

DISCOVER

Each topic will provide a scriptural foundation, the concepts underling the topic, and questions for the students to demonstrate their understanding of the topic. It is anticipated that these will be taught in a small group setting and take approximately 45-50 minutes. You are free to modify the concepts taught into your own words, but actual scriptural references should be included. There is a student handout for each teaching module which also includes student assignments.

DEMONSTRATE

In preparation for this topic, think of examples of how God's Grace has impacted you own life and how it could be incorporated into your group's walk with the Lord.

DEVELOP

Each module will contain questions for the students to answer that should give you an opportunity to determine if the Key Considerations are understood.

DEEPER

Be sure to leave time at the start of each meeting to allow the students to share their answers/responses to their previous assignments.

DISCERNMENT

The Disciple has a good understanding of the subject.

The Disciple has expressed ownership of the concepts.

The Disciple is integrating the concepts into his/her personal walk with Christ.

DAILY LIVING

A memory verse is provided at the end as a suggestion for them to practice and pray through each day.

LEADER OVERVIEW

This is an introductory session on the topic of God's Grace and Mercy. It attempts to provide a clear definition of what we mean by God's Grace and His Mercy.

INTRODUCTION TO GRACE

Pastor Rick Countryman has made this statement on the subject of God's grace: *"Perhaps there is no word in the Bible more precious than grace."*

The grace of God is one of the most important subjects in all of Scripture. At the same time it is probably one of the least understood. What is God's grace? How do we appropriate God's grace? How do we deal with perfectionism? Is grace really amazing? Is grace sufficient to meet all my needs? Does grace really mean that we are forgiven?

The Bible teaches we are not only saved by grace, but we also live by grace every day of our lives. However, most of us tend to base our personal relationship with God on our performance instead of on His grace. In this sense, we live by works rather than by grace.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

What is God's Grace?

I'm sure many of you have heard the acronyms: **"God's Riches At Christ's Expense"** or **"Gifts Received At Christ's Expense."** While both of these are true, neither really adequately describes the full scope of what **"God's Grace"** means from a biblical viewpoint. **Grace** is God's free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment. It is God holding out His hand of fellowship to people who are in rebellion against Him.

Grace stands in direct opposition to any supposed worthiness or performance on our part. In other words, grace and works are mutually exclusive. Our relationship with God is based on either works *or* grace. There is never a **"works + grace"** relationship with Him.

Let's look at a couple of Scriptures to get a handle on this concept:

Romans 11:6 / Philippians 1:6

We find the concept of God's grace in both the Old and the New Testament. The Hebrew word for grace is frequently translated into English as **"favor."** (See *Genesis 6:8* and *Esther 7:3*.) The Greek word for grace is also frequently translated as **"favor."**

Grace means the favor of God showered upon mankind who didn't deserve His favor. No other word so expresses the depth and richness of the heart and mind of God. This is the distinctive difference between God's grace and man's grace. Whereas we sometimes do favors for our friends and thereby can be said to be gracious, God has done a thing unheard of among humans. He has given His very own Son to die for His enemies (See *Romans 5:8-10*).

DISCUSSION

Can you think of a good reason why understanding the concept of God's Grace is important to how you live your life?

Is there a difference between God's grace as expressed in the Old Testament as opposed to the New Testament?

Let's take a look at a few more passages of Scripture:

Romans 3:23-31 / 1 Corinthians 1:4 / 2 Corinthians 8:9

Additional verses to look up on your own:

Romans 4:4; 5:15, 17, 20-21 / Ephesians 1:6-7; 2:5, 8

Colossians 1:6 / 2 Timothy 2:1 / Titus 3:7

Jesus wants to save us from our hurts, our habits, and our hang-ups. He wants to save us for His purpose and by His grace. But we've got to quit trying to do it ourselves. We've got to relax. We need to let go and let God be God. Remember that He is God and we're not.

MERCY

If grace is described as "getting what you don't deserve," then mercy, on the other hand, can be described as NOT getting what you do deserve.

The Bible clearly describes how God had mercy on man (not giving him what he deserved). Instead He extended grace (getting what we do not deserve) to all who call on his name.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:1-9).

What Does The Bible Say About Mercy?

The Bible gives us a very clear picture of what mercy looks like in how God deals with us. We deserve punishment but God does not give us what we deserve; instead He loves and blesses us.

Take a few minutes and let everyone read Mathew 18:23-27

For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought

DISCUSSION

How would you describe/define mercy?

Can you describe a time when you either experienced mercy from another person or you showed mercy to another person?

When you think about showing mercy to someone, what emotions do you struggle with? What do you think drives those emotions?

Do you think "being merciful" is synonymous with "letting someone off the hook"?

to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt (Mathew 18:23-27).

Because of our sin, we owe a debt that we can never repay. God had mercy on us and offers forgiveness for our debt.

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy (Titus 3:5).

The act of mercy can also be expressed with feelings of pity, sympathy, compassion, and affection; showing love, tenderness, and kindness toward people in their need.

Mercy does something about the suffering. It does not just sit there idly by and let it happen. It requires action with tangible remedies.

Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same" (Luke 10:30-37).

DISCUSSION

What can you take away from the story of the Good Samaritan that you can apply to your life today?

What does showing mercy look like?

Can you think of an area in your life where you are not willing to show mercy?

What makes showing mercy hard for you?

Is it possible to show mercy to someone who is not asking for mercy?