

Christ's Gifts - Grace

The gift of grace is for all people of all abilities.

I am the vine. You are the branches. If anyone remains joined to me, and I to him, he will bear a lot of fruit. You can't do anything without me.

—John 15:5 NIV

- Think about the word *grace*. What does grace mean to you?
- Grace is often defined as receiving something good from someone, even though we really don't deserve it. This could be a gift; this could be forgiveness. Can you think of a time when someone has given you grace? What did they do for you?
- How did you feel about receiving grace?

Grace is a precious and wonderful gift from God - a free gift God gives even though we don't deserve it.

GRACE = God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

We live in a broken and sinful world. And if we're really honest with ourselves, we know there is sin in our lives, too. We know we don't always say good things; we don't always think good things; we don't always do good things. Sometimes we say, think, and do bad things all at the same time! Because we sin, we deserve punishment. We do not deserve forgiveness. We do not deserve a home in heaven. But the thing is, God wants to forgive us and He wants us in His home some day. So God sent His Son Jesus to earth to live the perfect life we aren't able to live. Then Jesus died on the cross for us and rose from death on Easter morning. God lets Jesus' perfect life replace our sinful life. There is no judgment because of Jesus. That's grace! We don't deserve it, but God gives grace to us as a gift. Because of Jesus, we can be forgiven. Because of Jesus, we can live in heaven. It's all grace.

- You don't have to say it out loud, but think about a time you sinned. Did you ask God for forgiveness?



- How does it feel to know you are forgiven because Jesus died to save you?

But there's more! God's gift of grace is so precious and wonderful; He chooses to pour His grace into our lives in several ways. God doesn't just zap us with grace out of nowhere. Rather, He **embraces** us with grace whenever we read His words in the Bible, words of love and forgiveness. God **bathes** us in grace when we experience the water of Holy Baptism where He forgives our sin and adopts us as His children. God also **feeds** us grace through the gift of the Lord's Supper. This precious meal forgives our sins, binds us to Jesus, and connects us as brothers and sisters in Christ. One of the most precious truths about these many different ways of receiving God's gift of grace is they do not depend on us—on our thoughts, our words or our actions. These many ways of receiving God's grace are truly **GIFTS** of grace from God Himself. His thoughts, words and actions are what give these gifts of grace their power. These are indeed gifts of grace for all of us!

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for giving us Your grace. Thank You for sending Jesus to save us. Thank You for the gifts of baptism and the Lord's Supper. We love having Your grace in our lives! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Christ's Gifts - Baptism
Becoming Children of God and Wearing New Clothes

The gift of baptism is for all people of all abilities.

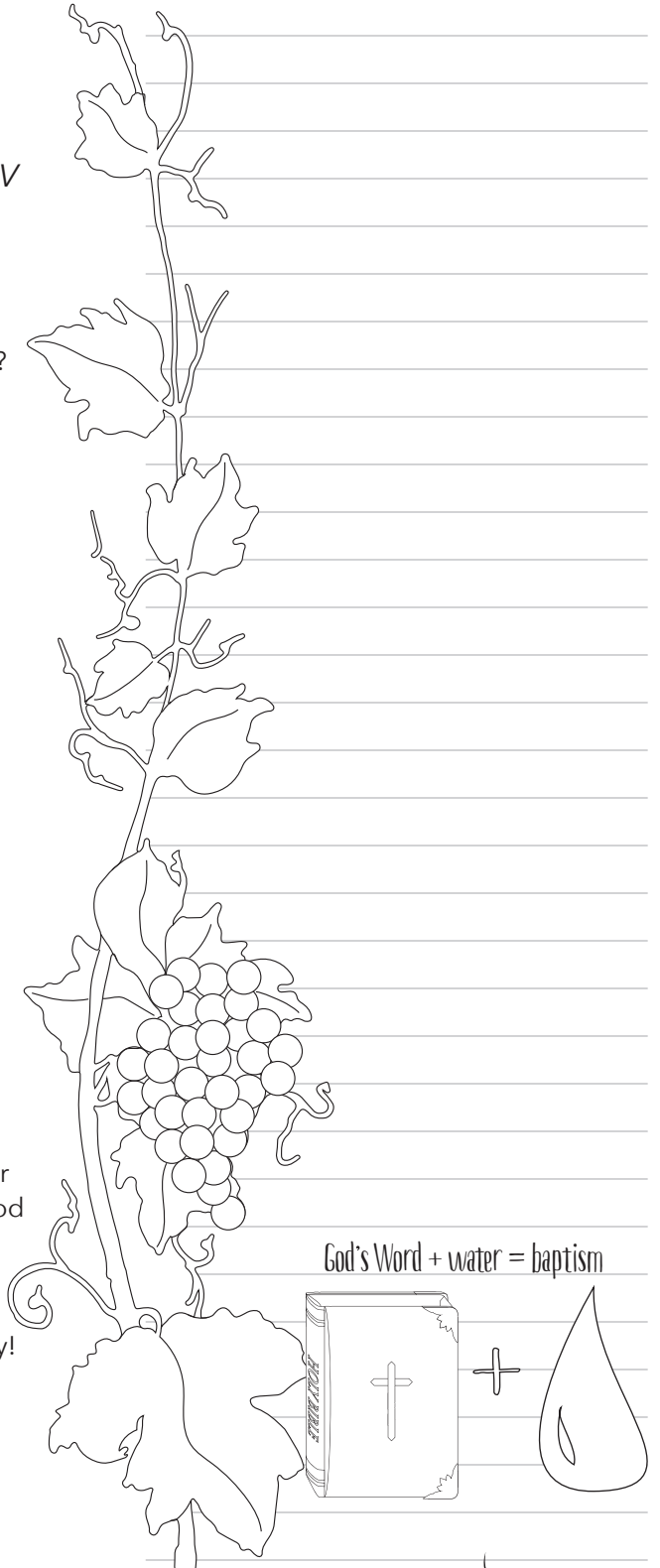
You are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ ... You are all one in Christ Jesus.

—Galatians 3:26-28 NIV

- Think about the last time you got new clothes. What did you get?
- How do you feel in new clothes?
- Have you ever gotten a stain on something you love to wear?
- Did you get it clean or was it ruined? How did that feel?
- How does it feel to be sweaty and dirty?
- How does it feel after you get cleaned up?

When we are sweaty and dirty, we use soap and water to get clean. When we are baptized, God's Word and water make us clean from our sins. Baptism is a gift from God. It is a free gift of grace. In baptism, God bathes us in His grace! Water is splashed on us, God's Word is said, and a miracle happens. God adopts us into His family. He is our heavenly Father and we are His children. This gives us forgiveness. Because we are His family, we are connected to Christ in a special way!

- Have you been baptized? If so, were you a child or an adult?



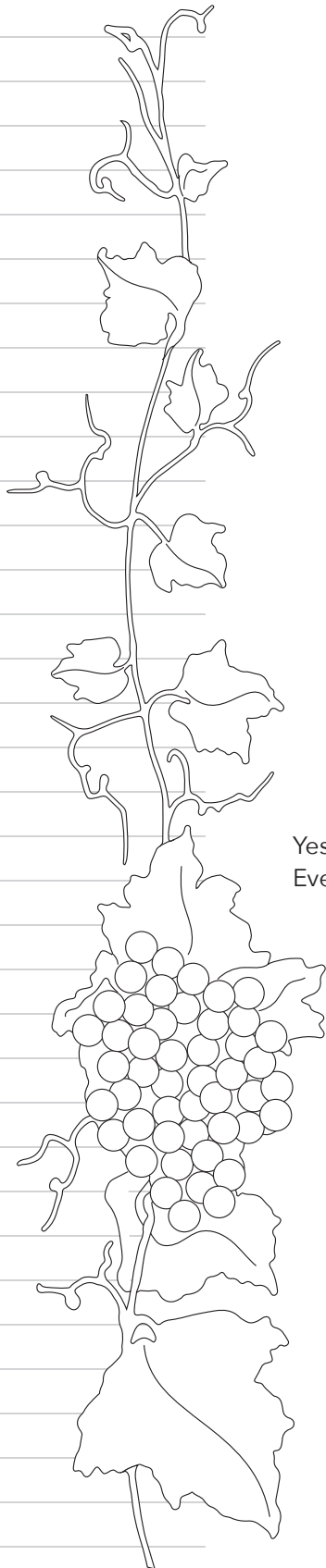
As if that's not enough, God does even more in baptism! When we are baptized, God sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts. The Holy Spirit lives inside us. He helps us believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit helps us trust God's promises for us. The Holy Spirit also helps us live our lives as followers of Jesus, living the way Jesus wants us to live.

- You don't have to say it out loud, but think of a time when you did something wrong to someone you know. Did they forgive you?
- If so, how did forgiveness feel?
- Have you ever forgiven someone?
- How does it feel to know you have been forgiven by God?
- Reread the Bible passage. Who did Jesus die for?
- Who is part of Jesus' family?
- Who should be baptized?

Yes! Jesus died for all of us. Jesus wants us all to take His gift of baptism. Everyone who believes in Jesus and is baptized is part of His family!

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for giving us the gift of baptism. Thank You for bathing us in Your grace through the waters of baptism. How wonderful You are! You adopt us into Your family as Your child. You wash away all of our sins. You give us the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts. You give us everything we need to stay connected to Jesus. In His name we pray. Amen.



Christ's Gifts - The Lord's Supper

The gift of the Lord's Supper is for all people of all abilities.

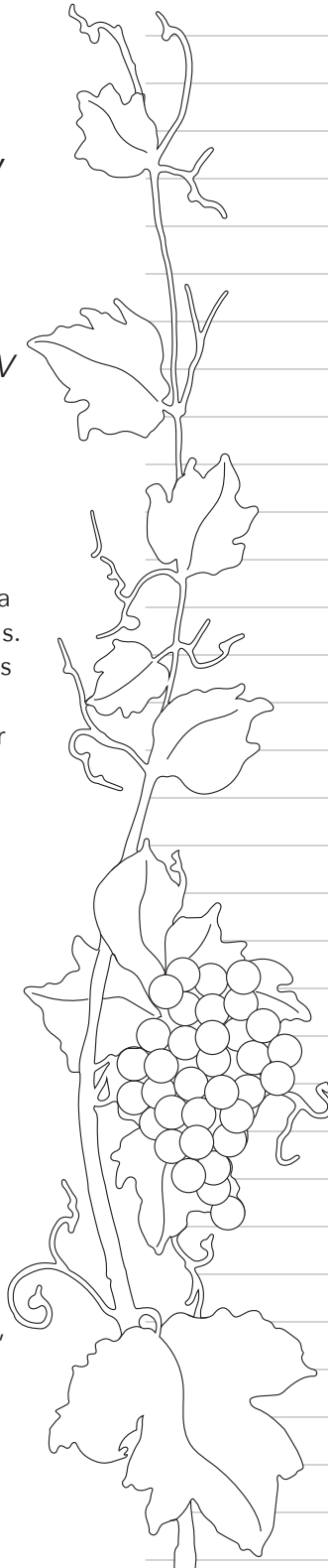
While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

—Matthew 26:26-28 NIV

The Bible shows us how wonderful God's love for us really is. God gives us grace. Grace is often defined as receiving something good from someone, even though we really don't deserve it. This could be a gift; this could be forgiveness. Think about what Jesus has done for us. None of us are perfect, so Jesus lived the perfect life we can't. All of us are sinners, so Jesus died on the cross to forgive our sins. Then Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning so we can live with Him forever in heaven.

- Have you ever received a gift you didn't really deserve? If so, how did you feel?
- Think of a time when someone said something to you or did something for you that was really special? What did they say or do for you? Why was it special?

In His wisdom, God has chosen to give us grace in some very special ways. One of these ways is God's gift of the Lord's Supper. The Bible tells us the bread in the Lord's Supper is the body of Jesus and the wine in the Lord's Supper is the blood of Jesus. What a precious gift! **(Reread the Bible passage.)** This wonderful meal, this wonderful gift, forgives our sins, connects us to Jesus our Savior, and connects us to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Because of Jesus, we are God's family!



- Have you seen people receiving the Lord's Supper in your church?

- Do you receive the Lord's Supper? Why or why not?

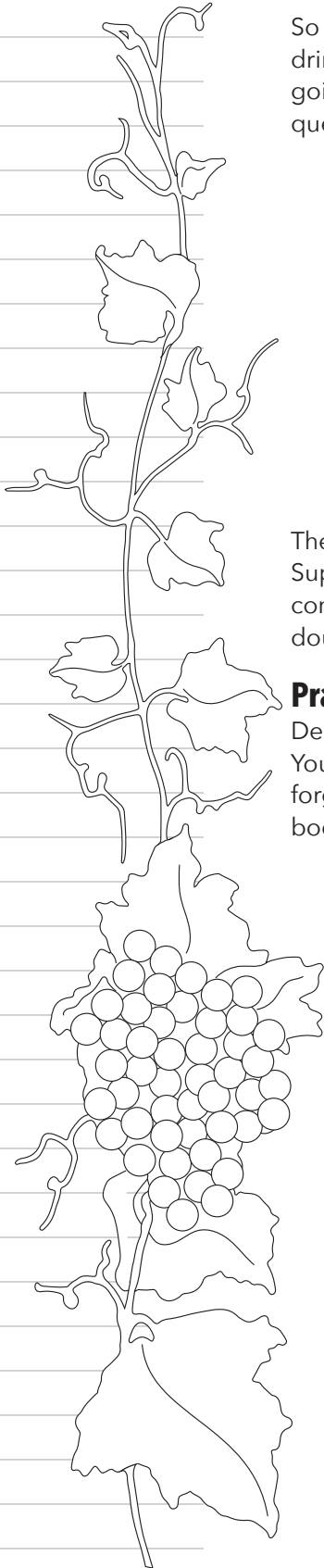
So how does this work? How can eating a little piece of bread and drinking a little bit of wine give us such a wonderful blessing? Before going to the altar to receive the Lord's Supper, we ask ourselves these questions:

- Am I a sinner needing forgiveness? Am I sorry for my sins?
- Do I believe Jesus died on the cross to save me from my sins?
- Do I want to live a better life for Jesus?

Then we trust Jesus to do what He says He will do for us in the Lord's Supper - forgive our sins, keep us connected to Him, and keep us connected to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Without a doubt, the Lord's Supper is a wonderful gift of grace!

Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving us the gift of the Lord's Supper. Thank You for giving us Your grace in this holy meal. Help us gladly receive the forgiveness only You can give us in the bread and wine, which is Your body and the blood. In Your name we pray. Amen.



Christ's Gifts - The Bible

The gift of the Bible is for all people of all abilities.

- How can they call on him unless they believe in him? How can they believe in him unless they hear about him?

*So faith comes from hearing the message.
And the message that is heard is the message
about Christ.*

—Romans 10:14, 17 NIV

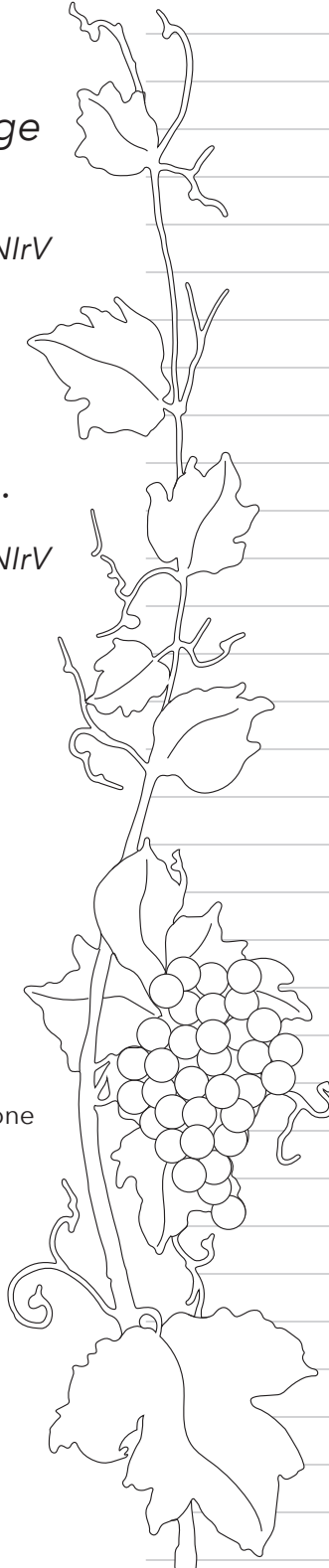
*Everything written in the past was written to
teach us. The Scriptures give us strength to
go on. They encourage us and give us hope.*

—Romans 15:4 NIV

- When you hear people say *God's Word*, they mean *the Bible*.
Do you have a Bible?
- If so, how often do you read or listen to Your Bible?
- Do you like to hear God's Word alone or with others?

The Bible is a gift from God and is not just an ordinary book. It is the one book that clearly tells us three important facts:

1. We belong to God.
2. God makes Himself known to us in it.
3. God has a plan for us.



We belong to God

The Bible tells us God created us. Because God made us, He loves us; we are special to Him. In the book of Genesis, we find the story of creation and the story of Adam and Eve.

- Think about a time when you loved something you made. What did you make?
- Think about how God made you and loves you. How does it feel to know God loves you as His creation?

How God makes Himself known to us

God wants us to know Him. God not only tells us He loves us, He uses stories from the Bible to show us His love. The Bible tells story after story about what God has done for people who trust Him. God feeds the hungry and gives water to the thirsty. God protects His people from danger and heals their sickness. Every time we read or listen to the Bible, we can see God's love in action.

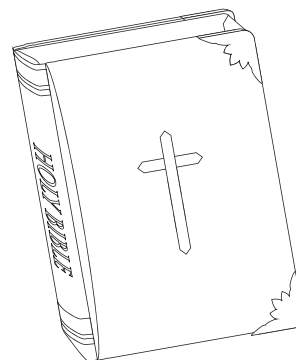
- Has anyone ever told you they loved you?
- Has anyone ever shown you they loved you by how they acted toward you? If so, how?

God has a plan for us

Finally, God wants us to know He has a plan for us. The Bible tells the Easter story of Jesus dying on the cross to save us from our sins. It tells how He came back to life to do great things. God promises we will do the same thing, die here on earth and live an even better life in heaven with Him. That will be wonderful! If God didn't tell us about His plan, this life would feel short and sad. We'd be afraid. Instead, we can be joyful no matter what happens today, because God cares about us and our tomorrow. We can rejoice knowing we have a forever home in heaven. The Bible gives us this promise!

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for Your words in the Bible. Thank You for creating us, loving us and giving us Jesus to save us. Teach us to trust Your words and see the love You have for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Christ's Gifts - Easter

The gift of Easter is for all people of all abilities.

What I received I passed on to you. And it is the most important of all. Here is what it is. Christ died for our sins, just as Scripture said he would. He was buried. He was raised from the dead on the third day, just as Scripture said he would be.

—1 Corinthians 15: 3-4 NIV

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even if they die. And whoever lives by believing in me will never die."

—John 11:25-26 NIV

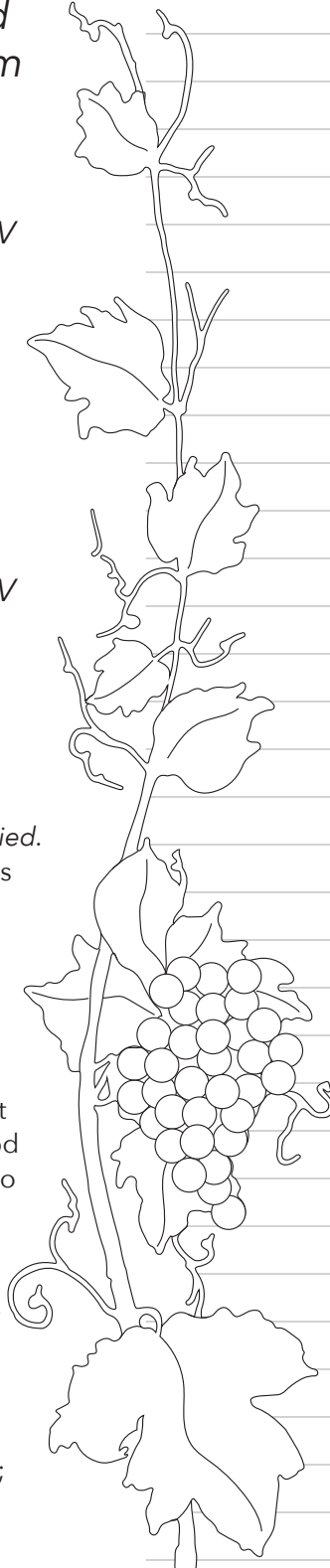
- *What is your favorite song about Jesus?*

There is an old and pretty Easter song with these words: *"Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!"* Even though it is short, it tells us everything we need to know about Easter.

Christ has died

At Easter time, we remember Jesus Christ died on a cross. He died because the world is a broken place where people do evil things. People sin; sin makes bad things happen. For example, because of sin, people get sick and die. God did not make the world this way, but people broke God's good rules; they deserve to be punished. But God loves us. He loves us so much He sent His Son Jesus to be punished so we don't have to be. God knows things are bad and He saves us from the bad things by giving us His Son Jesus.

- Think about a time when you escaped, or got away from danger. What happened? Did someone help you?
- Sinning is bad and dangerous. Because of Jesus, we can escape; we can get away from God's punishment. Because of Jesus we can be forgiven. How does it feel to know you are forgiven?



Christ is risen

Fortunately, Jesus did not stay dead. The Bible tells us Jesus came back to life just three days later on Easter morning. That is great news for Jesus, but it is also great news for us! When Jesus rose, He beat death. We are now forgiven for all our sins. Jesus fixes our friendship with God. Because of Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live in us and teaches us to trust Jesus. We are connected to God with an unbreakable bond. Even though we can't see the connection, like being tied to a rope or stuck with glue, the connection is always there. God never leaves us. God always loves us.

- How does it feel to know God never leaves you alone?
- How does it feel to know you can talk to God at any time and He will listen?

Christ will come again

Jesus said He will come again. Jesus promised, and Jesus never breaks His promises. We can count on Him. That's the good news for us. Because of Jesus we will live in heaven with Him some day. We will be with Him if we die, or we will be with Jesus if He comes back before we die. Either way, Jesus is coming! Hallelujah!

Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank You so much for loving us. Thank You for dying on the cross to save us from our sins. Thank You for promising to come back. Teach us to trust Your promises as we wait. In Your name we pray. Amen.

