

MinistryPlace.net

The Jerusalem Council , Grace, Not Law

Scripture: Acts 15:1-35

Theme: We are saved by grace through faith, not by keeping rules

1st-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Sunday School Lesson: "The Jerusalem Council , Grace, Not Rules" Dear Teachers, Today's lesson explores how God forgives us through faith in Jesus, no matter what we've done. Start with a simple question like, "Have you ever done something you were afraid to admit?" to help kids connect with the idea that God's love is bigger than rules. Use Acts 15 to share how the apostles met and decided that everyone, even those who hadn't followed Jewish rules, could believe in Jesus. Praise God for this kind of love! Lesson Overview: 1. Opening Question: Ask, "What's one rule you wish you could break without getting in trouble?" to spark curiosity. Explain that God's love is like a big, kind rulebook, it doesn't punish us for mistakes, but shows us how to live with Him. 2. Story Time: Read Acts 15:1, 11 (the Jerusalem Council). Share how Peter said, "God forgives all who trust Jesus, no matter what." Use simple words like "faith" (trusting) and "grace" (God's kindness) to define them. Act it out: Imagine Peter waving a big "OK" sign to show God's acceptance! 3. Key Point: "Rules help, but God's love makes us free." Show a picture of a parachute (like wings) and say, "Jesus is our parachute, He saves us and keeps us safe!" Let kids draw their own "grace parachute" with faith and love. 4. Application: End with, "How can we share God's grace today?" Give examples like helping a friend or telling someone about Jesus. Encourage kids to keep it simple: "I trust Jesus, and He trusts me!" 5. Closing Prayer: "Dear God, thank You for loving us so much! Help us trust You and share Your kindness. Amen!" This keeps it heartfelt, visual, and age-appropriate! Let me know if you'd like props or songs. Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

Bible Story

The Jerusalem Council: Grace for All

Once, some Jewish believers in Jerusalem had a big question. A group of Gentiles (people who weren't Jewish) who had been baptized wanted to follow Jewish laws, like eating only meat that was kosher. The apostles Peter and Paul, along with the other leaders, met to talk. Peter explained, "God doesn't judge people by what they eat or wear, but by their hearts. We were saved by trusting in Jesus, not by following laws!"

Some Jewish leaders disagreed, saying, "You must follow these rules to be saved." But the apostles stood firm: "No, God's grace, His kind love, is enough for everyone!" They wrote to the Gentiles and their leaders, explaining that while they didn't need to keep Jewish laws, they should still stay close to God. They sent Barnabas and Paul with a letter that said, "God has accepted these Gentiles, so we will also."

The letter traveled far, reaching Antioch and other places where the Gentiles lived. Some people even heard about it and brought gifts for the church to help take care of the poor. This showed that God's love brought people together in peace, even when they had different rules.

--- Why This Story Matters for Us Today God's love is always enough, no matter what! Just like the apostles taught that Gentiles didn't need Jewish laws to be saved, we don't need perfect behavior to feel God's love. His grace is like a big, warm hug that forgives all our mistakes. When we trust in Jesus, we're welcome in God's family, just as we are!

Key Verse

Acts 15:11 , 'No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.'

The Power of Jesus' Grace This verse is all about how God loves us and saves us, not because of anything we do, but because of His kindness and love. Imagine if you had a big, kind gift (like a toy or a hug) given to you just because you wanted it, not because you earned it. That's what God does for us! Jesus died to take away our mistakes and gave us a free gift of being with Him forever. It's like a gift you don't have to pay for, God already paid the price for us! The verse says, "We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved." This means we trust Jesus' love and what He did for us. Just like you wouldn't try to earn a hug from a friend by being extra nice all day, God saved us by choosing us, it's His love, not ours! When we believe in Jesus, we don't have to worry about being perfect; His kindness covers our mistakes, like a big, warm blanket. What Does This Mean for Us? This is a great reminder to be kind to others, just as God is kind to us. If you make a mistake, instead of feeling sad, think: "God already forgave me because of Jesus!" That means you can ask for forgiveness and start fresh. You can also share God's love with your friends, maybe by helping someone or telling them, "I believe God loves you too!" Remember, God's love is like a big, cozy blanket that covers all our mistakes. We don't have to earn it, it's free, just like a gift! When you believe in Jesus, you can trust that He always has your back, no matter what. Keep being kind and grateful, just as God is kind to you! Small Action: Try this: Write down one thing you're thankful for today (like a friend's hug or a favorite snack). It's like remembering God's love keeps you warm!

Activities

Activity 1:

Kids act out the moment the Jerusalem Council debated whether new believers needed to follow Jewish rules. They learn that God's grace was the key decision, love, not rules, brought them together.

1. Draw a Starting Point: Have each child fold a sheet of paper in half vertically. On the left side, write or draw a symbol (e.g., a heart for Grace) at the top and a question mark at the bottom. On the right side, write or draw a chain-link fence (for Rules).
2. Add Branches: On the left side (Grace), draw a downward line with a smiley face at the end to show how God's love helps us decide. On the right side (Rules), draw a line with a "Do This!" arrow to show God's commands.
3. Connect the Idea: Glue or tape the two sides together to show that grace leads to choices, while rules help us follow God's way.

4. Discuss Together: Ask, "When did the Jerusalem Council argue about grace or rules? How did they decide?" (Hint: They trusted God's grace, not human rules.)
2. "The Apostles' Big Vote" , Bible Story Role-Play
6. Set Up the Scene: Gather kids in a circle. Explain that the apostles (leaders of the church) were arguing: "Should new believers follow Jewish laws to be saved?"
7. Act It Out: Assign roles (e.g., Peter as the leader, Paul as the lawyer). One child can play the "disciples" (new believers), another the "Jewish leaders," and another a neutral apostle (James) who helps decide.
8. Debate the Question: Have the leader (Peter) explain the argument. Then, have James (or a teacher) share Paul's perspective: "Grace is enough!" (Acts 15:11). Act out how they voted to include all believers.
9. Reflect Together: Ask, "Why was grace more important than rules? How can we trust God's love today?" (Example: We don't earn God's love, He gives it freely!)
10. Tips: Keep it fun and interactive! Use gestures or props to help kids visualize the story. For both activities, end with a prayer thanking God for His grace.

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for early elementary children (ages 6, 8) based on The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1, 35), "Grace, Not Law":
- What do you think the apostles and teachers were talking about when they gathered in Jerusalem? (Encourage kids to describe what might have happened in the story, why the group met, what they discussed, and how they decided.)
- Application: How do you think Jesus would want us to share the good news with others? Why is it important to listen to God's friends (like the apostles) when they share His teachings?
- The apostles said, "We believe God wants us to follow Him with all our hearts." What does that mean to you? (Invite kids to explain what "all our hearts" could look like in their daily lives, kindness, sharing, prayer, or obeying God's rules.)
- Application: Have you ever felt like God is asking you to do something hard? How can you trust Him, just like the apostles trusted Him?
- Why did some people think they had to follow extra rules to be a Christian, like cutting meat or keeping the Law? (Discuss how the group was confused and worried that they might miss something important.)
- Application: Have you ever felt like you didn't measure up because you made a mistake? How does God's love help you feel better?
- The apostles gave the Jewish believers a letter saying, "You don't have to follow the Law anymore." What do you think they meant by that? (Ask kids to explain what they think the apostles meant by "law" and how they were showing grace instead.)
- Application: Think of a time you felt grateful for someone who forgave you. How does Jesus' grace make you feel? Why is it important to share that with others?
- These questions encourage kids to explore the story's big ideas while connecting them to their own experiences with God's love and grace! Would you like any adjustments to better fit a lesson plan?

Prayer Focus

Here's a simple, heartfelt prayer for early elementary children (ages 6, 8) based on Acts 15 and the theme of grace rather than rules: --- "Heavenly Father, thank You for the wonderful people in Jerusalem who talked about how to help everyone believe in Jesus. They reminded us that God's love is like a big hug, it doesn't make us perfect, but it gives us a heart to trust and follow Him. Just like they showed kindness to strangers and loved others no matter

what, we can try to be kind too, even when we don't feel perfect. Help us to remember that God's grace is always there for us, no matter what we do. Amen." --- This prayer keeps it warm, simple, and tied to the lesson's key idea: grace is a gift, not rules. You could even ask the kids to repeat a key phrase, like "God's love is like a big hug!" to make it interactive!

>> Missions Spotlight

In many parts of Africa, traditional religions mix with Christianity, creating confusion about salvation. Missionaries emphasize the Jerusalem Council's decision: salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

-> To the Cross

Some people said you had to follow Jewish laws to be saved. Paul and Barnabas said no , salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus alone. The cross is enough. We don't add our good works to what Jesus did. His work on the cross is complete.