

Growing in Faith: Caring for Others

Quarter 12 | Lesson 2 | Spiritual Formation

1. **Connecting:** Do an activity to understand grace.

2. **Teaching:** Learn that grace is a gift and works are a result of our faith (Ephesians 2:8–10; Romans 11:6; James 2:15–17; Galatians 5:22–23).

3. **Responding:** Do an activity about choosing to do good works by showing the fruit of the Spirit.

SUPPLIES

- Bibles

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse Poster
- Pencils
- Student Pages

Teacher Devotion

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—
and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—
not by works, so that no one can boast.*
Ephesians 2:8–9

As Christians, we know that our faith can be seen in the ways we serve others. However, too often we think that by doing good we will become good. We think we will receive the applause of others and the approval of God because we have served well. But the Bible teaches us that this change happens the other way around. As God transforms our hearts and minds and as our faith grows, so does our service to God and to others. Our good works are motivated by our love of the Lord, not by a desire for recognition or an attempt to earn our place in His family. This is when we begin to share the gift of God's love in practical and visible ways.

Think of the ways you serve others. Answer honestly to yourself: Are you serving so others will notice? Are you hoping to earn approval from God? If so, it may be time to stop looking around and start looking inward and upward. Next time you find yourself thinking about the recognition you will receive for your service, ask God to change your heart. Remember that your good works are not intended to bring glory to your name but to the great name of God.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Do an activity to understand grace.

Welcome students by name as they arrive. Get to know more about your teens' lives by asking them about their families, their friends, and their interests. If possible, allow a short amount of time at the beginning of each class to give them opportunities to share with each other. This will help them to build relationships with their classmates.

When you are ready to begin class, divide the teens into groups of 4–5.

We will begin by playing a game. Each group will do the same task. Then I will decide who has done the task best. That group will win the game. So listen carefully to the instructions to be sure you can do the task well.

Give the teens a simple task to perform, such as arranging themselves from tallest to shortest or alphabetically by first name. As they do the task, walk around and watch the groups as though you are judging them. After they have all completed the task, choose a winning group. It should not be the group that did the task the fastest. There should appear to be no reason that group was chosen.

If time allows, repeat this game a few times with different tasks. Choose different groups each time. The students should be unsure why the winning group won the game.

Have the students sit in their usual places for discussion.

- **What did you learn from this game?**

The teens will likely say that they did not learn anything or that they learned that they could not figure out who would win.

This game can teach us about grace. "Grace" is a blessing that is not earned or deserved. When the groups won the game, they did not win because they did the task right or because they did it best. They won because I extended grace. They won because I chose them and gave them the gift of being named the winners. They did not earn this grace or do anything to deserve it. Sometimes we receive this kind of grace from others, and it can help us and bless us. But the grace we receive from God can change our lives. Today we will learn more about God's grace.

2. Teaching: Learn that grace is a gift and works are a result of our faith (Ephesians 2:8–10; Romans 11:6; James 2:15–17; Galatians 5:22–23).

Have a student read Ephesians 2:8–9 aloud from the Bible. If that is not possible, the verses are printed here for you.

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—
and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—
not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Ephesians 2:8–9

- **What do you think this part of the verse means: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith?”**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their answers.

We are saved by God’s grace. His grace is the free gift of forgiveness we do not deserve and can never earn. We learned in the last lesson that Jesus died to pay the price for our sins and to take away our shame. It is important to understand that there is no way we could have ever done that for ourselves. No matter how we behave or what choices we make, we can never be without sin. God’s standard is holy perfection. Because of sin, humans can never reach that standard. God understands this, so He provided a way for our relationship with Him to be restored through Jesus. That is grace! When we accept Jesus as our Saviour, we receive forgiveness that we do not deserve and have not earned. Understanding God’s grace helps us to understand the rest of the verse. Let’s read them again.

Have a student read Ephesians 2:8–9 aloud from the Bible again.

- **What do you think it means that we are “saved, through faith ... not by works, so that no one can boast?”**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their ideas.

Let’s talk about some situations to understand more about faith and good works.

Situation 1: Pradesh was a Christian pastor in a small community. He worked hard to care for his family and always helped his neighbours. Many people in the community accepted Jesus because of his preaching and teaching. When he died, many people shared stories about the ways he had loved and served others.

- **Do you think Pradesh’s life was changed by God’s love? Why or why not?**

Situation 2: Samir lived on the streets. He started stealing food to survive when he was very young. By the time he was 13, Samir was the leader of a street gang. He often beat up and even killed some of the people he stole from. Eventually Samir was put in prison and became very ill. One day, a missionary visited the prison and told Samir about Jesus. Just before Samir died, he asked God to forgive him, and he put his faith in Jesus.

- **Do you think Samir received salvation and forgiveness of his sins? Why or why not?**

Though Pradesh spent his life learning to live in godly ways and Samir lived in ways that were wrong and sinful, both of them were saved by God’s grace. Pradesh’s life showed fruit of the Spirit, and he did many good works. But he did not earn salvation because he lived well. He could not live forever with God just by doing good things. But he did probably have peace and joy in his life because he was close to God. Samir had a difficult life and did many wrong things. He is still able to live forever with God, but he probably did not enjoy the benefits that come from walking closely with God.

- **Is your life more like Pradesh’s or Samir’s? You do not need to share your answer with anyone else. Just think about it.**

Remember that grace is not earned or deserved. That means it is a gift from God, not something we can earn. “Works” are the good things we do for others that help to reflect God’s love in the world. This verse teaches us that it is faith that saves us, not our works. And even that faith is a gift from God! No matter how “good” we are and no matter how many good things we do, we can never do enough earn God’s forgiveness. But He loves us so much that He gives it to us as a gift when we turn away from our sin.

- **What does God’s grace show us about His character?**

Allow 2–3 students to share their thoughts. Answers may include that He is kind, loving, compassionate, patient, and forgiving.

When we accept His gift of grace and allow Him to begin to transform our lives, we begin to think and act in ways that please Him. We begin to show the qualities of His character that we just talked about, such as love, kindness, compassion, patience, and forgiveness.

- **How do you think this transformation may affect our desire to do good works?**

Allow 2–3 students to share their answers.

God does not require us to do good works. In fact, we cannot ever do enough good works to be saved. Listen to what the Bible teaches about this.

*And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works;
if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*
Romans 11:6

- **What do you think this verse means?**

God’s grace is not a result of our good works. We cannot earn this gift. If we could earn it, it would no longer be a free gift from God. But, as our faith grows, so does our desire to live in more godly ways. Doing good works is 1 way we can reflect God’s love to others.

Listen to the Bible verse that comes after the passage we read earlier.

*For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.*
Ephesians 2:10

- **What do you think it means to “walk” in good works?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their ideas.

When we walk in good works, we do them as part of our everyday life. We do not keep track of them or expect that they will bring us a reward or praise. We do them because we love God and love others, and we allow our lives to reflect this attitude. Listen to something else the Bible teaches us about faith and good works.

If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

*Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food.
If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,”
but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?
In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*
James 2:15–17

- **What do you think it means that faith that is not accompanied by action is dead?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts.

We cannot earn our salvation by doing good works. However, good works are a result of our faith. If we do not begin to change to reflect God's character, it is a sign that we are not growing in faith. This process of change can take a long time, but there should be evidence in our lives that we are becoming more loving, more compassionate, and more forgiving. We should find that doing good works is more natural and brings us joy.

- **Does it seem difficult to do good works without thinking about praise and reward? Why or why not?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their answers.

It may seem impossible to do good works without thinking about the reward or praise you will receive. After all, our desires are often selfish. However, as we talked about last time, our lives change when we choose to follow Jesus.

We have to try to change, but we cannot do this on our own. We are given the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us to change on the inside so that we reflect God's love and grace on the outside. We begin to show characteristics that make us more like Jesus. These characteristics are called the fruit of the Spirit. Listen to what the Bible teaches us about this.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
Galatians 5:22–23

- **How do you think the fruit of the Spirit could help you desire to do good works?**

Teacher Tip: Those who are not believers can show some of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit. But only when a person is empowered by the Holy Spirit can he show these characteristics in ways that reflect God's goodness and love.

When we choose to follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit works inside of us to produce "fruit" in our lives. This fruit makes it easy for others to recognize that we are Christians. It also increases our desire to do good works. We begin to look for ways we can love and serve others instead of ourselves.

It is important to remember that we do not have to show the fruit of the Spirit in our lives in order to be saved. Salvation is a free gift from God through faith. God does not expect us to be immediately perfect. But as our faith grows, our lives begin to show the fruit of the Spirit more and more. And we begin to show that we really are new creations!

3. Responding: Do an activity about choosing to do good works by showing the fruit of the Spirit.

Have the class stand in a circle and join hands. If possible, join the circle.

I will think of something showing the fruit of the Spirit, something that is a good work for someone else. I will not say it out loud since we do not do good works for reward or praise. Once I have thought of an idea, I will squeeze the hand of the person next to me. Then she will do the same thing. We will continue around the circle until we have all thought of something we can do to show how God has changed our lives in wonderful ways!

Even if you have not yet made the decision to trust God, you can think of something loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, or gentle you can do for someone else.

Give the teens time to think and squeeze the hand of the person next to them. When the person on the other side of you squeezes your hand, close with a blessing based on Romans 11:6:

Optional: If you are using the Student Pages, the teens can write their ideas on their pages after they do the hand-squeezing activity.

Blessing: May you know that you are saved by grace and not by works, and may you allow this to guide you as you love and serve others.

Family Connection: Encourage the students to work together with their family members to think of 1 thing they can do for someone else that is loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, or gentle. They can then do this good work together.

Lead the students in singing this quarter's song, if possible. "Mighty God" by Elevation Worship:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAhkYoWYxAY>