



WEEK
ONE
JULY 2023

LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

Sermon Outline

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Salvation Is Here Salvation Is God's Gift Ephesians 2:8-9

GOD VIEW:

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FAITH AND GOD'S CHARACTER, AS SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

FAITH IS TRUSTING IN WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU CAN SEE.

WEEK 1

Key Question: How do you feel when you get a gift?

Before we get to God's gift of Jesus, we want preteens to think about the emotions that come from giving and receiving any sort of gift. The best gifts come from a person's love and care for another person. And God loves us more than anyone! That's why God gave us Jesus. As preteens engage with this lesson, we pray that they will understand the importance of experiencing God's gift of salvation for themselves and put their faith in Jesus.

We start off the month with something Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus. In Ephesians 2:8-9 we read, "God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift. It is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it." When it comes to faith in God, everything—especially God's gift of grace through Jesus—is a gift of love. All we have to do is accept it.

Use this page as a guide to create your sermon or feel free to pull from the script.

Bottom Line: Jesus is a gift for everyone. This is a simple, yet powerful truth that we pray will sink into the hearts of kids. There's nothing we have to do to earn our salvation. We just have to accept God's amazing gift of grace through Jesus. We pray that this is a decision every kid will make at some point in their life—maybe even this summer!

This message should be 15- 20 mins. More time for small group is key.

Open up with a story about best gift you have ever had or excited about.

Landing: "How do you feel when you get a gift? How does this change the way you think about God as the gift-giver? Or you as the gift-receiver? Before you head out, let's pray and ask for help to understand God's grace more and more today. Let's pray."

BASIC TRUTH

I can trust God no matter what.

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

How do you feel when you get a gift?

TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Jesus is a gift for everyone.

MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift." Ephesians 2:8, NIV



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PRELUDE **SOCIAL** **STORY** **WORSHIP** **GROUPS** **HOME**

25 MINUTES 10 MINUTES

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Salvation Is Here
Salvation Is God's Gift
Ephesians 2:8-9

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

How do you feel when you get a gift?

TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Jesus is a gift for everyone.

MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift."
Ephesians 2:8, NIV

MONTHLY VIRTUE

Faith—Trusting in what you can't see because of what you can see

BASIC TRUTH

I can trust God no matter what.

LARGE GROUP

ENGAGE KIDS' HEARTS THROUGH A DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE BIBLE STORY, WORSHIP, AND PRAYER EXPERIENCE IN A LARGE GROUP SETTING.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS ENTER.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP

Host enters . . .

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): COUNTDOWN (30- OR 60-SECOND VERSION)

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME

WELCOME

Host has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host can talk about something that happened culturally throughout the week like a big sports game, movie opening, a viral video on YouTube, etc. Host tells them how excited he or she is that they're there and briefly runs through what they can expect. This is especially helpful for first-time guests to make them feel like they know what's happening.

OPENER

HOST: "Welcome, everyone! I am so pumped for another month here at [Name of Environment]! I hope you're ready and set, because we're keeping things moving, just like last month. I figured some games would really get us going . . . so let's start right now!"

Host takes out a couple nicely wrapped gifts.

"Personally, I think Christmas should be 365 days a year—or at least people should give each other presents 365 days a year—ANYWAY, let's continue! For this game, we're sharing the love. Who wants a gift in a game we call 'Ready, Set, LEFT or RIGHT!'"

SLIDE: READY, SET, LEFT OR RIGHT!

Pass out the gifts to kids in the group. Determine ahead of time if this is an All-Play, or if you are just using a group of volunteers from the Large Group.



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PRELUDE **SOCIAL** **STORY** **WORSHIP** **GROUPS** **HOME**

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

"You get a gift, and you get a gift . . . but do not—I repeat DO NOT—under any circumstances whatsoever and under any conditions, open it. Or squeeze it. Or shake it. Or smell it.

"Those of you who have gifts—go ahead and form a circle, seated on the ground. I'll tell you a story, and as you hear the word 'LEFT,' or 'RIGHT,' you must pass your gift in that direction. Be sure to listen carefully!

AUDIO: FUN CHRISTMAS INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Use the "Ready, Set, LEFT or RIGHT!" Story printable and read the story, emphasizing the LEFT or RIGHT throughout the story. Kids will pass either right or left based on what the story says. Once the story is finished, have kids open their presents.

(After the Story is Finished) "It's the end—rip open your gifts!

Participants open gifts, share what they got, and return to seats.

"Good thing you all know your right from your left—or else that would've been a nightmare before Christmas. That was a lot of fun! Now, let's get ready to worship our amazing God!"



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10 MINUTES

WORSHIP

Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.

WORSHIP LEADER: “Hi, everyone! It’s great to be here with you. You know, the best gift we can give God is our worship. Let’s get on our feet and get ready to sing to God together. We’ve got so much good news to share. Let’s sing ‘Ready, Set, Move!’ Come on!”

AUDIO: “READY, SET, MOVE!” / TRACK 1 FROM READY, SET, MOVE!
OPTIONAL VIDEO: “READY, SET, MOVE!” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

“Yes! That song is a party. So much fun! Before we continue in worship, let’s watch this.

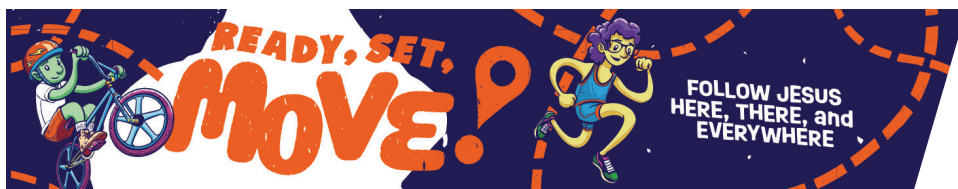
OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): LIVE LOUD VIDEO FROM GET REEL

“This next song is called ‘Movin’ Me.’ It’s about how God’s love makes us want to MOVE and show love to the people around us. That’s a great way that we can worship—by putting God’s love in action. Let’s have fun singing this one about how God’s love moves us! Sing along with me once you catch on.

AUDIO: “MOVIN’ ME” / TRACK 6 FROM READY, SET, MOVE!
OPTIONAL VIDEO: “MOVIN’ ME” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

“Yeah! Let’s keep on celebrating God’s love. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 9:15: ‘Let us give thanks to God for his gift. It is so great that no one can tell how wonderful it really is!’ (NirV) God’s love is so amazing. Let’s sing this out with all our hearts today and thank God for loving us.”

AUDIO: “HOW AMAZING” / TRACK 6 FROM EVERYTHING TO ME
OPTIONAL VIDEO: “HOW AMAZING” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO



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COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator enters as Worship Leaders exit.

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATOR: “Welcome, everyone! I’m a little confused about what month it is. Is it July . . . or December? That gift exchange was wild!”

“Thinking back to Christmas—or even to past birthdays—has anyone ever gotten a really horrible gift? A gift that, when you opened it, you tried really hard to be excited about, but it was something you really didn’t like too much? Turn to someone near you and tell them about it.

Give kids a few minutes to talk about this—and add your own well-meaning but off-putting gift story.

“What about the best gift you’ve ever gotten? Or even better, what’s the best gift you’ve ever given to someone? Find a friend near you and tell them all about that!”

Give kids a few minutes to talk about this and then take a few answers from the group. Affirm each response and then continue.

TENSION

COMMUNICATOR: “Nice answers!”

“Gifts are an amazing way to make someone else feel special—and sometimes you get the perfect gift for someone, and you can’t wait to give it to them. It’s really exciting, the anticipation, waiting for them to open your gift. And you can’t wait to see their reaction! Anyone know what I’m talking about?”

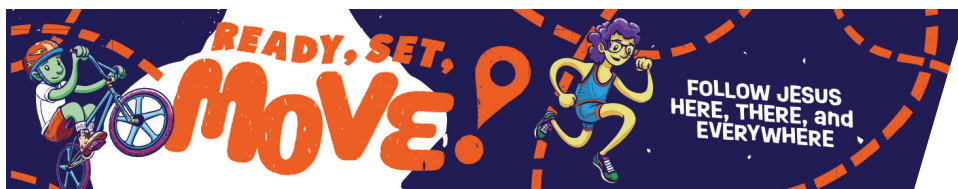
“So what happens if that person opened your really amazing gift, maybe something you spent a ton of time and thought on, and they weren’t really appreciative of it? What if they were like, ‘Oh, great, I’ve already got three of these,’ and then tossed it aside?”

“How do you deal with that? Good questions, right? And the answers aren’t so black and white. When faced with these kinds of questions, a great place to look for answers is (hold up Bible) right here. People were inspired to write down what God said and did thousands of years ago—and we can take these stories and accounts and letters and still learn from them today, thousands of years later.”

TRUTH

COMMUNICATOR: “To help us answer some of these questions, we’re heading to the New Testament of our Bible, but first let’s do a quick recap.

“If you’ve been here at [name of your environment] lately, you know we’ve been going through God’s Big Story in the Bible (*hold up Bible*)—all the way from the very beginning.



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If you're using a Bible timeline on your wall, you can reference it here as you recap.

"We saw how God created EVERYTHING. People turned away from God . . . but God had a plan to make everything right. God's plan was to send Jesus to be our Savior!

"While Jesus was on earth, He taught amazing things about God, and He showed what love is all about. The religious leaders at the time didn't believe that Jesus was and is the Son of God, so they sent Jesus to die on the cross. But then Jesus came back to life!

"Jesus stayed on earth for 40 more days and then returned to heaven. After Jesus left, the early church grew quickly, and lots of people decided to put their faith in Jesus. People like Peter and Paul traveled all over the place to tell others about Jesus.

"Paul especially started many new churches all over the Roman territories. He started one church in a city called Ephesus. That's where we start today with a letter called Ephesians. We call it a letter because many of the early church leaders wrote letters to groups of Christians around the known world to encourage them, to teach them, and sometimes to challenge or correct them if necessary.

"The apostle Paul wrote quite a few letters that we have in the New Testament of our Bible. One of those letters was written to a group of Christians living in a city called Ephesus. If you live in Ephesus, you are an Ephesian. Hence, the letter to the Ephesians.

"Now that we have that settled, let's check out something really important that Paul had to say.

Host carries in the first present and places it in front of a volunteer. Host exits.

"Whoa! Big gift! Would you open that for me and hand me what's inside?"

Volunteer opens the present, revealing the first poster with part of the verse.

"(Reading from the poster) 'God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ.' Interesting. Let's break this down. According to this verse, what has saved you?"

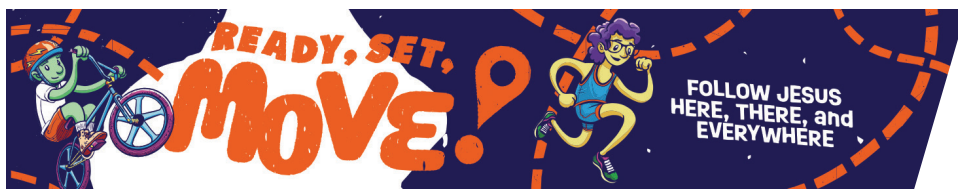
Kids' Response = "God's grace"

"Right! But what in the world does that mean? What actually is grace? Anyone have a way to define it?"

Ask for a few responses, affirming each one.

"Not bad! The idea of grace is a big deal in the Bible. It's talked about a lot, actually. Grace is similar to forgiveness—it's when you're given something that you don't deserve. A gift that is given freely.

"Have you ever been given something out of the blue for no reason at all? Not because it was your birthday, not because you got a good grade on a project, not because you finally stopped stuffing your sibling into the dishwasher. *(Beat)* Am I the only one who did that growing up? Anyway . . . grace is when you get something 'just because.' That's grace. 'You didn't deserve it, but this is for you.'



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"Like the gifts in the Left-Right game you played. You didn't have to pay for them or anything.

"God shows that kind of grace on the daily. We mess up all the time. Me included! The reason God can show grace for the things we do that are wrong is because of Jesus. His death on the cross makes God's grace possible—and when we put our trust in Jesus as our Savior, God shows grace and forgives us of our sins. We're saved by God's grace through Jesus.

"But hang on a second. I'm a pretty good guy. I do good things. I teach Bible stuff on Sundays. I'm not angry, don't yell at bad drivers, and I hold doors open for people. I mean, I probably do enough good things to please God, right?"

Host carries in the second present and places it in front of a volunteer. Host exits.

"Tear open that for us.

Volunteer opens the present, revealing the second poster with part of the verse.

"(Reading the poster) 'Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift.' Well, huh. Grace is something I can't earn? It's not like school, where I do the work and get good grades?"

"Nope. It's not. It wouldn't be grace if it had some kind of price tag or tier level on it.

"This second part helps us put the whole idea together. The first part says that we have been saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus. The next part says salvation doesn't come from anything we do. It's a gift from God.

"If we believe in Jesus—believe that He is a real guy Who really came to earth, Who is really the Son of God, and performed miracles, healed the sick, loved people, and then was crucified, died, and was buried . . . only to rise from the grave three days later, conquering sin and death just so we could have eternal and everlasting life—if we really believe that, God's grace saves us. There's no work, no job, no act that we could ever do to get good standing before God.

"We just have to believe. That's it.

"Take for instance those gifts [Name of Host] handed out earlier. You played this really fun game, believing that you were going to receive a gift . . . which you did. How awkward and even frustrating would it have been if, after opening the gift you received, [Name of Host] then asked you to pay for the gift! It is not a gift anymore if you have to pay for it!

"God saves us because of what Jesus has done. Jesus' work on the cross was the way in which God showed grace to us. That is a gift. And it was undeserved.

Host carries in the third present and places it in front of a volunteer.

"Don't hold back! Go crazy on this last one for us please.

Volunteer opens the present, revealing the third poster with part of the verse.



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"(Reading third poster) 'It is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it.'

"That's right to the point, isn't it? God's grace is the most important, biggest gift anyone could ever get, ever.

"I mean, people brag about getting the best parking spot at Target. You think they wouldn't brag about this?

"If it were within our power to get God's grace, we wouldn't need God anymore. Shoot, we wouldn't even need Jesus. Just do some things on a checklist, and BAM, eternal life.

"Let's take the reverse of this verse. If you could earn God's grace, if you could do something so that God would rescue you . . . what would be the result according to this verse? What would people do if it was based on what they had done?"

Take responses from the group.

"Exactly! Brag about it! *(Walk around, puffing chest out)* 'Did you see what I did? Do you see how great I am? God needs me! God has to save me! How could God not when you're as great as me?'

"Not quite what Paul was going for here, right?

"Instead of us saying how great we are, the gift God has given us through Jesus should cause us to walk around and say how great GOD is! Do you know what God did for me?! Do you know what God did even when I didn't deserve it?!

"Grace. Undeserved. Unearned. And the only thing to brag about? God's gift of Jesus."

Thank volunteers and have them sit down.

APPLICATION

COMMUNICATOR: "It's difficult to think about getting something for nothing. It's not in our nature, really, just to believe that you could be given something without being asked for something in return.

"We're a very 'what do I get out of it' sort of people.

"But God's not a person. God doesn't only pass out love or grace to those who most deserve it, hand picking some and not others. It's because we're messed up and broken that God offers grace freely.

SLIDE: GOD'S BIG STORY TIMELINE

SLIDE: WEEK 1 TIMELINE IMAGE

If you're making a timeline of printed images on your wall, take this moment to place today's timeline image on the clothesline.

"Some of you might think, 'I'll never be good enough for God to love me.' But the truth is exactly the opposite. You're never bad enough for God not to.



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25 MINUTES

“This can really help us as we think about the people in our lives who maybe sometimes frustrate us or get on our nerves. Sometimes we might want to withhold our love or kindness from them in order to show them that they haven’t earned it. But remember, if God treated us like this, we’d all be sunk. Instead, we can be more like God by loving people even when they don’t deserve it.

“It might be easy to think that because the apostle Paul—the guy who wrote this letter in the first place—said we can’t earn anything, we should just simply stop trying. I mean, it’s free, right? That means I’m off the hook!

“Not exactly. We’re saved by God’s grace through our faith in Jesus, but the best way to show your faith in Jesus is to treat people like He treated people.

“We aren’t saved by good works—that is a gift. But once we have put our faith in Jesus and accept that gift, we now get to do good works as our gift back to God! Not because we need to earn anything from God. We do good and love others because God loved us first and prepared us to do good and love others well!

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: “Today as you go to groups, think about this:

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

“How do you feel when you get a gift? How does this change the way you think about God as the gift-giver? Or you as the gift-receiver? Before you head out, let’s pray and ask for help to understand God’s grace more and more today. Let’s pray.”

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS THE KIDS EXIT.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP