

This midweek study will explore the biblical teaching of God's graciousness. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.

Essential Doctrine: God is Gracious

God's nature is to delight in giving unmerited favor to those who are undeserving (Eph. 2:8-9). His grace toward sinners is found most clearly in the salvation He has provided through Christ. Because of sin, humanity is undeserving of salvation—all of us have turned our backs on God, and as a result, we deserve death (Rom. 6:23). However, instead of leaving people in their sins, God has demonstrated His graciousness by providing atonement and forgiveness for our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21).

1 We are undeserving

(Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

Invite students to consider what it would be like to give a place on the Olympic team to someone drastically out of shape, uncommitted, and unreliable. We would be upset, especially if we tried out for that spot, because the one who got it was undeserving.

- ▶ *Why does someone getting something they don't deserve make us upset?*

Read Romans 3:23.

- ▶ *Why do we get upset about receiving grace from Christ that we do not deserve?*

While watching someone receive something undeserved can feel wrong, in the eyes of Christ we are all undeserving because of our sins.

- ▶ *How does the fact that you were undeserving of Christ's love affect how you approach those who are not yet believers?*

Knowing we are undeserving of Christ's love should drive us to humility.

Read Romans 6:23.

When we earn wages, we are paid according to our work. The Bible says our wages, or sin, earn the payment of death. However, since we are undeserving, God gave us a gift—the gift of eternal life through Christ.

- ▶ *How does it make you feel knowing that your only spiritual "wages" have earned you death?*
- ▶ *In what ways should being undeserving of grace make believers more compassionate and loving?*

2 God delights in giving unmerited favor

(Eph. 2:8-9).

Option: Distribute candy bars to each student for "no reason." The gift wasn't based on your work. You received the candy simply because it made the leader happy to give you candy. God gives out favor we have not earned and does so because it brings Him joy and honor.

- ▶ *What surprising gift or reward have you received that you didn't earn?*

Not only does God's unmerited favor meet our need, but it goes above and beyond with benefits that only make us more Christlike.

Read Ephesian 2:8-9.

- ▶ *Based on this passage, describe how boasting about our works has no place in the Christian life.*
- ▶ *What would be some specific impacts on the church if every believer practiced the truth found in this passage?*

God not only gives us gifts because we need them, but also because it is His joy and pleasure to do so. It brings God delight to give believers unmerited favor.

- ▶ *Why would God delight in giving unmerited favor to those who trust Him?*

3 God's graciousness is found in Christ

(2 Cor. 5:21).

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

While it is God's delight for believers to receive unmerited favor, it did not come without a price. Jesus became unrighteousness on the cross on our behalf so we could know Him. Therefore, it is through Jesus alone that the unmerited graciousness of God can be found.

- ▶ *How does it affect you, knowing the unmerited favor we received was not simply waved away, but paid for with a high price?*
Since God was the only One who could have paid such a high price for our sin, it is through Jesus' death and resurrection alone that we have redemption and salvation. Seeking salvation in any other way is simply insufficient to pay the debt we owe.
- ▶ *Why is the exclusivity of Christ's death and resurrection essential and necessary for salvation?*

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *In what ways can you display that you possess the unmerited favor of Christ through your humble actions?*
- ▶ *How would you answer someone if asked what it means for God to be gracious?*
- ▶ *Challenge students to record three specific examples, in addition to their salvation experience, where they have found the unmerited grace of God to be a reality in their lives.*