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The Jerusalem Council , Grace, Not Law

Scripture: Acts 15:1-35

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

Nursery (Ages 0-2)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

"God Loves You!" "God loves you so much, just like you! He gives you His love, like a hug from heaven!" "Rules are for friends, but God's love stays strong, He loves you even if you do wrong!" 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

"God's Big Love for All"

Once, some people said, "God's love is only for some people, not others." They wanted rules to keep everyone separate, but God said, "No! Everyone is loved!"

The apostles and leaders met in Jerusalem. They prayed together and asked God for help. "How can we share God's love?" they asked. "Does God's love depend on rules?"

God gave them a simple answer: "Enjoy time with each other. Trust God's love, not your own rules." They sent back two men with a sweet message: "God's love is for everyone!"

The story ended with everyone happy, trusting God's love. They knew He made them special, but not alone.

Why this matters: God loves all of you, just the way you are! No rules, no waiting, just love and hugs!

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.'

God loves you so much! Jesus saves you with His kindness, like a hug from heaven! You are loved by God always!

Activities

Activity 1:

Toddlers explore grace by painting a rainbow (colorful, messy, no rules) and comparing it to a "strict rule" (like a straight line). They glue their rainbow to their Bible pages while hearing how Jesus gives love freely!

1. Give a Big Hug , Sit with them; say, "God loves you like this hug, soft and warm!" (Wrap arms gently.) Then say, "The Bible says Jesus doesn't make rules for us to earn love. He loves always!" (Point to Acts 15:1-35 in Bible.)
2. Color & Cut , Give each child a plate to color with "God loves you!" crayons. Say, "Cut out a circle like this, it's God's grace!" (Hold up pre-cut circle.) Glue it to their plate.
3. Show the Difference , Hold their hand tightly (like a "law") and say, "Rules can hold us tight, but God's love is always hugging us." Let them share their hug plates with a partner.
4. "Grace is a Rainbow!" (Colorful Grace vs. Strict Rules)
5. Paint the Rainbow , Set up a table with paper towel halves and paints. Say, "God's love is like a rainbow, colored and fun, no matter what!" (Hold up Acts 15:1-35.) Let them paint their roll.
6. Glue the Rainbow , While still wet, glue their rainbow to their Bible page (or a paper cutout). Say, "God's grace is like this rainbow, always there for you!"
7. Contrast with Rules , Show a straight line (cut from red paper) and say, "Rules can be straight, but God's love is colorful, like a rainbow!" Let them hold up their Bible pages to compare.
8. Share Love , Each child says, "God loves me like this!" (Point to rainbow) while holding up their Bible page. End with a hug!

Discussion Questions

- Here are four simple open-ended questions to help babies and toddlers explore God's love based on the Jerusalem Council story:
- "When God loves you very much, what does He give you?"
- (Let them repeat: "Love, love!")
- "How can we be kind to others, just like God is kind to us?"
- (Point to hands: "Love hands!")
- "What happens when someone hurts you or makes you sad? How does God help?"
- (Say: "God gives us His love, like a hug!")
- "If we all follow rules, does God still love us?"
- (Pause, then repeat: "Yes! God loves us always!")

Prayer Focus

"Dear God, you love us so much, just like a mother loves her baby. Your love is always there, always kind, always gentle. Help us trust that God gives us grace, not rules, to show His love to others. Thank You for your love for us!"
 (Repeat:) *"God loves us! God is kind! We can trust His love!"*

>> 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.