

Fourth Sunday in Lent

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.—Ephesians 2:8 NRSV

Explore

Grace...Is It Mine?

paper slips, pen or pencils, container for drawing slips, treats for each student

Before class, prepare slips of paper with tasks that can be done in class, such as erase the board or sweep the floor. Make some of the tasks impossible to do in the classroom, such as drive a car. Be prepared with enough treats for each person. Tell the students that if they want one of the treats, they will have to participate by drawing a task and performing it. When the task slips are completed, share the treats with everyone—whether they successfully participated or not.

As the treats are enjoyed, discuss what just happened with the class. How does the activity compare to God's loving grace for each one of us? Are we asked in the scriptures to do good things? Is it God's desire that we do good works? If we don't, does God still love us? How can that be?

According to *Webster's New World Dictionary*, mercy is the power to forgive or be kind. Grace is the unmerited love of God. Grace is about claiming what's already ours. God's love is given freely as a gift.

Extract

Our Responsibility

Bible, Book of Mormon

Ephesians 2:1–10
III Nephi 4:44–53

Ask the class to read Ephesians 2:1–10. Grace is the idea that God had acted with deep love for humanity since its creation. Because of this love, Jesus Christ came and gave his life, and we can be assured that our sins are forgiven. All we need to do is recognize the fact and have faith that God's love is for us. As Paul wrote, because of our response to that love, the things we will then choose to do will be in-line with the Spirit of God's love. Discuss the importance of these words in our lives as individuals. Where does it place the responsibility for our relationship with God? Have the youth read from III Nephi 4:44–53 in the Book of Mormon. Discuss the differences and the similarities of the two references. Who is speaking in each one? What is the point of each message?

Experience

The River Wild

masking tape

On the floor place two lines of masking tape, five feet apart. Explain to the class that the area between the two lines of masking tape is a rushing, violent river. The waters have risen since they left this morning, and now they must get home. All bridges have collapsed, and the river's current is far too fast for someone to safely wade across. Their task? Get everyone to the other side without falling into the water.

There is no correct solution to this activity. Hopefully, in the process of the group's evaluation, they will need to rely on someone besides themselves. How they do this is up to the participants. Let them be as creative as possible within the safety of your setting. Some may even try to jump the river and fall in, creating a need for the group to pull them back to safety.

When all have reached the other side, sit and discuss the activity. How did they feel about getting across? How many tried first to figure out how they could get across alone? Was it hard to let another person help? If they fell in, what did the others do? What were some of the personal obstacles that had to be overcome? How did they finally accomplish the task?

Now compare the activity to claiming God's mercy and grace. Often, we are the biggest obstacle standing in the way between us and our relationship with God. When we fall, God is there to pick us back up. When it is a struggle to overcome, God is there to help us. And sometimes, as we journey along in grace, God is even there to carry us until we are able to walk again safely on our own.

Where Is the Grace?

In the following scenarios, identify how recognizing and claiming God's grace might change what happens next to the individuals involved. Consider, also, how grace affects our lives as practicing Christians. How do we respond in God's grace to others? Prepare the different scenarios on separate slips of paper. Have each student draw them individually to read. Discuss each scenario together, and determine several possible conclusions.

scenarios on slips of paper

My name is Tabi. Last week I stole \$20 from my mother's purse. She never missed it, but I feel bad because I can't replace it.

My name is Chas. Last night I was out driving around, and I hit a kid on skates. I should have stopped, but I panicked and drove on. The newspaper says the kid is in critical condition in the hospital.

My prison number is 47889. I'm doing a life term. If I'm good, I get out on parole in thirty-two years. I needed money to support my drug habit, so I tried to rob a store. When the clerk set off the alarm, I got mad and shot the clerk and four customers. Three are dead, one is paralyzed from the waist down, and one is in a coma in the hospital.

Expand

Jesus' journey to the cross is the ultimate expression of God's grace and love. It is waiting for us to claim it. Marjorie Thompson, author of *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* and director of the Pathways Center for Spiritual Leadership, says, "Grace is Christ's love entering a person's life at unexpected times." On the paper provided, have the students relate their feelings when they have claimed God's grace.

paper, pens or pencils