

God Is Gracious

Remember Verse

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! Isaiah 30:18


LESSON OVERVIEW

EXPLORE// 10 minutes



Option 1: Let's Go Shopping
(younger kids)

SUPPLIES

- Toy cash register
- Denominations Paper Money*
- Small, inexpensive items (e.g., candy, toys) 
- Scissors
- Paper (1 sheet)
- Pen

Option 2: Designing Money
(younger and older Kids)

SUPPLIES

- Blank Paper Money template*
- Scissors
- Markers or colored pencils

Option 3: Coins of the World
(older kids)

SUPPLIES

- Coins of the World Quiz*
- Coins of the World Photos*
- Pencils or pens
- Tape

DISCOVER// 30 minutes



Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image*

- Remember Verse animation*
- Mementos for your church Traditions

Connect Activity:



Five Groups

SUPPLIES

- Connect Question image*
- Connect Activity image*

The Big God Story

SUPPLIES

- Timeline image*
- Timeline animation*
- Images: Clocks set to 6 a.m., 9 a.m., Noon, 3 p.m., and 5 p.m.; Vineyard; Denarius*
- Bibles
- Rubber band ball
- Rubber bands (5 large bags)
- Candy or small prizes (5 identical) 
- Opaque bag full of different prizes (candy, inexpensive toys, etc.) 

Worship as Response

SUPPLIES

- Worship music
- Craft sticks (jumbo, various colors)
- Markers (1 per child, dark-colored)
- Velcro dots (2 per child, 3/4" size)
- Optional: microphone

RESPOND// 15 minutes



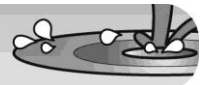
Reflect

Faith Community Mosaic

SUPPLIES

- Ceramic tiles or wood craft squares
- Wood cross (approx. 3') or several small crosses made from craft sticks
- Tempera paint (various colors)
- Paintbrushes (1 per child)
- Spackling paste and putty knife
- Tarp or plastic tablecloth

BLESS// 5 minutes



SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards*
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 12*
- Bible

Further Resources

To help you plan and lead:

Customizable copy of Lesson 11 2018–19 Scope and Sequence TruStory How It Works Small Group Enhancement

At Home Weekly: Lesson 11

The weekly for the next lesson—to be sent home for preteaching by parents—is found in BLESS.

LEADER PREP

Each week you'll find a list of resources along with encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.

Inspire *Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

Rows of dainty plants stood protected within yellow tubes and wire. The seedlings were frail, but soon they would be beets, chard, squash, and even some lettuces. All this growth would be under the careful care of my dad, or “Papa” as my children call him. Papa composts beautiful soil out of things I'd sooner throw in the trash: eggshells, coffee grounds, watermelon rinds—even dryer sheets. He is committed. I too want to be a committed gardener. But I forget to water on a hot day, I don't weed properly, I place the seeds too close together—and the plants die.

That summer, Papa gave me the best advice for my adventure with tomatoes. I had arranged too many plants too close together and hadn't put up the stakes in time, so the tomatoes were growing into a tangled mass. I had even given them too much water, so some plants were getting mushy. As Papa and I surveyed my mess, I felt embarrassed and discouraged. But he told me to leave them alone and they would get what they needed. Sure enough, within a couple of weeks we began harvesting luscious ripe vine tomatoes. After all of my failed attempts, I saw these tomatoes as a gift.

God's spiritual gift of grace is like my beautiful summer tomatoes. While I, for the life of me, can't work my way to have better fruit, God gives it to me anyway through His Spirit. In the midst of my tangled attempts, God alone produces beautiful fruit in my marriage, with my children, and in the many wonderful friendships I enjoy. God is gracious, and He gives grace in abundance.

Amy Palmerton
ROCKHARBOR Church

Equip *Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

God is gracious, but His grace doesn't always look like what we expect. Through the parable of the workers in the vineyard (or “field,” Matthew 20), Jesus gently reminded His listeners to approach God with gratitude for all He's given His people, because salvation and even our next breath are gifts from Him. While it's tempting to compare ourselves with others concerning what we think is fair, Jesus shows how God graciously gives to all of us as He chooses.

Before Jesus told this parable, a rich young man had approached the Lord to ask how he could earn his way into heaven (Matthew 19). Jesus told the man that if he wanted to earn eternal life, he needed to be perfect. The young man went away sad. In response to this, Jesus explained to His disciples that “kingdom economics” differed from what people were used to—that rich men have a difficult time entering the kingdom of heaven. In response to this, Peter wanted to know what the reward would be for the disciples who gave up everything to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:27). Jesus said that in the kingdom there would be rewards, but those rewards would look different from what the disciples expected: many of the last would be first and the first, last.

Knowing this context helps us understand what Jesus was trying to say through this parable: If we want to deal with God on the basis of fairness on our terms, we'll be in for a shock. No one in the parable of the workers in the vineyard was dealt with unfairly. Everyone got at least what he'd been promised. Though God's grace doesn't always look like what we expect, we can always be sure it's His best for us.

Support *Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

God tells us plainly in Scripture that the tangled mess of our lives allows Him to demonstrate His amazing grace. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 12:9, He says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” What things in your life do you consider weaknesses or shortcomings? Do you feel discouraged by a difficult situation or

relationship? If so, perhaps it's time to surrender to God's amazing grace. The apostle Paul's response to 2 Corinthians 12:9 was one of empowerment, even in his flawed state: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

Maybe it's time to share with a trusted friend your desire to live more fully in God's grace. Maybe God desires to show you, through your faith community and through His Spirit, that His strength is made perfect in your weakness. May God give you the strength you need to see that His grace is more than sufficient for you.

SMALL GROUP

SECTION

EXPLORE//10 minutes




Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

Through these EXPLORE options, the children will consider the idea of money and how money can be used.

Option 1: Let's Go Shopping (for younger kids)

SUPPLIES

- Toy cash register (or make your own using a shoe box or pencil box)
- Denominations Paper Money cutouts (see Resources)
- Small, inexpensive items (e.g., candy, toys) 
- Scissors
- Paper (1 sheet)
- Pen

SET UP

Create a store by setting up various items on a table. Make a price list that tells how much each item costs and display the list at the store. Make multiple copies of the Denominations Paper Money cutouts (onto colored paper if possible) and cut out the money.

RELATE

In the parable of the workers in the vineyard, a field where farmers grow grapes, the landowner gave the same amount of money to those who started work first thing in the morning and those who started late in the day. The early workers didn't think this was fair, even though they received what the landowner had promised them. Whether or not we think God is fair, He is always gracious and does what's right!

Today, let your kids go shopping! Using your play store, give kids play money they can use to shop in the store and buy various items. To make it fun, the kids can haggle on the prices of certain items instead of using the prices on the price list.

Option 2: Designing Money (for younger and older kids)

SUPPLIES

- Blank Paper Money cutouts template
- Scissors
- Markers or colored pencils

SET UP

Print the Blank Paper Money cutouts template, one sheet per child.

RELATE

Through the parable of the worker in the field, or vineyard (a field where farmers grow grapes) Jesus taught His disciples that God's kingdom is very different from ours. In this parable, some of the workers labored all day long and some only for an hour, but each received the same wage. The workers felt this was unfair and

grumbled to the landowner. Sometimes, in God's kingdom, things don't seem fair. But God is God, and He is more gracious and merciful than we can imagine, even if we sometimes don't understand His ways. Just like God's economy differs from ours, countries around the world use different kinds of money. In the European Union, people use the euro. People in Canada use the dollar. If you ran your own country, what kind of money would you make? Encourage responses. Invite the children to take one sheet of blank paper money cutouts and design what their countries' currencies would look like.

Option 3: Coins of the World (for older kids)

SUPPLIES

- Coins of the World Quiz (see Resources)
- Coins of the World Photos (see Resources)
- Pencils or pens
- Tape

SET UP

Print a Coins of the World Quiz for each child. Also print the Coins of the World Photos and tape them to the wall. Keep the Key page (page 2) of the Quiz hidden from the children while they complete the Quiz matching activity.

RELATE

Almost every country in the world uses its own type of money. Canada uses the dollar. The European Union uses the euro. Mexico uses the peso. Invite your kids to use the Quiz and Photos to match the different coins with the countries they represent.

LARGE GROUP

SECTION

DISCOVER// 30 minutes



Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image (see Resources)
- Remember Verse animation (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! Isaiah 30:18

Connect

QUESTION

Would you rather do chores all day and get paid for them or do nothing all day and not get paid?

Activity: Five Groups

SUPPLIES

- Connect Question image (see Resources)
- Connect Activity image (see Resources)

RELATE

Divide up children into five groups. Have everyone line up along the sides of the room. Start by dismissing group one into the center of the room. Have the kids in this group find someone they don't know and discuss the Connect question. Then, allow group two to join them in the center of the room; these kids can also find people they don't know and discuss the question. Repeat with groups three, four, and five.



The Big God Story

Bible Passage: Matthew 20:1–16

Storytelling Technique: Creating Objects

God Is Gracious

SUPPLIES

- Timeline image (see Resources)
- Timeline animation (see Resources)
- Images: Clocks set to 6 a.m., 9 a.m., Noon, 3 p.m., and 5 p.m.; Vineyard; Denarius (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Rubber band ball (for photo example, see Resources)
- Rubber bands (5 large bags)
- Candy or small prizes (5 identical) 
- Opaque bag full of different prizes (1 per child; candy, inexpensive toys, etc.) 

SET UP

Hide the rubber band ball and rubber bands somewhere onstage.

RELATE

Before you start to storytell, walk around with the bag full of different kinds of prizes. Have each child, without looking, reach into the bag and pick out a prize. **Jesus used stories called parables to teach His followers about the kingdom of heaven. What's a parable?** Invite responses. **Good thoughts! A parable is a story that tells us about something spiritual. Before we hear a parable today, let's ask God to teach us.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Invite children to open their Bibles to Matthew 19:30 and follow along as you read. **One day, while Jesus and His disciples walked to Jerusalem, Peter asked Jesus a question that prompted Him to tell a parable. Peter wanted to know if he and the other disciples would receive anything for following Jesus. The disciples may have felt they deserved special treatment because they had walked with Jesus from the beginning. Jesus responded by telling Peter, "Many who are last will be first." This meant that God's grace is for everyone. God is gracious! Just because the men were Jesus' 12 followers didn't necessarily mean they deserved special treatment.**

Grace means getting something you don't deserve. For example, when you all arrived here today, you each received a prize. Did you do anything to deserve those treats? Invite responses. No! They were free—kind of like grace. To help His disciples understand grace better, Jesus told them this parable.

Once there lived a man who owned a vineyard, or a place where farmers grow grapes. Tech: Cue Vineyard image. Early one morning (Tech: Cue 6 a.m. image), the owner hired some men to work in his vineyard. The owner told the men he would pay them a denarius for a full day's work. Tech: Cue Denarius image. A denarius was a small coin used in Bible times that equaled payment for about one day's work. So, the men went to the owner's field and got to work. Bring out some rubber bands and ask a volunteer child to come onstage and create a rubber band ball. Promise the volunteer a piece of candy when she finishes. Have her work while you storytell.

At nine o'clock, or the middle of the morning (Tech: Cue 9 A.M. image), the landowner went back to the marketplace and found more workers. Read Matthew 20:4–5a aloud. Ask another volunteer to start making a rubber band ball onstage. Don't promise him a specific prize.

Later that day, at noon (Tech: Cue Noon image) and at three o'clock (Tech: Cue 3 p.m. image), the landowner hired more workers. He told them the same thing: He would hire them and pay them a fair wage. Ask two more

volunteers to come onstage and make rubber band balls.

The men continued to work in the field. Finally, at five o'clock (*Tech: Cue 5 p.m. image*), **the owner went back and found more men.** Encourage children to follow along as you read Matthew 20:6–7. **What do you think the landowner did?** Interact with responses. **That's right. He hired them.** Ask one more volunteer to make a rubber band ball. **Finally, at the end of the day, it came time for the landowner to pay his men.** Read Matthew 20:8.

Give one piece of candy to each child making a rubber band ball while you tell the next part of the parable. **The landowner paid the men he hired at five o'clock one denarius. He paid the men he hired at three o'clock one denarius. Then, for the men he hired at nine o'clock and noon—how much do you think he paid them?** Invite responses. **Yes: one denarius. And finally, the men he'd hired the earliest, at six o'clock in the morning?** Interact with responses. **Yes! One denarius.**

In this parable, the landowner represents God and the workers represent His followers. The workers who were hired early in the day didn't think it was fair that those hired later should receive the same amount of money. But it wasn't up to the workers to decide what was fair or whether the landowner should be generous. It was up to the landowner.

It's the same way with God. God is gracious, and He gets to decide how generous He wants to be. None of us deserve God's grace, but He's given it to us anyway. Still, we may struggle to understand why God does what He does. Sometimes we might feel that because we're being obedient, doing good things, or being a "good" person, we deserve special treatment or a reward for our behavior.

God has given every member of His family a unique story of His grace in their lives. Also, our relationship with God is all that matters. God Himself is our reward. Not things. He is the gracious One who gives us gifts we don't deserve. He is the generous One.

We all have sinned, but Romans 5:8 says that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Because of His great love for us, God shows us grace. Jesus took the punishment for our sin, something He didn't deserve, so we can know Him and have eternal life. God offers this grace freely to all people. He is gracious! Share a story of when you or someone you know received God's grace.

Worship as Response

This time allows kids to respond to God through worship. Make plans for your worship time, but prepare yourself and your team to hold them loosely if the Holy Spirit leads the group in a different direction.

SUPPLIES

- Worship music (suggestion: "Thank You," TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*)
- Craft sticks (1 per child, jumbo, various colors)
- Markers (1 per child, dark-colored)
- Velcro dots (2 per child, 3/4" size)
- Optional: microphone

SET UP

Pull apart two Velcro dots for each child and put one half of each dot on each end of a craft stick so that one end has the hook and one end has the loop. Flip over the craft stick and stick the loop side of the Velcro directly behind the hook side and the hook side directly behind the loop side, so that each stick has opposite dots on both ends on both sides. Place the Velcro-dotted craft sticks and markers at the front of the room. In order for children to begin building a shape, it may work best to have a starting shape on the ground. For example, Velcro three sticks to the floor to form a triangle, and encourage children to build off of this shape. Optional: Set up the microphone.

RELATE

God is gracious, and He offers His grace freely, as He chooses. Grace means getting something you don't deserve. When we choose to trust and obey Jesus, our sins are washed away and we become a part of God's family. What a wonderful, undeserved gift! Today let's share some of the ways we've received God's grace.

Invite the kids to come forward and take a craft stick and a marker. *Tech: Cue music.* Encourage children to write a word or draw a picture—on both sides of their craft stick—that represents a way they have received God's grace. When they're finished, the children can come forward and Velcro their "grace stick" to another child's stick. Encourage children to work together to make a shape or chain by sticking their sticks together.

Optional: Have kids stand up (or go to the microphone) and share stories about how they've personally been impacted by God's grace in their lives. As leaders, share your stories first to model this for the kids.

RESPOND//15 minutes

Children respond to what the Holy Spirit is teaching them as they reflect on the day's portion of The Big God Story, engage in relationship, and create meaningful pieces of art individually or together.

Reflect: God Is Gracious

Encourage the kids to open their Bibles and read the suggested passages.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

- **How do you think the workers who'd been hired late in the day felt when they finally got hired after waiting all day?** Matthew 20:6–7
- **How did the workers who'd been hired early feel when they received the same pay as the workers who'd been hired late?** Matthew 20:11–12
- **What does *grace* mean?**
- **How has God shown you grace in your life?**

QUESTIONS FOR OLDER KIDS

- **How do you think the workers who'd been hired late in the day felt when they finally got hired after waiting all day?** Matthew 20:6–7
- **How did the workers who'd been hired early feel when they received the same pay as the workers who'd been hired late?** Matthew 20:11–12
- **What does *grace* mean?**
- **What does it mean to be shown grace?**
- **What's the difference between grace and fairness?**
- **How has God shown you grace in your life?**

Faith Community Mosaic

Children will create a mosaic to remind them how God works in each person and weaves together many stories to make something beautiful.

SUPPLIES

- Ceramic tiles or wood craft squares (1 per child)
- Wood cross (approx. 3') or several small crosses made from craft sticks
- Tempera paint (various colors)
- Paintbrushes (1 per child)
- Spackling paste and putty knife or glue dots (1 per child)
- Tarp or plastic tablecloth

SET UP

Spread out the tarp or tablecloth. Set out the wood cross or craft stick crosses.

RELATE

When we come together as a faith community, we represent different stories of who God is and how He has worked uniquely in our lives. Together our stories create a beautiful picture of our gracious God. Today we're going to spend time making a mosaic, or a collection of small pictures, to create a beautiful, larger picture made up of all the small pictures.

Give each child a small tile or wood craft square and have her paint or draw on it a picture or symbol showing what God's grace means to her. For example, since grace is a gift, a child might draw a present. If a child thinks of Jesus offering her grace, she might draw a cross. When your kids finish painting their tiles or craft squares, have a leader help them spread the spackling paste or place a glue dot onto the back of each tile or square and attach it to the wood cross or a craft stick cross. This will create a larger picture of how God has worked uniquely in the lives of many.

BLESS// 5 minutes



Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 12 (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Encourage the children to make up their own hand motions or actions to go with the words in the blessing verse. Then open a Bible and read Ephesians 2:8–10:

**It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God ...
For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

Have the children hold out both hands, palms up, to receive the final Blessing:

May you see God's graciousness in your life. May you notice the ways He shows love and kindness to you.

Send home Remember Verse cards and the At Home Weekly with your kids.