

THE 
PRESENT
WORD 
ADULT BIBLE LESSONS

LEADER'S GUIDE

FALL 2019

RESPONDING TO GOD'S GRACE

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Introduction

The “grace of God” is a central conviction of Christian faith. Our God of grace loves us in Jesus Christ, forgives us, saves us, and draws us into a life of growth in faith, hope, and love. As members of the body of Christ, we endeavor to share God’s grace with others by word and deed through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The studies this quarter explore what it means to live in the grace of God and perceive God’s grace all around us. As 2 Peter 3:18 counsels,

“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

May this study be a catalyst for you and your fellow *The Present Word* readers to grow in grace and share God’s amazing grace with others, day by day.

Mark D. Hinds,
Editor

The Uniform Series

The Present Word quarterly Bible study is based on the Uniform Series, a plan for reading and studying the Bible. The objectives of the series are to help persons increasingly:

1. to know the content of the Bible,
2. to understand the message of the Bible in light of their experiences and relationships, and
3. to be aware of God's self-disclosure, especially God's redeeming love as revealed in Jesus Christ, that they may respond in faith and love—to the end that they may know who they are and what their human situation means, grow as the children of God rooted in the Christian community, live in the Spirit of God in every relationship, fulfill their common discipleship in the world, and abide in the Christian hope.

The emphasis in these objectives is on the Bible as the record of the revelation of God in Christ as the primary source of understanding the meaning of the Christian faith and as the most effective means of confronting persons with the significant concerns of the gospel. These concerns include personal faith, values, human relationships, social responsibility, Christian hope, and the implications of Christian discipleship under the lordship of Christ and in the fellowship of his Spirit.

One of the distinctive features of the Uniform Series is the collaborative process through which denominational partners engage in the common task of developing the Lesson Guides. The development process begins with a Scope and Sequence subcommittee whose work sets a framework for the biblical themes of each six-year cycle. The Scope and Sequence team for Cycle 23 (2016–2022) chose themes that are creatively expressed in this statement of Christian faith:

The God of the Bible, the source of creation, loves us and calls us in covenant through our faith to worship and to do justice.

The underlined words in the statement compose the eight recurring themes throughout each quarterly segment of *The Present Word*.

Quarter in Brief

The fall quarter focuses on God's gift of faith and how we respond to it both personally and communally. The lessons from the Old and New Testaments illuminate how God's grace affects the lives of all believers, as demonstrated by their obedience, gratitude, and holy living.

Unit I, "God Is Faithful," has five lessons that tell the story of God's faithfulness. In Genesis, God is faithful to Abraham by blessing his nephew Lot, and God is faithful in answering Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel. In Exodus, God is faithful to the people of Israel by providing manna when they complain of hunger. In Numbers, Caleb and Joshua remind the Israelites of God's faithfulness. Later, God hears their cries and forgives, although the people continue to rebel.

Unit II, "Responses to God's Faithfulness," has four lessons that explore reactions to the many benefits accrued to humans because of God's grace. Deuteronomy teaches that faith requires a response of obedience. The story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings shows that faithful obedience saves Elijah, the widow, and her son. Luke's Gospel tells about gratitude for God's faithfulness in the anointing of Jesus and the healing of the centurion's servant.

Unit III, "Faith Leads to Holy Living," has four lessons that examine letters to early churches that tell them how to live as faithful followers of Christ. Second Corinthians tells the people to examine themselves to see if they are living in faith. First Thessalonians urges Christians to be positive examples of faith. First and Second Peter teach that faith requires holy living and goodness.

Resources for the Leader

The following resources are suggested for those who are interested in doing additional research and study.

Bible Commentary Series

Interpretation Bible Studies series. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998–2008.

New Daily Study Bible, by William Barclay. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

The New Testament for Everyone series, by N. T. Wright. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004–2015.

The Old Testament for Everyone series, by John Goldingay. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016.

Bible Dictionaries

Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible. Edited by David Noel Freedman. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000.

Harper's Bible Dictionary. Edited by Paul J. Achtemeier. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1985.

Single Book Commentaries

The Bible from Scratch: The New Testament for Beginners, by Donald L. Griggs. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

The Bible from Scratch: The Old Testament for Beginners, by Donald L. Griggs. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

Video Viewing

When you show videos to a group of learners, you need to obtain a license from Christian Video Licensing International (CVLI) to do so. Obtain a public performance license at <https://us.cvli.com>. Check with your church, though, to see if an umbrella license has already been obtained. Often many denominations—through conferences, jurisdictions, dioceses, and other structures—secure licenses for their churches.

Worship Leaflets

Geneva Press offers *The Present Word* quarterly Worship Leaflets. Each leaflet includes a brief service of worship with prayers and hymn texts used in the lesson. The Worship Leaflets provide opportunities for reflection on the Scripture passage for the day. Order your quarterly *Present Word* Worship Leaflets at pcusastore.com.

SPARED!

MAIN IDEA

In the saving of Lot God's continuing covenant with Abraham was confirmed. God's faithfulness is sure and certain.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Genesis 18:16–19:29

A VERSE TO REMEMBER

So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had settled. (Gen. 19:29)

PREPARING TO LEAD

- Provide Bibles, Participant's Books, Worship Leaflets for lesson 1, name tags, and pens.
- Search Google Images for "Lot and Sodom." Plan to show the picture to the group.
- The lesson begins and ends with Morning Prayer found on the Worship Leaflet.
- If you plan to sing the hymn suggested in the Worship Leaflet, arrange to have an accompanist or choir member lead the singing.
- If appropriate, provide simple refreshments; ask volunteers to bring refreshments.
- Read and reflect on lesson 1, "Spared!" (Participant's Book, p. 1).
- Be able to tell the story of Lot and Sodom from memory.
- Be able to summarize the meaning of "righteousness" as the character of the relationship between God and human beings.
- Review the lesson plan below and decide which questions and activities you will use.

LEADING THE LESSON

Opening Worship

1. Gathering

- Make class members and guests feel welcome with a warm greeting.
- Distribute Bibles, Participant's Books, Worship Leaflets for lesson 1, name tags, and pens.
- Agree on and review simple ground rules and organization (for example, time to begin and end; welcoming of all points of view; confidentiality; and so on).
- Encourage participants to bring their Participant's Books and Bibles.
- Are there ways that you can make the learners more comfortable?

2. Morning Prayer 1

Worship Leaflet, lesson 1

- Invite the participants to turn to the Worship Leaflet.
- Enlist volunteers to lead portions of morning prayer.
- Set a prayerful tone by lighting a candle or keeping a brief silence.
- Begin with the Call to Worship and end after the morning hymn/psalm.
- Move immediately to Bible Study.

Teaching Tip
If you enjoy the Bible story, so will your learners. Let your own humor, imagination, and playfulness enrich the story. Give them a role in the storytelling. Invite them to make sound effects, join in motions, make facial expressions, or repeat key repetitive phrases. Encourage them to use their imaginations and pretend that they are there at the scene. Give lots for them to imagine—tell them about the tastes, sounds, smells, and textures. Help them enter into the mood of the story.

SCRIPTURE READING

Gen. 19:1, 15–26, 29

19:1 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. . . .

¹⁵When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be consumed in the punishment of the city.” ¹⁶But he lingered; so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and left him outside the city. ¹⁷When they had brought them outside, they said, “Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, or else you will be consumed.” ¹⁸And Lot said to them, “Oh, no, my lords; ¹⁹your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, for fear the disaster will overtake me and I die. ²⁰Look, that city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my life will be saved!” ²¹He said to him, “Very well, I grant you this favor too, and will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. ²²Hurry, escape there, for I can do nothing until you arrive there.” Therefore the city was called Zoar. ²³The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

²⁴Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven; ²⁵and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. ²⁶But Lot’s wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. . . .

²⁹So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had settled.

Scripture Notes

The city gate served as a seat of government for a city in the ancient world. Lot’s presence there may indicate (along with 19:9) that he held a position of authority in Sodom.

Zoar: From the Hebrew *Tso`ar* meaning “insignificant” or “small.”

Lot’s wife looking back indicated that she did not want to leave Sodom. Therefore, it was fitting punishment for Yahweh to allow her to stay—as just another salt pillar that dotted the landscape around the Dead Sea.

Lot was commended as a righteous man living among the unrighteous in 2 Peter 2:7–8.

Bible Study

3. Scripture Reading

Participant's Book, p. 2

- Show a picture from Google Images. Invite volunteers to tell what they remember about the story based on the picture.
- Invite the group to read Genesis 19:1, 15–26, 29 in unison or responsively, with a leader and the group reading every other verse.
- Option: Invite the group into a prayerful, reflective reading of the Scripture:
 1. Read Genesis 19:1, 15–26, 29 aloud.
 2. Invite all to reflect for a few minutes in silence.
 3. After reflection time, invite all to listen for a word or phrase as the passage is read again and to reflect on that word or phrase in silence.
 4. Read the passage a third time, asking all to offer a silent prayer following the reading.
 5. Invite volunteers to share the word or phrase that spoke most deeply to them.

4. Lot and Sodom

Participant's Book, p. 3

- Share observations, reflections, and insights about “Lot and Sodom.”
- Avoid getting bogged down in a discussion on the sins of the citizens of Sodom.
- Share these key points:
 1. The men in Genesis 18:22, God’s angels, are headed toward Sodom and Gomorrah to destroy the cities because of the wickedness of the people. The people of the cities refused to act with justice and mercy and treated the poor with great disdain.
 2. Like Abraham (18:1–7), Lot immediately offers hospitality to his visitors.
 3. Abraham’s intervention for Lot in Sodom marks his second such intervention for his family member. The first was going to battle for Lot when he was captured during a rebellion against ruling kings (Gen. 14).
- Discuss:
 1. Why is it important to remember the story of Lot and Sodom?
 2. What questions are raised by Lot’s experience in Sodom? How do they relate to us?

5. Righteousness

Participant's Book, p. 4

- Ask the group to brainstorm things they know about righteousness.
- Share observations, reflections, and insights about “Righteousness.”
- Share these key points:
 1. There appears to be a parallel of the flood story in Genesis 6:5–9:17 with Genesis 19:29. In the flood story, God remembered Noah, who was a righteous man (6:8–9). In 19:29, God remembered Abraham, who was a righteous man, and saved Lot.
 2. In 19:3, unleavened bread is bread baked without yeast. By serving unleavened bread, Lot demonstrated he was a righteous man, unlike the men of Sodom. See 2 Peter 2:7–8.
 3. The capacity of one to save others underlines Paul's argument about the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21–26).
 4. God's faithfulness and mercy endure even in the midst of wickedness.
- Discuss:
 1. How can sparing a few over the many be justified? What other questions must be asked in determining what is just?
 2. What assurance does it give you that God spared Lot and his family because of the covenantal promise to Abraham?
 3. What promises has God made to you in your baptism? How assured are you in God's promises to you?

6. What It Means for Us

Participant's Book, p. 5

- Share observations, reflections, and insights about “What It Means for Us.”
- Here are some optional ideas to explore today's Scripture:
 1. Discuss: How does the person and work of Jesus affect the message of today's passage about Lot and Sodom?
 2. Create a top ten list of the biggest fears people have today. Discuss how God's faithfulness and mercy shown to Lot and his family offer hope and peace to us amid today's fears.
 3. Identify the highs and lows of the last few years, praising God for being present during all those times.
 4. Write a note of appreciation to a specific person that you know has been praying for you regularly.
 5. Develop a project to help those in your community or church who have been affected by disaster, believing in the righteousness and mercy of God.

Closing Worship

7. Morning Prayer 2

Worship Leaflet, lesson 1

- Invite the participants to turn to the Worship Leaflet.
- Enlist volunteers to lead the remaining portions of morning prayer.
- Begin with Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession, say the Lord's Prayer, and end with the Dismissal.
- Extinguish the candle.
- Bless the participants. This can be as simple as saying "God bless you, (*Name*)" as each person leaves.

A LOOK AHEAD

DAILY BIBLE READINGS			
M	Sept. 2	The Nazarite Vow	Num. 6:1-5, 13-15
T	Sept. 3	"O LORD, You Answered"	Ps. 99
W	Sept. 4	Hannah Is Childless	1 Sam. 1:1-8
T	Sept. 5	The Yearly Sacrifice	1 Sam. 1:21-23
F	Sept. 6	Dedicated to the Lord	1 Sam. 1:24-28
S	Sept. 7	Hannah Is Rewarded	1 Sam. 2:18-21

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS DURING THE WEEK

Send an email:

1. That offers a brief reflection on the lesson, such as, "What promises has God made to you in your baptism? How assured are you in God's promises to you?"
2. That looks ahead to the next lesson, asking them to reflect on times God has answered their prayers.