

BIG CROSS

APPRECIATING THE GREATNESS OF JESUS'S GRACE

The BIG IDEA:

As we grow in our understanding of how holy God is and in how very sinful we are, we are even more amazed at Jesus' grace in our lives.

The PROBLEM:

We think we aren't that sinful and don't understand how holy God is, so Jesus' grace isn't that big of a deal.

OUR RESPONSE:

Rest in God's promise that those who trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins can be sure they have eternal life and are secure in their relationship with God.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TOPIC:

There's nothing more amazing than the undeserved favor that comes to us through faith in Jesus Christ. Yet it's easy for us to miss how amazing this grace is. It happens all the time when we fail to see God for how holy he is. It also happens when we minimize our sin, thinking it's not that big of a deal. Having a growing appreciation and awareness of God's holiness and our sinfulness is essential for living in awe over the grace of Jesus Christ.

The IMAGE:

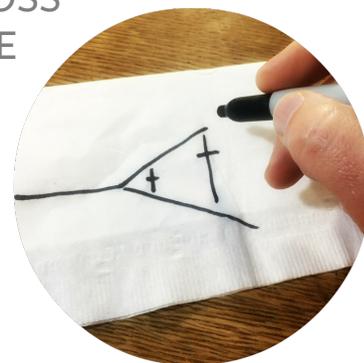
This drawing represents the content of this study. The bottom line is our understanding of our own sinfulness, the top line is our understanding about how much grace we need. The cross bridges that gap. The more sinful we recognize that we are, the more we will appreciate Jesus' grace in our lives. Try drawing it for your students!

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

What I want the group to know and understand: That a growing awareness of God's holiness and our sinfulness are essential to living in awe of Jesus' grace.

What I want the group to experience: Being overwhelmed by God's holiness, our sinfulness, and Jesus' grace.

How I want the group to respond to Christ: By celebrating his grace and inviting him to show more of his holiness and expose more of our individual sinfulness.

**LAUNCH:**

Think of a time when you messed up really badly and someone showed you grace (i.e., didn't come down on you like you deserved)? How did that person's grace make you feel toward him or her and about what you did?

Allow the group to discuss. Help the group see that when a person extends grace to you, it typically helps you appreciate that grace and also see that it was a big deal that you messed up. Explain that this is similar to what we can experience with God through faith in Jesus Christ when we realize how holy God is, how sinful we are, and how Jesus' undeserved goodness to us closes that gap.

EXPLORE:

1. Read Isaiah 6:1-4. Isaiah lived several hundred years before Jesus did and in this story, he sees a strange vision. Isaiah was a prophet (people who hear messages from God and give them to the people). Describe in your own words what Isaiah sees.

Allow the group to discuss. Isaiah sees the Lord sitting gloriously on a throne in his temple. Standing above him are seraphim (angelic beings) with wings that cover their faces and feet as they fly. They declare the Lord's holiness as the foundations of the smoke-filled temple shake at the sound of their voices.

2. How do the seraphim describe the Lord in verse 3?

The seraphim describe the Lord as holy and say the whole earth is full of his glory.

3. What do you think it means that the Lord is holy and that the whole earth is full of his glory?

Allow the group to discuss. "Holy" means the Lord is pure and without fault. It means he is in a class of his own, completely separate from his creation. "The whole earth is full of his glory" means there are displays of who God is and what he is like everywhere around us.

4. Read Isaiah 6:5-8. How does Isaiah respond to this vision of the LORD in verse 5? Why do you think he responds this way?

He says he's doomed because a sinful person like him has seen the Lord.

5. In verses 6-7 an angel flies over and touches a burning coal to Isaiah's lips. What's that about? What is the difference between Isaiah's attitude between verse 5 and verse 8? What changes for Isaiah between those verses?

A seraphim flies to Isaiah and touches a burning coal to Isaiah's lips, bringing about the forgiveness of his sin. Experiencing God's forgiveness is what happens and makes the difference for Isaiah.

APPLY:

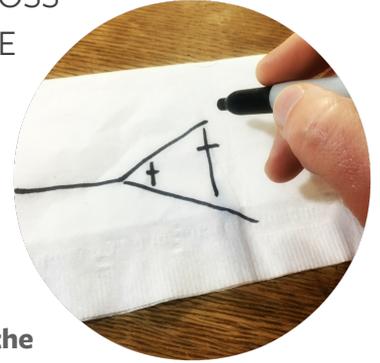
6. Read Luke 5:4-10. How is Isaiah's experience with the Lord like what we experience when we meet Jesus Christ?

Allow the group to discuss. When we see how holy and amazing Jesus is and how sinful we are, we realize how unworthy we are. But Jesus in his grace (undeserved favor) accepts us and makes it possible for us to be his special messengers too.

HOLY: God is pure and without fault. He's in a class of his own, completely separate from everything he's created.

GLORY: What we see when God shows himself to us. Sometimes people will say a sports team is "in its glory." This means that game after game you see how amazing this team is. It's the same idea with God. When it says, "The whole earth is full of his glory," it means everywhere we look there are examples of how amazing God is.

SERAPHIM: Angel-like beings.



APPLY (con't):

7. Why do we need to see God's holiness and our sinfulness to appreciate the grace that comes to us through Jesus Christ (see the Gospel Centered Life of God's Holiness, Our Sinfulness, and the Growing Cross that I can't figure out how to paste into this doc)?

Allow the group to discuss. Just as Isaiah and Peter appreciated God's grace when they experienced God's holiness and their own sinfulness, the same is true for us. Seeing God's holiness and our sinfulness shows us how hopeless we are unless God steps in to help us. This is exactly what he does through Jesus' death on the cross for our sins. Trusting in Jesus brings us forgiveness of our sin and lets us live in the presence of a holy God. The more we grow in seeing God's holiness and our sinfulness, the more we appreciate the grace of Jesus' cross. The cross "looms large" in our lives.

8. There are lots of ways we "shrink Jesus' cross" in our experience. Look at this list for some of the ways this happens. What is one of the ways on this list you can relate to?

Allow the group to discuss.

9. How can a growing appreciation of Jesus' grace keep you from "shrinking Jesus' cross" in the way you mentioned?

Allow the group to discuss. Help your group make connections between the ways they said they "shrink Jesus' cross" and how appreciating Jesus' grace helps them not to do that. For instance, if I realize that Jesus' grace makes me acceptable before a holy God, I don't need to defend myself to others or fake and pretend to be someone I'm not.

10. Just as Isaiah and Peter became God's messengers when they experienced his grace, the same is true for us. Who is someone you'd like to tell about the grace of Jesus we've learned about in this study?

Allow the group to discuss. Lead your group in thinking about a friend, family member, co-worker, teacher, or coach to talk about this with.