

Read: Ephesians 3:2-12

A Mystery of God's Grace—Jesus is for All People

Ephesians 3:6

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Wow. Didn’t see that coming.” When you read a good mystery, you feel the suspense as the author unfolds the story chapter by chapter. In a movie mystery, the build-up of the plot keeps you on the edge of your seat.

Have you ever heard of the mystery of God’s grace? It’s absolutely thrilling! Listen to how it gradually unfolded in the Bible:

- After the first people sinned in the Garden of Eden, God made a promise that a hero would crush Satan (Genesis 3:15).
- The entire first half of the Bible (the Old Testament) is filled with similar promises, that a Savior would come who would restore peace (cf. Isaiah 57:19) and forgiveness (cf. Jeremiah 31:34b).
- This week, we learned that “nations will come” to this light—Jesus, the light of the world.

Even after Jesus completed his ministry on earth, the mystery of God’s grace continued to unfold. Jewish believers were part of the earliest Christian churches. They were used to being God’s special people. They sat in their pews with other Jewish people and listened to the apostles like Paul teach about God’s grace given to them in Jesus. Then Paul threw a curve ball. Listen: “through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” God’s grace belongs to all people, no matter where they come from. The Jewish people were now supposed to share the grace of God with others. They might have said at the time, “Wow. Didn’t see that coming.”

That’s the amazing thing about God’s grace. Just when we think we have it figured out, God pushes the boundaries of our minds even further. Just think about God’s grace to you:

- God loved all people—including you—so that he sent his Son to be the sacrifice for sin, so that fallen sinners can have peace with God.
- Of all the times and places you could have been born, you were born into a family where you could learn about Jesus and his forgiveness.
- You are free to read about him in the Bible and worship him—a blessing many people have not had.
- He continues to strengthen your faith through the Holy Spirit every time you hear his Word.

We are truly blessed! His grace to us is boundless!

The mystery of God's endless grace continues. There are still conflicts and tensions that have to be resolved. Sin is still present in our hearts and in the world around us. God still intends for his grace to conquer all of that and for the gospel to reach all people. On the Last Day, the last chapter of this great mystery, the suspense will end and Christ will reign as the conquering hero forever!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Think of your life as a story. How is Jesus the hero of your story?
- Can you think of anyone who needs a hero like Jesus in their life? Name one thing Jesus did for that person.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- How did God include you in the story of his grace? (*Hint: Your baptism connected you to God's grace.*)
- How does God intend for the message of his grace to reach all people?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Explain what God's grace is. Explain three different ways that God has shown grace to you in your life.
- Describe a conflict you see within yourself or in the world around you. How does God's grace conquer that conflict?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, the grace you show us in Jesus is amazing. We thank you that we are included in your story of grace. Equip us to share your grace with others in all we do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hymn: CW 384:1-3 – By Grace I'm Saved

By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless;
My soul believe and doubt it not.
Why waver at this word of promise?
Has Scripture ever falsehood taught?
So then this word must true remain:
By grace you, too, shall heaven obtain.

By grace God's Son, our only Savior,
Came down to earth to bear our sin.
Was it because of your own merit
That Jesus died your soul to win?
No, it was grace, and grace alone,
That brought him from his heavenly throne.

By grace! Oh, mark this word of promise
When you are by your sins oppressed,
When Satan plagues your troubled conscience,
And when your heart is seeking rest.
What reason cannot comprehend
God by his grace to you did send.