

# Full of Grace!

NG04

**Bible Verses:** Genesis 37:2-8, Genesis 37:23-28, Genesis 37:31-33, Genesis 45:4-15, Luke 15:11-32, Ephesians 2:1-4, Ephesians 1:3-6, Ephesians 1:7, 1 Peter 4:10, 2 Corinthians 12:9.

**The aim of this session is to help children realise that God is full of grace and that they can be confident in their relationship with Him. The session also aims to show that when we have received God's grace we want to share it with other people.**

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## Leader's notes

Grace. It is central to God's character and central to being a Christian. Our God is full of grace. He forgives us for our sin but it goes so much farther than that. He forgives, He restores, He gives gifts, He calls us his children. He prepares works for us to accomplish and then gives us the strength to accomplish them. Should we do our own thing, He calls us back, forgives us and lets us start again!

People are not like that. Even those who love us best might keep a record of the wrongs we have committed and can't help reminding us about them. If we are forgiven, we are rarely given the opportunity to try again – people lose confidence in us. We cannot really comprehend the depth of God's love for us, the true depth of His grace, because we have never come across such total grace, even from our own families.

God starts with no illusions. He knows what we are like, that we are sinful. But knowing this, He chooses to take us and make something of us. He lavishes individual care and attention upon us, forgiving us over and over again as He moulds and perfects us – and then starts again if we turn our backs on Him.

The main aim of this session is to help the children in the group to understand just how total God's love for them is! His grace is unconditional. It is only by grace that we are given the faith to become Christians in the first place. We are totally dependent on God and He doesn't take advantage of us!

A real picture of grace is found in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The child takes everything the father has worked for and squanders it. The father doesn't disown him. He doesn't tell him to pay anything back: he accepts him home again, calls him “son” and throws a party. That is what God does for us. That is grace – total forgiveness and restoration.

Because we experience this grace from God, we ought to be graceful to other people and so the story of Joseph is also used in this session. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery – he had been a stranger in a strange land, a prisoner and a slave because of their jealousy. Surely Joseph would have been justified if he had thrown them into prison and thrown the key away? But Joseph didn't. He welcomed his brothers with tears of joy. He shared his wealth with them – he completely forgave them, so much so that the brothers were happy to come and live with him in Egypt. Would you be happy to live near to someone that you had treated badly? Grace had obviously completely healed this relationship. Joseph had learned about God's grace and, as a result, he was able to be gracious and humble with his brothers.

Both in this story and in the prayer activity, the children are challenged to think about how they should behave towards other people as a result of knowing God's grace.

But the overwhelming thing about grace is its all-sufficiency and so the memory verse is 2 Corinthians 12:19 – My grace is sufficient for you. Because we really don't need anything else!

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## Hunt The Slipper

Warming Up

5 mins

 Game

One child is chosen to hide the object somewhere in the room. While he/she does this, all the other children should be taken into an adjoining room or sit in the centre of the room with their eyes shut and singing a song so that they can't hear where it's being hidden.

When the object is hidden, the children come back into the main room/open their eyes and hunt for it.

Whoever finds it hides it again the next time.

You may need to specify areas in which the object must not be hidden – for instance, if you have electrical equipment in the room. Leaders shouldn't close their eyes!

**The Point:** Just for fun.

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## Equipment


An item to be hidden, such as a coloured ring, a ball or a slipper!

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## “I'm Sorry!”

Getting Started

15 mins

 Drama

Ask the group to imagine that they have broken a window and have to go and apologise to the owner of the house whose window they have broken. What different responses might they get and what sort of person might give that response? (For instance, a strict person would want to know why they weren't playing in the park. A friendly person might say it doesn't matter at all and so on.)

After brainstorming the sorts of people they might meet, choose several different types of people i.e., Strict, cheerful, caring, angry. Make sure that there is a good variety. Ask for volunteers to play each type of person. The volunteers should choose a hat that they feel goes with their type of person and sit on a chair at the front of the room.

Using different volunteers each time, choose children to go to one or other of the chairs and role play admitting doing something wrong – like breaking a window – to that person. You can change the misdeed to keep interest higher and send people to each person type more than once. (If you have a very keen group, you may want to change the volunteers on the chairs as well.)

For instance:

**Child** – *Please ....*

**Angry person:** *What do you want?*

**Child:** *I've come to tell you*

**Angry person:** *I hope you haven't come here to waste my time with some nonsense about the scout jumble sale.*

**Child:** *No, I've come to tell you that*

**Angry person:** *That what?*

**Child:** *Your window is broken.*

**Angry person:** *Who broke it? Which one?*

**Child:** *My ball did.*

**Angry person:** *What's your name? I'll telephone your parents! They'll pay for it! Every last penny! You need to be taught a lesson ... and so on.*

After the role-play bring the group together again and ask:

What it was like admitting things to the different types of people?

Who was it easier to tell?

Who was hardest to tell?

How did people feel when acting out the situation?

What sort of person would they prefer to have to admit something to?

What is God like when we admit our sins to Him?

What sort of character is God? Is he angry, kind, caring, or what?

After the children have thought of their answers, explain that God is full of grace – He loves to forgive us, He wants to forgive us and He isn't ever angry when we come to him to confess our sins.

**The Point:** This activity looks at the types of response we are used to receiving and brings out the point that God is not like anyone else – He is loving and forgiving all the time – we don't have to be scared of approaching Him!

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## **Equipment**

A row of chairs and a selection of hats.

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## **Joseph Forgives His Brothers**

Put the children into small groups and give each a Bible.

Ask the groups to read Genesis 37:2 – 8, 23 – 28 and 31 – 33

Ask them to discover why Joseph's brother hated him and what they did to him as a result of that hate. Give several minutes for this.

Share the answers together.

Joseph's brothers hated him because

He told their Dad about them doing something bad (v.2)

He was their father's favourite and was given a special cloak.

He told them dreams he had that showed he was going to be greater than they were.

They sold him into slavery and told his father that he was dead.

Ask how the brothers might have felt after doing that?

Do you think they felt guilty or just glad to be rid of him?

What do you think deserves to happen to the brothers because of what they did?

Explain the next part of the story to the children:

After many years, there was a terrible famine in the land and Joseph's family were starving. In the end, Joseph's brothers had to go to Egypt to buy food. The man who was selling the food said that he thought the brothers were spies and would only give them food if one of the brothers stayed in Egypt as a prisoner.

Joseph's brothers were upset. They thought that this was a punishment from God because of what they had done to Joseph. They left their brother Simeon behind and went home. Joseph's father was really upset because he had now lost two sons.

The famine lasted another year and Joseph's brothers had to go to Egypt again for more food. They were really worried and this time their youngest brother, Benjamin came with them.

This time, the man who had sold them the food told them that he was their brother, Joseph.

How do you think the brothers felt when they discovered that Joseph was still alive?

How do you think they felt when they realised how powerful Joseph was now?

What do you think they expected Joseph to do to them?

You could then get the children to enact what they think Joseph would do to his brothers.

Now read Genesis 45:4-15 in groups.

What did Joseph do to his brothers?

Do you think the brother's deserved this treatment?

Why do you think Joseph treated his brothers like that?

Share answers together in the larger group.

Explain that Joseph knew God and had experienced God's grace in his life. Because of that, he didn't want revenge on his brothers – he wanted them to be his friends, he wanted to forgive them and start again!

Joseph could see God had a plan and, even when things went wrong, God was still in control.

Can the group think of people who they are upset with?

How should we respond to people who have upset us if we want to please God?

Please be aware that it is important for children to know that if people do hurt them it is important to let an adult know.

**The Point:** To show an example of responding to other people with grace.

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## ***Equipment***


A Bible for each group of five children.

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## **Masterpieces**

Response

10 mins

 Craft Ideas

Ephesians 2:10 says, "We are God's masterpiece!"

God saves us and works to redeem us through and through. In His grace he forgives us over and over and helps us to change. To help the children to remember this, let each child make a masterpiece.

Give each child a length of silver foil and ask them to mould it into a statue. It can be a person or an animal or an inanimate object! They may need several lengths of foil if they are being ambitious!

Give each child a piece of black card on which to stick its finished statue. The card could be decorated with gel pen or with glitter glue.

On a small piece of white paper, write, "We are God's masterpiece!" and stick it onto the front of the black card like a plaque.

If you can get hold of enough small boxes, the children can mount their masterpieces onto a small box covered in black paper rather than just onto card. (You could use small selection boxes of breakfast cereal.)

**The Point:** To remember that we are God's masterpiece.

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## ***Equipment***

A strip of silver foil for each child, black card, pens, white paper, glue, sellotape, scissors. Optional:

Glitter glue, small boxes for each child and black paper to cover them with.

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## Grace around us

Take Away

5 mins

 Discussion

**This item can be shared with your group using the QR code:**

After talking about the grace God has shown us ask the children to think about these three things in the week ahead.



- 1) Do I believe that God loves me? Is there someone I could ask to explain this to me more?
  - 2) God's grace means that He came to forgive us and give us the gift of a life with Him because He loves us. Do we think there are some things in our life that stop us letting God love us? Remember God knows everything and loves us deeply.
  - 3) Who might you be able to share the grace and love of God with? It is great that we can be loved so deeply by God, who would you like to share this with?
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