

Grace Through Christ

20 Lessons to
help you learn
more about your
Loving Savior



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Lessons 1—2: God loves you as His child. His love is undeserved and knows no bounds.

Lessons 3—6: God’s love gives you merciful forgiveness and peace. In turn, you forgive the “unforgivable.”

Lessons 7—10: God’s love and forgiveness change your actions and life.

Lessons 11—14: God works in your life, provides you with everything you need, and daily cares for you.

Lessons 15—16: God offers you strength in situations where you seem to be weak.

Lessons 17—20: Faith in God offers you many blessings.

INTRODUCTION

This booklet consists of twenty lessons which explore the many aspects and implications of Christ’s love. It may be used for group or individual study. Ideally the group will be led by a facilitator whose main role is to initiate and encourage discussion. The goal of each lesson is to stimulate self—reflection and dialogue concerning how God loves us, works in our lives, and how His loves strengthens us to live in Him. May the Holy Spirit work through these lessons and studies that people may come to know God’s unsurpassing love and give peace which passes all understanding.

Points to Remember as a Facilitator

1. Keep the setting as informal as possible. When it works, sit where you are comfortable. Sitting in a circle or around a table is optimal.
2. Be friendly and show your Christian love. Begin with a few minutes of introductions to get to know one another.
3. Don't lecture! Try to foster discussion. Use comments or questions to encourage others to participate.
4. Remember that the lesson plan is to be flexible. Adapt the Bible study to fit the group. Questions may be skipped if time does not allow. New questions may be asked as the group discussion develops.
5. Appreciate all contributions and participation. Let each person read from the Bible if he/she wishes. Do not force anyone to do so. Simply acquiring the facts is not the purpose of these Bible studies; growing in faith is.
6. You do not need to know all the answers. If someone asks a question you are unable to answer, contact a chaplain who will in turn help you to find the answer for the next time you meet.
7. Attend all planning and debriefing meetings. These will allow you to be properly prepared for the next week's lesson, give constructive criticism and share new ideas.
8. Ask God to help you in your role as a facilitator Pray to the Lord, asking Him to bless your efforts.

FACILITATOR GUIDE

FOR “GRACE THROUGH CHRIST” LESSON SERIES

Lesson 1

Preparation Notes:

- **Tax Collector**— see Picture on Page 22, see Note 9:9 on Pages 735, 736
- **Pharisee**— see Note 3:7a on Page 731
- **Scribe**— see Note 2:4a on Page 729
- **In Jesus’ time, the act of eating with a person in his home was a very close act of friendship (Anderson, 797 and 771). It showed “acceptance and recognition” (Concordia, 1579).**

Jesus was speaking and associating with people who were considered to be “ungodly.” A group of people who were very religious and who looked down on everyone not in their group saw this. They thought that Jesus was wrong for doing this. Jesus then told them a story about a shepherd and His sheep. This story tells about how every one of God’s children is important to Him. He is especially concerned when one of them is lost. This story also expresses the great joy God has when the lost are found.

Lesson 2

Last lesson was about a lost lamb. We talked about the Shepherd’s joy at finding him. This story is also about someone who gets lost. A boy loses sight of the One who loves him and what is important to the boy. This story tells us about the forgiveness and love of God which are unlimited and remain no matter what we do.

Lesson 3

Preparation Notes

- **Dinar**— Worth a day’s wages (Anderson, 744)
- **Pharisee**— See Note 3:7a on Page 731

Last lesson we learned the story of a lost son who was welcomed home by his father with open arms. Today’s lesson is about a woman who was very lost. We also see her thankfulness to be found. The very religious people thought that Jesus was too good to be in the presence of such a sinful woman. Jesus then tells a story about the debt we all owe, how that was paid, and how this makes us feel. We are to remember that we all have sinned, are declared guilty and need Jesus.

Lesson 4

Preparation Notes

- In Jesus' day, people were expected to forgive an offense three times but did not need to forgive the fourth offense (Zondervan, 1269).
- 10,000 talents = trillions of dollars, 60 million day's wages (Anderson, 741)
- 100 dinar = four months wages (Anderson, 744)
- Putting one's forehead on the ground in front of a person was a sign of great respect

(Anderson, 729—730). See Picture on Page 4.

Last lesson we learned about a woman who truly knew what it meant and how it felt to be forgiven. She responded in love and humility toward her Savior. Today's story is also about forgiveness. This time we learn how having our debt canceled affects the way we treat others.

Lesson 5

Preparation Notes

- The manner of execution for a woman caught in adultery was not prescribed unless she was a betrothed virgin (Concordia, 1621).
- According to the law of the time, both parties caught in adultery were to be executed (Concordia, 1621).
- The word for woman that Jesus used to address this adulteress is the same word He used to address His own mother (Concordia, 1622).
- The Romans did not let the Jews carry out death sentences (Concordia, 1621).

Last lesson we learned how, because we have had our many sins forgiven by God, we in turn will forgive others continuously. This lesson deals with forgiveness for a specific sin— adultery— in a specific instance. We learn of the men's sinful unforgiving nature and the solution Jesus gives. Once again we see Jesus' love for us which offers forgiveness even for sins other find hard to forgive.

Lesson 6

Preparation Notes

- In Jesus' time, men were not supposed to speak with women in public. It was considered to be impolite and wrong (Anderson, 779).
- In Jesus' time, it was believed that if one drank from the same vessel as a Samaritan then he/she would be unclean (Concordia, 1610).
- To avoid having contact with Samaritans, Jews would very often take a long route around Samaria instead of traveling straight through it (Concordia, 1609).
- The well in this story was found to be 138 feet deep (Concordia, 1610).

Last lesson, we learned of men who made a public display of a woman caught in sin. This lesson is also about a sinful woman who is considered an outcast because of her nationality. Again, we will learn that Jesus is not bound by man's laws or prejudices. All people are precious in God's eyes and because of Jesus they are worthy of salvation.

Lesson 7

Preparation Notes

- Samaritans and Jews were bitter enemies (Anderson, 769).
- See John 4:9 (Anderson, 266).
- See Matthew 5:43—45 (Anderson, 13).
- Dinar = one day's wage. This could keep a person up to two months in an inn (Concordia, 1569).
- The distance from Jerusalem to Jericho was seventeen miles and ran through rocky, desert country in which very often robbers would pose as wounded people (Concordia, 1569 and Zondervan, 1355).
- Samaritans were viewed as half—breeds both physically and spiritually because they were said to have intermarried with the wrong people (Concordia, 1569 and Zondervan, 1355).

— The Old Testament said that if a person touched a dead body he/she was said to be unclean for several days (Zondervan, 1355).

In the last lesson, we learned about Jesus' love which passes prejudice. This lesson is about another man who showed this same sort of love. He risked his health and life to help a man that man's rules and common sense would say to ignore. Jesus tells this story to answer the question of, "Who is our neighbor?". Obviously, according to the example of the Samaritan and of our Savior, our neighbor is anyone who is God's creation.

Lesson 8

Last lesson was about a man who risked his life to help his neighbor. In this lesson, Peter, one of Jesus' disciples also takes a risk to walk to Jesus on the water. As long as Peter truly believed in God's power working in him he could do this act. As soon as he began to doubt and fear, however, he started sinking. God wants us to give our fives and talents to Him, trusting that He will use us and care for us always. As God's children we are willing to give up the things that we want in order that God's will be done. With God as our strength we can do anything.

Lesson 9

Preparation Notes

– **Usually the older brother gets two times more inheritance than the younger. It is usually rabbis who settle these matters (Concordia, 1573).**

In the last lesson, we learned what we can do when we put our strength and life in God's hands. Through the story of a rich man, we learn what happens when we love and value our riches more than God. We see what happens when we do not admit that all that we have and all that we are, are gifts from God and are to be used for His purposes. We see that in the end all physical riches are taken away and all that truly lasts is the love and relationship we have with our God.

Lesson 10

Last lesson was about a man who relied on his riches to bring meaning to his life. He was forgetting that his riches came from God. He did not realize that his life would eventually end and that God could take all that he had away. We will learn in the lesson today that the rich man could be called a foolish builder. Christians have built their homes and lives on a firm foundation. The only stable, true and unmovable foundation is our Rock, our God. Anything else which we put hope or trust in, just like sand will crumble and ultimately ruin and disappoint us.

Lesson 11

Preparation Notes:

- **There was no door in a sheep's pen. The keeper stood in the way of the opening (Anderson, 784).**

In our last lesson, we learned about what it means to be a wise builder. In **essence** we give control of our lives to God and depend on Him to care for us, all that we have and all that we need. In this lesson, we will learn that sheep have the same qualities as a wise builder. They are dependence and trust. It is their Good Shepherd who carefully leads them, cares for them and is willing to give His life up for them.

Lesson 12

Preparation Note

- **200 Dinar = Eight months wages (Anderson, 744)**

Last lesson we learned how Jesus is our Good Shepherd and how we as sheep can depend and rely on Him. In this lesson we are told of a specific incidence when Jesus cared for the needs of 5,000 of His followers with five bread loaves and two fish. This lesson gives us proof that God has powers beyond men to care for us in all circumstances. This gives us encouragement to pray to God for all of our needs.

Lesson 13

Preparation Notes

- **In Jesus' day, instead of beds like ours, people used little padded mats (Anderson, 753—754).**
- **Scribes— definition found on Page 729**

Last lesson gave us an example of how Jesus can and does care for His people. Too often, however, we don't go to God with our concerns, worries and needs. In this lesson, we learn of the great faith of a man who went out of his way because he knew Jesus would care for him. Jesus did heal this man. He can heal and help us too if we only go to Him. We know that He can do all things and will not turn us away.

Lesson 14

Preparation Notes

– **Rabbi— Teacher, “the great one,” studied Bible thoroughly, able to recite the Old Testament by heart (Anderson, 734)**

In the last lesson we met a very faithful man who risked injury and embarrassment to be healed. He truly trusted Jesus' love and power. This lesson is also about a request. This request was made by two women who were friends of Jesus. Their brother had died and they wanted Jesus to raise him back to life. Although they knew that Jesus had the power, they may have still begun to question whether He really cared enough to answer their request. We learn that Jesus does care about us always and shares in our suffering. He raised the brother and didn't desert His friends. In the same way, He never deserts us.

Lesson 15

In the last lesson we saw the part of Jesus that was man by the way in which he experienced emotion and cried. So we see in this lesson that He was part man by the way the devil tempted Him. Jesus truly experienced great hunger and human desires yet did not give into the devil's temptations. Jesus used Scripture to refute temptation. So we can follow His perfect example and resist the Devil. We know that this is God's will for us.

Lesson 16

In our last lesson we learned that Jesus was truly tempted by the devil. We also learned that the devil is cunning and smart and his temptations are strong. We know, however, that with God's strength we can always resist. In this lesson, Paul, the author and disciple writes honestly about his weakness. We all have weaknesses and it is important to recognize them and realize that the devil also knows them. Paul informs us of the ways in which God uses our weaknesses and declares that we should not only accept them, but boast in our weaknesses.

Lesson 17

In the last lesson we learned of our weaknesses that we each have. These weaknesses can also be seen as strengths because God uses them for His glory. Knowing that we are needy of God's help in our lives should help us to take note of others who are poor and needy. God wants us to invite them into our

lives as the Banquet Host of today's lesson does. We must be careful to not be like those who the host originally invited because they refused to go giving invalid excuses. Instead we should take God up on all of His offers to be close to Him.

Lesson 18

Preparation Notes

- **Temple—Yard— See Picture on Page 63.**
- **Pharisee— See Note 3:7a on Page 731.**
- **Tax Collector— See Note 9:9 on Page 735—736.**
- **Fasting— See Note 6:16 on Page 733.**

The last lesson was about a banquet prepared by a host. God invites us to the eternal banquet in heaven but also invites us to communicate with Him on earth. We can do this through Baptism, Holy Communion and Prayer. This lesson contains two men who pray very differently. The pharisee prays with pride and expects to be accepted because of all that he had done. The tax collector showed humility and respect for God and did not feel as if he deserved forgiveness at all. The prayer of the tax collector was very pleasing to God and is how we should pray.

Lesson 19

In the last lesson, we heard the prayers of a pharisee and tax collector. These were two very different prayers. The pharisee was full of pride, the tax collector was full of humility and submission. In this lesson, Jesus showed submission also by performing an act of a servant and washing His disciple's feet. We, also, are to be humble and are to serve others. Our role on earth is to help others and to serve God. Jesus knew that God had ultimate control of His life and all He needed to do is follow His will. So God has equal control over our lives. We merely need to follow Jesus' example and let His will be done in our lives.

Lesson 20

Last lesson we saw Jesus wash His disciples' feet. This was an example of how we should be submissive to God and others. Many times we lose our submission and question God. Thomas was one of Jesus' disciples yet he also doubted and did not believe that Jesus was truly alive after dying on the cross until he could

actually touch Him. Jesus was patient with Thomas and loving to His disciples even though they deserted Him the week before. Although we have never seen Jesus, He wants us to read His Word which is perfect and states the truth that He lived, died, and rose again for us. Therefore, we will live our lives in submission to God. As we pray in the Lord's Prayer, God's will be done.

Resources Used

- 1. The Bible in Counseling** _Waylon O. Ward _Moody Press _Chicago _1977
- 2. Chapters That Breathe From the Book of Life** _Paul Kelm
- 3. The NIV Serendipity Bible for Study Groups** _Zondervan Bible Publishers _ Littleton, CO _1989
- 4. Concordia Self—Study Bible—** Concordia Publishing House _St. Louis _1986
- 5. New Testament Into Simple Everyday American English** _Reverend Julian G. Anderson _Anderson Books _Naples _1984

Unless otherwise noted, the page numbers which are referenced throughout the lessons are to be used with the
New Testament Into Simple Everyday American English