



A TALE OF GRACE

MAIN THEME: Jesus is full of grace and forgiveness because He loves all people. In the Bible, there are examples of a lot of people who needed grace and received it from Jesus—even criminals.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 2:13-17; John 4:7-26; Romans 3:10-12

PREP / MATERIALS: Construction paper, crayons, markers and other supplies to draw pictures of Biblical characters and a self-portrait.

DISCUSSION (FEEL FREE TO BREAK THE CONTENT DOWN INTO 3 DIFFERENT LESSONS)

Lesson 1: We know that Jesus loves us. He loves us so much that he came to suffer our punishment for sin, death, in our place. On Sunday at V21 Kids, we talked about grace and forgiveness, and that grace is receiving forgiveness when you don't deserve it. Remember the story of Levi, the tax collector? Let's talk a bit about him and what happened to him.

Read Mark 2:13-17: *"He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as He passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to Levi, 'Follow me.' And he rose and followed him. And as [Jesus] reclined at the table in [Levi's] house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that [Jesus] was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to His disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?' And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'"*

Remember when we said that you have to first know you're a sinner before Jesus can help you? Over and over again in the Bible, Jesus invites sinners to accept His gift of grace. Levi was one of these people. Did you know that when Jesus lived on the earth, people thought tax collectors were bad people? They often stole money from people paying taxes by taking more money than they were supposed to collect and using for themselves. Because they forced people to pay more taxes than they were supposed to, people called them thieves. But Jesus wanted to go eat at Levi's house, even though he was a thief!

The Pharisees didn't understand why Jesus would want to spend time with a person like Levi, so they asked Jesus about it. Jesus knew what Levi was like in his heart. He knew all the wrong things that Levi had done—all of them—but He loved Levi so much that he wanted to give him grace and forgiveness anyway. Jesus knew all people have sinned (not just Levi, but everyone), and that's why he said "those who are well do not need a physician." Jesus wanted to point out to the Pharisees that even they had sinned and were in need of His grace.

Have your kids draw a picture of Jesus & Levi having dinner together while you talk about how Levi must have felt. Was it strange that Jesus wanted to come to dinner? What would it be like if no one wanted to hang out with you because they thought you were bad, but then Jesus wanted to come to dinner?

Lesson 2: Let's look at another example of how Jesus gives someone grace when they don't deserve or expect it. Jesus was sitting at a well while his disciples went to town to get some supplies. A Samaritan woman came to get some water. Here is her story.

Read John 4:7-26: *A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."*

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

In Jesus' time, there were a lot of reasons it would be strange for Him to ask this woman for a drink of water. First, he was a man and she was a woman. Culturally, women were considered less important than men—they weren't even allowed to be independent. A woman couldn't make important decisions for herself—she had to have her brother or dad do it for her. Frequently, men didn't talk to women at all. So when Jesus spoke to her, it probably shocked her.

The second thing that made Jesus' conversation unusual was that Jesus was a Jew and the woman was a Samaritan. The Samaritans believed in a different religion than the Jews, and the Jews thought the Samaritans were unclean because they were a mixed race. Jews didn't want to have anything to do with the Samaritans. Jews thought sin was contagious. So, Jesus asking this woman for a drink was pretty outrageous. It would be like asking to share the same cup with someone who has a cold!

Because Jesus wasn't afraid to approach her, the woman was able to trust Him. He showed her that he didn't care about the fact that she was a woman, or that she was a Samaritan. In fact, he loved her so much that he didn't just want to talk to her—he wanted to give her eternal life. He offered her the “spring of water welling up to eternal life.” And because He knew everything that she had done—all the sins of her past—and loved her anyway, she could accept his grace and trust his promise of eternal life. He is the Messiah she had been looking for!

Let the children draw a picture of the Samaritan woman at the well and Jesus. What do you think it would have been like for her? Was she coming in the middle of the day when it was hottest because she hoped she wouldn't see anyone? How did Jesus make her feel? Was she still ashamed when she left the well, or did she know that what she had done didn't matter?

Lesson 3: So we've talked about Levi the tax collector and the Samaritan woman at the well. But what about us? How does Jesus' gift of salvation and his grace apply to us? What do we have in common with these people in the Bible?

Read Romans 3:10-12: *As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”*

The Bible says everyone has sinned. It's part of human nature, and there is no way to be good enough or work hard enough to avoid sin. The Bible tells us we are no better than the tax collector or the woman at the well. We are in need of grace—we need a Messiah! But the good news is that Bible also tells us that Jesus loves us enough that he came to be a sacrifice for us, so if we accept his gift, we can escape our sin.

Let kids draw a self-portrait with Jesus and talk about some of the things Jesus frees us from through his love for us. How does accepting his sacrifice change our lives? Are we ashamed of our past anymore, or do we walk in gospel boldness?

Spend time praying and thanking Jesus for his gift for us, and that he loves us enough to accept us as we are. Thank him for his love and the fact that he gives us grace.

