.angelfire.com/ut/urumea/rob.html>)*

Some of you can relate to Axl’s background. And like him, you have a dark view of the world and assume that God is just another authority who wants to let you down and abuse you. And Axl is far from alone in his dark view of the world.

***ILLUSTRATION:** When guitarist Carlos Santana chose the songs for his recent (1999-2000) best-selling album, he purposely tried to run positive, encouraging themes through the album. Why? Listen carefully. In a recent interview, Santana says that lots of students have a “victim mentality.” They wake up each morning believing that life stinks and everyone’s out to get them. He then hits the interviewer with a paradoxical statement:*

“As you know, most people are not happy unless they’re miserable.” (“Exploring the Supernatural,” by Rich Maloof, The Musician’s Planet Magazine, Spring, 2000, p. 22)

What do you think Santana meant by that statement? (Let them discuss. Many musicians and students think it’s uncool to be positive, happy and thankful. Instead, they are miserable, constantly complain about their circumstances, and seem to prefer life that way.)

We all come here with views of God and life that have been shaped by our upbringing, the media, and our friends. But today, I challenge you to clear your minds of all your preconceptions so that we can take a fresh look at how God presents Himself in the Bible. If you don’t like the picture of God that’s in your mind, please don’t reject Him until you’ve got a clearer picture of who He actually is. But to see God clearly is more than a mind game. It’s a spiritual battle. So let’s bathe this session in prayer so that God will break through and give us eyes to see.

PRAYER

REVIEW: Last week we looked into the Bible and discovered a God who threw parties. Who remembers what the Old Testament party was like? What about the New Testament party? How does a God who throws parties differ from the God most people have in their minds?

B. A God Who Showers Us With Grace

I don't want to lay my opinions on you here. Rather, I want you to go straight to the bible and draw your own conclusions about whether or not God deserves our worship and our lives. First we'll look at verses that speak of the physical blessings God has showered on us.

BIBLE SEARCH: Divide into small groups. Have someone read a verse and let at least one person say in his own words what the verse says that God does for people. (Don't preach here! Let the students read the verses on their own and come up with their own comments. I've got some of my thoughts beside each for those who are speaking to groups so large that small group interaction may be impossible.)

1. Physical Blessings

"...the God of all grace..." (I Peter 5:10).

IDEAS: 1) A group of more mature Christians could take Psalm 145 or Psalm 23 and take turns reading a verse and thanking God for something the verse brings to mind. 2) Create a slide show out of beautiful nature scenes (I've done it by finding calendars with dramatic nature scenes and take pictures of the scenes using slide film. Mount the camera on a tripod to minimize movement.) Then turn out the lights and sing praise songs while looking at the slides.

- **Genesis 1:21-31** *God's Grace in Creation.*

Variety of food and animals - God could have given us grits in morning, a banana at night, a palm tree to look at and a lizard to play with. Instead, he put man originally in a paradise with fresh fruits and vegetables, and the possibility of millions of combinations of those to make delicious recipes. When's the last time you walked into Kroger or opened your refrigerator and praised God for what was there?

1:27 – The human body - Everyone look at one of your hands for a moment. Twitch one of your fingers. Pick up your Bible or wallet. Has it ever astounded you how

incredible a creation that hand is? Your brain interacts seamlessly with it to tell it to hold a pencil lightly, grasp a book tight enough to keep it from dropping, to pull immediately away from a hot object. It can learn to play the guitar or the piano. Have you ever thanked God for your hands and fingers? You neither worked for them nor did enough good to deserve them. That's God's grace.

- **Matthew 5:45** *Sun and Rain.*
- **Matthew 6:27-30** *Wild flowers that we didn't plant.*
- **I Timothy 6:17** *Material things for our enjoyment.*
- **Other Physical Blessings:** Brainstorm other ideas: (The air, the seasons, parents, church, friends, music.)

Mt. 5:45 – Remember: in the culture to which these words were spoken, a rainy day was a *good* day! Without rain, their crops would fail.

Now I know that some of us have gone through some horrendous times. But it's interesting how some people can come out of those hard times *bitter* and others come out *better*. The only difference in those two words is the letter "I." I can either focus on the bad circumstances, get bitter and conclude that life stinks, or I can focus on the good in life, be thankful for what I have. Some people see the donut and others see the hole. It's all in my perspective. Satan wants us to focus on life's hard times and become cynical. God wants us to focus on the good times and become thankful. Perhaps that's part of how Paul could be content and joyful while sitting in prison.

IDEAS: 1) Cassie's friend who brought her to the retreat (see illustration at end of this lesson) said that it was the singing that seemed to break through to Cassie. That's a good reminder that we've got to touch hearts, not just educate heads. Consider putting together a **slide presentation (or Powerpoint)** with beautiful scenery and put lyrics to praise songs on each picture. This gives the opportunity to praise God for His handiwork as you sing to Him. Make sure all lights are out so that you get the full impact. 2) **Find a colorblindness test** (my encyclopedia has one in it) and put it up in front of the group. Don't anyone say anything. Everyone look at it. If you are not colorblind, you can see a number. Someone tell me what the number is. Now can any of you not see the color? Color blind people can't see any number. They see only meaningless blobs. And no matter how hard they squint or how many of you try to describe the number and where it is, they can't see it. That's the way it is for many people who are "grace blind." We must pray that God will give them eyes to see. . (If you are artistic take the colors off of a colorblindness test and make images of cruelty and hatred in the world. But only the non-colorblind people can see Jesus on a cross dying for them. A "chalk talk" would serve the same purpose.)

2. Spiritual Blessings

*"...the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us."
(Eph. 1:7,8)*

Sometimes, especially when we're sick or our families are in turmoil, it's hard to fully appreciate all our *physical* blessings. But God has also given us *spiritual* blessings, blessings that are constant and never change.

Again in your small groups, reflect on these spiritual blessings that God has given us. (Let the youth read and reflect on these as they did above. If time is running low, choose the passages that you think are the most effective.)

- **Rom. 5:1-11** – *justified, peace with God, hope, Jesus died for us, saved from wrath, reconciled*
- **Romans 8:31-39** – *God is for us, delivered up His Son for us, will freely give us all things, justifies us, intercedes for us, nothing can separate us from His love, we can overwhelmingly conquer*
- **Eph. 1:7** – *Forgiveness, according to the riches of His grace*
- **Eph. 2:1-9** – *made us alive from the dead, raised us up, seated us in heavenly places, saved as a gift*
- **2 Cor. 8:9** *He became poor so that we could be rich.*
- **Jn. 3:16** *have eternal life*
- **Rev. 21:3,4** *Look forward to new heavens and new earth, with no more crying, death, etc.*
- **Heb 13:5,6** *God will never desert or forsake us.*
- **Mt. 7:7** *God answers our prayers.*

- **Pr. 3:5,6** *God gives us direction.*
- **Eph. 1:3** *blessed with every spiritual blessing*

Brainstorm Other Blessings: Can you think of other spiritual blessings that God has given us? What do you like about the Christian life? (Example: God could have commanded us to praise Him by walking on our knees for a mile each day. Instead, He accepts our joyful praise through song, instruments, and thanksgiving.)

Why spend all this time counting our blessings? Because if a wealthy person gives me a couple of quarters to purchase a canned Coke, I casually thank him and go on with my life. But if he gives me unlimited use of his credit card, house, swimming pool, and country club membership, then I'm overwhelmed with gratitude. I thank him profusely and ask what I can do to show my gratitude. In the same way, the more I understand how much God has done for me, the more I want to thank and serve Him.

THANK GOD ACTIVITY: Now come together in a large group for prayer. I want everyone to think of at least one physical or spiritual thing that is an evidence of God's grace to you. Try to make it something that you don't normally thank God for. It may or may not relate to the verses we just said. For example, I once heard a guy thank God for the fluid that surrounds his eyes, keeping them from hurting. Now, one at a time, mention something out loud to God that you are thankful for.

We could list hundreds of blessings God has given each of us, but it would never make an impact on many people. Some of you here may sit through this session and not be impressed at all with God. Why? Because in trying to help people understand grace, I'm convinced that we're dealing with more than just a mind game. We're dealing with spiritual warfare. Powerful, evil spiritual forces grip people's dark glasses so that they can't take them off and see the grace in the world. (II Cor. 4:3,4) That's why, for many people, God has to take the dark glasses off before they can see His grace. It's not an intellectual thing. It's a God thing. I'll give you an example.

ILLUSTRATION: *Cassie Bernall became known worldwide as a 17-year-old student who died in the April, 1999 massacre at Columbine High School. I think that her spiritual journey well illustrates the change that happens when God takes off a student's dark glasses and replaces them with "Grace Glasses." Cassie's journey to the dark side was much different from Axl's. Her parents adored her. Each morning her dad would sit on the side of her bed, sing a little good-morning song to her, and tell her, "Have a good day, Cassie, I'll see you tonight." Her dad*

Rom. 8:31-39

Vss. 33ff. - "Paul for a moment envisages the situation in terms of a court of justice, where the believer stands to be judged." "...if God takes the side of the defendant, no amount of evidence for the prosecution can procure an adverse verdict." (Bruce)
 "To justify, is to declare the claims of justice satisfied." "No rational creature, no enlightened conscience, can call for the punishment of those whom God justifies." (Hodge)

On Comprehending our Spiritual Blessings:

In this lesson (and series) I'm following Paul's approach in Ephesians. He begins by explaining in detail the riches that the readers have in Christ (Eph. 1-3), praying that their hearts can comprehend how much God loves them and has blessed them spiritually (1:18; 3:18,19). Only after enlightening them concerning their blessings in Christ does he exhort them toward right conduct, motivated by wanting to live a life worthy of their high calling (4:1), modeled after God's conduct toward us (4:32-5:2), consistent with their new life (5:8). Thus, a major key to seeing our students spiritually blossom is to make them aware of what they have in Christ. (Note also Romans 1-11 as a basis for the practical exhortations of 12-16.)

took her for rides on his dirt bike. They had enough money to buy her pets and toys and nice clothes.

But her childhood happiness began to slip away when she got with the wrong friends in the 5th grade, students who dabbled in satanic rituals. Their view of life became her view of life. Very slowly, subtly, over the next few years, the glasses through which she viewed the world became darker and darker till she could not longer see any grace in the world. One day her mom was looking for a Bible in Cassie's room when she ran across some letters addressed to Cassie from her best friend. What she found devastated her.

The friend's letters were full of occult drawings, spells, excitement about a Satanist church where people had to drink a kitten's blood to enter, horrific drawings of a man and woman hanging by their intestines and daggers protruding from their hearts. Incredibly, the drawings were labeled "Ma and Pa," Cassie's parents. Her friend was obsessed with death. One of the letters said, "...kill me with your parents, then kill yourself so you don't go to jail." Cassie told one of her friends that she was planning to kill one of her teachers.

Her parents took drastic action, forbidding her to see her friends, and putting her in a new school. Cassie became obsessed with suicide and would scratch her hands and wrists with a sharp metal file until they bled. She hated her parents. She hated her miserable life. Cassie later wrote these words in a paper for an English class: "Throughout this time I hated my parents and God with the deepest, darkest hatred. There are no words that can accurately describe the blackness I felt...."

Now think with me for a minute. What is going on here? On the outside, Cassie has a lot going for her. She's got parents who love her, feed her, and give her things. She's getting a free education in a great school. She lives in a nice, warm house in a nice neighborhood. Millions of kids around the world would give anything to have what she has. What has happened? (Get some discussion here.) Something has happened inside Cassie's mind. She has allowed herself to become blinded to the grace around her and obsessed with the darkness. If something hadn't happened to open up her eyes, she could have very well become one of the murderers at Columbine High.

From a biblical point of view, I think we can assume that what went on here was more than just a natural process. Cassie later said that she had given her soul to Satan and felt gripped by the powers of darkness. Her parents couldn't make any progress trying to talk to her rationally. Her mom came to see that a spiritual battle was going on. She tried to go into Cassie's room one day and couldn't bring herself to enter. When she finally did, in her own words, "I can't quite describe it, but it felt like you could almost cut the air in that room with a knife, the atmosphere was so oppressive." She felt for certain that there was more to this than just a rebellious teenager. She began to cry and pray for God to break through.

The next chapter of the story is dramatic. A Christian at her new school befriended her and invited her to a weekend retreat in the Rocky Mountains. That night, God broke through to her during a praise and worship service. The change was almost instantaneous. Her dark "glasses" fell off. After the service, Cassie and a few others began to look up at the stars. They stood there in silence, totally in awe of the God she had once hated.

*Her parents noticed the change when she stepped off the bus. She had left gloomy, with her head down, saying nothing. She came back bouncy and excited. Listen carefully to her dad's own words, "It was as if she had been in a dark room, and somebody had turned the light on, and she could suddenly see the beauty surrounding her." They saw the smile that had disappeared years ago. She began to love and respect her parents and her brother. Grace had been all around her, but for the first time in years she could finally see it. (Source: *She Said Yes: The Unlikely Martyrdom of Cassie Bernall*, by Misty Bernall, Plough Publishers, 1999)*

Some of you can probably identify with the dark view of the world that Cassie formerly had. Have you ever wondered why you think that only negative lyrics are cool – lyrics about death,

destruction, hate and revenge? Have you ever wondered why you think all positive lyrics are wimpy and gutless? Maybe you haven't gone as far to the dark side as Cassie did, but if you've become negative and cynical about the world, and you're not "happy" unless you're complaining, you're on the same path. If you're on that path, I challenge you, I plead with you to ask God to intervene. Ask Him to break through and open up your eyes. I'll give you an opportunity now.

Action Points

- Let's **pray that God will open up our eyes to see His grace.** (Let someone lead in prayer.)
- Have you got the "Negative Disease"? Everything you see is dark and gloomy? Let me prescribe "**Thank Therapy**" to you. **Several times per day, thank God for the things you normally take for granted.** And not just God. Thank people that you've never thanked before. Like that teacher that's trying to get through to a class of disinterested students. Go make his year by thanking him for pouring his time into you guys. Like your parents for something they've done for you. Thank God regularly for things you normally take for granted. Any of you got appendicitis today? In the process of a massive heart attack? Why not thank God that you don't. It's only because of His grace that you're able to be here today. (Col. 3:16; cr. I Thes. 5:16-18)
- **Serve God out of gratitude, not compulsion.** Why do you come to church or serve God? To please your parents? Because your parents make you? Because you're afraid God will smash you if you don't? If these are your motives, don't be surprised if spiritual stuff is a drudgery to you. I challenge you to do this: meditate on God's grace till you get so excited about it that you begin to serve Him out of a grateful heart for who He is all He does for you.

**Amazing Grace
(Lesson V)
Our Gracious God (Part 2)**

INTRODUCTION

"Bill Bailey becomes Axl Rose"

"Most people are not happy unless they're miserable."

B. A God Who Showers Us With Grace

1. Physical Blessings

- **Genesis 1:21-31** _____
- **Matthew 5:45** _____
- **Matthew 6:27-30** _____
- **I Timothy 6:17** _____
- **Other Physical Blessings:** _____

2. Spiritual Blessings

- Rom. 5:1-11** _____
- Romans 8:31-39** _____
- Eph. 1:7** _____
- Eph. 2:1-9** _____
- 2 Cor. 8:9** _____
- Jn. 3:16** _____
- Rev. 21:1-4** _____
- Heb 13:5,6** _____
- Mt. 7:7** _____
- Prov. 3:5,6** _____
- Eph. 1:3** _____
- Other Blessings:** _____

"Cassie Bernall's Journey in and Out of Darkness"

Action Points

- **Pray for Eyes to See.**
- **Thank Therapy (Col. 3:16; cr. I Thes. 5:16-18)**
- **Serve God out of Gratitude, not Compulsion.**

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Rom. 5:1-11 _____

Romans 8:31-39 _____

Eph. 1:7 _____

Eph. 2:1-9 _____

2 Cor. 8:9 _____

Jn. 3:16 _____

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Mt. 7:7 _____

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Action Points

- **Pray for Eyes to See.**
- **Thank Therapy (Col. 3:16; cr. I Thes. 5:16-18)**
- **Serve God out of Gratitude, not Compulsion.**

Amazing Grace (Lesson VI) Living a Grace-Filled Life (Part 1)

PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS LESSON, I WANT MY STUDENTS TO BEGIN SHOWERING OTHERS WITH THE SAME GRACE WITH WHICH GOD SHOWERED THEM.

LEADERS: Too much material, too little time. It's my downfall. So, I consolidated my final few lessons into this final lesson. Consider expanding on each of these points yourself, adding more discussion and illustrations and extending the series an extra week or two so that your students have time to internalize each of these points.

Introduction

Many of your classmates at school have been treated so cruelly that death is beginning to look better than life for them. I'll give you an example.

ILLUSTRATION: Multi-platinum selling singer/songwriter Jewel wrote a moving song entitled "Fat Boy." It's about a real boy named Edward who was one of her close childhood friends. Edward's friends mercilessly teased him for being overweight. Like most kids, he probably tried to brush off the jokes and act like they didn't bother him. But inside he became more and more depressed. Finally, by age 18, he decided that enough was enough. He went to a corner of Jewel's parent's farm and shot himself in the face. This is what he wrote in his suicide note: "Nobody will love me. And to know that you're not sexually attractive in our society at age 13 or to feel that you won't ever be loved at age 18 is just devastating." (Neil Strauss, Rolling Stone, 1/7/99).

<p>Selected Lyrics from "Fat Boy" by Jewel</p>	<p>Wish you could have been there for Edward, before it was too late? Well I've got news for you. Every day in your school, in your neighborhoods and perhaps even in your home there are "Edwards" all around you. During the hour that we meet, 228 teens in the USA will attempt suicide. That's two million students every year whose lives are so miserable that they're looking for a way out. (CPYU Fall 1998 Newsletter "It's Time to Give Them Time," by Walt Mueller) These students desperately need to hear an encouraging word from someone who cares, someone who will give them some grace. Let's pray that this morning God will show us how to take the grace that God's showered upon us and shower it on the people around us.</p>
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<p>"Fat boy goes about his day Trying to think of funny things to say</p>

<p>Like, 'This is just a game I play' And 'I like me this way' Oh fragile flame When no one feels the same"</p>

PRAYER

Do you want to help the "Edwards" that God puts in your path? Here are some specific ways. As God touches your heart with ideas, write them out in the "Action Points" section at the bottom of your student sheet.

I. Put Your Relationship with God First

Many Christians are more a part of the problem than a part of the solution. When you find yourself in a situation where everyone who's anyone is dishing out ungrace to the lowly, it sometimes takes more guts than you've got to make a stand and say "*enough is enough.*" You'll need a power from outside yourself to break with the crowd, risk your own reputation, and reach out to those who are despised. You need a motivation and power that comes from a tight relationship with God. How do you get that motivation and power?

Jesus was one time asked, "*Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?*" He replied,

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
(Mt. 22:37-39)

As we begin to understand the grace that God showed toward us, it's only natural that begin to like Him, love Him and desire to spend time with Him in personal quiet times and group worship. The closer we get to God, the more we can share His heart for the downtrodden. So put your relationship with Him first.

ILLUSTRATION: *Have you noticed the difference between a guy who casually dates a girl that he kind of likes versus a guy who is "head over heels" in love? The guy in the casual relationship has lots of other important things in his life, doesn't want her around all the time, and complains about having to go shopping with her, buy flowers for her or buy her gifts for special days. The "head over heels" guy knows every moment that she's free from class and takes advantage of it. He wakes up thinking about her and goes to bed dreaming of her. And he delights in finding any opportunity to serve her by carrying her books, picking up something at the store for her, or helping her with homework. It's the same way with our service for God. The more passionate we are for Him, the more we delight in spending time with and serving Him.*

And how do we serve Jesus? One way is to help those who are hurting, like Edward. Jesus said,

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40, see context, especially vss. 35,36)

A. Above Your Ministry

Why is your relationship *with* God more important than your ministry *for* God? (Get a response)

Someone has said that the main thing in the Christian life is to keep the main thing the main thing.

If the greatest commandment is to love God, then don't let your ministry or anything else come in front of it. Go on, use and develop your gifts to impact the world. But keep it in perspective. Some people get so infatuated with ministry that they neglect their love relationship with God. And many spiritually crash, burn and impact people negatively instead of positively.

B. Above Picky Rules

“Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.”(Col. 2:20-23)

Col. 2:20-23: “It is not difficult to

picture the sort of religion Paul is opposing here. Its elaborate liturgies and seemingly rigorous

self-abasing asceticism give it a name for serious piety: but it is a sham.” (Wright)

“Why, you are attributing an inherent value to things which are fleeting; you yourselves are citizens of eternity, and yet your thoughts are absorbed in the perishable.”

(Lightfoot)

Some people imagine God keeping a scoreboard of who keeps the most picky rules. In their minds, the object of the game is: *“He who keeps most rules wins.”* They fast every Monday, never miss a quiet time, never watch movies, and think that the stricter they get, the more God loves and admires them. (See Col. 2:6,7; 16-23; Rom. 14:17,18.) And don’t get me wrong. Discipline is great (I Tim. 4:7). And keeping God’s laws is a natural result of loving Him (Jn. 14:15) But some people try to get stricter than the Bible in order to impress God and the religious crowd. Remember, the Pharisees were awesome rule keepers. But playing the rule game led them into spiritual pride, self-righteousness, and, as in the case of Martin Luther, hating God. Put the relationship first.

Want to make an impact on the “Edwards” around you? Remember that God already loved you before you kept the first rule. And that’s the same way He loves the lowliest person you know.

II. Draw from His Power.

As we connect with the heart and power of God, we’ll find a strength that’s way beyond our natural powers. The Greek word for “grace” often carries an interesting meaning in the New Testament. Sometimes it’s almost synonymous with the word “power.” Look at how the Apostle Paul, one of the most powerful Christians of all times, describes the source of his power (Have students read these and comment on them.):

II Cor. 12:9 “But he (the Lord) said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

I Cor. 15:10 “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”

Col. 1:29 “To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.”

So how do we hook into this power?

- **Rely on His power (or, perhaps, “Abide in Him”)**

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (Jn. 15:5; cr. Acts 14:3)

- **Ask for His power**

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Heb. 4:16; I Jn. 5:14,15; Eph. 3:14-16)

We can’t live the Christian life by just gutting it out in our own power. Sure, we strive. But we strive in the power that He gives us. He won’t ever give us a task to do without also giving us the grace (power) to do it. Many have found a major key to living the Christian life in learning to draw on His resurrection power.

IDEA: Use a clip from a movie where someone dramatically finds that someone has more power than he ever thought possible. (E.g., “The Matrix,” when Neal requests weapons and an incredible arsenal materializes.)

And just how much power is there? Look what Paul says in Eph. 3:20:

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us....”

Paul says there’s more power available to us than we could ever *imagine*. In fact, there’s more than we could ever *ask* or *imagine*. In fact, there’s *immeasurable more* than we could ever ask or imagine. Draw on that power and you can live a life that

makes a difference.

III. Serve Others With Joy, Motivated by Gratefulness and Love.

If your only motivation for loving “Edward” is to fulfill a duty to God, he will sense the phoniness of your love. Want your love to be real? Then reflect on all the grace God has

II Cor. 12:7-10 - “In regard to what was ‘the thorn’ – a whole literature has been written on it.

But for us now it matters not what it was. Enough that it was, to a very strong man, a tremendous trial; a

something which for the time darkened his whole spiritual sky; a conflict which brought him face to face w/ the powers of hell.”

(Moule)

I Cor. 15:10 - *Than all of them*

could mean either “more than all of them put together,” or “more than any one of them.” Morris and

Grosheide opt for the former.

Colossians 1:28,29 - *Labor*

“expresses toil carried to the point of weariness.” (EGT) It “is used especially of the labour undergone by the athlete in his training...”

(Lightfoot) The present tense indicates continual action, not a one time effort in the past.

Struggling has also been translated “striving,” earnestly contending,” “struggling like an athlete.”

showered upon you, and let your service of others flow naturally from your joyful, grateful heart. As Jesus said to his disciples,

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” (Jn. 15:11; cr. II Cor. 4:15; I Pet. 1:3-15; Rom. 14:17; 15:13; Acts 13:52; Heb. 12:28)

People serve God for lots of different motives. Some serve out of fear that if they mess up once, God will smash them. Others serve to try to earn salvation. Others are saved but think they have to work hard to keep their salvation. Others think God only smiles on them when they have served Him to the point of exhaustion.

But those who understand the grace of God serve Him because they are grateful and love Him. These are the people who truly enjoy God. These are the people who truly impact others. Let me give you an illustration:

ILLUSTRATION: *I’ve heard the story of a young Englishman who traveled to California back in the 1800’s to search for gold. “After several months of prospecting, he struck it rich. On his way home, he stopped in New Orleans.*

Not long into his visit, he came upon a crowd of people all looking in the same direction. Approaching the crowd, he recognized that they had gathered for a slave auction. Slavery had been outlawed in England for years, so this young man’s curiosity drew him to watch as a person became someone else’s property. He heard “Sold!” just as he joined the crowd. A middle-aged black man was taken away.

Next a beautiful young black girl was pushed up onto the platform and made to walk around so everyone could see her. The miner heard vile jokes and comments that spoke of evil intentions from those around him. Men were laughing as their eyes remained fixed on this new item for sale.

The bidding began.

Within a minute, the bids surpassed what most slave owners would pay for a black girl. As the bidding continued higher and higher, it was apparent that two men wanted her. In between their bids, they laughed about what they were going to do with her, and how the other one would miss out. The miner stood silent as anger welled up inside of him. Finally, one man bid a price that was beyond the reach of the other. The girl looked down. The auctioneer called out, “Going once! Going twice!”

Just before the final call, the miner yelled out a price that was exactly twice the previous bid. An amount that exceeded the worth of any man. The crowd laughed, thinking that the miner was only joking, wishing that he could have the girl himself. The auctioneer motioned to the miner to come and show his money. The miner opened up the bag of gold he had brought for the trip. The auctioneer shook his head in disbelief as he waved the girl over to him.

The girl walked down the steps of the platform until she was eye-to-eye with the miner. She spat straight in his face and said through clenched teeth, “I hate you!” The miner, without a word, wiped his face, paid the auctioneer, took the girl by the hand, and walked away from the still-laughing crowd.

He seemed to be looking for something in particular as they walked up one street and down another. Finally he stopped in front of some sort of store, though the slave girl did not know what type of store it was. She waited outside as the dirty-faced miner went inside and started talking to an elderly man. She couldn’t make out what they were talking about. At one point the voices got louder, and she overheard the store clerk say, “But it’s the law! It’s the law!” Peering in, she saw the miner pull out his bag of gold and pour what was left of it on the table.

With what seemed like a look of disgust, the clerk picked up the gold and went in a back room. He came out with a piece of paper, and both he and the miner signed it.

The young girl looked away as the miner came out the door. Stretching out his hand, he said to the girl, "Here are your manumission papers. You are free." The girl did not look up.

He tried again. "Here. These are papers that say you are free. Take them."

"I hate you!" the girl said, refusing to look up. "Why do you make fun of me!"

"No, listen," he pleaded. "These are your freedom papers. You are a free person."

The girl looked at the papers, then looked at him, and looked at the papers once again.

"You just bought me...and now, you're setting me free?"

"That's why I bought you. I bought you to set you free."

"The beautiful young girl fell to her knees in front of the miner, tears streaming down her face. "You bought me to set me free! You bought me to set me free!" she said over and over.

The miner said nothing.

Clutching his muddy boots, the girl looked up at the miner and said, "All I want to do is to serve you - because you bought me to set me free!" (Reprinted from *Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks* copyright 1994 by Youth Specialties, Inc. 300 South Pierce Street, El Cajon, CA 92020.

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Like the Englishman who bought the slave, God bought us, at great expense, so that He could set us free. And like the beautiful slave girl, once we grasp the extent of God's sacrificial love for us, the more naturally we desire to serve Him and others.

Action Points

We began by thinking about the tragedy of Jewel's friend Edward, who killed himself because of an ungracious world. Are there some "Edward's" in your neighborhood or in your school that you could impact by stopping the kidding and cuts, paying them some attention, and showing the same loving grace that God showed you? Whatever you think God wants you to do, write it out in your "Action Points" section.

[As they write, consider playing a song in the background like "Fat Boy," by Jewel "For Annie," by Petra (*Never Say Die Album*)].

**Amazing Grace
(Lesson VI)
Living a Grace-Filled Life (Part I)**

"Fat Boy" by Jewel

I. Put Your Relationship with God First (Mt. 22:37-39)

A. Above Your Ministry

"The main thing in the Christian life is to keep the main thing the main thing."

B. Above Picky Rules (Col. 2:20-23)

II. Draw from His Power. (II Cor. 12:9; I Cor. 15:10; Col. 1:29)

- **Rely on His power. (Jn. 15:5; cr. Acts 14:3;)**
- **Ask for His power (Heb. 4:16; I Jn. 5:14,15; cr. Eph. 3:14-16)**

III. Serve Others With Joy, Motivated by Gratefulness and Love. (Jn. 15:11)

"Bought to be Set Free"

Action Points

**Amazing Grace
(Lesson VI)
Living a Grace-Filled Life (Part 1)**

"Fat Boy" by Jewel

I. Put Your Relationship with God _____ (Mt. 22:37-39)

A. Above Your _____

"The main thing in the Christian life is to keep the main thing the main thing."

B. Above Picky _____ (Col. 2:20-23)

II. Draw from His _____ (II Cor. 12:9; I Cor. 15:10; Col. 1:29)

- _____ *on His power.* (Acts 14:3; Jn. 15:5)
- _____ *for His power* (Heb. 4:16; I Jn. 5:14,15; Eph. 3:14-16)

III. Serve Others With _____, Motivated by Gratefulness and Love. (Jn. 15:1)

"Bought to be Set Free"

Action Points

Amazing Grace (Lesson VII) Living a Grace-Filled Life (Part 2)

PURPOSE: BY THE END OF THIS LESSON, I WANT MY STUDENTS TO BEGIN SHOWERING OTHERS WITH THE SAME GRACE WITH WHICH GOD SHOWERED THEM.

Introduction

Last week I began by telling the background of Jewel’s song, “Fat Boy.” Who remembers the story of the real person that the song was about? (Let them share. You fill in the details they miss.) Our challenge was that as Christians, God has called us to help, encourage and befriend those who have needs. Today we want to continue that theme. We’ll give lots of specific ideas, so keep your pencils ready to jot down God’s promptings in your “Action Points” section.

There’s not a lot of grace around these days. In a recent survey over half (Fifty-one percent) of teens said they had been verbally insulted or threatened in the past year. (Discovery Channel/Time poll of 1,000 Americans, released April 13, 2000) And many of these endure put downs almost every day. Some of you can probably identify. Many students dread school each day, not because of difficult studies, but because of the ungrace that awaits them there. In class, teachers put them down because of their intellectual weaknesses. In PE, fellow students tease them for their clumsiness. The rich put them down because of their clothes. Then they come home to parents who remind them, daily it seems, that they will never amount to anything.

Many of these people are desperate. What can we do to give them hope? We must treat others with the same grace that God has shown us.

Let’s **PRAY** that God will open our hearts and change our lives.

IV. Treat Others With Grace

A. Help those who are hurting.

Why? Because God helped us when we were hurting.

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.” (I Jn. 3:16; cr. Lk. 6:36; Rom 15:2,3; Mt. 11:4,5; Mt. 9:35,36 Lk. 19:10)

BRAINSTORM: Who did Jesus lay down His life for? (Us.) How should that affect the way we treat other people? (We should be willing to do the same for others.) Someday, you may need to actually lay down your physical life for someone. But short of laying down our physical lives, what might this involve? (At least to be willing to be identified with them, to be willing to talk to them and be rejected by others in the process, to go to great pains to help them with their needs.)

What are some specific things we could do to help hurting people? (Put how you think you should respond under your “Action Points.”)

B. Be kind to the unlovely.

Why? Because God loved us when we were unlovely.

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.... For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” (Rom. 5:8,10, cr. Lk. 14:13; 15:1,2)

I love this poem by Dave Tippett, which was inspired by the shootings at Columbine High School.

“The Outsider”

*He was a dweeb in the eyes of some.
A loner.
Strange.
Unpredictable.
He was different.
Spoke of strange things.
Weird things.
Things that no one had heard before.
His dad had a bad reputation with some.
He tried to talk about his relationship with his father.
Few of the teachers listened. Or cared.
He belonged to a gang.
A gang that was considered dangerous.
It roamed the town, causing local authorities trouble.
He got in people’s faces.
He hung out with losers.
Rich kids hated him.
Some said Satan was in him.
He called the teacher names.
To their faces.
He lived on the streets.
He called himself God.
He got violent once. He was expelled for it. But he came back.
He talked about his own death calmly.
He promised to come back from the dead.
One of his gang got him arrested.
He defended himself in court. He lost.
The state executed him. It was a horrible death.
On the third day, he kept his promise.*

(Used by permission of Dave Tippett)

DISCUSSION: If this was your first time to hear this poem, what surprised you about it? How does it make you think?

We often forget just how revolutionary, so objectionable Jesus was to so many. But He didn't come to impress people. He came to seek and to save the lost. That's why He hung around the people that the self-righteous despised: the prostitutes and other social outcasts. And that's why He didn't fit in with a lot of the popular, respected people.

If I want to live a life of grace, reaching people like the ones Jesus reached, I can't write people off, reject them, or snub them because of their outward appearance or reputation.

DISCUSSION: What are some of the ways that we unfairly judge people or stereotype them? (All "Freaks" use drugs. All Goths are violent. All jocks and cheerleaders are hung up on themselves. Prostitutes are more sinful than self-righteous straight people. Fat people are undisciplined. People who flunk classes are losers.) Can you think of people who defy these stereotypes? (E.g., D.L. Moody and Charles Spurgeon were overweight, but also godly and disciplined.)

If these people were in your school, would you look down on them or look up to them?

- *As a child, he began talking later than normal. He was regarded a freak by his classmates because of his lack of interest in sports. His teachers considered him dull because he was poor at memorizing by rote. One teacher told him in exasperation that he wouldn't amount to anything, was wasting everyone's time, and should drop out of school immediately. (You just looked down on young Albert Einstein (Facts from Albert Einstein: A Life, by Denis Brian, 1996, John Wiley and Sons, Inc.)*
- *They memorized loads of Scripture, prayed a lot, and never hung around the wrong crowd. (Some of you just looked up to some of the Pharisees who had Jesus killed.)*
- *As a college student, he enjoyed putting down Christians. (You just looked down on Josh McDowell as a young college student. He has now almost certainly spoken on more university campuses in defense of the faith than any living person.)*
- *He was out to murder Christians. (You just looked down on the apostle Paul.)*
- *As a youth, he disrupted his youth group with his pencil fights and general rowdiness. He made out with girls in the church storage closet. (Shame on you! You just put down Barry St. Clair, the founder and director of Reach Out and a man who's been used greatly by God.)*

So don't judge people by their outward appearance. If you want to reach people like Edward, learn to see them, not for what they are now, but what they could be if God transformed their lives. Here's a good rule of thumb:

Treat every person you talk to as if you might be his last ditch effort to find someone who cares before he takes his own life.

C. Forgive those who hurt you.

IDEA: Forgiveness is a central aspect of grace. If you want to spend a week or two on this critical issue, consider using Lesson 1 of my “Relationships” series and the latter part of Lesson 2 of the “Prejudice” series.

Why? Because God forgave us when we sinned against Him.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Eph. 4:32, cr. Col. 3:12-14, Mt. 18:21-35)

Aren't you glad that God doesn't hold your sins against you?

Since God forgave you of sins which were atrocious enough to deserve an eternity in hell, He asks you to be just as gracious to those who have sinned against you.

This forgiveness thing is so crucial, so central to what grace is all about, that I'm going to dig in a little bit more. Because when we're unwilling to forgive people, we find ways to justify our attitude, pretend we don't really have a problem, and bury it deep inside. To uncover our unforgiveness, I'm gonna slowly mention a few examples of people you need to forgive. Ready for some soul searching? Are you mad at

- *Someone who spread a rumor about you?*
- *A friend who betrayed you?*
- *Someone who stole your boyfriend or girlfriend?*
- *Someone who stole a material thing from you?*
- *A teacher who was unfair to you or put you down?*
- *A parent who consistently lets you down?*
- *A relative who has favorites, of which you are not one?*
- *A relative who molested you?*

If I had a thermometer in each of your mouths, I probably could have seen your temperature rise when I reminded you of a person about whom you are inwardly seething with rage. But by harboring that rage, that unforgiving spirit, who are you hurting? (Let them answer.) In what ways does harboring bitterness and anger hurt people? (It can control your thoughts, ruin your joy, rob you of sleep, make you physically ill.)

Listen to me. Whatever those people did, let them go. Release those people that hurt you. Until you release them by forgiving them, they will pull you around with a leash that threatens to strangle you. You're letting them control you. Let them go. Only then can you find the joy and peace that comes with a life of grace.

PRAYER: Let's stop here and let you deal with God about this. Bow your head. Close your eyes. Some of you are mad with people who have hurt you. The last thing you want to do is to forgive. You want to get even. But would you be willing to silently pray that God will give you the “want to” – the willingness to forgive. (Give them a moment.) Some of you may be ready to tell God, “I forgive...” and you fill in the names. Then, ask Him for the power to keep forgiving that person when the rage returns from out of nowhere. Ask Him to replace that rage with love and compassion. Only then will you be free.

D. Love those who sin a lot.

Why? Because God loved us when we had sinned enough to deserve hell.

“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8)

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (I Jn. 4:10,11 cr. I Thes. 3:12; Eph. 4:31-5:2; Mt. 9:10-13; Lk. 15:19:10)

ILLUSTRATION: Popular Christian professor, author, and speaker Tony Campolo once threw an unusual late night party that well illustrates this point. (While this really happened, he changed the names, setting, and a little of the dialogue.) Campolo flew from the States to Hawaii and found his internal time clock all out of whack. So at 3:30 AM he wandered the

streets of Honolulu looking for a place to eat. Finding a sleazy, greasy diner still open, he sat down and ordered a cup of coffee and a donut. About that time, eight or nine prostitutes came in and sat down on either side of him. Campolo suddenly felt an urge to make his exit but decided to stay when he overheard their conversation. A prostitute named Agnes said that she would be thirty-nine the next day. Her “friend” replied, “So what do you want from me? A birthday party? What do you want? Ya want me to get you a cake and sing ‘Happy Birthday’?”

Agnes chided her for being so cruel and ends by saying, “I’ve never had a birthday party in my whole life. Why should I have one now?”

After hearing that, Campolo hung around till the women left. Then he asked Harry, the greasy man behind the counter, about them. Upon finding that they came in every night, he suggested that they throw a party for Agnes. Harry loved the idea and called his wife out of the back room to share it with her. She said, “That’s wonderful! You know Agnes is one of those people who is really nice and kind, and nobody ever does anything nice and kind for her.”

So early the next morning they did everything up right. Harry baked the cake and Campolo decorated the entire diner, complete with crepe-paper decorations and a sign that read, “Happy Birthday, Agnes!” Somehow, the word must have gotten out about the party, because by 3:15 AM Campolo found himself in a restaurant packed with prostitutes! When Agnes arrived at 3:30 sharp, they screamed in unison, “Happy Birthday!”

Agnes was so stunned that she could hardly stand up. And when the cake arrived with all the candles lit and the accompanying birthday song that she had probably never heard sung in her honor, she began to weep. She couldn’t bring herself to cut the cake, hesitantly asking if anyone would mind if she just kept it for awhile.

Campolo no doubt stunned everyone by offering to lead in a prayer. Afterwards, Harry said, “Hey! You never told me you were a preacher. What kind of church do you belong to?” He responded, “I belong to a church that throws birthday parties for whores at 3:30 in the morning.” After a pause, Harry almost sneered his answer. “No you don’t. There’s no church like that. If there was, I’d join it. I’d join a church like that!” (Condensed from Tony Campolo, *The Kingdom of God is a Party*, Word Publishing, 1990, pp. 3-9.)

<p>I Jn. 4:10,11 - “In the ancient world outside Christianity, it was thought appropriate to love only those who were regarded as worthy of being loved.” (Stott) In verse 10 “we find the deepest meaning of the term ‘love’: love means forgiving the sins of the beloved and remembering them no more.</p> <p>This is what God has done for rebellious mankind: he pardons their sins against himself at his own cost.” (Marshall)</p> <p>“...love is self-sacrifice, the seeking of another’s positive good at one’s own cost, and a greater self-giving than God’s gift of his Son there has never been nor could be.” (Stott)</p> <p>“God’s love for us, then, supplies the motive power for His people’s love for one another.” (Bruce)</p>

Jesus was often in trouble with the self-righteous crowd for being kind to, listening to, and eating with known sinners. But Jesus responded that He came to reach sinners. He came to seek and to save the lost. After all, well people don't need a physician.

Are there sinners that you despise so much that your face probably betrays your disgust whenever you get near them? Is it possible that a small act of kindness could forever rock their world?

DISCUSSION: What could we do to help sinners? How can we guard ourselves from getting pulled into their sin?

E. Shower grace on everyone.

Why? Because God showered His grace on us when we didn't deserve it.

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.” (Eph. 1:7,8; Titus 2:11-14; cr. I Jn. 4:10,11,19; Acts 10:38; 2 Cor. 1:12; Rom. 2:4; Eph. 2:7; Titus 3:4-8; Lk. 4:22)

ILLUSTRATION: Steve Sjogren (show' grin) was one frustrated pastor. He worked hard at his ministry, speaking to people day after day about God's love and his vision for starting a church. But people just didn't seem interested. Ninety seven percent of the 1000 plus people that he talked to rejected him. After two full years of rejection after rejection, he had a small group of 37 people to show for all his efforts. But then something happened. Something so amazing that after seven years, over two thousand people were attending his church. Plus, they launched 12 other churches in the area. After 10 more years, 4,500 people were regularly attending. What happened to turn things around?

Instead of trying to pull people into the church, pastor Steve and his small group of believers began looking for ways to show grace to people. They found needs in the community and began meeting those needs. They washed the windows of passing cars, cleaned toilets at businesses, gave away hot drinks to shoppers on cold days, gave away cold drinks on hot days, wrapped people's gifts at malls during the Christmas season, and served in many other ways. And everything was free with no strings attached (that's grace). When people asked why they were doing it, they'd reply, “We just want to show you God's love in a practical way” and leave them with a business card with the name and address of the church on it.

People couldn't believe it. Some would begin to weep. Some would begin to ask questions and open up their hearts. Some would ask for prayer. People expected Christians to preach at them or ask them for money. Instead, these Christians caught them off guard, confusing them with kindness. For most people, there was no immediate response. But over time people began to talk about the church that showed God's love by serving.

Pastor Steve and his flock don't serve people just to get them into their church. They serve because their Master served. But as a result, in one year alone, 5,000 people visited their church, 60% of whom were unchurched. I think the saying etched over the entrance to their church explains their “secret” well:

“Small things done with great love will change the world.”

(Source: *Conspiracy of Kindness*, by Steve Sjogren, Vine Books, 1993. Their website: <http://www.cincyvineyard.com/>)

DISCUSSION: Are you known as a person who meets needs, who serves? Is our youth group known for doing good deeds? What are some small things we could do with love that might begin to change our world? (Let them discuss.) In addition to the above ideas, here are some more ideas to start your thinking: older students tutoring struggling younger students, delivering food to shut-ins, shoveling snow from driveways and sidewalks, visiting orphanages or nursing homes, helping someone with his garden, making bird feeders or bird houses for convalescent homes, shining shoes, washing windows on homes or businesses. Is there a rejected person you need to pay attention to and offer your friendship in your neighborhood or at school?

F. Hang out with those who are “beneath” you.

Why? Because God hangs out with us, although we are light years beneath Him.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: (Phil. 2:3-8; cr. Mk. 10:42-45; Jn. 13:3-15; Rom. 12:16).

We began with the story of Edward, who committed suicide because of the ungrace that was dished out to him through his life. I want to end on a positive note, with another down and outer who was shown grace by someone who refused to quit.

ILLUSTRATION: Jamie was considered one of the weird girls at her school. While most of the others dressed fairly preppy, she dressed grungy, complete with big chains and metal beads around her neck, and short, bleached-blond hair. Jamie was a Christian, and when a new ninth grade girl transferred into her school, Jamie was the one who stubbornly loved her and prayed for her. I say “stubbornly” because the new girl apparently didn’t want a friend. At first Jamie would just say “hello,” and the new girl would just give those “Don’t talk to me” signals. She was closed off, bitter, hopeless – and seemed like she wanted to stay that way. But every day Jamie kept trying to break through the hard shell and pray that the new girl would respond.

When the girl finally opened up enough to talk, Jamie tried to bring God into the conversation and silently pray for a response. But the girl responded, “There’s no way I can love God” and went on to explain that she had given her soul to Satan. But Jamie refused to give up.

The new girl was heavy into darkness and wrote dark, suicidal poems. She brought a file to school and sometimes cut herself with it. She often considered suicide. Turns out she was seething with rage because her parents had taken her away from her friends and had moved her to a new school.

But Jamie never gave up. She invited the new girl to her church group retreat. She felt the new girl would relate to the youth in the group, since many of them dressed like punk rockers with weird hair. Her parents freaked a little when they let their daughter off in the parking lot to go to the retreat. From the way the kids dressed, it appeared that they were letting their daughter go with a group like the kids they were trying to get her away from. But they let her go. And they were glad they did.

Because at that weekend retreat, God opened her eyes and she poured out her heart to God, asking His forgiveness for all she had done. She went home a different person and never looked back.

I’m so glad that Jamie never gave up. The girl she stubbornly loved to Jesus was named Cassie Bernall, the girl we talked about last week. Cassie’s earthly life suddenly ended three years later, when the two gunmen blasted their way through Columbine High School, but that was only the beginning of Cassie’s new life in heaven. The story of her faith traveled around the

world. But the part of the story I want you to remember today is the stubborn love that a teen misfit named Jamie played. You've got to wonder whether Cassie would have ever seen the grace of God, had she not seen it through Jamie. (Facts summarized from: She Said Yes: the unlikely martyrdom of Cassie Bernall, by Misty Bernall, pp. 58-85)

And you know, there are Cassie's all around you today, in your neighborhood and at school. Some dress preppy and some dress freaky. But they're confused, hopeless, and desperately need Jesus. And we don't know how long we have to reach them before they exit this life.

Action Points

God has shown you incredible grace by loving you when you were unlovely. If you think hard enough, you'll realize that you probably rub shoulders with rejected "Edwards" and depressed "Cassies" every day at school. Are you willing to pass on the grace to them that God gave to you? What can you do to show kindness or a helping hand or friendship?

I'll give you a moment of silence to write in your "Action Points" section whatever God lays on your heart.

**Amazing Grace
(Lesson VII)
Living a Grace-Filled Life (Part II)**

IV. Treat Others With Grace

A. Help those who are hurting. (1 Jn. 3:16)

B. Be kind to the unlovely. (Rom. 5:8,10)

"Treat every person you talk to as if you might be his last ditch effort to find someone who cares before he takes his own life."

C. Forgive those who hurt you. (Eph. 4:32)

D. Love those who sin a lot. (Rom. 5:8; 1 Jn. 4:10,11)

"Throwing a Party for a Prostitute"

E. Show grace on everyone. (Eph. 1:7,8; Titus 2:11-14)

"Small things done with great love will change the world."

F. Hang out with those who are "beneath" you. (Phil. 2:3-8)

"Jamie's Stubborn Grace"

Action Points

**Amazing Grace
(Lesson VII)
Living a Grace-Filled Life (Part II)**

IV. Treat Others With _____

A. Help those who are _____ . (I Jn. 3:16)

B. Be kind to the _____ . (Rom. 5:8,10)

“Treat every person you talk to as if you might be his last ditch effort to find someone who cares before he takes his own life.”

C. _____ those who hurt you. (Eph. 4:32)

D. Love those who _____ a lot. (Rom. 5:8; I Jn. 4:10,11)

“Throwing a Party for a Prostitute”

E. _____ grace on everyone. (Eph. 1:7,8; Tit. 2:11,14)

“Small things done with great love will change the world.”

**F. _____ with those who are “beneath” you.
(Phil. 2:3-8)**

“Jamie’s Stubborn Grace”

Action Points
