



# Contemporary Issues

Teachers Guide

Grade 8



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## Law/Gospel Focus

Without faith we are lost in our sinfulness. By His grace God uses His Word to call us to faith in Jesus Christ.

### Objectives

That by the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, the students will

- describe the means through which God has called them to faith;
- identify ways in which faith changes lives.

### Background

Concepts presented on the origin of faith may conflict with beliefs held by some Christians. The Bible teaches (1 Corinthians 12:3) that faith in Jesus Christ is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Some Christians mistakenly place more emphasis on the individual in the acquisition of faith. Phrases such as "altar call" and "choosing to follow Jesus" tend to shift the emphasis away from the Holy Spirit's work. Believers who claim a part in their coming to faith still have faith if they confess Jesus as their Savior. They simply misunderstand God's complete and loving work in giving them faith. See also 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:8-9.

### Worship Ideas

- Sing "Amazing Grace" (AGPS 63) or "Just as I Am" (AGPS 148).
- Read responsively by verse Psalm 40. You may explain that the phrase "my ears You have pierced" in verse 6 means that the psalmist's ears were opened to hear of God's love.
- Recite the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed (AGPS, pp. 38-39) and sing "Holy Spirit, Light Divine" (AGPS 120).

# God's Amazing Grace: How God Made Me a Christian

## INTRODUCE

**The Condition of the Lost:** Discuss TV programs or stories from the newspaper that deal with rescues. As a transition to the lesson, emphasize that when we are lost in our sin, we cannot find or come to Jesus. He alone does the seeking and finding. Only by God's grace, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can we respond to God's call when we are lost.

## DEVELOP

**Lost:** Work through this section with the class. Ask students to look up the verses and record answers in their books.

**And Found:** Ask volunteers to read the two accounts in Luke 15:1-10. Students may not find the answer obvious. Lead them to the conclusion that things remain lost until someone looks for them.

## 1 God's Amazing Grace: How God Made Me a Christian

### The Condition of the Lost

At one time all of us were as lost as it's possible to be. Then, in the most dramatic rescue of all time, Jesus found and saved us. Today we're going to learn why Christians delight in the words of the much loved hymn of faith "Amazing Grace": "Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see!"

### Lost

Just how lost were you? Read the following Bible verses and record some of the words used to describe our condition before God rescued us.

1. Psalm 40:2: "[God] lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand."

2. Ephesians 2:1-2: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."

What other words or phrases could describe your condition before God found you?

Possible responses include *condemned, hopeless, and so on.*

### And Found

1. What has to happen in order for us to be found? See Luke 15:1-10.

Someone must look for us.

2. Whom can we count on to find us? See Luke 19:10.

Jesus

6

### How Does God Find Us?

One of the most graphic rescues recorded in the Bible is the conversion of Saul. Read Acts 9:1-22.

1. Saul was on his way to Damascus to round up Christians and have them executed. As he traveled, he was blinded by a bright light, and a voice spoke to him. What was Saul's response to Jesus' words?

a. Verse 8

### He did as Jesus commanded

b. Verse 18

### was baptized

c. Verse 20

### started preaching

d. Verse 22

### proved that Jesus is the Christ



Stress that God sent Jesus to seek and to save all who are lost. Also note that some people do not want to be found.

**How Does God Find Us?** You may wish to divide the class into two sections—one to analyze Saul’s (Paul’s) call to faith and the other to study Cornelius. Make sure that both groups report to the class and allow students to fill in Student Book material that is presented by the other group.

1. Note the dramatic and miraculous conversion of Paul. Ask, **What means does God most often use in conversions today?** The Word of God is the means of grace. Conversion includes another means of grace: Baptism.

2. The account of the conversion of Cornelius shows how the Holy Spirit uses people to deliver God’s Word, which then brings about conversion.

3. God still uses His Word to create faith. Use this opportunity to discuss the means of grace (the means by which God creates faith—the Word, Baptism, and Holy Communion).

Neither Saul nor Cornelius deserved God’s precious gift of faith. Similarly there is nothing about us that makes us deserve God’s wonderful gift of salvation. He acted in love.

Ask, **Since God creates faith as the Spirit works through the Word, what challenge has God given His people regarding His Word?** God would have us tell others that God’s gift of salvation is for them too.

2. Read Acts 10. Cornelius lived at the same time as Saul. He, too, was dramatically confronted by God. Cornelius was described as a “righteous and God-fearing man.”

What message did Cornelius need to hear (verses 39–43)?

**Jesus died for his sins and was raised from the dead. Everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness.**

How did this message change Cornelius’ life (verses 44–48)?

**Cornelius and his household believed and were baptized.**

3. What means did God use to call Saul and Cornelius to faith?

**God used His Word to create faith in their hearts.**

What means did God use to call you to faith?

the same means

### To Review and Remember

[God] lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. *Psalm 40:2*

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. *Galatians 5:13*

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. *Galatians 5:25*

The Third Article and its explanation



### A New Way of Looking at Things

The hymn “Amazing Grace” compares coming to faith in Jesus with receiving sight after having been blind. By the working of

the Spirit, Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection enables all who trust in Him for salvation to see everything in a new way. Write a sentence telling of the change God’s Spirit desires to work in the lives of each of the following.

1. Each day as she gets ready for school, Miriam wishes she would have stayed in bed. She thinks of herself as a worthless “nobody.”

**God would have Miriam know that Christ died for her and that she is uniquely blessed, loved, and valued by Him.**

2. Mike sees nothing around him but change and uncertainty. First his mom filed for a divorce and took him to live in another state. Then she got sick, and her illness left them with little money. He wishes there was something in his life he could always count on.

**The Holy Spirit would have Mike find his security and confidence in the One who never changes and is always faithful.**

3. Tim and Sheila decide not to listen during classroom devotions. They say, “I don’t know why our school can’t just teach what’s important to get ahead in this world. We waste 15 minutes on this God stuff every morning. We would rather have time on the computer!”

**Tim and Sheila need to listen to God’s Word. They will discover that the most important knowledge is knowledge of Jesus as their Savior. Once they know this, they will continue to listen, so that they grow stronger in faith.**

## RESPOND

**A New Way of Looking at Things:** After reading the opening paragraph, discuss the contrasting phrases used to illustrate the dramatic change that takes place when someone comes to faith. Examples are lost to found, slave to free person, and blind to given sight. Discuss changes that God the Spirit might work by bringing to faith those described in the vignettes. Some of the suggested answers may be too advanced for individuals in your class. Item 3 is a good example. Lead students to the suggested answer.



### Extending the Lesson

- Discuss the Christian practice of “making the sign of the cross.” Remind students that this symbol is an important part of the baptismal ceremony. The pastor makes the symbol of the cross on both the forehead and over the heart of the one being baptized, as a “symbol that you have been redeemed by Christ the Crucified.” Ask, When is it good to make the sign of the cross? When might it be inappropriate? Beginning and ending the day with the sign of the cross reminds us that we belong with Jesus. We might also use the sign when the phrase “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” is used in worship. It is inappropriate when used casually or as a ritual or as a spiritual good luck superstition.
- Spreading the Word is a vital part of the Christian life. Discuss names of organizations that are directly involved in spreading the Word to those who have never heard it (e.g., Lutheran Bible Translators, Gideon Society, etc.). Allow students to choose one such organization to support through prayer and weekly chapel contributions.



### Involving the Family

Luther reminds us that we should “daily be put in mind of our Baptism.” Give each student a copy of the family shield, Blackline 1-1. Have students draw symbols on their shield that represent ideas, possessions, and beliefs that are important to them or their family. Encourage students to include some symbol of their Baptism. Ask students to get input from parents and siblings as to what would be appropriate symbols for their family shield.





## Law/Gospel Focus

God forgives us for our indifference to worship and through Christ empowers us to respond joyfully with lives of worship.

### Objectives

That by the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, the students will

- express the love God has for them in Christ and reasons for worshipping God;
- recognize various appropriate worship forms;
- demonstrate a desire to worship God in thought, word, and deed.

### Materials

Samples of preservice prayers; dictionary (optional)

### Background

Christian worship involves human response to what God did for sinners through Jesus Christ. Any discussion of worship necessarily includes corporate worship, in which Christians gather regularly to receive the means of grace—Word and Sacraments. While God does not need our worship, we need gladly to respond to His grace and mercy. Often that reception and response take place in organized worship services. In a broader sense, everything in the life of Christians can be seen as worship, and even when such worship is personal and private, it remains corporate because Christians are part of the whole Christian church.

### Worship Ideas

- Ask students to scan the hymns listed in the index of *All God's People Sing!* to find stanzas or phrases asking God to prepare us for worship. Then sing one of these hymns.
- Assign students to small groups. Ask each group to compose a prayer for use before attending school chapel services. For guidance, you may wish to collect samples of preservice prayers used by your congregation. Check with the church office for archives.
- Integrate the concept of worship into other curricular areas to emphasize that worship is appropriate in all of life. For example, interrupt a science lesson to praise God for the wonders of creation by singing the doxology.

# 2 Worship and Me

## INTRODUCE

**Thoughts on Worship:** Before asking a student to read this section aloud, ask students why they worship God. If they equate "worship God" with "go to church," don't attempt at this point to expand their definition. Record the responses on the board. Encourage honest responses, including such answers as "My parents make me go," "My teacher takes attendance."

Read the Student Book material aloud. Don't dwell on what students find "wrong" with worship in their congregation. Instead point out that people have not fully appreciated or wholeheartedly participated in worship since the fall into sin. Explain that in this lesson students will learn that God not only forgives our indifference toward worship but also changes our hearts so that we will want to worship Him with our bodies, minds, and hearts.

## 2 Worship and Me

### Thoughts on Worship

*Luis looked down at his Sunday bulletin. Across the cover he had written the word boring in fancy letters. There's nothing about church that isn't boring, thought Luis. And wouldn't you know it, this would have to be a Communion service. There's even a Baptism. I'll never get out of church. And I've got a big day ahead!*

Have you ever felt like Luis? Our attitudes and actions toward God and His goodness are affected by our sinfulness.

#### Why Do Christians Need to Worship God Anyway?

We have a great and awesome God to worship. He has created a magnificent world. In His Son He has provided the gifts of forgiveness, eternal salvation, and the strength and comfort of His Holy Spirit for our daily lives. Still, God doesn't need to be worshiped. He is, after all, an unchanging God and will remain the same whether we worship Him or not. The blessings of worship are ours. Complete the following matching activity to explore the reasons God wants us to worship Him.

- d** 1. Faith is created and strengthened through the hearing of God's Word.
- e** 2. Christ, who comes to us through Word and Sacraments, enriches us, confirms us in our saving knowledge of Him, and enhances our spiritual gifts.
- c** 3. In worship we praise and thank the God who forgives, heals, redeems, crowns us with compassion, and satisfies our desires.
- e** 4. In worship we make public confession of our sins and receive from the pastor the forgiveness of our sins for Jesus' sake.
- b** 5. God has commanded all of His people to meditate continually on His Word. He desires parents to encourage their children, by word and example, to do likewise.

### And Forget Not All His Benefits

*Midway through Pastor Jacob's sermon Luis's attitude began to change. Pastor reminded the congregation of all the blessings God has given us. In Jesus we have victory over sin and all the forces that would lead us to an eternity in hell. He has earned forgiveness and eternal life and salvation for us.*

*Pastor Jacob challenged the people to think of God's goodness as they sang, prayed, meditated on God's inspired Word, confessed their sins, and received forgiveness. He encouraged the people to think of God's great love for them as they welcomed a young child into God's family through Holy Baptism and as they received the Lord's Supper. Suddenly the worship service took on a new meaning for Luis.*

Apply Pastor Jacob's words to your own life. Think about all that God has done for you through Jesus, His Son, as you fill in the blank before each of these statements with the name of the part of the worship service it describes. Choose your answers from the following list.

Prayers, Sermon, Blessing, Hymn of Praise, Introit, Absolution, Collect, Invocation, Baptism, Offering, Creed, Lessons, Lord's Supper, Confession of Sins, Kyrie.

#### 1. Invocation

The words at the beginning of the service also remind us of our Baptism.

#### 2. Confession of Sins

Bearing in mind all the things we have done in disobedience to God and His commandments, we tell God of our sorrow over our sins.

#### 3. Absolution

The pastor tells us that because of Jesus' saving work, our sins are completely forgiven.

#### 4. Introit

From a Latin word meaning "he enters into," these psalm or hymn verses usually announce the theme of the day.

- a. 1 Corinthians 1:4-7  
b. Deuteronomy 6:4-7  
c. Psalm 103:1-5  
d. Romans 10:17  
e. Psalm 51:10-12

# DEVELOP

**Why Do Christians Need to Worship God Anyway?** Emphasize that although God has commanded our worship, He does not need us. Rather, we need Him and the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation, which He offers us freely through Christ as His Word is read, studied, applied, and combined with water and bread and wine in the Sacraments. Allow students time to complete the matchings. Then review their answers in class.

Mention that worship customs vary widely even within Lutheranism. Worshipers in African mission churches, for instance, worship differently than worshipers in an established rural congregation in mid-America. Lead your class in a discussion of how worship practices have evolved in your congregation or the Christian church as a whole.

# RESPOND

**And Forget Not All His Benefits:** Read through the introductory paragraphs with your students. Describe worship as a two-step process. Worshipers receive the blessings God in Christ offers through Word and Sacraments. Plus they respond to His love for them in prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and offerings. Add that only by the Spirit's power can we honor God in worship. God promises to bless us through His Word regardless of the form in which the Word

is read, taught, or sung or of the environment in which the worship takes place.

## Extending the Lesson

- Have students work together to list suggestions for preparing the family for worship. Publish their ideas in your church or school newsletter, have students make a presentation of their ideas at a parent-teacher meeting, or include the students' suggestions in a letter to parents.
- Invite your pastor or someone else knowledgeable in worship terminology to explain the meaning and significance of worship terms commonly encountered in orders of service.
- Duplicate, distribute, and assign Blackline 1-2. This activity emphasizes worship in all of life's activities. Have students share their completed worship schedules.

## Involving the Family

Invite families represented in your classroom to attend a specified worship service. Plan to greet families and sit together for the service. Ask volunteers to bring light refreshments to share with the entire congregation following the service.



### 5. **Kyrie**

Usually sung. With this verse the people of God ask for His mercy and blessings. It comes from a Greek word meaning "O Lord."

### 6. **Hymn of Praise**

This song glorifies God for His goodness toward us, especially in sending Jesus to be our Savior.

### 7. **Collect**

The main thoughts of the day are gathered into one short prayer. (Hint: Think of a synonym for *gather*.)

### 8. **Lessons**

Three of these are usually read—one from the Old Testament or from Acts, one from the New Testament (usually an Epistle), and one from one of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John).

### 9. **Sermon**

The pastor proclaims God's Word, applying it to our life. He preaches both the Law (God's demands) and the Gospel (God's love and grace through Christ Jesus).

### 10. **Creed**

The congregation joins in the profession of one of these three statements of the Christian faith.

### 11. **Prayers**

The pastor leads the congregation in bringing before God in the name of Jesus mutual concerns for the whole church, nation, those in need, and other special concerns.

### 12. **Offering**

The people respond to God's goodness as the ushers collect their gifts.

### 13. **Baptism**

Individuals become members of the body of believers as the Holy Spirit works through water and the Word.

### 14. **Lord's Supper**

Believers receive the true body and blood of our Lord together with bread and wine, joining them with the Savior as well as with all believers everywhere.

### 15. **Blessing**

The pastor pronounces God's grace and favor on the congregation, encouraging them as they go out into the world to worship God in lives of service to Him.

### To Review and Remember

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,  
the King of Creation!  
O my soul, praise Him,  
for He is your health and salvation!  
Let all who hear  
Now to His temple draw near,  
Joining in glad adoration! (AGPS 201)

The Third Commandment and its explanation