PWOC

Protestant Women of the Chapel

Materials:
- Chart paper, markers
- Signs for Forgiven, Power, GRACE

WORKSHOP: GRACE EXTENDED

by Cinky Jones

LEADER'S GUIDE

RELEVANCE: God's grace is consistent and dependable and is absolutely unrelated to our consistency or dependability. On our best days and on our worst, His grace is there to supply what we lack. His great heart is ever-inclined toward us. This lesson explores the definition of grace, especially what it looks like in our everyday lives. When we truly get a grip on the lavish gift of grace that God has given to us, we are better able to extend grace to others around us.

CONTEXT: This topic is suitable for any PWOC audience.

TIME: 55 minutes

HOOK YOUR AUDIENCE: (10 minutes)

If you have a copy of the book quoted below, bring it to class as a visual aid for this section.

We all have good days and bad days, some days are better and others worse. There are also great days and the worst days. And there are all those shades of days in between.

Alexander had a day that ended just as badly as it began:

> *There were lima beans for dinner and I hate limas. There was kissing on TV and I hate kissing. When I went to bed Nick took back the pillow he said I could keep and the Mickey Mouse night-light burned out and I bit my tongue. The cat wants to sleep with Anthony, not with me. It has been a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. My mom says some days are like that.* - From Alexander and the

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Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst.

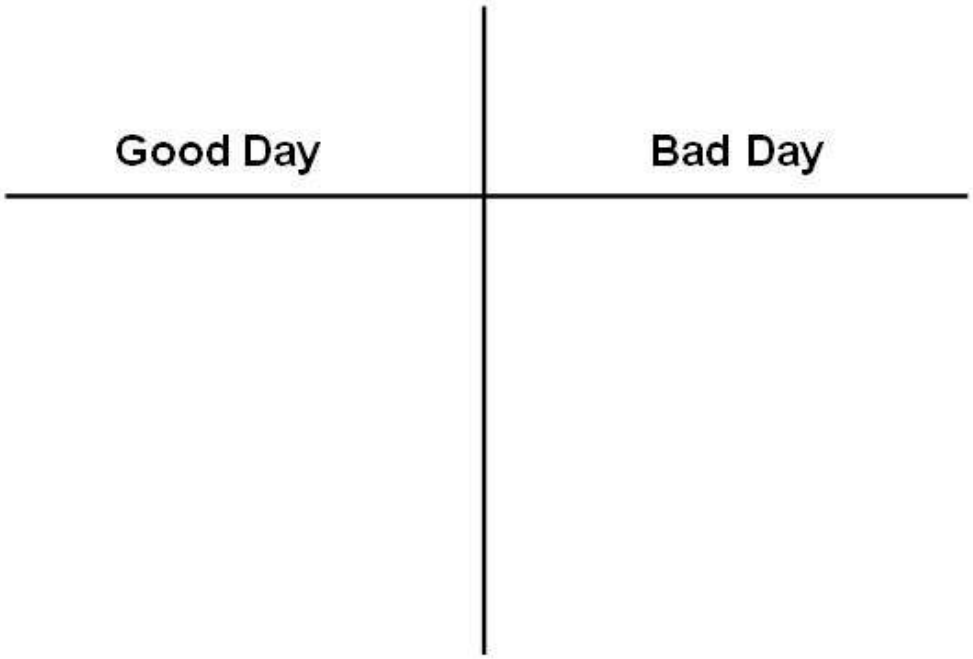
How many of you are familiar with that book? Yep, Mama said there'd be days like that!

> *It is good to start with something fun and light-hearted. Your listeners will be only too glad to go along with you for the ride. Creating common ground through a fun illustration that everyone can relate to, sets your lesson up for success. You have their willing attention.*

Followers of Christ have days like that too, but praise God, He extends more grace yet! His Grace is truly sufficient, available, and needed!

Ask the group, "What would a good day for a PWOC sister look like?" "What would a bad day for a PWOC sister look like?" Work with a partner and record your thoughts on the "Good Day/Bad Day" chart on your Participation Page.

> *Having participants work with a partner gives everyone a voice. Recording personal information weaves the lesson into real life. This activity encourages the learners to draw on their own experiences and will give them something to relate the Biblical content to. Do not underestimate the value of writing and sharing experiences and opinions. This activity and discussion will give you a pretty clear picture of this group's beliefs on your topic.*



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Allow partners to work together for a few minutes. When it seems like most people are finished, open up a discussion with the following question: "Do you believe that God extends more grace to you on good days? Does He extend less grace on bad days? Take two minutes to discuss this with the person beside you.

Have the partners share some of their thoughts. Guide the conversation to include elements of the Bottom Line (below). You may have some hard-core legalists in your group who bristle at the thought of grace. Be aware of this and gently press them beyond their comfort level.

Bottom Line: It is important to understand that no matter what we do, we cannot earn more grace than what Jesus already offers us nor can we lose His mercy or grace because of sinful choices. He is absolutely consistent; His love endures forever. Because of His love and mercy, He has a way of "amping up the grace" on your bad days to see you through, and it is His grace that fosters your good days.

> *It is an art to lead a discussion in such a way that everyone feels "heard." One way to do this is to use reflective language- use the person's same wording and then press your group to build on that idea. Even if there is a comment that is not very grace-oriented, it can still be incorporated in a positive manner.*
>
> *Example: Someone makes the following statement, "I know God is happy with me when I get my Bible reading in before the kids go to school." Your response could be, "I'd agree with that statement that God is happy with me when I get my Bible reading in before the kids go to school…now let me ask you this…is it possible that God is also happy with me when I do not get my Bible reading in before the kids go to school? (Allow responses). But is that the best thing for me? So I see where _____ is coming from in the statement she made."*

MAKE YOUR POINT 1: THE APOSTLE PAUL'S TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE, NO GOOD, VERY BAD DAY (5 minutes)

If anyone could say that they had a "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day," brother Paul could say that on a few different occasions. Let's look at a passage written by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11 starting with the second half of verse 23:

> *I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger*

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> *from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? (continuing on in chapter 12, second half of verse 7) … there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.* (2 Corinthians 11:23b-29, 12:7b-9; NIV)

Despite his tribulations, Paul didn't lose sight of his victory. In chapter 4 he wrote, "We are pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

Paul has a not–so-secret weapon. In response to him asking the Lord to take away his thorn in the flesh, the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." God's power is perfected in our weakness through His grace.

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 1: (10 minutes)

Ask the group, "How do you define grace?" Write their answers on chart paper. Note to your group that to those who are not Christ–followers, these are foreign concepts.

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he encourages Timothy to "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus" and to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Let's look at what being strong in Christ Jesus means.

Ask the group to read and underline what speaks to them in this quote by John MacArthur:

> *Perhaps the best translation of 2 Timothy 2:1 is, 'Be strong by means of the grace that is in Christ Jesus.' As believers we exist in the sphere of grace through our union with Christ. It's the grace of God that empowers believers. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8).*

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> *Grace is the undeserved favor of God extended through the gift of salvation--it can't be earned. Once grace is extended to us it's always ours. That's important because if God withdrew His grace, our present sins would condemn us. By living in the sphere of Grace we are continually cleansed of our sins (1 John 1:9).*

Allow people to share what they underlined and their thoughts about why a particular phrase spoke to them.

MAKE YOUR POINT 2: GOD'S GRACE EXTENDS FORGIVENESS AND POWER (less than a minute)

God's grace not only extends forgiveness to us, but also divine power. Romans 5:2 speaks of "this grace in which we stand." The Greek word translated "stand" – histémi (his'-tay-mee) means "to be fixed." It is by God's grace that we are both forgiven and have the power to stand in the sphere of grace.

It's God's grace that enables us to extend grace and serve God when we humble ourselves and walk in His forgiveness and His power--otherwise we can do nothing. He gives more grace. (James 4:6) That's the kind of grace Paul spoke of in 2 Timothy 2:1.

> *A valid, memorable point can be made very succinctly. Our typical method of lecturing for several minutes is not necessarily the best way to get our point across. This point is short and sweet -the activity that follows illustrates it and utilizes several volunteers. It is wise to engage your learners as much as possible. They will learn best when they are invited to be involved in the process.*

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 2: (5 minutes)

Let's get a visual of "standing, fixed–in grace."

Activity: *Forgiven and Power in Sphere of Grace*

Materials:

- 8 ½ x 11 sign "Forgiven"
- 8 ½ x 11 sign "Power"
- Six 8 ½ x 11 signs "GRACE"
- 8 Volunteers

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Procedure:

1. Ask for two volunteers to hold signs with "Forgiven" and "Power" and six (or at least four volunteers) to each hold signs "GRACE"
2. Invite "Forgiven" and "Power" to stand facing group with their cards.
3. Go back to chart (from HOOK) and choose one or two good day events to read aloud
4. Invite 4 "GRACE" ladies to encircle "Forgiven" and "Power" – moving slowly around the two
5. Have someone read a "bad day" event from their chart
6. Invite 1 more "GRACE" lady to join circle around "Forgiven" and "Power"
7. Have someone else read a bad day event from their chart
8. Invite last "GRACE" lady to join circle around "Forgiven" and "Power" and allow them to circle a couple more times before thanking them and asking them all to sit down

It is in the sphere of God's grace that we can stand – fixed – both forgiven and with power.

> *Your volunteers will be especially energized and engaged. Their attention is 100% reclaimed and they are invested. This result occurs when you get women up and moving and involved in meaningful activities of learning. Using a variety of volunteers throughout your lesson gives many people this opportunity to re-engage.*

MAKE YOUR POINT 3: A GRACE-FILLED HEART (10 minutes)

We've seen that the Lord's grace is sufficient. We have also learned that the unmerited favor of His forgiveness through His grace gives us His power. So now my question is, "How do we get more of His grace and His power in our hearts, to extend grace to others?"

Eric Elder, of The Ranch Fellowship Ministry, offers *5 Ways to a Grace-Filled Heart*:

1- Practice Continual Forgiveness

- Forgiveness is the heart of the gospel, as Jesus forgave us even while we were still sinning against Him. It's the heart of showing grace towards others as well. As Paul said, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32)
- By choosing to forgive others, as God has forgiven you, you'll be well on your way towards having a grace-filled heart.

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2- Fill your Mind with the Things of God

- Paul wrote to the Philippians: "...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things." (Philippians 4:8)
- By reading God's Word daily, memorizing verses of Scripture, and meditating on what you're reading, you'll find that God will begin to fill your mind with His thoughts, His ideas and His point of view on whatever you're facing. Keep filling your heart and mind with the things of God as much as possible, every day, several times throughout the day. This process will pay off with huge dividends for you and for those around you, both in the short-term and in the long-term.

3- Keep Asking Yourself, "What Would Jesus Do?" (WWJD)

- This question is a simple, but helpful reminder to try to think and act and speak as Jesus would. It's not just an intellectual exercise. It's a practical way to accomplish God's work here on the earth. When Jesus went back to heaven, He sent His Holy Spirit to live inside us so that we could be His body--His hands, His feet, His eyes and ears and voice to those around us. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:27) As a believer in Christ, God wants to work through *you* as if Jesus Himself were doing the work--because He is!

4- Pray at All Times.

- As Paul said to the Ephesians, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests." (Ephesians 6:18) By praying throughout the day, seeking His will and listening for His voice, you'll be able to stay focused on what God wants at all times. It's like walking through the day with a friend--and even better--because Jesus is a friend who knows everything! So as you walk or sit or talk or think, keep on praying and talking to God at all times. It'll be both a joy to you and a practical help to those around you.

5- "Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry"

- This practical reminder from James will help you to spiritually "count to 10" before responding to others. While it doesn't say you can't get angry, or you can't ever say anything with which others might disagree, it does say to wait to speak until after you have listened carefully--meaning "with care" and "fully." When you do this, your words will simply come out better, expressing more love and grace, even when speaking things that may be hard to hear.

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ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 3: (10 minutes)

Take a few minutes to answer the following questions on your own. Then partner with someone new and take a few minutes to share your answer to one of the first 4 questions. Share the one that challenged you the most.

1- Which one of the five ways to a grace filled heart is the most challenging for you? Describe why.
2- Explain how important it is to you to have grace extended to you by God on one of those "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad days." What has "God's grace extended" looked like in your life?
3- Explain how important it is to you to have grace extended to you by another person on one of those "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad days." What has that looked like in your life?
4- How does God's grace differ from a person's grace?
5- Why is it important that we as Christ-followers extend grace to others?
6- How would you explain, to a 5-year-old what grace is, where it comes from and how he could extend it to his best friend who is having a "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day" and threatening to move to Australia?

Ask for a couple of people to share what they wrote for question 5 or 6.

APPLY IT TO LIFE: (5 minutes)

Thank you for sharing your answers. We have been given a great gift- Grace! Great men of the faith have written wonderfully deep definitions of grace:

- "Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits on the undeserving." ~ A.W.Tozer
- Hendrikus Berkhof defined grace as "the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit."

As we continue to try to wrap our brains and hearts around this extravagant gift to us that we are blessed to extend, I leave you with another near-definition of grace.

- *Two pastors were on their way to Atlanta, Georgia for a large Christian men's gathering. One of them had never been in the South before. After staying in a motel overnight, they stopped at a nearby restaurant for breakfast. When their meal was delivered, the pastor who had never been south before saw this white, mushy looking stuff on his plate. When the waitress came by again he asked her what it was. "Grits," she replied. "Ma'am I didn't order it and I'm not paying for it." "Sir, down here you don't order it and you don't pay for it, you just get it." How like the grace of God!*
  ~ Ray Raycroft

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What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do? Do you need to receive grace from God or others? Do you need to extend grace? Let's pray together.

Consider beginning with a few seconds of silence to allow for reflection.

Close in prayer.

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PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

RELEVANCE: God's grace is consistent and dependable and is absolutely unrelated to our consistency or dependability. On our best days and on our worst, His grace is there to supply what we lack. His great heart is ever-inclined toward us. This lesson explores the definition of grace, especially what it looks like in our everyday lives. When we truly get a grip on the lavish gift of grace that God has given to us, we are better able to extend grace to others around us.

INTRO: We all have good days and bad days, some days are better and others worse. There are also great days and the worst days. And there are all those shades of days in between. What would a good day for a PWOC sister look like? What would a bad day for a PWOC sister look like? Work with a partner and record your thoughts on the "Good Day/ Bad Day" chart.

Good Day	Bad Day

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Bottom Line: It is important to understand that no matter what we do, we cannot earn more grace than what Jesus already offers us nor can we lose His mercy or grace because of sinful choices. He is absolutely consistent; His love endures forever. Because of His love and mercy, He has a way of "amping up the grace" on your bad days to see you through, and it is His grace that fosters your good days.

I. THE APOSTLE PAUL'S TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE, NO GOOD, VERY BAD DAY

Look at these passages written by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11 starting with the second half of verse 23:

> *I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? (continuing on in chapter 12 the second half of verse 7) … there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.* (2 Corinthians 11:23b-29, 12:7b-9; NIV)

"We are pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

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How do you define grace?

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ACTIVITY: Read and underline what speaks to you in this quote by John MacArthur:

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> *Grace is the undeserved favor of God extended through the gift of salvation--it can't be earned. Once grace is extended to us it's always ours. That's important because if God withdrew His grace, our present sins would condemn us. By living in the sphere of Grace we are continually cleansed of our sins (1 John 1:9).*

II. GOD'S GRACE EXTENDS FORGIVENESS AND POWER

God's grace not only extends forgiveness to us, but also divine power. Romans 5:2 speaks of "this grace in which we stand." The Greek word translated "stand" – histémi (his'-tay-mee) means "to be fixed." It is by God's grace that we are both forgiven and have the power to stand in the sphere of grace.

It's God's grace that enables us to extend grace and serve God when we humble ourselves and walk in His forgiveness and His power--otherwise we can do nothing. He gives more grace. (James 4:6) That's the kind of grace Paul spoke of in 2 Timothy 2:1.

III. A GRACE-FILLED HEART

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1- Practice Continual Forgiveness

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ACTIVITY: Take a few minutes to answer the following questions on your own. Then partner with someone new and take a few minutes to share your answer to one of the first 4 questions. Share the one that challenged you the most.

1. Which one of the five ways to a grace filled heart is the most challenging for you? Describe why.

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2. Explain how important it is to you to have grace extended to you by God on one of those "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad days." What has "God's grace extended" looked like in your life?

3. Explain how important it is to you to have grace extended to you by another person on one of those "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad days." What has that looked like in your life?

4. How does God's grace differ from a person's grace?

5. Why is it important that we as Christ-followers extend grace to others?

6. How would you explain to a 5-year-old what grace is, where it comes from and how he could extend it to his best friend who is having a "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day" and threatening to move to Australia?

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APPLY IT TO LIFE: Consider the following quotes regarding grace:

- "Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits on the undeserving." ~ A.W.Tozer
- Hendrikus Berkhof defined grace as "the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit."

What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do? Do you need to receive grace from God or others? Do you need to extend grace?

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