



Experiential Worship: Amazing Grace

What aspect(s) of the Transformational Model this activity helps illustrate: Personal Transformation, Mental Models, Spiritual and Relational Vitality

Materials needed: Recordings of *Amazing Grace*; Wind Chimes; Box with lid; Mirror; Road Maps and Small Compasses that can be kept by participants; Sheets of Paper, Pencils, and Paper Shredder or Scissors; Copies of Responsive Reading: God's *Amazing Grace* (make an even number of copies); Items to represent 'dangers' – Toy Gun, First Aid Kit, Caution Tape; Items to represent 'toils' – Work Gloves, Hard Hat; Items to represent 'snares' – Thorns, Barbed Wire; Pictures of House, Markers, Glue Sticks, and Poster Board; Bibles, Index Cards, Pencils, and Cross; Variety of Clocks, and Call Bells; Blindfolds (One for each participant)

Minimum number of participants required: N/A

Time needed: at least 10 to 20 minutes

Instructions:

Create ten experiential stations that represent facets of the hymn *Amazing Grace* by John Newton. Post signs at each station to explain what actions needed to complete that station.

TEN EXPERIENTIAL STATIONS

1. Focus phrase: Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,

Materials needed: Wind Chimes

INSTRUCTIONS

- Pick the chimes up.
- Using your hand, gently move the chimes back and forth.
- As you listen to the music of the chimes, contemplate what grace might sound like to a person experiencing the relief, freedom, and forgiveness of grace for the very first time.

2. Focus phrase: That saved a wretch like me!

Materials needed: Box with Mirror placed inside

INSTRUCTIONS

- Remove the lid from the box and look inside.
- Reflect on your life to this point. What was your life like before Jesus Christ became your Lord and Savior? Who would you be if it were not for the grace of God?

3. Focus phrase: I once was lost, but now am found,

Materials needed: Road maps, Compasses

INSTRUCTIONS

- Choose a map and open it.
- Consider the many paths someone might take to get to a specific destination, and how easy it would be for someone without a map or clear directions to become lost.
- Take a compass to carry with you throughout the day. Let the compass remind you of the phrase: "I once was lost, but now am found!"

4. Focus phrase: Was grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved;

Materials needed: Paper, Pencils, Paper Shredder or Scissors

INSTRUCTIONS

- Take a piece of paper and pencil.
- List any fears you currently have or have had in the past.
- Take a moment to thank God for relieving those fears.
- Place the paper in the shredder (or use scissors and cut up your fears) to symbolize your fears being relieved.

5. Focus phrase: How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed!

Materials needed: Copies of Responsive Reading: God's Amazing Grace (see

below)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Pick up two copies of the responsive reading, God's Amazing Grace.
- You are Reader No. 1. Find a partner to be Reader No. 2.
- Softly read the Scripture passages to each other.
- Return the copies to this table for use by the next person.

6. Focus phrase: Thro' many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;

Materials needed: Items to represent danger, toils, and snares

INSTRUCTIONS

- Study the different items on this table. Pick them up. Hold them for a moment. How do they represent dangers, toils, and snares?
- Meditate on the dangers, toils, and snares God has brought you through.
- Take a moment to thank God for being with you as you experience dangers, toils, and snares.

7. Focus phrase: 'Tis grace hath bro't me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.

Materials needed: Pictures of Houses, Markers, Glue Sticks, Poster Board

INSTRUCTIONS

- Choose a picture of a house to represent the home God has prepared for you.
- Write your first name on the front of the picture.
- Apply glue to the back of the picture.
- Attach the picture to the collage.
- Reflect on the ways God has brought you safe thus far.
- Take a moment to thank God for the home He is leading you to.

8. Focus phrase: The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be As long as life endures.

Materials needed: Bibles, Index Cards, Pencils, Cross

INSTRUCTIONS

- Choose a Bible.
- Locate Jeremiah 29:11
- Write the passage on an index card, replacing the word "you" with your own name.

- Lay your index card at the base of the cross to symbolize that you are placing your future in the hands of Jesus.

9. Focus phrase: When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first begun.

Materials needed: Clocks, Call Bells

INSTRUCTIONS

- Stand here for a moment and read this famous verse several times. Feel free to quietly sing the verse.
- Look at the clocks. Pick them up if you like. Contemplate time. How many years has God given you here on Earth compared with eternity in Heaven?
- Ring the bell once to symbolize the brevity of your earthly life compared to eternity.

10. Focus phrase: Was blind, but now I see

Materials needed: Blindfolds

INSTRUCTIONS

- Take a blindfold.
- Return to your chair.
- Place the blindfold on.
- Sit silently until instructed to do otherwise.
- Ponder the extreme darkness of people who live without Jesus Christ – the 'grace' of God.
- You will be instructed when to remove the blindfold.

WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

1. Play a recording of *Amazing Grace* throughout the experience. A variety of versions by different artists (both instrumental and vocals) will give variety and help participants stay focused.
2. Participants are given the following instructions as they enter (copies to be duplicated follow these instructions):
 - You are entering into a worship experience. Please enter quietly and speak only when instructed to do so.
 - In order to free your hands, you may wish to find a chair and leave your personal items there.

- You will find ten stations. Each station is based on a phrase or verse of John Newton's famous hymn *Amazing Grace*.
 - Each station is numbered. With the exception of Station 10, it is not necessary to complete stations in a specific order. It is necessary that Station 10 be your last station.
 - The level of your involvement with this experience will determine the benefit you receive from it.
 - Participants individually complete each experiential station. Stations can be visited in order as long as Station 10 is the last station visited.
3. Once all participants have completed the experiential stations and are wearing blindfolds, read the story of John Newton and the writing of *Amazing Grace* (see below).
 4. Ask participants to sing *Amazing Grace*. Following the phrase, "Was blind, but now I see", instruct participant's to remove blindfolds. Continue singing the hymn.

Debriefing suggestions:

Use some of the following questions:

- What was your reaction when you received the instructions for this experience?
- Why was it so hard to follow the instruction to speak only when instructed to do so?
 - What was the hardest part of this experience? Why?
 - What was the most meaningful station? Why?
 - Describe your feelings about wearing the blindfold?
- What was going through your mind as you sat with the blindfold on?
 - Describe the experience of removing the blindfold?
 - Do you now have a different understanding of 'grace'? Explain.
 - How do you think you have been changed by this experience?
- Do you think this hymn will have a new meaning the next time you sing it? Why?

Close in prayer, thanking God for His Amazing Grace.

Created by Jerry Wooley, Education Pastor, Park Place Baptist Church, Houston, 2003.

An Experience of Grace and Worship

- v You are entering into a worship experience. Please enter quietly and speak only when instructed to do so.*

- v In order to free your hands, you may wish to find a chair and leave your personal items there.*

- v You will find ten stations. Each station is based on a phrase or verse of John Newton's famous hymn Amazing Grace.*

- v Each station is numbered. With the exception of Station 10, it is not necessary to complete stations in a specific order. It is necessary that Station 10 be your last station.*

- v The level of your involvement with this experience will determine the benefit you receive from it.*

God's Amazing Grace

Reader No. 1: From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Reader No. 2: Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love.

Reader No. 1: God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Reader No. 2: You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

Reader No. 1: Because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

Reader No. 2: This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

John 1:16-17; 13:1; Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 2:4-5; 1 John 4:9-10 (NIV)

Copied from The Worship Hymnal

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John Newton's Amazing Grace

John Newton's father was a sailor and his mother died when he was seven. After only two years of schooling, he was sent to sea at the age of eleven. His early life was by his own account godless and dissolute. Flogged for deserting from the

navy, at the age of twenty-two he became captain of a ship engaged in the slave trade between Britain, West Africa and the West Indies.

*Three years later he underwent a dramatic conversion to Christianity, which seems to have started while he was reading Thomas a' Kempis's book *The Imitation of Christ* on a voyage across the Atlantic. A violent storm blew up, and Newton spent nine hours manning the pumps and a further seventeen hours at the ship's wheel as the waves crashed around him. Several times he found himself crying aloud to God for protection. The storm eventually abated and Newton later traced the first stirrings of the 'great change' that was to turn him towards evangelical religion on his sense of deliverance after this terrible experience.*

For the next several years he continued as a slave ship captain, trying to justify his work by seeking to improve conditions as much as possible, even holding public worship services for his hardened crew of thirty each Sunday. Eventually, however, he felt convicted of the inhuman aspects of this work and became a strong and effective crusader against slavery.

Forsaking the slave trade and the seafaring life, he became friendly with John Wesley and George Whitfield, the two leading figures in the Evangelical Revival, and spent nine years training for the Anglican ministry.

Especially effective was the use of the story of his early life and conversion experience, which he told often. In addition to preaching for the stated services in his own church, Newton would hold services regularly in any large building he could secure in the surrounding area. This was an unheard of practice for an Anglican clergyman of that day. Wherever he preached, large crowds gathered to hear the "Old Converted Sea Captain."

*Amazing Grace first appeared in *Olney Hymns*, which was published in 1779. It reflects Newton's own intense conversion*

experience and his profound sense that it was only the overwhelming grace of God which had saved one as wretched as himself from eternal damnation.

Until the time of his death at the age of eighty-two, John Newton never ceased to marvel at God's mercy and grace that had so dramatically changed his life. This was the dominant theme of his preaching and writing.

Copied from Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck, Kregel Publications, and The Book of Hymns by Ian Bradley, Testament Books.