



LIVING IN AMAZING GRACE—
THE NATURE OF GOD
COURSE WORKBOOK

Also used for
Retreat/Small Group Leader Guide

LIVING IN AMAZING GRACE— The Nature of God

Retreat Leader Guide

WORKBOOK

RICHARD T. CASE





Dedication/Acknowledgements

We often sing at church, the beautiful Hymn—*Amazing Grace*, penned by John Newton. He is said to have written it as a heartfelt expression to God in 1772. It was inspired by a pivotal time in his life after surviving a shipwreck. Newton was involved in the slave trade but would go on to regret his actions and became a priest who advocated for the abolishment of slavery.

We tend to associate this term—amazing grace—with our salvation experience in being born again, due to God's grace toward us who do not deserve based upon being perfect or cannot attain a relationship with God by ourselves. As we have explored further in the Word about the truth, the breadth and fullness of Grace, we have learned of the deeper profound truths of living in Grace. We wish to dedicate this course to and thank my wife, Linda, who has learned these deeper truths and lived them out in our marriage and family. Further, we dedicate this to our ministry leaders who have personally demonstrated this life.

We experience this fullness of Grace because God's nature is Grace—all His nature is Grace. This includes redemption, favor, freedom, goodness, pleasantness, overcoming, miraculous, and leading us into the experience of this fullness. We learned that our experience of Grace is not automatic, but there are conditions to our receiving and experiencing the Grace of God in our everyday lives. And, as we experience this, we are to give it away—be conduits to others of this amazing grace available to all. Linda and the leaders understand this Grace, are living it out and giving it away. It is a joy for all of us. Thank you, Linda and team. An honor.

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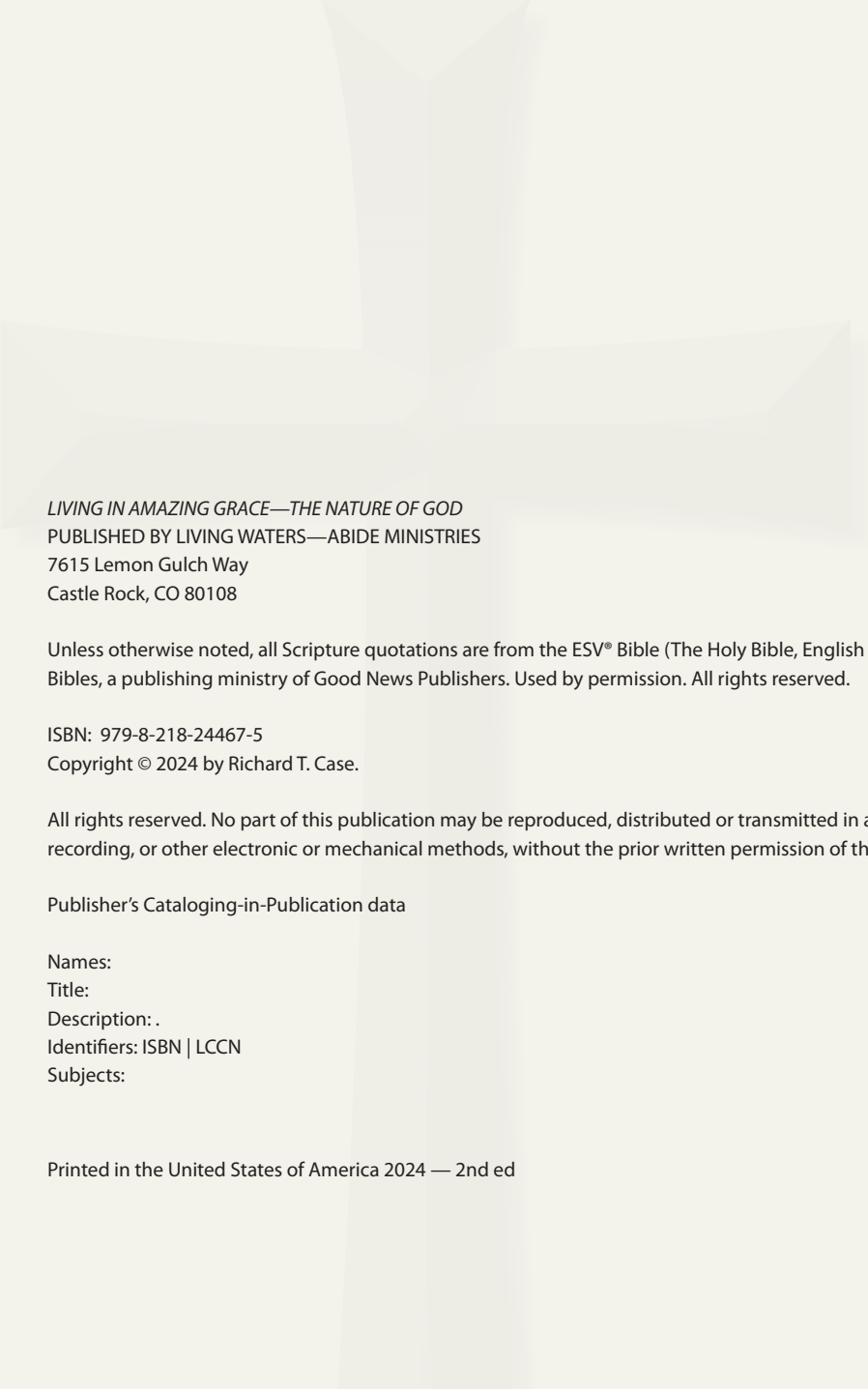
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INTRODUCTION: LIVING IN AMAZING GRACE—THE NATURE OF GOD



Welcome to our course, *Living in Amazing Grace—The Nature of God*. It's both significant and profound for our lives today. The issue of grace is usually associated with Ephesians 2:4: By grace you've been saved. People look at that solely as "unmerited favor." It's nothing you personally have to do. God gives you the opportunity to have salvation, which they define as eternity with Him. They limit grace to being the ticket to heaven that God gives to those of us who do not deserve it. They take it even further saying that grace is the acceptance of everything. We're going to learn that's not true. There's way more to it in this beautiful study of amazing grace. What is grace, and what is the nature of God that we are to experience, live in, and then pass along to others? It is far more than just a ticket to heaven.

What is grace? Who is grace? What does this mean regarding why it is so important to understand the fullness of grace versus grace just being a ticket to heaven?

Read Revelation 1:3–6:

³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

Greeting to the Seven Churches

⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

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God says, *Grace and peace from Christ*. Who are grace and peace? Christ. The nature of grace and the nature of peace is actually Christ Himself. He embodied it in Him. He wants everyone who follows Him and has a heart to live with Him to receive it and experience it.

The true definition of *grace* that should be noted for this course is:

Joy. Pleasure. Delight. Sweetness. Charm. Loveliness. Goodwill. Lovingkindness—covenant loyalty. Favor. Kindness. The power of Christ to keep, strengthen, and increase you as you live out His abundant life of faith.

Grace is a great benefit to us. It is bountiful, extreme goodness. It's more than unmerited favor for a ticket to heaven. It's really a place of delight, sweetness, and great favor. The life of God. We'll learn how important that is.

That word *peace* is defined as:

Extreme favor. Prosperity. Safety. Harmony. Accord. The ability to live without fear.

Peace is shalom. Grace and peace be to you from Christ, who is grace and peace.

What are situations, relationship issues, personal issues for which you are needing to understand, receive, and then extend grace?

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**"Grace is majesty,
magnificence,
splendor, truth—it is
the way to live with
Him."**

From the following two verses, what are the biblical definitions of grace? What do these mean for us? Why is this important to understand as we learn of grace?

Read Psalm 45:1–8:

Your Throne, O God, Is Forever

To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. A Maskil^[a] of the Sons of Korah; a love song.

45 My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;

I address my verses to the king;

my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

² You are the most handsome of the sons of men;

grace is poured upon your lips;

therefore God has blessed you forever.

³ Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one,

in your splendor and majesty!

⁴ In your majesty ride out victoriously

for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness;

let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!

⁵ Your arrows are sharp

in the heart of the king's enemies;

the peoples fall under you.

⁶ Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.

The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;

⁷ you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

Therefore God, your God, has anointed you

with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;

⁸ your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.

From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;

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Grace is majesty, magnificence, splendor, truth—it is the way to live with Him. It's to experience His success and be prosperous, according to His will. It is to be taught how to live that out in His grace and in His righteousness. You have the privilege of living in His righteousness. We will learn that because of His righteousness, you can be holy and righteous, which results in extreme gladness. When you're in gladness, what does that look like? You're happy. Content. Thrilled. Your life is thrilling. But we know something about life that must not be overlooked or ignored. In the world, you're going to have what? Trouble, difficulty, and hard circumstances. It doesn't mean that grace is being absent of trouble. It means that through it, through all of the pain, turmoil, and struggles, His grace is going to get you to a place of joy where you'll be thrilled to experience this as a normal part of life.

Read John 1:14–18:

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son^[a] from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.^[b] ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God,^[c] who is at the Father's side,^[d] he has made him known.

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Grace and truth come from God—who is Jesus Christ. This is the very nature of Christ. It's not mechanical—where He's going to do certain things that are activities of grace. Rather, He is giving us Himself because He is God whose very nature is grace and truth. We are living this life that has been given to us by God, who is grace. It's God Himself.

As we go through the course, we will reinforce this important and profound truth that will give understanding of how to receiving it, live it, and give it away. It will be an activity that we experience, but ultimately, it's who? It's Christ in us. If grace and truth are His nature, is it possible that sometimes they aren't? No. It is always Him.

Why does all of mankind need grace? What is the problem for us all? How then did Christ resolve this problem? On what basis does this define grace?

Read Romans 3:21–26:

The Righteousness of God Through Faith

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

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Nobody can earn salvation by themselves because no one is good enough. Why is this? It is because of His nature. And because of His nature, what is the requirement for all of mankind? All have to be perfect. How come? To be in and have a relationship with a holy God, we must also be holy—which means we must be perfect. God is holy, God is righteous. He can't alter that nature and touch unholiness. It is just not possible. Light cannot touch darkness—light cannot be in the same place as dark. Spirit cannot be in the same place as demonic. It's just not possible.

Given this, how are we to live life, especially since there's demonic around us all the time. There's untruth around us all the time. There's imperfection around us all the time. In order to live our life when all of this is around us, we need His remedy to overcome all of it, which is grace. With His own nature of grace, He sacrificed Himself to become the propitiation for sin, a substitute for the requirement of perfection. In doing this, He gave us the opportunity to have a relationship with Him. If it was left up to us, none of us could have this relationship because our nature, our self, is not perfect. He redeemed us to release the requirement to be perfect.

Because of His sacrifice for us, what are we required to do to have a relationship with Him? Believe it and receive it. Does His nature of grace and forgiveness automatically mean you can have a relationship with Him? No, because it takes two parties. He's done His part, but there's a part that you have to play in order to participate. Does it change the nature of it? No. When He sacrificed Himself, He sat down at the right hand of the Father and finished it for all—once and for all. He does not have to repeat the sacrifice. It is done. Grace fulfilled something that we could not fulfill on our own.

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What is God's purpose for extending us grace? What does that mean for our lives? What then are we to experience? How can we experience this?

Read 2 Timothy 1:8–12:

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us to^[a] a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,^[b] ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.^[c]

Before we were even created, His purpose and grace set up this opportunity for us to have what? Fellowship. God's nature is to be in intimate relationship with His created beings—us. He created each of us for fellowship. That's His purpose. He set this up in a place of perfection—the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, who had a perfect life with Him. They failed due to the very nature of self will—another element of His nature—but it did not stop Him from fulfilling His purpose.

Unfortunately, this created a new problem. The requirement was still perfection, so how would we be able to meet this requirement? We can't. How can we have fellowship with God if we can't meet the requirement of perfection? God takes care of this issue so that we can have life again. Even though we chose to walk away and placed His ability to have fellowship with us into an impossible scenario, He, based upon His nature of grace, fulfilled the requirement Himself. He did this so we could regain His original purpose, which is fellowship—with Him.

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With Christ's nature of grace when He raised us up with Him, what are the four benefits to us that He fulfilled at the cross? What do these practically mean to us, and why is this so important?

Read Colossians 2:11–15:

¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities^[a] and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.^[b]

He says He has raised you up with Him. He has given you back fellowship. He did that with the following four things. The Scripture says: Having done this:

1. He has forgiven you. He has forgiven all of your transgressions. He went to the cross, based upon His nature—which is grace. He forgave you. Past, present, and future. This does not mean reconciliation, but it is the opportunity to now have fellowship with Him again. He took care of the requirement of perfection.
2. Jesus being nailed to the cross took away the requirement. What's the requirement? Perfection. We do not need to be perfect anymore to have fellowship with Him. We are imperfect beings who can never be perfect. He took care of the requirement and replaced it with Himself. The requirement was released at the cross. Now, instead of working to achieve righteousness to have fellowship, we are given the privilege of receiving His righteousness through what He did at the cross.

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3. He disarmed principalities and powers. When you think of disarming, think of missiles. We used to have missile silos with intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), and the government disarmed them all. Did they take the missiles away? No. What did they do? They took away the power, took away the trigger, took away the firing mechanism. The missiles were still there but could not fire off and be launched. There's no power there. When He says *disarm*, it doesn't mean these principalities and powers are not there. It means they are disarmed when in the presence of Christ. They are powerless in His presence. But when you are in the world and living in the flesh outside of the Kingdom, the powers and the principalities have more power than you.
4. He gained victory over them. He triumphed over them. This victory is absolute and always.

As we learn to understand grace, we have to receive and experience what He has already fulfilled and know that it is absolute. He forgave us. He took away the requirement of perfection. He disarmed principalities and power. And He gained complete victory over the enemy.

From the following two sets of verses, what are other wonderful benefits of living in God's grace? What does this practically mean regarding how we live our life—including relationships toward others?

Read Romans 8:1–2:

Life in the Spirit

8 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

^[a] ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you ^[b] free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

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Because of the nature of grace, whenever you're in His presence, what is His view toward you? There is no condemnation, and there is no judgment. There are consequences if you don't stay in His presence—which we will explore later—but, when you're in His presence, condemnation does not exist. There's no judgment, which means you can live a life of freedom.

Read John 5:24:

²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

When we receive Christ, we are transferred to that place where you don't need to be condemned anymore. You are transferred into His life. Again, with this privilege, we have a choice to make. Christ wants us to stay there—in this life where there's no condemnation—but the choice is ours.

From the following two sets of verses: As we experience grace, what is to characterize our life? What does this mean, and how then shall we expect to live all the time? What is the condition to living this way? Why?

Read Galatians 4:21–5:1:

Example of Hagar and Sarah

²¹ Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. ²³ But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. ²⁴ Now this

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may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. ²⁵ Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia;^[a] she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written,

“Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;
break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor!
For the children of the desolate one will be more
than those of the one who has a husband.”

²⁸ Now you,^[b] brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. ³⁰ But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.”³¹ So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Christ Has Set Us Free

5 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

We are called to stand where? In the freedom of Christ. By definition, where else could you stand? In bondage. He said that life with Him is going to be really simple. You're either going to live in freedom or you're going to live in slavery and bondage. This is based upon the opportunity that He has given you because of grace. He has taken care of the issue of forgiveness and has taken away the requirement of perfection so that you can live a life of freedom.

This is represented by the two covenants. Either you receive what Christ is offering and live in the Spirit or you reject this invitation, go to the flesh, and live in slavery. By definition, if you're living in slavery, where aren't you living? In freedom. The nature of grace is freedom. Freedom is to be experienced if you live in that

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nature. But, you can also choose not to live in that nature. He says you have to cast out the flesh and live in the Spirit. It's a choice. Because of grace, it's representative of freedom, and if you're living in freedom, then you're living in grace. If you're not living in freedom, you're not living in grace. It's there and available to you, but you may not be living it out and experiencing this wonderful privilege. It is our choice to stay in what is absolute and always there.

Read John 8:28–32; 36:

²⁸ So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." ³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

The Truth Will Set You Free

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

If you abide in His word, you'll know the truth, and the truth will set you free. If He sets you free, you're really free. This is not just temporary. If you are experiencing Him and His grace, you are really free. You can feel this and you know it to be true. When you're burdened, you know it. When you are lacking peace, you know it. When you're heavy hearted, you know it. Thus, you will also know it when you're free. Abiding means living in His grace, and this grace gives you freedom. If you are not living in grace, or you are not experiencing freedom, something's not right.

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To understand grace, we again need to understand the question: Who is grace and peace? Why is this fundamental understanding so critical to us receiving and living in grace?

Read Galatians 1:3–5:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Who is grace and peace? Jesus Christ. He gave Himself to you so that you can live out the life of grace, which is life without condemnation and judgment. It is freedom, shalom, favor. He wants you to experience that. He is giving that to you. He created us for fellowship with Him. But, in order to fulfill this, we have to be walking with Him. If we're walking with Him, what can He deliver to us? Himself, which was the original intention. He wants you to experience Him. He created you for that. His thrill is to be with you—but the only way He can be with you is if you receive who He is and what He is giving you, which is life and freedom.

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Is it possible that though Christ is grace and has extended us grace, we might not experience it as a believer? Why does this happen, and what then is the consequence? Why is this so important for us to learn?

Read Galatians 2:17–21:

¹⁷ But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness^[a] were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

If you don't receive Him and His nature of grace, there's no what? There is no effect. You have wasted what He did. If you don't receive this—you have wasted the opportunity. God gave and did this for you so that He could have fellowship with you—and you could live out the abundant life that He has for you. But if you don't, you've made it all vanity—it is of no worth. This is clear and demonstrates the wonderful invitation He offers us all the time—why would we not accept?

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What happened that all mankind requires grace? What did Christ do to resolve this and bring about His grace? Thus, what is the central truth about what is necessary to receive His grace? Why then is this so critical to how we live?

Read Romans 5:12–21:

Death in Adam, Life in Christ

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men^[a] because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass^[b] led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness^[c] leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Simply put, God created the Earth, and God created man and woman. The purpose for creating these was for what? For us to live in a perfect place and to have a perfect relationship with God. They had Spirit, soul, and flesh—living in perfect communion with God. But, through one man and one woman came sin. What was their sin? Disobeying God's instructions and exercising their own will against God's will. Self, flesh—their own will.

When confronted by the enemy, the enemy made them question what God really said, and convinced them that surely they would not die. What was their mistake? They didn't go back to God and ask Him to help them better understand what He meant and help them process this. Rather, they decided it was a good idea, and the nature of mankind was forever changed.

What happened? God said, *If you eat of that tree, you will surely die.* When they ate of the tree, they lost their spiritual connectivity to Him, and the requirement to regain that connection is perfection. Because we are imperfect and self-centered, is this something that we can fulfill? No. Adam and Eve created the mess, making a relationship with God impossible since this requires perfection—which can no longer be attained.

However, one man—Christ—took away the problem through His victory over the true issue, which was self-will. When did He do that? When He was in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was finished when He took on the punishment at the cross, but He had to conquer the will before He could get to the cross. Adam and Eve failed in the battle of their will, which resulted in the permanent consequence of separation. Because of grace, when Christ took on the punishment at the cross, His victory satisfied the requirement of perfection. But it was His victory over self-will in the garden of Gethsemane where He gave life and fellowship back to us. By one man came death, separation, a terrible life, and consequences of pain. But, by another man—Christ—we get to do what? Reign in life again. We get to rule over all of the troubled world again because of what? Grace, which is restoring us back to the abundant life, the fellowship with God. Christ conquered that problem, and now we can live with Him—with all the benefits of this life. This is grace, it is His nature.

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Since Christ is grace, what is necessary for us to receive it and live it out? How much of grace can we expect, and why then is this so important?

Read 1 Corinthians 14:29:

²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.

Grace has enriched you and has given you everything. Think about the simplicity of that. Why is that? If you're living in grace, what do you have? You have Him. He's everything. It's not kind of, or partial, or once in a while—no, you now have all of Him, and He will enrich you with everything that's available, including the spiritual gifts that will allow you to live out and experience the life that He has for you. It's a spiritual thing. Are you willing to receive it and live there with Him, where He will give you all the benefits to live the beautiful life that He has for you?

From the following two sets of verses, if you attempt to live the life of grace on your own, what happens? Then, what is necessary for us to live the life of grace? How do we live that way practically?

Read Romans 8:3–5:

³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^[a] he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

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He took care of the problem, and your role is to live where? In the Spirit. When you became a believer, God put Himself, His Holy Spirit, within you. He resides inside you, which is the reason that you can live this life of grace. You can't live perfectly without Him, and if you try, you essentially walk away from Him into a place where He cannot give it to you. He has given you the Spirit so that you live the life of the Spirit. He will keep inviting you to that because it's already there. All you have to do is join Him. That's it. In doing this, you'll experience the life because it's the Holy Spirit Himself—who is grace, who is resident in you. So, take advantage of this.

Read John 14:25–31:

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

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The Holy Spirit, who He placed within you, is to teach you what? All things. This is embedded in shalom—the shalom that He is giving to you. The shalom that is He, Himself. The Spirit is going to teach you all things. What exactly is He going to teach you? Everything you need to know for your situations—for your life circumstances. He will teach you how to live the life of grace in your situation. He says He is going to teach you all, and it's going to apply to you personally. He will teach you everything you need to know to be able to experience a life of grace right now and always. Are you going to have trouble? Yes. Are you going to have difficulty? Yes. Will there be sticky situations? Yes, but guess what? The Holy Spirit will teach you how to live if you receive the life of grace, which is Him. He is giving this to you, offering this to you, so receive it. This is the life of the Covenant.

What is the basis of grace? What is the heart of God toward all who are His children? What does that mean then for what we can expect? Why is that?

Read Genesis 12:1–3:

The Call of Abram

12 Now the LORD said^[a] to Abram, “Go from your country^[b] and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”^[c]

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The Covenant is God blessing you to make you a blessing. He always intended for you to have fellowship with Him and thus for you to be blessed. Why? To attract other people to Himself. Why would you be a recipient of that? Because you are His, and as a believer, He is living within you, living His life through you. His nature is grace—the Covenant. You're not relegated to remain in a life of trouble. No, His nature is blessing. He always intended for you to live a life of blessings. He created us not just for fellowship, but for perfect fellowship. But that perfection only comes by living life always in Him. You don't have to be perfect to receive it—you just have to be with Him. You do not have to be perfect to learn it—you just have to be with Him.

What is necessary for us to receive God's Covenant blessings? What does that look like practically for how we follow God?

Read Deuteronomy 28:1–14:

Blessings for Obedience

28 "And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God.

³ Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. ⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. ⁵ Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. ⁶ Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

⁷ "The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. ⁸ The LORD will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. ⁹ The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. ¹⁰ And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. ¹¹ And the LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. ¹² The LORD will open to you his

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good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. ¹³ And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them, ¹⁴ and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

He says that if you hear Him and follow Him, the blessings that He promise you will do what? Overtake you. So where are they coming from? From behind. You're living in grace, and grace means He is going to bless you to make you a blessing. As you stay in His grace, the blessings will continually overtake you. He promises that He will bless you to make you a blessing and you will receive extreme favor.

From the following two sets of verses, since God promised us Covenant life, what promises did Christ specifically give us so that we experience the life of grace? What can we then expect and why?

Read John 10:10:

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

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What did Jesus say? He has come to give you super-abundantly the life that He has. When? Now. Why is it super abundant? Because it's the blessing of the Covenant. It's the blessing of the original intention that He is going to restore to you—if you have a heart to go. That is what He has come to do. Why? Because you are going to be in fellowship together, and He is super abundance. He doesn't give anything less than that, so come and receive it.

Read Isaiah 61:1–4:

The Year of the LORD'S Favor

61 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;^[a]
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;^[b]
² to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.^[c]
⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

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The world is difficult. It is filled with brokenheartedness. Your life isn't quite what you thought. You're bound up. You've got things that are oppressing you. You're mourning. You've lost things. You're struggling. You've made ashes of things. You've ruined important things. This is all true. This life truly looks like this. But what has Christ come to do? Give back to you the abundant life. How about letting Him heal all that? How about letting Him restore all that? How about letting Him give you back the life He has planned for you? Yes, you're a sinful person who is living in a sinful world, but His grace is to restore you to the promised Covenant life, the promised super-abundant life. He will do it if you let Him give it to you. That's the gospel, and it is available any time and all the time. No matter what awful thing you've done or the mess that you have made, His grace is abundant life, and He offers this to you now.

A significant part of our life is spent experiencing difficulty, hard circumstances, and negative consequences—including loss. As part of God's grace, what does He promise even in these conditions? What does that mean for our life of grace? Why is this so important to understand?

Read Deuteronomy 30:1–10:

Repentance and Forgiveness

30 “And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you,² and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul,³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.⁴ If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you.⁵ And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.⁶ And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.⁷ And the LORD your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you.⁸ And you shall again obey the voice of the LORD and

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keep all his commandments that I command you today. ⁹ The LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground. For the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, ¹⁰ when you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

You have lots of problems that were caused when you walked away from Him and the Kingdom—and walked back into a wicked world. This wicked world is where you're going to have trouble, and when you tried to figure out solutions and resolutions on your own, it got worse. But when you realized your mistakes, repented, and were willing to return and walk with Him, what does God say? Welcome back. What is He going to do? He is going to bless you, and restore your fortunes. He is going to restore delight. He can fix every problem you caused. How much of it will He fix? All of it. When will He fix it? Now. The beautiful life of grace is always available to you—every time, all the time. The life of grace is abundant life.

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God further says that if you have a heart to go, He can prevent you from experiencing some trouble. The life of grace includes protection. From the following two sets of verses: What protection is promised? What does this mean to our life, and what is the benefit to us living under this protection?

Read Psalm 5:11–12:

¹¹ But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy,
and spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may exult in you.
¹² For you bless the righteous, O LORD;
you cover him with favor as with a shield.

Read Psalm 84:11–12:

¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
the LORD bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
¹² O LORD of hosts,
blessed is the one who trusts in you!

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Because of what happened with Adam and Eve, you're living in a world of kill, steal, and destroy, which is the nature of the enemy who still has authority and power over the world. The world is a dangerous place, and when faced with danger, what do you fundamentally need? Protection. Let Him protect you from things caused by this troubled world. He will be your shield. He will be your protector. He will be your refuge. He will be your fortress. Let Him give it to you. No good thing will be withheld from you.

God does not say, *Sorry, you're not one of the lucky ones, so you don't get the abundant life. You lost out.* That is not how God operates. He will not withhold the good things that He has promised to all His children who have a heart to be with Him. Why? Because He is your protector.

If you knew trouble was coming, you would move to a place of protection. You know it's coming, and you know you need protection. God wants you to live in a way that you are protected from the trouble that is coming, so it won't ruin you. In the life of grace, He can actually prevent the impact of this trouble from coming on you. Go to Him and live a life of grace.

Christ reminds us that He is grace, and He desires to have us live with Him—living the life of grace and experiencing all its benefits. What is His promise for us to experience this?

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12:

¹¹ To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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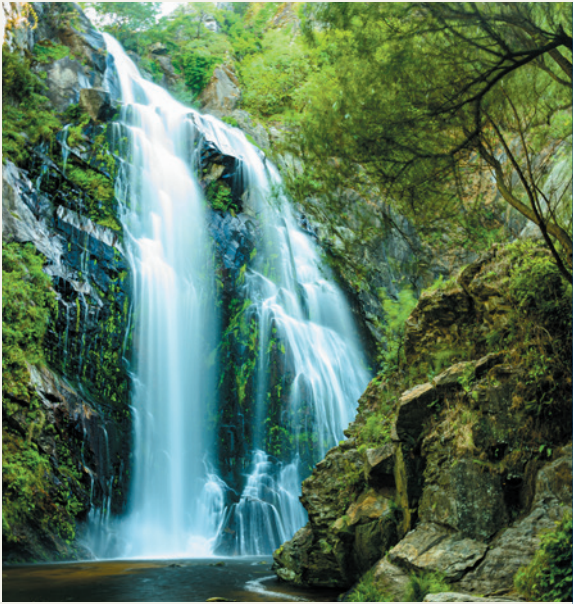
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The purpose is for you to live what? The beautiful life that He has available to you by living in the grace that is Christ. He is grace, and He is going to give grace to you. He wants you to understand, to enjoy, and to receive the life of grace. His universal purpose is that all His children would live in this place of grace.

What does that mean? Who must you live with? Him. It's not that complicated. If you live with Him, you'll receive the life of grace, which is freedom, redemption, shalom, favor, abundant life, and blessing. If you learn this and believe this, what would you do? You would live there in His grace. Further, when you experience His grace, it will be obvious to others. When people see that you're experiencing this grace, they will ask if it is possible for them—which it absolutely is. They, too, will learn that Christ is in them, and they, too, can learn to live with Him. You can help them learn this and experience this. Grace is more than just a ticket to heaven. It's the nature of God, the abundant, super-abundant life, the blessing of the Covenant that He wants to give to you. It's Him. He will put Himself in you. He will deliver it to you personally.



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"He says that His nature of grace will transform your experience of life step by step by step."

As we continue our course: *Living in Amazing Grace, The Nature of God*, we revisit the definition of grace—joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness, loving-kindness, which is also Covenant loyalty, favor, kindness, the influence of Christ to keep us, strengthen us, and increase us in walking with Him in faith, affection, knowledge, virtue, benefit, bounty, and thanksgiving. In Revelation, we learned that grace and peace are from the Lord Jesus Christ, and then we learned that grace actually is Jesus Christ. It is His nature. It's not just something He does. It is Him. Because it is the essence of who God is, He can't alter it. He is not grace only part of the time, it is His nature, and it is always His nature. Since God lives within us, He gives this grace to us. It resides in us, and we are to live it out. We learned that it's freedom. It's Covenant. It's abundant life. It's restoration, knowing that we live in a tough world.

When God lifts up veils—opens up new understanding—what does He do for us (vs. 18) that changes us? In what way does God fulfill this change? Why is this necessary? What is the outcome? What is true where the Spirit of the Lord is? Why is this important?

Read 2 Corinthians 3:16–18:
¹⁶ But when one^[a] turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord^[b] is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,^[c] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.^[d] For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

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The process of Christian life is transformation—metamorphosis, like a caterpillar to butterfly.

It is real change. Your nature changes, but it takes a lifetime. Why? Because you have a sinful nature, a self-centered nature that—apart from God—never gets any better. He says that His nature of grace will transform your experience of life step by step by step. He lifts up veils and reveals something new that will bring about transformation. He says He will fulfill this as you walk with Him, which is something we will be doing the rest of our life. Our self-centered nature transforms into His nature of grace.

In verse 17, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there's what? Freedom. This freedom is because of His nature. Why would that be? Because He's free. He's freedom. So, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there's freedom. Since He's already resident in you, you will experience freedom when you're walking through life in Him. Freedom does not come when your transformation is complete. Instead, it comes as you are walking in Him and being transformed. We have a tendency to believe that as soon as that next big thing happens or victory is achieved, that is when you will experience freedom. But, He says no, you actually have it within you, and you will experience it when you are in His Kingdom with Him. The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit Himself is freedom, so where that's operating, you have freedom. When will you have freedom? Now, because this is grace, and is an indicator you are living in grace.

Why are we called to freedom? On what basis can we live in freedom? Thus, when is freedom available to us? Why is this important?

Read Galatians 5:1; 13:

Christ Has Set Us Free

5 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

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You've been called to freedom. Christ is freedom. Live in freedom. Why? Because Christ's nature is in you and serves as an indicator. You know that you are experiencing grace because you are experiencing freedom. When? Now. How about when you have trouble? How about when things aren't working too well? How about when you're not being fully transformed? It is still now—because grace is freedom.

From the following two sets of verses, from Jesus' instruction on prayer and the truths of Ephesians, as we live in freedom, in His Kingdom, in His will, what is important for us to continue to live in freedom? What does that mean for how we live?

Read Luke 11:1–4:

The Lord's Prayer

11 Now Jesus^[a] was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."² And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread,^[b]

⁴ and forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation."

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One of the elements of experiencing the Kingdom (thy Kingdom come) will be that you are living this day, your daily bread (now), and forgiving those who have trespassed against you—those who have harmed you, have not been fair with you, have hurt you, have come against you. First, we are to forgive them. Why? Because that is His nature. In doing this, you will receive freedom in your soul because you are living in Him. His nature is forgiveness, which means you are living in His nature. Remember, this is not reconciliation—which requires two parties to go to truth—this is just between you and God. This is where you release the burden of what they have done even though it deserves your anger and wrath.

Read Ephesians 4:29–32:

²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Your life is always to be lived with honor and respect. It is living a life of forgiveness on the same basis that Christ forgave you. What did Christ do on the cross? He paid the penalty. What was the requirement that He had to resolve? The requirement for us—His creation—to be perfect. Why? Because a holy God cannot touch unholiness.

When Adam and Eve chose to eat of the forbidden tree, they transferred their perfect nature into a nature of self-centeredness and no longer had perfect communion with God. Their nature is called sin nature—it is self, flesh, carnal. They could no longer have communion with God because they could no longer fulfill the requirement of perfection. Because of this, we are all imperfect and cannot attain perfection. However, at the cross, He took away that requirement

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and replaced it with grace. With grace, we—imperfect beings—can receive what He did for us because of forgiveness. He took away the requirement that you have to do anything other than receive it, process His truth, and be reconciled back into fellowship with Him.

Is forgiveness equal to reconciliation? No, because it takes two parties to receive the truth. He doesn't, nor can He, alter the truth, but He gives the opportunity for us to process the truth and then be reconciled based upon that truth. When He says to forgive others like He forgave you, what are you doing toward the person who has offended you? Forgiving. What does that mean? You've taken away the requirement for them to do anything, which equals freedom for you. If they have a heart to go to truth, they can process the truth with you until justice is satisfied and made right.

God says not to grieve the Holy Spirit by retaining your anger, hardness, bitterness, or desire to take revenge. Instead, live in the Spirit of forgiveness that offers the opportunity to reconcile versus requiring them to fix something or be punished before they can be forgiven. His nature is forgiveness, and it is finished—the forgiveness has already happened. Forgiveness is a key element of the nature of grace because that's who He is, and offering forgiveness demonstrates you are living in Him—even when not reconciled.

Why are we called not to judge others? How do we practically experience this when others are difficult or in conflict with us?

Read James 4:11–12:

¹¹ Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.^[a] The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

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It is evil when you speak against another believer. The word *evil* is not dark, awful, black. The word *evil* is working against God's nature, causing difficulty for yourself and for others. How do we do this? By judging others. What is judgment? It is believing you are right, and they are wrong. It is deciding that you are right and they are not. It is coming against others to persuade them that you are right so you can get them to do what you want. If they aren't persuaded, you run through them, ignore them, or go around them.

When you bring judgment, you are not living in Him, in grace. Grace is having a heart with no judgment. When you are living in Him, your attitude toward others isn't judgment, rather it switches to a place of grace. When you are living in this place of grace, you do not go to judgment and your thoughts do not even go in that direction.

Why are we to avoid going to law? What does that mean that we go to "I should," or "You should"? Why is this so important for living in freedom?

Read Galatians 5:13–15:

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

If you start to live in liberty, but then take that liberty and apply it as law to others, this moves to judgment. Judgment is learning something and then telling everyone else that they need to be at the same place. Just because you are living in liberty with this particular issue in your life, you need to understand that God has others on a different path. Don't use your freedom to go to law and then bite and devour others. This is all about your heart and not going to judgment

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where you are right and they are not—rather it is living in freedom and letting God direct you to His healthy way of living with others who are difficult and not walking with Him.

When others are coming against you, what are you called to do? Why? How do you do this when it is so difficult not to engage in the battle or conflict?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:19–21:

¹⁹ Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. ²⁰ For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. ²¹ I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.

We are called to live without quarreling, contention, and disorder. What causes quarreling, contention, and disorder? Judgment. What do you do with that judgment toward another? You go to battle—quarreling, debating. It is debating back and forth with contention and disorder—disunity. This is particularly difficult when the other party is judging you and wants to fight, quarrel, argue, and offend you. God says for us not to go to judgment and not to join the battle. Let God handle it. Grace is having no judgment on your part, not engaging in quarrels, and staying in freedom to let God lead you to resolution.

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In what way can we make the life of freedom given to us by God become vain (of no value)? Why is it so important for us to realize this?

Read 2 Corinthians 6:1–3:

6 Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For he says,

“In a favorable time I listened to you,
and in a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. ³ We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry,

Don't allow His life of grace that is living in you to be in vain, because now is the day of what? Salvation. What is salvation? Evangelicals tend to define salvation as being saved, knowing that you're going to heaven. In simple terms, salvation is defined as a ticket to heaven.

In these verses, God says that salvation is healing and deliverance. In Greek, the root word of salvation means to heal and to deliver. Salvation is God restoring you to the fullness of the life of God. Now is the day. Don't let grace lose its value. In other words, grace gives you this opportunity to go to wholeness, but you can reject it by not paying any attention to it, limiting it, and misapplying it. Jewish people have a better understanding salvation because they understand the Covenant. They know that salvation is a step into the Covenant. What's the Covenant? It is God blessing you so you can be a blessing to others. It is the fullness of the abundant life.

Since this abundant life is now, how would you make this in vain? By ignoring the truth and wonder of this, and resigning to the fact that life is going to be tough and you are going to fail—but it's okay since you have a ticket to heaven. When you do this, God says that you are ignoring the opportunity that He has given you during this lifetime for full salvation. You are resigned to living in mediocrity. You

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have decided that the abundant life is not for you. When your life is heavy, difficult, has ups and downs, but is nothing spectacular, you might feel that the abundant life is really not available to you. Maybe you don't believe you are good enough or that God doesn't operate that way but you are good because you have a ticket to heaven. This is how you receive the grace of God in vain.

As we walk with God, what is His purpose for us? How can we stay in freedom while He is transforming us?

Read Hebrews 13:7–16:

⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹ Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. ¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tent^[a] have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹² So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³ Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. ¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. ¹⁵ Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. ¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

The basis of grace is Christ, and the purpose of grace is sanctification. What is sanctification? It is transforming us to be more like Christ. It is transformation from the sinful nature that we tend to operate under to the life of Christ that is now to become our nature. He is going to sanctify each of us step by step by step. Will you

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be fully sanctified in five years? No. There will never be a point where you achieve full sanctification because the life of grace grows continually throughout your entire life.

The journey of grace begins with no judgment. You don't have a right to judge. Your role is to enjoy your walk into sanctification, God's path for you. You are not to place what is happening on your path onto another. Rather, your only question you should ask of others is if they are in a process of being sanctified. If they aren't clear about what you are asking, you can—without judgment—share your experience. If they have a heart to go, help them walk in the nature of grace themselves. If not, you still live in freedom, not taking on their burdens. All of this must happen without judgment.

Since grace is Christ and Christ is living in us, what does He promise when we experience trouble and difficult circumstances? What does that mean in relation to how we follow and live in Christ? Why?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7–15:

Treasure in Jars of Clay

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

¹³ Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, ¹⁴ knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵ For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

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God says that you are going to have trouble. When will you have trouble? All the time. You will find yourself trying to overcome that trouble, and in doing so will be working against the nature of grace. But grace is Christ in you, and what is Christ going to do? He's going to bring restoration and redemption, and He is going to walk you through His path to overcome the trouble. This resolution will not come because of something you did, but because of Christ in you. He is Almighty God at all levels, internal and external. He can change circumstances and give you the personal power to walk through it to the restoration. Why does He do this? Because He doesn't want you to live in oppression while you're going through it. He will resolve it. Let Him give you the favor of understanding that He will do this, and the ability to enjoy His restoration in the middle of this awful thing.

From the following two sets of verses, since we live in the world, what are we going to experience? Why does grace not exempt us from this? What is the good news about grace that we are going to experience? Why is this so important for us?

Read John 16:33:

³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Again, in the world you're going to have trouble. The word *trouble* means pressure, distress, tribulation, difficulties, and awful circumstances. That's the nature of the world. Does He exempt you from that? No. Don't associate grace with living a life free of trouble. Had Adam and Eve not fallen, that would be true. But unfortunately, they did, and now, each and every one of us will be impacted by trouble. But don't fret because what has He done for all trouble? He has overcome it. He has an answer and resolution for every situation. It is in His nature.

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When you have trouble, go to God and ask: What do You have to say about this? Grace confirms that He has the answer because He has overcome the world of trouble. He's got this. It's His nature. He has already overcome it and will get you the answer if you have a heart to go with Him. Trust and enjoy His resolution and overcoming.

Read Revelation 3:20–21:

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹ The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

In these verses, Christ is talking to the church, to believers who have not been walking with Him—essentially making grace in vain. Because of this, He is knocking on the door waiting for you to do what? Answer the door. He is pointing out that you are not in fellowship with Him. If you were, you would be sitting at the table, but instead, you're off on your own trying to find your own resolution. He invites you to let Him in. If you do, you are going to have supper together. You are going to have fellowship where the outcome will be you joining Him as an overcomer. He will lead you into the overcoming and will reveal to you the very reason why He was not at the table with you to begin with. This opportunity is for you to grow in your fellowship with Him. But in order for this to happen, we have to choose it. We have to open the door. Grace is His heart of thanks for opening the door. He is excited for the fellowship, and He is going to take you with Him to the overcoming that you need.

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From the following four sets of verses, we see that lovingkindness means God's loyalty to the Covenant. What is the Covenant? What are the benefits of living in Him and receiving His Covenant blessings? What does it mean that He is loyal to that for us? What then shall we expect?

Read Psalm 31:19–21:

¹⁹ Oh, how abundant is your goodness,
which you have stored up for those who fear you
and worked for those who take refuge in you,
in the sight of the children of mankind!

²⁰ In the cover of your presence you hide them
from the plots of men;
you store them in your shelter
from the strife of tongues.

²¹ Blessed be the LORD,
for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me
when I was in a besieged city.

God's heart for us is *lovingkindness*. The word *lovingkindness* is Covenant loyalty. He has shown us His loyalty to the Covenant. He is going to bless each of us to make us a blessing, and He is going to deliver goodness to each of us, as well. The definition of *goodness* is fairness, beauty, joy, prosperity, excellence, power, merit, miraculous. He is going to deliver goodness to you. He is loyal to the Covenant, and it's universal for everybody who has a heart to follow. The nature of grace is always goodness—goodness for all. Every single person who has a heart to follow Him will receive this goodness. It is always available. He will lead you to the very, very best—where it's extraordinarily grand.

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Read Psalm 65:4–8; 11–13:

⁴ Blessed is the one you choose and bring near,
to dwell in your courts!

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,
the holiness of your temple!

⁵ By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness,
O God of our salvation,
the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas;

⁶ the one who by his strength established the mountains,
being girded with might;

⁷ who stills the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples,

⁸ so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs.
You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy.

His paths are goodness dripping with what? Joy and abundance. They drip with abundance. Where is this abundance found? On God's path. God's path for who? For you. He has a path for you, and you can be assured that if you're living in grace, there will be goodness and abundance. This goodness and abundance can't be found on every path, but only on His path that He has made for you personally—the path you have to be on with Him.

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Consider your situation: Are you on His path of goodness? If not, you are on your own path where there's struggle, where things don't come together, and where the answers don't come. All of God's paths are goodness and abundance. His paths drip and overflow with abundance. It is spectacular. Remember, life will not be absent of trouble, so what will abundance look like while you're in the middle of trouble? It is a posture of having joy, peace, and hope—knowing He's going to provide resolution. Even though you are in the middle of it, you are comfortably sitting in this place knowing He's got it and that your job is to walk with Him step by step. Even when it's hard, you can sit in joy and peace and continue to follow Him. He's already overcome whatever trouble you are facing, and He is going to reveal and lead you into His resolution.

When Joshua and Caleb get ready to cross the Jordan, what does God say to them? He tells them that He is going to give them the Promised Land. All the Jews who were in Egypt died in the wilderness, outside of His will, but if they—Joshua and Caleb—have a heart to go, He is going to give them the Promised Land—where there will be abundance. Everything they could ever need will be there, and even though the land was occupied by an enemy, if they followed Him, He would take care of that, too.

The abundance is knowing what is coming—His promise, His Covenant, His abundance, His resolution. Did it happen overnight? No. It took five years. During that five years, did they have tribulation? Yes. There was a powerful enemy that had never been beaten before. They went into every city with tribulation. But while they were in tribulation, did they have abundance? Yes. They had the promise of what was to come and walked along His path step by step. They weren't on the sideline waiting for God to fulfill His promise, rather, they walked along His path each day, each week, each month as God delivered the victory and the fulfillment of His promise—which was full resolution and the reason they could enjoy the abundance along the path.

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Read Psalm 16:5–11:

⁵ The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.

⁶ The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.^[a]

⁸ I have set the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being^[b] rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.

¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.^[c]

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

God promises that your life is going to be pleasant, delightful, lovely. Pleasures are at His right hand forevermore, so your life, even in the middle of trouble, is pleasant. How could that be when you've got a struggle or you are in a battle or a difficulty? How can that be pleasant? It can be pleasant because our confidence is in Him and what He has told us—that He's going to solve our issues.

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The problem with tribulation is that it looks like things are not going to work out; things aren't going to be good. But pleasantness is knowing it is going to be good—and walking with Him in the process of Him resolving it. Pleasantness is getting excited about His instruction and about the things He will do along the path. Why? Because you know it is headed toward resolution, and you will get to experience adventure as you are following each step. You see Him do special things along the way that show you He's got it. You aren't able to see the end yet, but you are able to see that He is right there in the middle of the whole thing. Knowing that keeps the pleasantness and the excitement and the adventure of seeing God at work. It may not yet be the resolution, but you are seeing God at work along the path. Covenant answer is still going to be there. Look at trouble differently. Look at it as an adventure. It will be interesting to see how God handles this and brings His goodness and His resolution. Living life with this perspective will enable you to have pleasantness along this path of difficulty.

Read Proverbs 3:13–18:

Blessed Is the One Who Finds Wisdom

- ¹³ Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,
¹⁴ for the gain from her is better than gain from silver
and her profit better than gold.
¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.
¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.
¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called blessed.

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God says that all of His paths are pleasantness and shalom. Life will not be absent of trouble, but His path will lead to Covenant and resolution, and if you are on His path, it is pleasantness and shalom. The grace of God is to provide pleasantness along the path, since all His paths are that way.

In order for us to live the Covenant life, what do we need? What is this? Why? With this wisdom, what will we be able to understand and approve? Why is this so important to us?

Read Philippians 1:3–11:

Thanksgiving and Prayer

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace,^[a] both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

We will abound in grace because we're a partner of grace. We are His workmanship, which means we are walking on His path of grace—and He gives us insight and wisdom to discern and approve His will. For you to approve and discern His will, what do you need? You need wisdom and understanding. You need to ask God what He has to say about your situation. Grace will lead you to let Him give it to you as you approve His will.

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Consider the simplicity of this: If you're going to approve His will, you have to know His will. In order to know His will, who has to give it to you? Him. In addition, you have to have wisdom to receive it. So, grace is both. He is not only going to show you the truth, He is also going to give you the ability to understand the truth. He works both sides of it while you just have a heart to go with Him. Because of grace, He is giving you the wisdom to walk in the path of goodness, pleasantness, and overcoming. Your only role is to stay on His path while He provides the wisdom and the ability to hear the wisdom. You are to have confidence that He will provide assurance that you are on His path where He will also give you wisdom and then translate your circumstances into powerful, miraculous resolutions.

If we are living this life of grace, what will we experience and when? What then can we expect and know if we are living in grace?

Read Acts 4:32–35:

They Had Everything in Common

³² Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. ³³ And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵ and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

The believers gave testimony to the power of God because of what? The grace that operated in them—the nature of God that leads us to experience the supernatural.

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When there is opposition to our life of grace, what can we still expect about experiencing the fullness of this life of grace? Why is that so important to us in the midst of these conflicts and opposition?

Read Acts 14:1–3:

Paul and Barnabas at Iconium

14 Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.^{[a] 3} So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

The disciples were speaking about the life of God—the grace of God. A lot of people accepted it, but what else was going on? The opposition was stirring up people against them who were saying it wasn't true and not to believe it. They were stirring up adversity. Instead of dealing with this, the disciples could have chosen to go elsewhere, but what does God say? He tells them to stay there where He is going to keep doing the signs and wonders. Not only will the disciples be talking truth, but He is going to be demonstrating truth. The opposition won't be able to counteract the truth no matter how hard they try, as He will be doing signs and wonders—miraculous things.

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Grace isn't just talking about grace. Grace is experiencing God's supernatural work. If you're experiencing grace, you will have supernatural things happen in your life, which will overcome tribulation. Along His path of pleasantness and goodness—you will see the supernatural. The key is to always follow God and let Him guide you along His path—which can include staying right where you are and letting Him overcome the tribulation or leaving so He can guide you away from further tribulation. There's no system to this, but you are not to decide on your own what you think is the right way to go. Ask God what He has to say about your issue knowing that His resolution is going to demonstrate signs and wonders on your path.

What is the mystery of Christ? What is His purpose of us experiencing His grace in us? What then are we to expect for our lives? Why?

Read Ephesians 3:1–7; 10–12:

The Mystery of the Gospel Revealed

3 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶ This mystery is^[a] that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.

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The mystery of the Christian life is Christ in you. The purpose of it is that you may make manifest in reality the power of God—the grace of God to whom? Principalities and powers in the heavenly places. Principalities and powers. The church is intended to make manifest the power of God to them. If this is to be true, what must happen? We have to be participating with Him in His supernatural work. This is the way it has to be. In the natural, principalities and powers have power over you. They're demonstrating to you this reality. But, when you're having power over them, it is because you're with God. The element of the supernatural is operational. That's your life. The church is supposed to be doing the supernatural to show the truth of this to principalities and powers. Who else is going to experience it? Other fellow humans who are going to want the same for themselves. The power of God—the grace of God—is to lead you to fulfilling the life of the supernatural. Along what? Along His path, which is goodness, Covenant, sweetness, pleasantness, and wisdom. It is His will for you where the purpose is to demonstrate to all that the life of God is real. The grace of God is real.

His questions are simple: Are you living in freedom? Are you living in forgiveness? Are you living in the power of God? Are you living in the favor of God? Are you experiencing all the elements of grace? Why? Because that's His nature. He wants you to live it out all the time. Why? Because He is in you and gives you all these great characteristics.

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"Grace is Him, and the life of grace is Him. This is not something arbitrary, rather, it is constant because it is His nature."

As we continue our course: *Living in Amazing Grace—The Nature of God*, we've learned that is much more than a ticket to heaven. It is the fullness of the nature of God Himself. Let's start again with the biblical definition of grace. Grace is joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness, lovingkindness, which is Covenant loyalty, the ability of Christ to keep, strengthen, and increase our faith, to live out the life of grace. It's knowledge; it's affection; it's benefit; it's bounty; it's Thanksgiving—all the nature of God. It's also not just something He does. He's going to illustrate these characteristics in our life, but it is Him. It's His nature. That's who He is. And He doesn't change.

This is an important truth to grasp. Grace is Him, and the life of grace is Him. This is not something arbitrary, rather, it is constant because it is His nature. He gave this to us when He placed His Holy Spirit within us to live out this life of grace both internally and externally. He can make things change, and He transforms us into freedom, forgiveness, overcoming, favor, Covenant life, the super-abundant life, where there is no judgment, no seeking revenge on those who come against us, no contention. We are to live in the sweetness, the goodness, and the pleasantness of all His paths, which are always available to us.

The questions as we get into in this lesson are: How do we do that? How do we receive it? It's always there in its fullness. Since it's there, what would be the explanation as to why people don't experience this? There's must be something missing.

To better illustrate, Linda was going to prepare a recipe that called for sage, so she looked in the cabinet where the sage is kept. It's there, right where it always is. But, if she never looks in the cabinet, she won't use it in the recipe, and she won't experience it in her dish. She won't receive it or use it,

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even though it is right there. Since she never looked for it, she figures it must not be there, and she will just do without it. This is what happens in the Christian life. People just figure this abundant life of grace is not for them, and they try to figure things out on their own—even though it is right there, available like it always has been. In doing this, they never receive it or live it. We will explore what is missing and how we are to receive it.

Grace is living in the Kingdom of God. Given this truth, what are we to be experiencing? When? Why is this so important to us?

Read Romans 14:17:

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The Kingdom of God is not perhaps or maybe—it is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is grace. So, grace is you living in the Kingdom, and in the Kingdom, you will experience grace. Therefore, what would you want to do? Live in the Kingdom.

If there's a Kingdom, there's also a what? A King. Who is in charge? The King. Who's not in charge? You. The demarcation of being in the Kingdom or not is the surrender of your will to His. If you are living in His Kingdom, you are following Him on His paths, which are pleasant and where He resolves all things. If you live in grace, the only place you can experience it is in the Kingdom. Once you are in the Kingdom, He says to not walk away.

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Though we are believers and called to live in the Kingdom—in grace—what are the two consequences of not living in the Kingdom? What causes us to experience separation and falling from grace? Why then is this so important for how we live?

Read Galatians 5:1–4:

Christ Has Set Us Free

5 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

² Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ³ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^[a] by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

Though we are clearly to live in freedom, which is the nature of God, you can fall from grace. You can estrange yourself, separate, and sever your relationship with Christ. This doesn't apply to your eternal destiny, because if you are truly a believer, you have passed from death to life, and will spend eternity with Him. This is referring to whether or not you are currently experiencing His life now. You can sever your relationship with Christ, and you can fall from grace.

The biggest way to fall is to set up your own rules—your own law. This does not have to be between you and other Christians, but can be between you and your spouse, you and your children, you and your business, you and your associates. When you decide on your own how you want others to act, be, or perform—without processing together—you've gone to your own law. When this happens, you're obligated to do what? To do all of the law—to be perfect. You've moved from having been released from the requirement of perfection to perfection again. You've moved out of the Kingdom and back into the world where the requirement is to be perfect.

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What's your ability to fulfill perfection? You can't. You lost the element of grace that has allowed you to come into the Kingdom without being perfect. You have fallen from grace. Why? Because you're not walking with God. If you're going to experience grace, where do you need to be? In the Kingdom with Him. You need to learn what it means to live there, to stay there, and to experience it. It is important that you make the decision to stay with God.

How else do we not experience His life of grace? What is the reason and the consequence of us engaging in disputing and arguing? How can we avoid this typical way of handling opposition and conflict?

Read James 4:1–10:

Warning Against Worldliness

4 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions^[a] are at war within you?^[b] **2** You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. **3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. **4** You adulterous people!^[c] Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. **5** Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? **6** But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8** Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **9** Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. **10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

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When you're quarreling, disputing, fighting, arguing, and debating, are you in the Kingdom of God? No. Does this mean that you won't have disagreements? No, but it is what you do with this and how you handle it. Because we live in a fallen world with self-centered people, we are going to disagree. Further, because we all have differing views—even when we are not being self-centered—we are going to disagree. This is not a matter of having conflict—conflict is normal.

However, when you are in a place where you are fighting, arguing, debating, and coming against each other, you've exited the Kingdom. He calls it murder. Think about what you're murdering. You're murdering the spiritual activity that's available for you to experience grace. You've separated yourself from God and have fallen from grace.

What does God oppose? The proud. What's that? When we do it our own way. When most believers are asked if they are prideful, they say *no*. When they are asked if they are living out their own life or following God, they don't know. If you don't know who you are living for, you're living your own life—for yourself. You're proud, by definition, because you're not following God. You've decided you're going to do it your way. God opposes that. He also says that if you are in friendship with the world—living the life of the world, which is self-centered determination—we are not with Him in His Kingdom.

This is not about enjoying the things of the world. It's not about having to reject all things in the world. Rather, it is making the decision to do it on your own. Friendship with that is enmity against God. Is that a good place to be? No. Why? Because you have fallen from grace where He can no longer deliver it to you. If you are no longer with Him, you're working against Him and His grace. He says He resists the proud, therefore, the key to receiving grace is being humble.

In the English language, humility tends to be relegated to deciding you are nothing, you will do nothing, and you will just surrender to everybody and everything. This is not what being humble means. The word *humble* means walking with Him and coming into agreement with Him with great confidence. It's not a passive thing. It's very actively surrendering to Him to seek His will, and coming into agreement with that. When you do, you will have great confidence that you are on the right path, and you will stay on that path. He said He will exalt you because He has given you grace. He will give you the life of grace and all that we have understood that to be.

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In addition to conflict, what else causes us to exit the life of the Kingdom, the life of grace? What does that require on our part to return to Him and experience the fullness of grace? Why?

Read 1 Peter 5:2–7:

² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight,^[a] not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you;^[b] not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Are you going to have things that cause you anxiety? Yes. The way to humble yourself is to do what? Cast your care on Him. Give it to Him. He’s got this. Grace is going to resolve this. He opposes the proud and can’t give you grace when you’re prideful—not willing to follow—but if you follow Him on His path, in His will, He is going to give you grace. Have a heart to surrender to His will, not your own. Always seek His will.

As a couple, are you going to have disagreements? Of course, but what do you do with these? Together, go seek God until you both see what God sees. It is okay that you disagree when the heart behind it wants to get to unity together. It is good to process it. Commit to processing the differences until unity with God is

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reached. You are both seeking God's will. Why would we want God's will? Because it's good, the best, and none better. It's the life of grace—His path of sweetness. It's dripping with abundance. It's Covenant life, its resolution, it's overcoming. And it's with Him.

He cannot deliver this grace if you don't come with Him. If you choose not to go follow Him, you're going to mess it up even worse. This is why He says to humble yourself and go with Him. The only way to be with Him and be in the Kingdom is to pursue God's will together with your spouse, your friends, your inner circle.

From the following three sets of verses, as we learn humility and surrender to God, what is the progression of surrender that we are to understand so we can truly know what it means to surrender; and what are the benefits of following this progression of surrender? What then do we need to understand about our role versus thinking freedom and holiness are automatic for believers?

Read Romans 6:4–7:

⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self^[a] was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free^[b] from sin.

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This states that you died with Christ. The word *died* is past tense. What has He done? He has freed you. What is sin? Not following God. He freed you from that—past tense. But, if we have already been freed from sin, why do we still struggle with sin?

Read Romans 6:8–18:

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Slaves to Righteousness

¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,^[a] you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

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You've been set free. However, is it a permanent thing? No, it's an opportunity to live in freedom. In verses 8 to 18, even though you have been set free, either you have become a slave to righteousness, or you're a slave to what? The world where you have moved back to sin. Whoever you present yourself to, that is to whom you will become a slave. It's automatic. You've been set free, but you're in a binary scenario—by not becoming a slave to Christ, you automatically are slave to what? Sin. Sin is going to dominate you because you've walked away from the relationship, have fallen from grace, and are living outside the Kingdom.

Who are you going to choose? Him. But if not Him, then you will default back to self—and sin. To better understand, picture this scenario: You are in jail. Christ comes down to the jail and tells you that He appeared before the judge, and He took on your penalty. You are free to go. He holds the key to your freedom. Your price has been paid, and the judge has released you. But, if you want to leave this jail, this bondage, you've got to become His slave. Do you want freedom? If you do, you have to be His slave. If you choose not to, you stay in jail. He can't let you out because you've decided by default to be a slave to sin—to self—and thus cannot be with Him in His Kingdom. Either way, is this a permanent choice? No. It's a daily decision to deny self, take up the cross, and follow Him. If you become His slave, you experience freedom—but if you do not choose Him and seek your own freedom, you remain locked up and cannot experience true freedom.

Read Romans 6:22:

²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

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In John 17:3, Jesus defines everlasting life as experiencing the Father and the Son. He states that as a result of having been set free, and having chosen to become His slave, you get fruit. What's the fruit? Holiness, transformation, and sanctification. The life of God is a result of you becoming a slave, not you trying to figure it out yourself. You've been set free. Surrender your life and surrender your will, and you will get the result of the fruit that He has planned for you—which is grace. It's a progression. Do you have a heart to go with Him? Then, surrender. While you're surrendering, keep walking with Him and receive all the abundant fruit that is there along the path.

How are we always to walk? If we do, what does He promise us? Why?

Read Psalm 26:3:

³ For your steadfast love is before my eyes,
and I walk in your faithfulness.

Remain in His steadfast love—in the Covenant loyalty. His loyalty to the Covenant to deliver grace is always before you. Your role is to walk in it. Stay with Him—hold fast to Him because He's going to deliver it to you along the path where He will also give you the wisdom to understand it.

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To assist us in walking in His life of grace, what does God want us to do? Why? What are they to help us with?

Read Proverbs 13:20:

²⁰ Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise,
but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Your role is to walk with a wise man, with wise people, with your spouse, with your friends, with your inner circle. If they are wise, what are they going to encourage you to do? Stay in the Kingdom. They will encourage you to walk together with them in the Kingdom to seek God's will. In the Kingdom, you are hearing from God, even though you likely will not fully understand it yet. As you are walking with other wise people, what are you understanding as God's will for you? Are you experiencing freedom in the process? Are you enjoying the process? Continue walking with Him. Don't quit early. Even though you don't have the answer yet or you'd like to try to resolve the issue on your own, a wise companion will encourage you to keep humble, keep surrendered with an expectation that you will receive His answer.

Wisdom is staying together until you get the answer, being encouraged to stay on the path, and then staying with Him in the Kingdom, because that's where you're going to receive grace. This is why we need each other.

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In order to process together with wise people, what are we to do? When we do that, what is God doing? How then does this describe a new element of how we pray, and what we can expect from God as we do this?

Read Malachi 3:16–18:

The Book of Remembrance

¹⁶Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. ¹⁷“They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

While believers talk to each other, what is God doing? He's listening. This means that talking to each other actually is prayer. This is the key to something truly wonderful. God says He needs you to discern His will and that He will give you the ability to know what's good and what's not good. How will you do that? By talking to each other. What are you saying? What do you understand? What's the truth? Where are you with this? What's God saying to you? Do you understand His will? Let's work together on this. Are you surrendered to Him? Have you become a bond servant, or are you trying to push your own will?

As you continue processing, processing, processing, you will receive His wisdom, insight, and revelation. Keep seeking the truth. Look at what God reveals and help each other stay in process to understand the truth, which is His will.

A member our congregation was led to read a particular story in the Bible. When she finished reading the story, she felt nothing. She had no idea how this story related to her or how it applied to her situation. But when she read the Bible story aloud to a friend, the friend asked if she heard what God had just told her.

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The friend was able to pick up on something the woman missed, which was the key to the woman's whole situation. The friend pointed it out, and the woman realized there was something there. What should they do at this point? Process this further together. There was something that God wanted her—and us—to understand. How was she made aware of this? By talking to her friend.

This is the beauty of community. If we're going to stay in the path of grace, we are to assist each other. This does not mean you are telling each other what to do. Instead, it is encouraging each other to stay with it, conversing with each other, and processing together. God is listening and is going to give you wisdom, insight, and revelation—which will lead to understanding the steps to His will.

Why did God say to do this in community? Because we all have the same Holy Spirit. He can choose how He wants to speak through each person. If we have ears to hear, we will receive this illumination—from simple conversations between a group of believers. God's been listening, and He has been guiding the conversation to move us to unity.

Instead of engaging in people who oppose us, what are we to do with those who we consider wise? Why is this, and what does that mean then for how we live with others?

Read Romans 16:17–20:

Final Instructions and Greetings

¹⁷ I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. ¹⁸ For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites,^[a] and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. ¹⁹ For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

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Does it benefit you to debate with people who are trying to fight you, argue with you, or doubt you? He said that it is worthless. Don't have people around you who are debating or arguing, causing division with you and your processing with God. Rather, it is important to have wise people as your inner circle—people who will help confirm that you are receiving the truth and understanding God's will. Any others who do not have a heart to help you seek God and receive grace are to be avoided.

What are we to seek and obtain with others who we consider wise? How do we fulfill this and experience the benefit of God's will and life of grace?

Read 2 Corinthians 13:11–14:

Final Greetings

¹¹ Finally, brothers,^[a] rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another,^[b] agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All the saints greet you.

¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

To receive and live in grace, we are to live in peace, live in unity, live in harmony, and live in agreement. We are to move toward God's will because that's where the power of the Holy Spirit is going to operate and deliver a life of grace. Keep pursuing grace.

As you're working through your issues and decisions with your inner circle, what is your inner circle's encouragement to you? To be pursuing God's truth and God's will. It's not to tell you what to do. Rather, it's to walk with you—to be of one mind—with the Holy Spirit to get to the answer. You should be encouraged to stay with it until you receive an answer that you understand and is clear to you. There's

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no judgment. If someone in your inner circle receives insight about God’s will for you, they should not tell you what you should do. You will hear His will directly from Him, and your trusted friend will be able to confirm it and go to unity with you and the Holy Spirit.

If we pursue unity, with whom are we together seeking and receiving unity? What then is our focus? Why can we be assured we will have unity of the Spirit and His will when we are having others around us assist us with going to unity?

Read Ephesians 4:1–6:

Unity in the Body of Christ

4 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit means to work really, really, really hard to get to the unity of this issue, with each other and the Holy Spirit together. Why can you and your spouse, you and your inner circle—all get to unity in receiving and understanding God’s will? We all have the same Holy Spirit. The Spirit is wisdom who then gives us wisdom—and He uses the body, our fellow partners and inner circle, to assist in receiving God’s will. These people are called to help encourage you to move forward until you have unity and receive God’s will. There’s great joy in walking through this process as a group. And because we all have the same Holy Spirit, we can get there 100% of the time, all the time.

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As we seek unity, what is important for how we live? What does this mean, and how do we live in holiness?

Read 2 Peter 3:14–18:

Final Words

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. ¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. ¹⁸ But 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.

We are to come without spot and be holy—stay in grace and encourage each other to stay in grace. To not drift away into your own thinking, but stay true to what you're learning from the Word and from Christ. How are you going to become holy? By being in the Kingdom, walking with Him. Why are you holy when you're with Him? Because He is holy, and His nature is in us. Are you Holy on your own? No. Why do you become holy when you cross over into the Kingdom? Because there, Christ gives you righteousness and covers you with His holiness. You don't become holy and then come to the Kingdom. You become holy when you enter the Kingdom. Why? Christ says His holiness covers you—as soon as you walk into the Kingdom. Without this, you couldn't be there.

Where does the progression in the book of Romans apply? You've been set free, you become His slave, and then the fruit is holiness. All of this happens in the

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Kingdom. You are holy automatically when you step into the Kingdom because Christ gives His holiness to you. You walk away from holiness when you do what? Go back to the flesh—walk away from the Kingdom.

He says to be careful not to be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. If it is a secure position, how can you fall away from it? By being lured away by lawlessness and error. It's secure as long as you stay in the Kingdom with God, but you have free will to walk away. If you walk away, you can get further enticed away by self-will, by others who entice you to seek your own will. Rather, you are to go to God always, on all things, asking Him what He has to say about your situation.

To receive this life of holiness, what is our privilege to be with Christ and have dialogue with Him (prayer)? On what basis do we have this privilege? Why is that so important to us personally?

Read Hebrews 10:19–24:

The Full Assurance of Faith

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers,^[a] since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

The access that we have to God is being described in relation to way the temple functioned. There were different courts. Court of the Gentiles. Court of women. Court of men. Court of priests. And the chamber of the Holy of Holies.

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Who could go into the Holy of Holies? Only the high priest. Because he was the only one allowed to go inside, they would tie a rope around his leg so that if he fell or had sickness, they could pull him out.

On the cross, Christ said, *It is finished*, and after He took His last breath, what happened? The curtain that was 80 feet high and eight inches thick ripped from top to bottom. God opened up access to everyone who has a heart to come, who believes that He is the Christ who gives you the solutions to the issues of your life—your problems. Now you have direct access, and with that access, come with great boldness and confidence. In other words, march right in.

On what basis are you able to march right in? On the basis that Christ did it all. He gave you access. There is no requirement to be holy before you can enter. You don't need to be perfect before you can enter. You don't have to solve all your problems before you can enter. He has given you access, and all you have to do is come to the Kingdom. When you come to the Kingdom, what are you seeking? His will. Further, come with a sincere heart. Come with an authentic heart. Admit you are struggling, that you are not sure, that you don't get it. Admit that you don't understand. Come on in because access is not based upon your holiness. It's receiving His holiness and asking God to understand where you are at, so that He can lead you onto His path.

When we are in trouble, having difficulty, or are not clear about His will, what are we to do? What then can we expect? Why is this so important to us living the life of grace in this difficult world?

Read Psalm 86:6–7:

⁶ Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;
listen to my plea for grace.

⁷ In the day of my trouble I call upon you,
for you answer me.

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We are to call to God for mercy—for Him to fulfill His Covenant loyalty. We are going to have trouble. How often will we have trouble? All the time. What are we to do? Call out to God, expecting Him to deliver the Covenant. He will answer. It's that simple: If we come with this free access, He will answer. Come and He will answer. If you have a problem, an issue, a tough decision to make, something happening in your life or your business, and you need help, come and He will answer with goodness and pleasantness. His Covenant is best, none better.

As we call out to God in our trouble, in our difficulty, what does He promise? What does this mean then for how we discover God's will and live out the life of grace? Why is this so important to how we practically follow His will?

Read Psalm 25:4–5:

⁴ Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.

⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.

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Read John 8:28–32:

²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” ³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

The Truth Will Set You Free

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

God says to let Him guide you into truth. If you abide with Him, He will reveal truth, and the truth will set you free. The path of access is pursuing His answer and having the willingness to receive truth. Let Him show you what's really going on here. Let Him help you understand the truth—not your own desire for a certain outcome. What do you need to know? Truth that leads you to His will—which is best and none better. Once you receive it, continue walking step by step into His truth so that you can receive and live in His will—living in grace.

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From the following two sets of verses, since we are called to seek His will and follow Him in unity, what has He promised to give us to fulfill this? What does that mean for how we receive and follow?

Read Jeremiah 31:31–34:

The New Covenant

³¹ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

God put His Holy Spirit in you because you're looking for truth, and you're looking to be guided onto His path. Whose job is it to reveal this to you? The Holy Spirit's. He's resident in you. God put Him in you to enable you to hear what He has to say so you can follow His path. To be on His path, His role is to get you to stay there and receive it. The New Covenant isn't an abolishment of the old Covenant. It's the ability for God to work both sides of the deal. If you are with Him, the Holy Spirit will work to get you the answers that you need along the path leading to truth and His will. Since He put the Holy Spirit in you, He works both sides for you to walk with Him, hear Him, and follow Him.

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Read 1 John 2:24–27:

²⁴ Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that he made to us^[a]—eternal life.

²⁶ I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷ But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

In these verses, He talks about an important progression: what you've learned through abiding, standing there, and going forward. Don't go backwards. Learn and build your library—your truth—and then go forward with that truth. You don't need anybody else to tell you what to do, because you have Him in you. Whose job is it to tell you? His. Combine that with the need for community. He said you don't need anybody else to tell you His will; but you do in a certain way, need other people to do what? Provide confirmation. You also need others to encourage you to receive it and make sure that you are receiving it as opposed to telling you what to do. Human wisdom is worthless because we don't have any. Why don't we just go to God? If you go to God, He guarantees grace. If you have an issue, grace will solve it.

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What can we know about receiving His grace when we are in trouble or experiencing difficulty? How are we to approach this and seek His answers? What can we expect and why?

Read Psalm 34:14–19:

- ¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous
and his ears toward their cry.
- ¹⁶ The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
to cut off the memory of them from the earth.
- ¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears
and delivers them out of all their troubles.
- ¹⁸ The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.
- ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

The Lord answers all what? Trouble. Every single issue, no matter how great or small. He can handle it. He says to pursue shalom, grace. And hate evil. The word evil in the Hebrew is: things that annoy, frustrate, irritate, oppress, and cause you trouble. You are to hate that. Does this mean you don't have to put up with this, that you don't need to live this way? It doesn't mean you're not going to experience it. It doesn't mean it's not there. It doesn't mean that there aren't going to be complications from it. All it means is that you are not to accept it. Acknowledge that something's not right and help each other so you do not go to resignation. This is not something that you can't get over, and it is not a problem that you will always have. You will get past this issue of surrender. Don't put up with that. Keep going and pursuing what He says. Pursue His answer. What is God

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saying? What are you hearing? What are you understanding? Go together step by step by step. Draw a line in the sand and keep looking toward His grand grace. Don't accept mediocrity. Don't accept a life of evil.

To live this out, what truth does God give us about the process? How does this work, and what can we expect? Why?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6–15:

The Cheerful Giver

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully^[a] will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency^[b] in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written,

“He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.”

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ By their approval of this service, they^[c] will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

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This is a simple principle. You're going to reap what you sow—out of your generosity. This includes money, but He said it's really stimulated by His grace that's in you. You're sowing grace into what? Everything—your own soul, your spouse, and your friends. Let Him help you receive grace.

How can you sow this into others? By having confidence in your access to Him. Don't put up with evil. Instead, receive God's will. God will deliver the Covenant, and He will deliver abundance and others will reap it. Give statements of hope, expectation, and confidence. Instead of saying how terrible their situation is, ask them to let you show them how to hear what God is saying. As you stay with Him, in His Kingdom, pursuing truth, you will receive His answer, His resolution, His best.

As we finish this lesson, we've learned that grace is available, and it's within each of us. It's all these beautiful characteristics. The key is to stay in the Kingdom and not fall from grace. Encourage each other to stay in the Kingdom. Walk with Him. Let His Holy Spirit lead you to unity. Keep seeking His will together; keep sowing the positive statements of access and truth, and that God's promises are real. This is not easy to do by yourself, so encourage people around you to learn how to abide together and learn how to walk together to seek God's will.



LESSON 4: HOW DO WE GIVE AWAY GRACE?



"...Christ Himself is grace. It's His nature all the time. It's not partial, once in a while, or every now and again. It is all the time."

As we now finish this course: *Living in Amazing Grace—The Nature of God*, we've learned some wonderful things about grace. It's more than just a ticket to heaven. There's real depth to this because it's the nature of God Himself. Again, let's describe what grace means biblically: It's joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness, lovingkindness, which is Covenant, loyalty (God's loyalty to His Covenant), great favor, the power of Christ to keep, strengthen, and increase our walk with Him in faith. It's knowledge, it's affection, it's benefit, it's bounty, it's thanksgiving. It is the opportunity for us to receive grace and live in the Covenant—blessed to be a blessing.

The reason this is possible is because Christ Himself is grace. It's His nature all the time. It's not partial, once in a while, or every now and again. It is all the time. It's His nature that He wants to give to us. And because of the Holy Spirit, He's placed grace within us, to live it out, to have freedom, to have forgiveness, to have favor, to have Covenant life, to have super-abundant life.

In the prior lesson, we discussed how we walk with Him, stay with Him, and stay in the Kingdom to experience the life of God. We can do this because we're with Him, and we're holy because of it. It's surrendering your will to His and seeking His will—that is specifically for you—together with your inner circle. We are to encourage each other and stay in process until we receive His will. Your role isn't to tell somebody else what you believe is His will or offer up your best idea or advice, but rather to help them stay in the process until they receive God's word and we confirm it. In this final lesson, we will discuss further aspects of what this looks like, particularly now as we move into conflict and difficult situations with other people. How do we approach this with grace and remain in grace in the process?

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As we deal with difficult people—those who oppose us and come against us, what is important for us to understand about how we react to this? Why is this so important for us to remain in freedom and grace?

Read Galatians 5:13–26:

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Keep in Step with the Spirit

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy,^[a] drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do^[b] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

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We are called to not go to dissension—fighting, arguing, debating, and devouring each other because you're in disagreement. What causes you to go to dissension with another party? Judgment. You want your way. No matter the perspective of the other party, you want your way. You've both gone to judgment in the flesh—which turns into bitterness, envy, strife, and consternation.

Remember, this doesn't mean that you're not going to have disagreements, rather it is about what you do with that. How far do you go with that in terms of what you engage in, and how do you process out of the life of grace? If you go to that level of dissension, what do you know? You're both in the flesh, outside of grace. It is important to remember that the only person you can be responsible for is you. So, you have to learn to deal with difficult people, since it will happen all the time. Ideally, all believers would do what? Work together with respect and honor to resolve your differences. We all have the Holy Spirit, and because He is grace, we are all to have a heart to go to unity, seek His will, and get the very, very best resolution to this difficulty. Is that always true of every believer? No, but the ones we debate and have contention with the most tend to be other believers.

So, as far as you're concerned, don't go to judgment and engage in the fight. This doesn't mean there's not going to be a fight, but choose not to engage in it. How then do we approach this?

Paul describes different situations with relationship issues between believers. How are we to react to these situations when:

1. There is disagreement on things that are not absolute truth from God?
2. There is disagreement on things that are absolute truth from God?
3. Those who disagree with us require us to follow their way of living (their law)?

Why is this all so important for us to remain in freedom and experience the full life of grace?

Read Romans 14:1–15:6:

Do Not Pass Judgment on One Another

14 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God

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has welcomed him. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master^[a] that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹¹ for it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall confess^[b] to God.”

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Do Not Cause Another to Stumble

¹³ Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. ¹⁴ I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

²⁰ Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.^[c] ²² The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. ²³ But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.^[d]

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The Example of Christ

15 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. ³ For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." ⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is speaking to believers to reveal how to approach various situations. Are you going to have things that you disagree about? Yes, and your first line of attack is to understand that many of these issues are not absolute. They're there and could even be in Scripture, but they're not absolute in terms of the single truth that all are called to receive as believers.

We need to understand that there are things in Scripture that are absolute. For example, Scripture says that no one can become a believer unless what? They believe in and receive the work of redemption and salvation that Christ has done through the crucifixion and resurrection because He so loved us. This requires repentance and receiving Christ into our heart. It's not just a good Biblical thought. It is absolute. Christ also says in John 15:5 that apart for Him, you can do what? Nothing. Abiding is absolute. This is absolutely true—unless we abide in Him, we will not experience the fruit of transformation and supernatural resolution of our circumstances. There is not another way. You have to know that this is true.

However, there are a lot of Biblical truths in Scripture—like eating and drinking; and interpretation of the Word—such as the rapture—that are not absolute. There are people who say the rapture is absolutely pre-tribulation, and many churches believe that everybody who doesn't believe that should be persuaded that this is true—especially if they want to be part of that church. Well, the truth of Scripture is that rapture is there. There is definitely a rapture, but from

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Scripture, there is no description of when exactly the rapture occurs. This is done purposely, and a case could be made for pre-trib, mid-trib, and post-trib—any of these. It's not absolute.

Let's continue to use this as an example: If someone's opinion differs from yours and claims that the rapture is pre-trib, they need to know why they believe that. Have they settled that in their heart what they believe to be true? Have they processed that? If they simply believe it to be true because that is what they were told, they have not really processed it at all. Because they have not processed it, there's really nothing to discuss until they work this through from Scripture as they seek to receive what the Word says.

If someone claims that the timing of the rapture doesn't matter to them, there is also no need to engage in discussion. Why debate something that is already not significant to this person. Keep in mind that you are not to judge them by telling them what they should do or how this really matters to you. The only question is if they have processed this. What has their time in Scripture revealed? Have they settled on a position in their heart? If they have settled on a position that opposes your beliefs, you can engage in conversation saying that you disagree with their conclusion because you have studied this and believe that Scripture does not make it an absolute truth. You believe that it may be something else other than pre-trib based on it not being absolute in Scripture.

If the other party is convinced from their time in the Word and they have it settled in their heart that it is pre-trib, how then do you approach each other? First, without judgment, and then with honor and respect. From there, go through the Word and process together. Fundamentally, their position doesn't really impact what you believe and vice versa. It is okay if you don't believe the same thing. You both took the time to process the Word and did not form your opinions based upon what someone else said. You have both done this and understand that you are not at the same place. What does Paul say? He says that is fine. There is no need to argue or debate. Don't fight for the sake of the unity of the body. It's okay that you believe different things, as the real issue is your relationship, unity of the Spirit together. Don't let this get in the way of enjoying your relationship because of judgment.

If you are in judgment, you want others to believe what you believe. If that is the case, what's your attitude toward people with opposing beliefs? Unless they believe the way you believe, they can't be part of your group, and they can't join in the beauty and fellowship because you judge their position. But God says that is not grace. Rather, grace says it is okay that you don't agree. You can live with that. Why can you live with that? Because you have it settled. Don't let this impact your relationship; it's not critical because you, as the body of Christ, are called to be living in unity—even in the middle of disagreement. You are not to lay your truth

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on somebody else. It is okay that you disagree on this because it is not absolute. Unity is what's important. You don't have to convince this person, and you don't have to change them. In verse 19, we are called to pursue what makes for peace and for mutual building. The focus is to help each other follow God's will. Build each other up. Don't let this get in the way of your relationship.

Let's now look at this same issue from the other direction: What do you do when someone is trying to push their rule—their law—on you, trying to get you to accept their view as absolute? Don't destroy the work of the Lord. Don't accept it. Don't let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. Remember, the definition of evil is *not of God*. If you are walking with God, you are not to let others draw you away into dispute. If you have processed it and feel good about the situation, don't allow anyone else to lay their rule onto you and pull you out of the Kingdom of God and the life of grace that you are experiencing.

Do not allow others to tell you what you should or should not do based upon their rule. Do not accept that. If they choose to come against you, oppose you, fight with you, contend with you, cut you off, God say that you should not accept that. If you accepted their position, what would you be doing? Violating what you've already settled with God. Why would you do that? If you haven't reached the point where you feel settled in the situation, what should you do? Spend more time processing until you are settled.

As you discuss this further with the other party, and they continue to lay their law on you, saying that unless you change your mind and accept their position, they are going to come against you, recognize that they are not willing to pursue peace. If you are attempting to pursue peace with honor and respect, agree to disagree for the sake of your relationship and the unity of the body. This is the moment of grace.

Does your heart naturally want to fight and debate their law because you have it settled? Sure. It is natural to want to persuade them why you are right, and they are not. But we are called to something different. If they are coming against you, they have moved from the ability to process, to not being able to process. Are we supposed to treat them differently at that point? The Scripture encourages us to relax, but if you are willing and they are not, they have moved from the process of trying to work through differences to laying their opinion on you as law.

We also need to process when there are absolutes. There are things that are absolutely true from Scripture. What does the Bible say about adultery? No, the answer is no. There is no question about this. The answer is absolutely no. If you have a person in your group who is committing adultery and is trying to justify and rationalize it, how should you respond? Because the Word is absolute, invite

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them to go with you to the Word to receive truth. If they are not willing to process this, Matthew 16 says you are to go to an elder of your church body—get another person of faith to come with you. It's all about truth. If there are two of you, you've got to make sure this is absolute for both of you. If this is not absolute, then we don't have a right to go to them and confront them on this matter. If you do that, you're trying to lay your law on them.

If the situation involved is absolute, you are called to speak the truth when you have the opportunity. If the other party is not willing to seek the truth together, get the church involved. What does Paul say to do if they continue to violate this absolute truth? We are to ask them to leave the body because they're acting as an unbeliever who is not willing to follow God at all. They will suffer the consequences of their decision, but should they have a change of heart, grace always has a heart to have them repent and come back. In this scenario, it is okay to have a break in your relationship since they have broken their relationship with God—severed the relationship and fallen from grace.

As you are dealing with differences, keep going through the cycle. The first question to ask is if they have it settled? If they don't, encourage them to spend personal time in the Word so they can get this settled. If they do, don't debate them. It is okay to disagree on something that is not absolute and continue to live in unity. If they don't really care or are indifferent, there's nothing to discuss. Again, it is okay to disagree on something that is not absolute.

If, however, they say that unless you believe what they believe, they will come against you, work to persuade you, and you will face the consequences of not agreeing with them—which is usually rejection and no longer being allowed in their group—you are called to move to a different place. Do not allow them to lay their rule or law onto you.

Throughout the entire issue, what have you done the whole time? There has been no judgment on your part. There has been no pursuit of conflict. You are willing to stand up for what you believe but are called to not take what you believe to cause dissension, conflict, and debate—rather, you are to live peaceably with all, even those who disagree. If you are engaged in a discussion that is absolute, you are still to live in grace 100 percent of the time. Don't carry judgment and speak the truth in love. Follow through until the other party either processes with God to receive this truth or not, and if not, then let them go. Do not be burdened by this or take on the responsibility that you have to change their mind. This is not your responsibility.

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This Scripture also says not to put a stumbling block in the way of others who disagree. Drinking is a good example. There are people who believe that we're not supposed to drink. If you are one who believes this, do you have that settled with God? If you do, and are going to be a dinner guest at someone's house, would it offend you if they had a drink with their meal? Would this be difficult for you? For some, the sight of alcohol causes them to stumble back to drinking when they know why they are not to drink. This is not about universally telling someone they can never drink. Rather, if you're in a situation where there are differing viewpoints on something that is not absolute, it would be courteous to ask if this would be offensive or difficult for the other party. If they say yes, you are to respect their position for this specific situation, and abstain for the sake of the body. You can get by one evening without a drink for the sake of the body—do not put a stumbling block in their way. If you ask the question about whether it would be offensive or difficult, many say it is actually okay that you have a drink, but they will not be partaking. Respect their position on this subject matter and refrain from putting a stumbling block in front of them, but also, don't let them lay their rule on you.

See how beautiful this very important dynamic can be? How do you approach it? By determining if it is absolute, if you have it settled? Stay away from judgment. Always work toward wanting to benefit others to get to the beautiful life of God, and never let your differences get in the way of your life as the body of Christ—this includes how to handle when someone else is trying to lay their law onto you. In all scenarios, you are never to let these conflicts get in the way of a healthy, beautiful, positive, graceful relationship. Your heart toward them is wanting them to experience the grace of God. If they oppose you because they are not willing to process it, move to a different place. Remain in grace, keeping the same place as Christ. What is Christ always doing? Asking if we would like to come and receive His grace. Don't stand in judgment. He invites us to truth. He has resolution for all the differences that will occur in the body of Christ.

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In order to process these differences with other believers, how are we to discuss the differences with each other? What does that look like? Why is this so critical for how we handle all this?

Read Ephesians 4:15–16; 24–27:

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil.

Anger is not sin, but we are not to allow the natural and good emotion of anger to turn to sin, which is moving to the flesh and not walking with God. This is fulfilled by speaking the truth. What truth? Your truth. That's all you can speak. Remember, you're not saying this as absolute. You're just saying that for you, this is your perception; this is your perspective. This is where you are at. When you process the truth, start with what you believe, think, and feel about this particular issue.

If the situation is something that Scripture clearly says is absolute—like adultery—you really can't confirm what the other party is doing, and you should urge them to go to the Word and together you can see what God would say about this. You can say that you believe they are doing is against the truth of God—absolute—and that you cannot condone or support what they believe is okay.

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You are speaking your truth, and if you speak your truth, what must you be willing to do? Let them speak their truth. If you listen, you might see something that you have not yet seen. If you still don't agree, it's okay. Stay with it either until you both see the same thing—which is God's answer, God's will—or until each of you has settled it in your heart and you're okay with both being in a different place. Remember the process:

1. Is this an absolute? This must be clear in Scripture and an absolute truth because of what is said in Scripture—which means you know the Scripture and have processed to see how clear this is.
2. Do you have it settled in your heart? We are to help others to understand that being settled is to be processing the Scripture with God. Being settled comes from this process—not because someone else has laid their law on you and you have just surrendered to their law.
3. If it is absolute, we are called to respectfully disagree and encourage them to reconsider—either they do or do not. If their response is against God's absolute truth, you are called to go to them with another member of the body—an elder. If the elders of the church are unable to make any progress, Scripture tells us in Mathew 18 that at the point of complete rejection of the truth being known through this process, we are to let them go as they have come under God's judgment and are no longer to be a burden to us.
4. If not absolute, we are to encourage them to get this settled through time in the Word with God and then if we still disagree, accept the difference, and continue to have sweet fellowship as the body of Christ. (This implies that you have it settled through the same process.)
5. Do not to allow others to lay their law on you. Respectfully disagree, explain to them why it is important for you to stay in fellowship and not let the other person's law divide you. Either they will agree and release their view of this "law," or they do not agree and continue to come against you. If this is the case, you are to dust off your feet and move away from this—all with grace and honor.
6. You are not to put a stumbling block in front of anyone—be willing to refrain from whatever is causing this particular issue. It is only for a brief moment and is not being set up as law for you to follow. Honor the other person in this situation for the sake of the body.

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This is all about grace, honor, respect, being free from judgment, and speaking the truth in love. Always live in freedom, which is grace. Speak the truth. Always be willing to process the truth—driving toward the will of God and toward the truth of God, which is in Scripture. Go to the Word to see what it has to say. God has ordained for us a beautiful life of grace that handles disagreement and conflict well.

When others continue to oppose us and are not willing to process truth together, what then are we called to do? What does this practically mean? What can we expect? Why is this so important for us to continue to live in freedom and a full life of grace?

Read Romans 12:9–20:

Marks of the True Christian

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit,^[a] serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.^[b] Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it^[c] to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰ To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”

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This entire passage implies that there's opposition and that they're fighting against you. He says to stay in kindness, stay in respect, stay in honor. Thus, you're in forgiveness on the same basis you've been forgiven by Christ. We are deserving of His wrath—his anger—but based upon His nature, He forgave us and invites us to reconciliation. So, as far as this concerns you, attempt to live peaceably—which is offering grace. How would you do that to somebody who is opposing you? Make every effort to reach peace between you. How? Don't engage in the argument, the debate, the fight. Rather, we are to invite them to process together by respectfully speaking truth to each other. *You've offended me, you've hurt me, you're opposing me. You're trying to lay your law on me. Since I cannot agree with you or confirm that we have come to understand God's will together, let's continue to process to come to a place where we resolve this opposition, this disagreement.*

He said that as far as you're concerned, stay without judgment and keep offering the invitation to process this issue together. If they are willing, God will get you to agreement since He will show both of you His answer which resolves the issue. However, if the other party says they are not willing to go, God says to get out of the way because His wrath is coming. Vengeance is His. Justice will be served, and He will take care of it. This is not to be your burden or responsibility.

Since we are to get out of the way, we are also not to interfere with God's work. Don't enable. Don't debate any further. Don't rescue them. Let it go, because justice is going to be served absolutely, 100 percent. This is called the Covenant. There's more to the Covenant than just being blessed to be a blessing. Not only does it say that He is going to bless you to become a blessing, but it also says that He is going to bless those who what? Bless you. He is going to curse those who what? Curse you.

What is the difference between somebody blessing you and cursing you? Let's look at the curse. All believers have been forgiven at the cross. He took away the requirement to be perfect. All humans already stand cursed—separated from God and not going to enjoy eternity nor the abundant life promised by God. In order for them to reverse that curse, what must they do? Repent and process truth? If you're not willing to process truth, you're cursed. If you're willing to process truth, you will get to the truth and be blessed when you reconcile to the truth. All because you have a heart to see the truth.

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Stay in peace and grace. Always be willing to stay in grace and process truth with others in honor and respect. If someone is not willing to join you in processing the truth, let it go. Do not take on the burden of setting them straight. They are cursed and God will fulfill His wrath and vengeance, as this is His and not yours. Do not have a hard heart—or be haughty. Don't look down upon others as if they are lesser in any form or fashion—rather with honor and respect to have a heart to seek harmony. Every person is worthy, valuable in God's eyes. Do not avenge. If you are living in grace, there's no desire in your heart to avenge or get even. Have a heart to bless others. Pray for others to repent—to reverse the curse. Don't encourage others by ignoring the truth and thinking you have to help them succeed, rather, get out of the way. Let them go to the pigsty. They are cursed, and God will absolutely fulfill justice and take vengeance. But there is always an invitation to repent and reverse the curse—and then immediately step into the Covenant life of God where they, too, will be blessed to be a blessing. This is grace—join God in His work, His heart, and live in freedom.

In our freedom, we are always called to offer our peace. What does that mean for those who are opposing us? What do we do if they agree to this offer? What do we do if they do not accept this offer? In both of their reactions, why can we continue to live in freedom and experience the full life of grace?

Read Luke 10:1–13:

Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-Two

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two^[a] others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. ² And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³ Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' ⁶ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. ⁷ And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰ But

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whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' ¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

Woe to Unrepentant Cities

¹³ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

As God spoke to us in Romans, we are to offer our peace. What's the offer of peace? Shalom. Come into the Kingdom with Him, and let's process truth to come to the understanding of God's will. In this context of having opposition, when you offer peace, you're offering them grace by asking if they are willing to process the truth—to seek God together. He has the answer. They have opposed you and offended you, but together you can go to God to process this. If they say yes, stay with them and work it through until you get to truth. Truth will show the way to God's answer, which will bring back harmony. If they refuse to accept your offer of shalom, dust off your feet and move on. No matter what their refusal looks like or how they try to convince you otherwise, dust off your feet and move on.

Christ's heart is for repentance so He can offer grace. He has already forgiven each and every one of us. If you want to process the truth and repent, you can immediately step from the difficulty of life you're in to the beautiful life that He has for you. He can reverse the curse and restore everything that you have lost. God is asking if you have that same heart that He does. Can you release it and move on in freedom, in the grace that He has for you? If the answer is yes, you will be blessed because grace is always offering blessing. When will this happen? Now. To whom will this happen? To everybody. And as far as you're concerned, God wants you to live where? In freedom, so don't let conflict keep you from freedom. Don't let oppression keep you from freedom. Don't let trouble keep you from freedom. Stay with it. Stay with it. Stay with it. Let every issue go all the way to a resolution.

LESSON 4:

HOW DO WE GIVE AWAY GRACE?

As we consider grace, one of our purposes within the body of Christ is to do what? What does that truly mean as we now understand grace? What will be the benefit to them and the benefit to us? How does this impact our life of freedom and grace?

Read Romans 12:3–8:

Gifts of Grace

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members,^[a] and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads,^[b] with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Our purpose as members of the body of Christ is to serve each other and build each other up. What are we trying to build them up toward? To receive His grace and live the life of grace.

Are you experiencing His grace? Are you having exciting, supernatural occurrences happen and giving glory to God? Does that mean your life is absent of trouble? No, but the troubles that do occur get fully resolved. If you are struggling and not experiencing the promised abundant life, you have walked away from God and are not operating in the Kingdom. You are not abiding. Regardless, what is the role of the body? To encourage you to do what? Come to grace. Help you walk with Christ, who is grace. He promises grace. He promises the Covenant. You are going to be blessed. The abundant life is yours. You can experience all these

LESSON 4:

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beautiful things. Particularly, you can live in freedom with all the tough things happening in life. Accept the invitation to receive grace.

God's priority, His question to you is really simple: Are you living in grace? Either you are or you aren't. You know you are if you are in peace, if you are in freedom where the Spirit of the Lord is, if you are seeing supernatural things happen, if you are experiencing grand. How are you handling others who are opposing you or coming against you or laying their law upon you? First of all, you can live with this, but then invite them to go with you to process truth and receive God's grace. If they don't accept it, then dust your feet off. Why? So, you live in freedom—always with a heart to invite them to experience His grace. If you ever go to judgment, you've moved out of this life of grace. Rather, we are to have God heart toward them, which is that they would understand this beautiful way to grace—to have your heart break for their refusal and that perhaps they will come to their senses and be willing to process truth to experience God's wonderful grace.

As we serve others, our call is to also identify and walk with others who will then do what? Why is this so important to fulfilling God's bigger purpose? Why is this so important for us to live this way?

Read 2 Timothy 2:1–7:

A Good Soldier of Christ Jesus

2 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men,^[a] who will be able to teach others also. ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. ⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

LESSON 4: HOW DO WE GIVE AWAY GRACE?

Because of the grace that is in you, He says to help others to not get entangled in things that aren't of God. This is something that everyone tends to do. People are way too busy, way too involved in too many things. You're involved in stuff that God doesn't ask you to be involved in, so He is going to help you live in what He says is His way to freedom and rest and recreation and beauty for you. How can this be achieved? By being faithful. Faithfulness is what? Asking others if they are living in grace, staying with them until they do, and when they do, giving it away as instructed by God. Are you offering that to other people now and entrusting them to grow in the same thing? These primarily will be those in your circle: your spouse, your children, your friends, people around you, people at work. Are you encouraging them to experience grace?

If you're giving it away, by definition, what does that mean? You have it. You've received it, and now you join God in inviting others to what you have. This is the full experience of grace. As we finish this course, we've covered in detail how to handle disagreement. How do you handle people who are trying to lay their law on you? You stay in peace, you stay in freedom. Learn what it looks like to get to resolution and then offer it to others—always invite them to this place of receiving the life of grace. Grace is your heart. Grace is the nature of Christ that asks for you to come and experience the fullness of life, His super-abundant life.

