

CONNECT



grace SUMMARY



Ephesians 2:8-9

After Paul's about-face from Christian persecutor to Christian champion, he traveled great distances to evangelize both Jews and Gentiles. The mixed background of church members was both blessing and challenge. Jews were accustomed to following the law of God as a way of life, providing a distinction between themselves and the rest of the world. Their obedience to God through these good works kept their righteousness in their own hands, not God's. **The notion that God's grace was a free gift was a hard sell.**

Paul's pronouncement that grace was given, not earned, was momentous. His words were insistent: it's not about us or what we do. **The good that we accomplish is a result of what God has done for us and not the means of our salvation, no matter how great we may sometimes appear.**

Titus 3:4-5

The letter written to Titus, a companion of Paul's, spelled out directions for how Titus should deal with the unruly Christian community on the island of Crete. While the author spent much of the three short chapters laying out the dos and don'ts of conduct, **he made clear in these two verses that believers have been justified by grace, not good works**—and that they should act accordingly.

John 1:14

In Greek, the word *logos* means "word" and "thought." The word of God could be imagined as the thoughts or mind of God. **We know the mind of God through the embodiment of Jesus.** His life among us told us volumes about what was on God's mind, giving us an understanding of God's love for humanity.

Acts 4:32-34

Believers in the early church were often at risk of persecution or even death. Perhaps in part out of need, they lived in solidarity with one another, sharing resources communally. But they also sought to live out the teachings of Jesus, caring for the poor and marginalized, lifting up the weak. **At their best, they embodied the grace of God for others to see.**



A **gift** is free, without being earned, or it is not a gift at all. The gift of grace from God is not deserved, and it is given freely with no strings attached. Unlike the gifts we may receive at birthdays and Christmas, it doesn't break and it can't be lost.

Weekly Challenge

- It is easy to take God's gifts for granted. The gift of grace isn't as hot of a ticket item as the latest handheld gadget. Write down all the gifts God has given you.
- Now, keep the love moving by sharing it with others. Tell someone (or, even better, multiple people!) what you appreciate about them. Write or text grace notes sharing what you appreciate about the person, reminding him/her/them that they are a gift from God too.

GRACE



In the early church, faithful Jews who had worked hard to keep the law felt uneasy letting go of that practice. The idea that God's gift of grace was free for all people was radical! We aren't saved through works but by grace!

A **gift** is free, without being earned, or else it is not a gift at all! Grace is a gift from God—not deserved but freely given with no strings attached.

Ephesians 2:8–9

Paul's pronouncement that grace was given, not earned, was momentous. His words were insistent: it's not about who we are or what we do. The good that we accomplish is a result of what God has done for us. Doing good stuff is not the means of our salvation, no matter how great we may sometimes appear.

Check out these other Bible passages that connect with the theme of Grace!

- > **Titus 3:4-5** Can we earn grace?
- > **John 1:14** What words are used to describe Jesus?
- > **Acts 4:32-34** What was it like to live in the first-century Christian community?

Talk about it!

Use these questions to connect with each other.

- > What is the best gift you've ever received? What about the best gift you've ever given?
- > Would you rather earn something or receive it as a gift? Why?
- > Do you think anyone is too evil to receive the gift of God's grace? Why or why not?

What are preteens thinking?

Preteens may scoff at the idea that "everybody wins." When everyone gets a medal at the end of a competition, most medals will be tossed in the trash. Because grace is offered to everyone, sometimes we lose sight of how valuable it truly is.

Try this!

Sometimes a gift is harder to receive than to give. Have each member of your family give a gift to the other this week—a kind word or a chore done joyfully. Practice saying, "Thanks be to God!" in response.

Prayer

God, you are better than we could ask for or deserve. Thank you for the gift of grace! Amen.

