

SAVING GRACE

THE AIM: To discover more about God's grace

The aim unpacked

Our society urges us to be tolerant of different attitudes, beliefs and behaviour, and advocates that everything is permissible as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else. The Bible has a slightly different take on things. In this session we explore the story of Noah and learn that if we do wrong there are consequences. God does not tolerate any kind of sin, even if it may appear that no one is getting hurt.

WAY IN



theGRID MAGAZINE

WHAT: questionnaire

WHY: to introduce the idea that we all do wrong things

WITH: magazine page 24

1 Give out copies of the questionnaire 'Have you ever...?' from page 24. Challenge the young people to get a signature in each box from a person who can answer 'yes' to that question. If everyone has told the truth, no one should be able to sign the last box.

2 Ask what the young people found out from the questions. Did they find someone to sign every box? Say that no one can sign the last box because we all do things wrong, all the time! No one is or ever has been perfect – except Jesus.



SCENE SETTER

WHAT: consequences

WHY: to introduce the idea that actions have consequences

1 Play a few rounds of consequences. This game works best with about ten young people but will work with four or five.

2 Give each young person a sheet of paper and a pen. Ask them to write a boy's name at the top of the paper and fold it over to hide the name. Suggest that they use famous people, to make the game more amusing. Ask everyone to pass their paper to the player on their left. Next, ask them to write a girl's name, fold the paper over and pass it on again. Then they should write where they met, what he said to her, what she said to him, folding and passing the paper each time. Lastly, write down what the consequence was.

3 Put all the folded papers in the middle. Invite each young person to pick one and read it out.

4 Ask the young people to share about times when something they have done has had a direct consequence, good or bad. Alternatively, think of some examples from films or TV shows. Pick up on this idea of 'consequences' through this session.



THEMED GAME

WHAT: to explore the idea that when rules are broken, everyone suffers

WITH: equipment for a game (for example football, volleyball, rounders, Monopoly, Pictionary)

1 Before you play the game, tell a couple of players, privately, to cheat as much as they like. Play a game, either an active running game or a board game.

2 After the game, explain that you gave some people permission to cheat, and point out that when one or two people break the rules, everybody suffers. Ask for some suggestions as to how it affected the group. (Perhaps there was no game left to play; it wasn't fun any more; people lost their temper; it made it very frustrating...) Would any young people say it doesn't matter?

3 Say that when we break the rules, somebody gets hurt and relationships can be damaged. Although today's example ruined the game, it probably won't have any long-lasting effect, but what about real life? Today we'll check out the extremes of what happened once when almost everyone on earth 'broke the rules'.

BIBLE EXPERIENCE



LEVEL 1: CONNECT

WHAT: demonstration

WHY: to discover more about God's grace

WITH: plastic globe or map of the world covered with plastic laminate, water-soluble marker pen, water, cloth, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* DVD, playback equipment

1 Invite the young people to suggest actions that are really bad. For each one, invite someone to draw a blot on the globe or map with the water-soluble marker pen.

2 Ask the group to suggest how to clean it again. They should suggest using water! As you prepare, explain that this is a popular story to tell children because it has lots of animals in it and a nice boat. But actually, it's a horrific story, showing us how much it matters to God when we do wrong stuff.

3 Tell the story of the flood, using the following key points (from Genesis 6:9–8:19):

- People were doing terrible things that made God wish he'd never created them. He decided to clean up the earth.
- Because he is a God of grace, he found one good person, Noah, and saved the human race through him. God told Noah to build a boat and bring on board his family and two of every kind of animal to give the whole of creation a second chance.
- God sent a great flood that wiped out every living thing, except what was on the boat. (Wipe the blots off the map.)
- Things were so bad on earth that only a really drastic solution would do.

4 Show the scene from near the end of *The Two Towers* where the Ents march on Saruman's tower and 'cleanse' the filth by flooding the area (scene 49 on the cinema version of the DVD, 2 hrs 33 mins in).

5 Invite the young people to read Genesis 6:9–8:19 together in pairs. Ask them to think about how the episode from *The Two Towers* is similar to the Noah story. How is it different? Bring the group back together to share feedback.



LEVEL 2: INTERFACE

WHAT: drama and discussion

WHY: to discover more about God's grace

WITH: magazine page 25, flip chart or whiteboard, Bibles, audio Bible and playback equipment (optional)

1 Before the session, invite some young people to practise the drama 'Chain of pain' on page 25, and to perform it in the session as an introduction.

2 Divide the young people into pairs and ask them if there is any crime that doesn't hurt anyone. What do they come up with? Ask them to feed back their ideas and write them on the flip chart or whiteboard.

3 Say that someone is hurt as a consequence of every crime. Read Genesis 6:5,6 to the group and ask them who else gets hurt when human beings do wrong. The Bible shows us that our wrong actions hurt God. Ask the group what they think God did next, and then summarise the story of Noah as in *Bible experience* 'Level 1 Connect', or listen to Genesis 6:9–8:19 from an audio Bible.

4 Ask the young people to think about the following questions in pairs or threes, before coming back together for discussion and feedback:

- Did the punishment fit the crime?
- Do you think God overreacted? Why? Why not?
- What does this story tell us about how seriously God takes sin?
- Why doesn't God flood our world on a regular basis?
- What has God done to take the punishment for us?



LEVEL 3: SWITCH ON

WHAT: visual Bible study

WHY: to discover more about God's grace

WITH: eight squares of card, toy boat, Moses basket, bowl of water, cross, globe, magazine page 26, Bibles, audio Bible, playback equipment (optional)

1 Put the globe, boat, basket and cross each on a square of card in a square shape. Everyone should be able to see them and, ideally, reach them. These represent creation, the flood, Moses and Jesus' crucifixion. Place the water in the middle.

2 Ask the group to guess which stories might be represented by these symbols. Briefly remind them of the stories of creation (especially the waters of chaos before creation) and Moses (especially the basket which carried Moses to safety). Touch the toy boat. Say that you're going to hear a familiar story and the young people should look at the symbols for the other three stories and think about whether the flood story has any links with them.

3 Read aloud (or listen to from an audio Bible) Genesis 6:19–8:19. Then ask if the young people thought of any links between the stories.

4 Look at page 26 and use the table for some more ideas. Challenge them to fill in the blank line with another story where people mess up and God deals with it.

5 Put out three more squares of card and ask the young people to draw or suggest symbols that could represent other stories that might be linked to the water in the centre.

6 Put out the last square of card and ask, 'Is there any way your life could be said to be part of this pattern? Are there any new links you would want to make between the stories now?'

7 Conclude by saying that the Bible gives many accounts of how God feels when people mess up and about his ways of dealing with the messes. Because of his grace, he is ready to rescue us from our sin and forgive us.



MUSICAL

WHAT: sound effects composition

WHY: to try to express feelings through music

WITH: musical instruments and anything else that makes sound

1 Challenge the group to try to describe the stages of the flood story using only sounds. Can they get across the feelings of:

- people hurting each other
- God's pain
- the isolated goodness of one man – Noah
- the power of the flood
- seeing the rainbow?

2 This could be a random selection of sounds, or perhaps the group would like to present it as a sort of symphony. If appropriate, you could ask the young people to take this one step further by adding a one-line prayer after each section.



PRACTICAL

WHAT: practical service

WHY: to show in a practical way that members of the group want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem

WITH: appropriate cleaning equipment

1 Ask the young people if they would rather be part of the problem of sin in the world, or part of the solution to it. (Actually, we are all part of both!)

2 Challenge them to clean something as a demonstration of being part of the solution. What can they do that involves water and cleaning? For example, they could wash the cars of church members (with permission!) or clean the kitchen or bathroom at home.

3 When they carry out their cleaning task, ask them to remember that they are doing it to symbolise how we can be a part of God's solution to sin in the world. Perhaps you could all report back next session.



CREATIVE

WHAT: creative confession

WHY: to take sin seriously in our own lives

WITH: water, soap, paper towels, coal or paint, ambient music and playback equipment, images of crime, poverty, pollution and suffering (from newspapers or magazines), cross

1 Play some music to set a quiet atmosphere.

2 Invite the group to look at the pictures and think about what responsibility they have for what is wrong in the world or in their own lives. Invite them to be honest before God who knows everything and who is longing for us to be honest with him so that he can forgive us.

3 As a sign of our guilt or responsibility, invite the young people to hold a piece of coal or to paint their hands while they look at the pictures and pray quietly. You might like to have a large sheet of white paper that group members could put their dirty handprints on.

4 As a sign that they want to be forgiven, ask them to wash their hands and sit quietly in front of the cross. You could end with a quiet song like 'Spirit of the Living God, Fall Afresh on Me'.

MORE ON THIS THEME:

If you want to do a short series with your group, other sessions that work well with this one are:

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | <i>Apple disaster</i> | <i>Genesis 3</i> |
| 2 | <i>Fugitive from justice?</i> | <i>Genesis 4:1–16; 6:1–8</i> |
| 4 | <i>Gracious promise</i> | <i>Genesis 8:20–9:17</i> |

HAVE YOU EVER...?



Bible bit
Genesis 6:9 – 8:19

Zero tolerance. How many times have you heard that phrase used? God has zero tolerance to sin – the bad stuff we do. God hates it! There is always a consequence to our sin; it always leads to someone – mostly ourselves – getting hurt. But the great thing is that God offers a way back. Jesus took the penalty for that sin so we can be forgiven! How great is that?!

Ask some of your friends to sign their names in the boxes where they can answer 'yes' to the question.

- 1** — **STOLEN A BISCUIT** —
- 2** — **TOLD A FIB SO YOU WOULDN'T GET INTO TROUBLE** —
- 3** — **FELT JEALOUS OF SOMEONE AT SCHOOL** —
- 4** — **SHOWN OFF ABOUT PASSING AN EXAM** —
- 5** — **FELT SO ANGRY WITH SOMEONE YOU'VE FELT LIKE HURTING THEM** —
- 6** — **HURT SOMEONE ON PURPOSE** —
- 7** — **CHEATED IN A MATHS TEST** —
- 8** — **SPENT A WHOLE DAY WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING WRONG** —

CAN ANYONE HONESTLY SAY 'YES' TO THAT FINAL QUESTION...?



CHAIN OF PAIN

Perform this sketch with some friends in a very stylised, over-the-top, in-yer-face, tongue-in-cheek sort of way.

Characters: Alf, Bob, Caz, Dez

Scene: the characters are standing in a line

Alf: Ha! I shall nick Bob's wallet when he's not looking!
(Does so.)

Bob: Here! Someone's nicked my wallet! I'll nick Caz's wallet.
(Nicks Caz's wallet.)

Caz: Oy! Someone's nicked my wallet! I'll nick Dez's wallet!
(Nicks Dez's wallet.)

Dez: Hey! Someone's nicked my wallet! I'll nick Alf's wallet!
(Nicks Alf's wallet.)

Alf: Pah! Someone's nicked my wallet! I'll have to get my own back.
(Thumps Bob.)

Bob: Here! Someone thumped me! I'll have to get my own back.
(Thumps Caz.)

Caz: Oy! Someone thumped me! I'll have to get my own back.
(Thumps Dez.)

Dez: Hey! Someone thumped me! I'll have to get my own back.
(Thumps Alf.)

Alf: Pah! I'll sort this!
(Stabs Bob.)

Bob: (Staggering.)
Here! I'll sort this!
(Stabs Caz and dies.)

Caz: (Staggering.)
Oy! I'll sort this!
(Stabs Dez and dies.)

Dez: (Staggering.)
Hey! I'll sort this!
(Stabs Alf and dies.)

Alf: (Staggering.)
Ummm. Sorted?
(Dies.)

GOD'S BIG PLAN

Check out the Bible passages below and see if you can fill in the table by working out the problems, God's view and how he rescued the people.



THE MESS PEOPLE ARE IN HOW GOD FEELS HOW PEOPLE'S MESS AFFECTS THE WORLD AROUND THEM HOW GOD SHOWS HIS POWER GOD'S RESCUE PLAN

| | THE MESS PEOPLE ARE IN | HOW GOD FEELS | HOW PEOPLE'S MESS AFFECTS THE WORLD AROUND THEM | HOW GOD SHOWS HIS POWER | GOD'S RESCUE PLAN |
|--|------------------------|---------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------|
| CREATION GENESIS 1:1 – 2:3; 2:4-25 | | | | | |
| THE FLOOD GENESIS 6:9 – 8:22 | | | | | |
| MOSES EXODUS 3,11,12 | | | | | |
| THE CROSS ROMANS 3:21-26 | | | | | |

Can you think of another story that follows the same pattern?
Perhaps your own? Where do you fit in God's rescue plan?

| YOUR STORY | THE MESS PEOPLE ARE IN | HOW GOD FEELS | HOW PEOPLE'S MESS AFFECTS THE WORLD AROUND THEM | HOW GOD SHOWS HIS POWER | GOD'S RESCUE PLAN |
|------------|------------------------|---------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------|
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