

God's River of Grace Cancels Religious Legalism

About 20 minutes, applies John 1:17 and Revelation 22:1

Participants (*No need to memorize lines; the aim is to relive sacred events, not perform*)

Lori

Victor

Julie

Tino

Jason

Prompter Shout a brief line and Echoes repeat it.

Echoes Children and all adults who want to take part. Echoes need no script.

Lori I am Lori. Victor and I have married, and life is a paradise,
until one day Victor comes home from work with a clouded face.

Prompter & Echoes Gloom!

Lori What's wrong, Victor?

Victor The shop downsized. I'm out of work.

Prompter & Echoes Oh no!

Lori I hope you find work soon.
I just found out that our family is about to grow. .

Victor Really? Wow! Okay, tomorrow I'll go find a job.

Prompter & Echoes But he finds no work!

Victor Lori, three weeks have gone by, and no luck.
We can't pay the rent.

Lori I'm afraid God is punishing me;
I've done a lot of wrong things,
and we both suffer.

Victor Not just you; I'm ashamed of how I've lived.
We don't have any religion. My employer, Jason,
said some friends are meeting tonight at his house
they meditate on how to live holy lives.
The group is called Sanctity Society. Let's try it.

Lori Good idea! I'll get ready.

Victor You go on ahead, Lori. I'll come later,
after I go beg our landlord to wait a bit longer for our rent.
Here's Jason's address.

Prompter & Echoes But the address has a wrong number!

Lori Hello! Is this where you meet to meditate?

Julie Oh, you must mean our fellowship meeting. Come in.
I'm Julie. We're just getting started. I'll introduce you.

Prompter & Echoes Something's different about this!

Lori I'm Lori.
Oh my! They are laughing and praying for one another
in the name of Jesus. I hope they don't ask me to pray, Julie.
I've never prayed aloud. I'd be mortified!
Now they are telling what God has done for them.

Prompter & Echoes Joyful testimonies of salvation!

Tino Tonight we look at God's river of grace.
A year ago, I didn't know that God's grace covers
all the shameful things I've done; I was miserable.
Now that we've found Christ, that has changed.

Lori I like the way they share things about God's grace
and healing, Julie.

Prompter & Echoes They weep and laugh!

Julie Praise God!
You don't know how miserable I used to be, Lori,
hooked by mind-poisoning drugs,
but our Lord Jesus Christ freed me.
I have been clean for months.

Prompter & Echoes Amazing grace!

Lori Julie, I hope they don't expect me to speak.
This is all new to me.

Julie Talk only if you want, Lori.

Tino Let's read about grace in Romans 5.

Julie Here's a Bible, Lori. I'll help you find Romans 5.

Tino Notice verses 20 and 21.
"Where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that,
just as sin reigned in death, grace reigns through righteousness
to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Prompter & Echoes Amen!

Lori I like the way everyone discusses God's river of grace, Julie.

Julie I love the promise in Isaiah 55:1, "Come, all who are thirsty,
come to the waters; and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!"

Prompter & Echoes Drink freely!

Toni The meeting is over. Help yourselves to the cookies.

Lori Julie, why do you call yourselves the Sanctity Society?

Julie Oh! They meet next door. You came here by mistake!

Lori Then it's the luckiest mistake I ever made!

Julie Look. They are leaving that house now. They look sad!

Prompter & Echoes Tense and unhappy!

Lori Good night, Julie!
Oh! There's my husband Victor. He looks forlorn!
Victor! I am here! I went to the wrong house.
I'm glad I did, I learned about God's river of grace.
It's big! It flows to us freely, from God in Heaven.

Victor What do you mean, Lori? What did you drink at the meeting?
Did you do drugs?

Lori Oh no! I learned about God's wonderful grace, Victor.
We don't save ourselves by following a lot of religious rules.

Victor The Sanctity Society teaches that we must do many things
to be saved and stay saved.
There are even more things that a Christian must not do.
They gave me this long list of sins to avoid.

Prompter & Echoes How negative!

Victor But there's also good news, Lori.
My cousin Jason gave me a job in his shop.

Lori Wonderful!

Victor Let's go to your group next week, and learn about God's grace.

Prompter & Echoes Infinite grace!

Lori At the next meeting we discuss the meaning
of Christ's death and resurrection.
Afterwards the leader, Tino, encourages Victor.

Tino God forgives all who receive the good news about Jesus.

Victor It's too good to be true, Tino. In my heart, I know it is so.
Lori, let's receive Christ right now.

Prompter & Echoes Born again!

Tino Since you've repented and trust in Christ, you should be baptized.

Lori Jason has a list of things we'd have to quit doing to be baptized.
I'd have to wear long, drab dresses, and stop using cosmetics.
Victor would have to stop bowling on Sunday.
After reading that long list, I felt stepped on and squashed!

Victor The apostles baptized new believers at once;
they required nothing but faith in Jesus.
Satan's cruelest weapon is his flaming arrow labeled 'legalism.'
Its venom keeps people from trusting God's grace!

Lori Oh! Here comes Jason to your house now, Tino.
He's Victor's boss at work. This might be interesting.

Victor Hi, Jason! Meet our small group leader, Tino.
He's arranging our baptism.

Jason So soon? No one can be baptized until they
straighten out their lives for at least a year.
Following strict rules makes us more spiritual.

Tino Victor and Lori are newborn in Christ, Jason,
just babies, spiritually.
We'll bring them into a loving church body at once,
as the apostles did. They need its warmth.
They're not perfect, and neither are you and I,
but Scripture shows that baptism is for bad people.
The apostles baptized really bad people at once
when they trusted Jesus.

Prompter & Echoes So Victor and Lori qualify!

Lori Tino baptizes Victor and me, and we feel happily assured.
But Jason points out sins that we still have in our lives.

Victor Jason, we know we have to grow in Christ.
Tino said the apostles received new believers that still had sin;
the apostles corrected that sin without condemning them.

Tino Yes. Paul dealt with believers' wicked sins in 1 Corinthians
without condemning their souls.
He reminded them of who they were, newborn sons of God,
and urged them to live up to their new identity in Christ.

Jason James said that faith without works is dead.
So works are necessary to be saved.

Tino You have the cause-and-effect backwards, Jason.
Good works are essential,
not as the cause of salvation but its result.
Ephesians 2 says we're saved "for" good works,
not "by" them.

Prompter & Echoes Saved to serve!

Lori At our next meeting, Julie takes me aside.

Julie Lori, you look troubled. What's wrong?

Lori I've lost the joy I had. The river of grace dried up for me.
I've been bad. I argued with Victor when I should've submitted.
I was terribly stubborn. I can't act nice like you do, Julie!

Julie You don't know the struggles I had as a very new Christian.
You're a new believer, Lori, a spiritual child in Christ.
All of God's children fail from time to time.
You're letting your feelings control you;
Satan prods our feelings to make us doubt God's grace.
Let's join the others; the meeting is starting.

Tino I have a proposal.
Our group is too large for everyone to take part
as Scripture requires.
Victor, you and Lori have won friends to Christ.
It's time for you to start leading a new group.

Victor But I'm so inexperienced! I'll make mistakes!

Tino Yes, you might make almost as many mistakes as I did when I started. Julie and I will coach you and Lori, as long as you need it.

Prompter & Echoes Wonderful!

Prompter & Echoes That's pure gold!

Tino

Lori Victor begins leading a group; two new couples are from Tino's group.

Victor It's easier than I thought, Lori. I simply repeat what Tino and Julie did for us and their group. Paul told the Corinthians, 'Imitate me as I imitate Christ.' So we imitate our mentor Tino, as he imitates Jesus.

Prompter & Echoes Many more find God's grace!

Victor Lori, God's grace flows through the spiritual gifts that he gives to believers. The same Greek word means both grace and gifts: charisma. The different gifts help believers carry out the ministries that the New Testament requires.

Prompter & Echoes Our tiny group is now a church!

Lori What are the required ministries that you mentioned?

Victor They include to shepherd, correct, heal, show mercy, evangelize and gather new believers, and go nearby and afar to reach the lost.

Lori Here comes Jason. Oh! He looks upset.

Jason No need to go to work today, Victor. My shop burned down!

Victor Oh, no!

Jason Totally. Nothing but ashes. It ruined all my equipment. Like a fool, I had let the insurance lapse.

Lori Sit, Jason. We'll pray, and I'll bring you some chili that I just made.

Victor Tell us, Jason, how can we help you?

Jason You can't. God did it to me!

Lori No. Satan did it.

Jason Lori, bring matches.

Lori Okay. Here. But why do you want matches?

Jason See this list? I will burn it up. It's the list I gave you and Victor, with things to do, and not to do, to be authentic believers. Here goes!

rompter & Echoes He burns it up!

Jason My dad taught me these prohibitions;
 he said God would punish me if I didn't comply.
 I've lived in fear, and tried to pass that fear on to you.
 Losing my shop woke me up, and I read those verses about grace
 that you gave me. I will never again resist God's grace!"

Lori I don't know whether to weep or laugh for joy!

Prompter & Echoes She does both!