

Overview

Lesson 1: Court Adjourned: God's Grace to You!

- **Lesson Aim:** To teach teens what the doctrine of justification means to them
- **Text:** Romans 5:1; 1 Corinthians 6:11

Lesson 2: Grace: God's Attitude Toward You

- **Lesson Aim:** To illustrate the difference between legalism and grace
- **Text:** Matthew 23

Lesson 3: Living Sacrifice: The Proper Response to Grace

- **Lesson Aim:** To teach teens how they should respond to grace
- **Text:** Romans 12:1–2

Lesson 4: Grace Living: Showing Grace to Others

- **Lesson Aim:** To teach teens how they can show grace to others
- **Text:** Colossians 3:12–13

Lesson 5: Standards: Nuisance or Necessity?

- **Lesson Aim:** To teach teens the importance of personal and institutional standards
- **Texts:** 1 Corinthians 14:40; Job 31:1

LESSON 2

Grace

God's Attitude Toward You

Many teens are confused about how God feels about them. Some think that God must be angry with them because they fail Him. Others have heard that God loves them, but they never feel that love. Understanding the doctrine of grace and its meaning for them will help teens have the motivation to live right.



To illustrate the difference between legalism and grace.



Students will:

- Learn the definition of grace
- Discover how much they live by grace
- Visualize the dangers of legalism
- Study the failure of the Pharisees



Matthew 23

This text reveals the stark contrast between the grace of Jesus and the legalism of the Pharisees. Jesus exposed them for who they were: hypocrites putting on a good outward show while their hearts were full of wickedness. They were teaching others to earn God's favor through self-righteous acts. Jesus demonstrated that as believers we already have God's favor.

What You Need

A table,
Snacks for everyone,
A sign,
A marker

The Lesson



Set up a table at the entrance to the room and arrange a variety of snacks and drinks on it. Write up a sign that says "Cost: Whatever You Want." Sell the snacks to anyone who offers money, but also give them away free to anyone who requests something. Note who

gives each amount. If anyone asks how much the snacks are, just say, "Read the sign." When you are ready to start the class, clean up the table and explain to the teens that the snacks really were free, but you wanted to see if anyone would feel obligated to pay anyway. While you appreciate their generosity, thankfully things don't work the same way with the blessing of God's grace. Hand the money back to those who paid, and distribute the rest of the snacks to those who didn't take any.



Say, "Many people don't realize God's grace, or favor, is free. Someone has told them they have to work for it, but God's Word tells us it is free. Some will try to earn it, and some refuse to take advantage of it at all, thinking they have nothing to offer in return. The truth is, none of us has anything to offer that compares to the wealth of God's grace."

The Definition of Grace

TWe mentioned the definition of grace in the last lesson. Grace is that part of justification that places us in the favor of God. We move out of condemnation and into the kindness of God.

Visual Aid: Write the following definition on the whiteboard or overhead: "To show grace is to extend favor or kindness to one who doesn't deserve it and can never earn it."

There are several parts of this definition:

God Extends Favor and Kindness to Us

This is a permanent disposition God has toward us. He welcomes us into a relationship with Him in which He accepts us as we are. He treats us with kindness. In Psalm 68:19, David says that God daily loads us up with blessings.

Handout: Distribute copies of "The Grace Meter" and pens or pencils. Have the teens answer the questions and rate their grace quotient.

But many of us don't recognize God's blessing in our lives. We don't see the blessings showering down from heaven all around us. And there's a reason: when we're on the treadmill of legalism, we don't have the time or ability to appreciate God's grace.

Grace Is Undeserved and Cannot Be Earned

Since few Christians understand the doctrine of justification by grace, they feel condemned and don't think that God's favor is on them. Instead they've placed themselves under a system that says, "To escape God's anger and earn his favor, keep this list of hundreds of rules and then you will

What You Need

Whiteboard or overhead

What You Need

Copies of "The Grace Meter"

Pens or pencils

What You Need

A treadmill

deserve God's acceptance." This system completely denies God's grace. A treadmill can help us understand this mindset.

Object Lesson: Bring a treadmill to class. A great way to hold the students' attention would be to teach the following points while walking or jogging on the treadmill.

A Person on a Treadmill Goes Nowhere

You can run as long as you want on a treadmill, but you'll never get anywhere. Christians who live their lives trying to escape God's wrath and earn His favor never get there because grace is not received this way.

A Person on a Treadmill Gets Tired After a While

At first running on a treadmill looks easy. The path is only five or so feet long. But soon you realize it never ends. After a while you quit because you're not getting anywhere. Likewise, a Christian who lives a legalistic life soon gets emotionally exhausted with running from God's anger, never fully experiencing God's grace. Many Christians in a system like this eventually quit the faith and never have anything to do with God or the church again.

A Person on a Treadmill Can't Lift His Eyes to Look Around

A Christian in a legalistic life has to focus so hard on making sure he doesn't break one of the hundreds of man-made rules that he doesn't have time to see God's grace all around him.

There is only one solution to this destructive mindset: get off the treadmill! God's grace does not require us to be on it. We already have His favor and have already escaped condemnation. We can't earn God's favor; we already have it. We don't deserve it and can never deserve it no matter how hard we try. It's given freely to undeserving sinners like you and I. We must simply accept it and begin to enjoy it!

The story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) is a perfect picture of grace. He didn't deserve his father's grace when he came back home. He even tried to earn it by becoming a hired servant. But his father showed him favor all along. He was always waiting for his son to come back, and when he did, no amount of work was needed to regain favor. The father's grace was free!

The Danger of Grace

One of the reasons so many Christians live under legalism rather than grace is that legalism keeps them in line through an emphasis on fear of God's wrath. When Christians constantly focus on the impending judgment of God, no one dares question or violate the rules that have been set up, even though they may be man-made and not from God. Christians then maintain a meticulous outward life while never addressing their inner problems. This is how the Pharisees lived.

Group Study: Have your teens read through Matthew 23:2–7, 13–28. Ask them to listen carefully to the difference between the outward lives and inner lives of the Pharisees. Discuss what they learn. Have them take a sheet of paper and draw a line down the middle lengthwise. At the top of the left-hand side write the word “Pharisee,” and on the other side of the column write “God’s Ruling.” As you read the passage, record every act that the Pharisee does and then record what God thinks about that action. You may not find a judgment recorded about each action.

It is possible for you to misuse grace as a pass for sinful living. Paul notes this danger in Romans 6:1 and the verses that follow. He anticipates the immature response of someone who discovers that he is not condemned but accepted and favored. “If this is true, then I can live any way I want. I can sin and enjoy it because I’ve escaped God’s condemnation. The more I sin, the more grace I can experience.”

To this Paul replies, “By no means!” Or in other words: “no way!” We should not live in sin just because we have God’s grace already. Instead of living righteously because we’re trying to earn God’s favor, we do it because we already have God’s favor.

It’s the difference between doing something because you have to and doing something because you want to. The first will make you more consistent initially, but eventually you’ll get tired and just maintain your outward appearance while your heart grows cold. Or you will just stop trying altogether. Living by grace may make you less consistent at first, because on days you don’t have the desire to live for God, you won’t. But eventually you’ll be gripped by grace, and your life and heart will be what they ought to be.

Galatians 3:1–5: Legalism leads to a life dominated by the rules of men.

Galatians 5:1–6: Grace leads to a life ruled by the love of God.

Matthew 19:20: Legalism makes you ask, “When will I have ever done enough?”

Philippians 3:10: Grace makes you say, “I want to give more.”

Luke 18:11–12: Legalism leads to pride in what you have done.

1 Corinthians 15:9–10: Grace leads to humility as you realize all God has done through an undeserving sinner like you.

Luke 18:11–12: Legalism leads to a phony life that others see through easily.

Luke 18:13–14: Grace leads to transparency and a real life that gets hold of a teen’s life and transforms him.

Galatians 3:10: Legalism demands strict conformity.

1 Corinthians 12:4–14: Grace recognizes and affirms the differences in how God made us.



Ask the teens to bow their heads and close their eyes. Tell them to ask God to teach them to live by grace. After a few minutes, close in prayer.

What You Need

Paper,
Pens or pencils

The Grace Meter

Answer the following questions honestly and then see how much you are living by grace.

I find myself thanking God for the “little” things in my life—like good health, a nice day, my friends, and my family:

- a. Consistently
- b. Almost never

I read my Bible and pray because:

- a. I long to know God better and I look forward to talking to God each day
- b. I know I should do it

When tempted to do wrong, my first thought is:

- a. How could I sin against God like this?
- b. What will happen if I get caught? Is it worth the punishment?

When I think about God, I ask:

- a. How can I give more of myself to you, Lord?
- b. Why do you ask so much of me and why can't I have any fun?

When I think of what I do for God:

- a. I am amazed that God would use someone like me
- b. I am pretty proud of what a good Christian I am compared to others

When it comes to the real me:

- a. I readily admit my failures and most people know the real me
- b. I feel like I have to maintain an image of a good Christian teen, but inside I know that there is a lot wrong with me

I feel like:

- a. God loves me and is good to me even when I am at my worst
- b. God must be angry at me or out to get me because I don't feel His love

Being a Christian is:

- a. The greatest thing that ever happened to me and I love it
- b. Good because I don't have to go to hell, but other than that it doesn't do much for me

After you have honestly answered these questions, grade yourself. An “a” is worth three points; a “b” is worth one point.

Scores	
20–24:	You are experiencing God's grace in a real and exciting way.
13–19:	You know a little about God's grace but there's more to it.
Under 12:	God desperately wants you to experience His grace so He can claim your love.

Permission to copy this page granted for church use.

Copyright © Positive Action For Christ, Inc. P.O. Box 700, Whitakers, NC 27891