



Grace: Favor for the Undeserving Appendix 1. Participant Handouts

If you are working with a class or small group, feel free to duplicate the following handouts at no additional charge. If you'd like to print 8-1/2" x 11" or A4 size pages, you can download the free Participant Guide handout sheets at:

www.jesuswalk.com/grace/grace-lesson-handouts.pdf

Discussion Questions

You'll typically find 4 or 5 questions for each lesson. Each question may include several sub-questions. These are designed to get group members engaged in discussion of the key points of the passage. If you're running short of time, feel free to skip questions or portions of questions.

Suggestions for Classes and Groups

Individuals who are studying online can probably complete one full lesson per week, though they'll need to be diligent to do so. But some of the chapters just have too much material for a one hour class discussion. Feel free to arrange the lessons any way that works best for your group. Because of the length of these handouts – and to keep down the page count so we can keep the book price lower – they are being made available at no cost online.

www.jesuswalk.com/grace/grace-lesson-handouts.pdf

1. Our Gracious God (1 Peter 5:10; Exodus 34:6-7; Hosea 1-3)

Is the God of the Old Testament different from the God of the New Testament? Is the God of the Bible a mean, angry, remote Judge, ready to smack down any human that gets out of line? No. Three passages help us look at our God's grace.

1.1 The God of All Grace (1 Peter 5:10)

Defining Grace (*charis*)

The basic concept of grace is "favor." *Charis* ("grace") was a common word in the Greek world. For us, the most helpful meaning is "a quality of benevolence that gives favor to inferiors," especially "a beneficent disposition toward someone, favor, grace, gracious care / help, goodwill."

It is important to note that *charis* refers to the favor of the giver, not the worthiness of the recipient. Grace is favor not based on obligation, wage, reward, or worthiness.

"Grace is favor that is neither earned nor deserved." (Romans 11:6).

Q1. (1 Peter 5:10) How does grace (Greek *charis*) differ from earning wages? From earning favor by being good? What is a helpful working definition of Biblical grace? In what way does grace characterize "the God of all grace"?

Restoration by Grace (1 Peter 5:10b)

(1) Minister to us personally. (2) **Restore us**, "put in proper condition." God refurbishes us. (3) **Support us**, "set up, fix firmly in place." Figuratively, "to cause to be inwardly firm or committed, confirm, establish, strengthen." (4) **Strengthen us**. The idea of this word is to increase our strength. (5) **Rebuild our foundations**. This word means literally to provide a base or foundation.

1.2 The Compassionate and Gracious God (Exodus 34:6-7)

When you see "LORD" in your Bible appearing in small capital letters, this is a sign that the underlying Hebrew word is God's name Yahweh. Since the Jews wanted to avoid taking God's name in vain, whenever it appeared they would substitute "Lord" (Hebrew *adonai*) in its place when reading aloud. This tradition has been passed down to most of our English Bibles.

"Compassionate, merciful, tenderness" is Hebrew *rachûm*, "compassionate, merciful."

"Gracious" is *hannûn*, "gracious," from the verb *hānan*, "be gracious, to pity."

"Slow to anger, longsuffering" means, "slow in regard to anger," God's patience.

"Love, steadfast love, faithful love, lovingkindness, goodness" is *hesed*, "kindness, lovingkindness, mercy." "*Hesed* is the disposition of one person toward another that surpasses ordinary kindness and friendship; it is the inclination of the heart to express 'amazing grace' to the one who is loved.... It is a committed, familial love that is deeper than social expectations, duties, shifting emotions, or what is earned or deserved by the recipient."

"Faithfulness, truth, constancy" is *'emet*, "firmness, truth, verity," from the root, *'āman*. *'Ĕmet* carries an underlying sense of certainty, dependability.

Q2. (Exodus 34:6) What do we learn about Yahweh's character in his self-revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai? What does this have to do with grace?

Forgiving Wickedness, Rebellion and Sin (Exodus 34:7a)

“**Forgiving**” is *nāsā’*, here, “to take, take away ... the taking away, forgiveness, or pardon of sin, iniquity, and transgression.

“**Wickedness, iniquity**” is *’āwōn*, “iniquity, infraction, crooked behavior, perversion, etc.”

“**Rebellion, transgression**” is *pēsha’*, “rebellion, revolt, transgression.”

“**Sin**” is *chattā’t*, the principal OT word for sin, “to miss a mark or a way.”

Not Clearing the Guilty (Exodus 34:7b)

“**Leave unpunished, clear**” is *nāqā*, “be clear, free, innocent.” Durham: “Certainly not neglecting just punishment” for the unrepentant. The phrase, “to the third and fourth generation” is “a typical Semitic idiom denoting continuity, not to be understood in an arithmetical sense,” as clarified by Ezekiel 18:20a.

Q3. (Exodus 34:7) What sins will Yahweh forgive those who repent? How might the sin of rebellion find its way into a believer’s life? Why doesn’t God forgive those who refuse to repent and surrender to him?

1.3 God’s Grace -- Hosea and his unfaithful wife Gomer (Hosea 1, 3)

In the Old Testament prophets, Israel is often depicted as Yahweh’s wife, who has sometimes prostituted herself with other gods (Jeremiah 2:2, 20; 3:1; 31:31-32; Isaiah 54:5; Ezekiel 16, 23; etc.)

Strangely-Named Children (Hosea 1:2-6)

Jezreel is a town that was the site of a bloody massacre (2 Kings 10:6-8).

Lo-Ruhamah means “not loved,” perhaps indicating a great deal of stress in Hosea’s marriage, as well as God’s relationship with Israel.

Lo-Ammi means “not my people.”

I Will Speak Tenderly to Her (Hosea 2)

Chapter two of Hosea is a poetic discourse on the unfaithfulness of Israel who has forsaken the Lord like an adulterous wife. Obviously, Gomer is an allegory of unfaithful Israel. A ray of hope in verses 14-16.

Restoring the Marriage (Hosea 3:1-3)

Hosea goes to the house of Gomer’s sugar-daddy lover and offers him money to let her go -- and to refuse to let her come back! See Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Mark 10:45.

Q4. (Hosea 1-3) Why does Yahweh tell his prophet to marry a girl of ill repute? What does the story of Hosea and Gomer teach us? How does the story illustrate God’s relationship with Israel? What does it teach about grace?

Lessons for Disciples

1. The basic concept of *charis*, “grace” is favor of the giver, not the worthiness of the recipient. Grace is favor that is not based on obligation, wage, reward, or worthiness.
2. Working definition of grace: God’s favor that is neither earned nor deserved.
3. God in his grace will personally strengthen us after times of suffering (1 Peter 5:10).
4. Yahweh recites his character qualities of grace and mercy before Moses on Mt. Sinai. This key revelation is quoted 12 times in the Bible (Exodus 34:6-7).

5. Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness (Exodus 34:6).
6. Yahweh forgives all kinds of sin and rebellion in those who repent, but does not forgive unrepentant sinners (Exodus 34:7).
7. Hosea is told to find a promiscuous woman for a wife. She commits adultery and lives with another man, but Hosea brings her home at great expense. This is a type of God's grace towards backslidden Israel (Hosea 1-3).
8. The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament.

2. Grace That Is Wildly Undeserved (Romans 5:6-8; Ephesians 2:1-5)

2.1 While We Were Sinners, Christ Died for Us (Romans 5)

Access to a State of Grace (Romans 5:1-2)

Greek *charis*, “favor.” There we learned that “**Grace is favor that is neither earned or deserved.**” “... This grace in which we now stand.” (Romans 5:2b). (1) We are in a state of grace, (2) We continue to stand in grace, (3) Faith.

Q5. (Romans 5:1-2) What does it mean to be in a state of grace? According to the text, what is the role of faith in this? What is the opposite of “peace with God”?

The Improbability of Christ’s Sacrifice (Romans 5:6-8)

(1) “**Powerless**” (verse 6) means helpless in a moral sense. (2) “**Ungodly**,” violated every norm before the deity, irreverent, rebellious in our hearts. (3) “**Sinners**,” fall short of God’s law. outside the Law, “outlaws.”

Saving the Innocent vs. Saving Enemies

The Cross Demonstrates God’s Love for You and Me (Romans 5:8)

“**Demonstrates, proves, shows, commendeth**” is *synistēmi*, “to provide evidence of a personal characteristic or claim through action, demonstrate, show, bring out something.”

“**for**” (Greek *hyper*), “for, **in behalf of**, for the sake of someone or something” (Romans 5:6-8; Hebrews 2:9; Mark 10:45).

Q6. (Romans 5:6-8) What do verses 6-8 say about humankind’s situation? What is so remarkable about Christ’s death for us? What motivates that sacrifice?

“For sin shall not be your master, because you are **not under law**, but **under grace**” (Rom 6:14).

2.2 Dead in Transgressions and Sin (Ephesians 2:1-5)

Spiritually Dead (Ephesians 2:1)

“**Transgressions, trespasses**,” “a violation of moral standards, offense, wrongdoing, sin.”

“**Sins**” (*harmatia*) means literally “a missing of the mark... A departure from either human or divine standards of uprightness.”

Following Satan (Ephesians 2:2-3)

“The power of the air” (verse 2). “Prince, ruler” is literally, “authority ... the power exercised by rulers or others in high position by virtue of their office.”

Children of Wrath (Ephesians 2:3b)

Being “children of something” or “sons of something” is a Hebrew idiom that means “worthy of.” “Wrath” here is a “strong indignation directed at wrongdoing,’ with focus on retribution, wrath.... of God’s future judgment, specifically qualified as punitive.”

Q7. (Ephesians 2:1-3) What do these verses teach us about humankind’s fallen nature? What motivates our actions before we come to Christ? Which of these motivations might be conscious? Which might be unconscious?

2.3 Fallen Sinful Nature

Verse 3 uses the Greek word *sarx*, “flesh.” The word is translated variously as “sinful nature,” “flesh,” “human self-indulgence,” “evil nature,” “earthly nature”, “lower nature” The Greek word *sarx* is used in several senses in the New Testament, but is used here as “sinful, fallen human nature.”

“By nature” (vs. 3) refers to refers to a “condition or circumstance as determined by birth, natural endowment or condition, nature, especially as inherited from one’s ancestors, in contrast to status or characteristics that are acquired after birth.” (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:18)

Man is basically good because of the remnant of God’s image in us (Genesis 3:27, 31). But we are basically evil since the heart, the very center of our being, is corrupt and cannot be trusted (Matthew 15:18-20a; John 2:24-25, ESV)

Q8. (Jeremiah 17:9) Is there good in humankind? Are humans basically good or basically bad? Or both? What are some of the ways a “deceitful heart” shows up in our lives and motivations? If the heart is the innermost person, how does a “deceitful heart” corrupt us in a pervasive way?

Cheap Grace

Cheap grace -- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship* (1937), in which he discusses man’s tendency to cheapen grace into a license or excuse for immorality (Jude 4)

Q9. According to Bonhoeffer, what attitudes cheapen the understanding of grace in Christians? Does “costly grace” mean we have to work for it? What is costly about grace?

2.4 The Good News: Saved by Grace (Ephesians 2:4-5)

“**Love**” (*agape*) - “quality of warm regard for, interest in another, esteem, affection, regard, love.” “**Mercy**” - “kindness or concern expressed for someone in need, compassion, mercy, pity, clemency.” “**Saved**” - “to preserve or rescue from natural dangers and afflictions, save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue.” Here “save or preserve from eternal death ... and bring to salvation.” “**Grace**” - “favor ... a beneficent disposition toward someone, grace, gracious help, good will.”

The Gospel of Grace (Acts 20:24; 32a; 2 Corinthians 4:15; Colossians 1:6)

Lessons for Disciples

1. All have sinned, both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 3:23).
2. In Christ we stand in a state of grace through faith (Romans 5:1-2).
3. Jesus died on our behalf while we were still in rebellion against him, enemies, sinners, showing a remarkable degree of love (Romans 5:8).
4. We are now under a Covenant of Grace, not Law (Romans 6:14).
5. Without Christ, we are spiritually dead due to our sins. In our lack of discernment, we follow the values of the culture, and ultimately Satan. As a result, we deserve God’s wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3).
6. Human nature contains some good, since we are made in God’s image, but we are deeply flawed at the core, with deceitful hearts (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:18; Matthew 15:18-20; John 2:24-25).
7. The Good News is that God in his mercy has made us alive, and rescued us by his grace.

3. Jesus: Full of Grace and Truth (John 1:14-17; 3:16-18)

3.1 Full of Grace and Truth (John 1:14-17)

In the Beginning (John 1:1-4). The Word, (2) preexistence, (3) Co-creator, (4) Life-giver.

Glory of the 'Only-Begotten' (John 1:14b)

Uniqueness literally, "only son from father." Adjective *monogenēs*, "pertaining to being the only one of its kind or class, unique (in kind)." **Glory** refers perhaps to the transfiguration, where the Shekinah glory was upon him (2 Peter 1:16-18). **Grace. Truth.** "I tell you the truth..." (NIV), or "Verily, verily I say unto you..." (KJV). Truth will set us free if we cling to Christ's teachings (John 8:31b-32).

3.2 For God So Loved the World that He Gave (John 3:16)

The actual word "grace" (*charis*) seldom appears in the Gospels. But the concept, *the practice of grace* is on full display for all to see using the related concept of "love" (*agape*).

"**Loved**" is the verb *agapaō*, "to have a warm regard for and interest in another, cherish, have affection for, love." "**Gave**" is the common verb *didōmi*, "to give." "**One and only Son**" *monogenēs* "pertaining to being the only one of its kind or class, unique." "**Whoever**" is *pan*, "all, everyone." "**Believes**" is *pisteuō*, "to believe ... to entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence, believe (in), trust," with implication of total commitment to the one who is trusted." "**Not perish**" *apolumi*, "perish, be ruined," especially of eternal death. "**Have eternal life**"

The Close Relation between Grace and Giving

Grace is *charis*. A related noun comes from *charis*: *charisma* (plural *charismata*), "that which is freely and graciously given, favor bestowed, gift."

Q10. (John 3:16) How does John 3:16 display "favor that is neither earned or deserved" without using the word 'grace'? What is the relationship between grace and giving? What motivates the gift in this verse? How does this relate to grace?

3.3 Jesus' Teaching on Grace

Love Your Enemies (Luke 6:27-36)

"I Desire Mercy, not Sacrifice" (Matthew 9:12-13; 12:7; Hosea 6:6)

Jesus desires "mercy, not sacrifice" -- grace, not a sense of religious superiority over the lost.

Continual Forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-22)

3.4 Jesus' Parables on Grace

Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

Q11. (Luke 10:25-37) Why do you think Jesus sets up the hero of the parable as a Samaritan? How does the Samaritan show undeserved favor? In your community, who are the "neighbors" that are resented? In what ways can you and/or your Christian community show God's grace to them?

Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35)

Q12. (Matthew 18:21-35) In what way does the king show grace in this parable. How does the forgiven servant withhold grace? Can we call ourselves Jesus' disciples if we withhold grace according to Matthew 18:35 and Matthew 6:12-15?

Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-31)

Q13. (Luke 15:11-31) What does the Parable of the Prodigal Son teach us about God? About repentance? About grace?

Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)

Jesus is teaching that God, represented by the landowner, operates on generosity, grace -- unearned and undeserved -- even though that offends people who demand absolute fairness, a fair wage for a day's work. This is a parable of outrageous grace.

3.5 Jesus' Grace in Action

Compassion as Grace (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32a; 20:34; Mark 1:41)

The Woman Taken in Adultery (John 8:1-11)

Jesus demonstrates mercy instead of judgment. It is a case of mercy triumphing over judgment (James 2:13), shows favor to her where none has been earned or deserved. It is grace!

Thief on the Cross (Luke 23:39-43)

Q14. (Luke 23:39-43) How does the story of the thief on the cross illustrate salvation by faith? How does it show the triumph of grace over sin to those who don't deserve it?

Woman Who Anointed Jesus' Feet (Luke 7:36-50)

To Seek and Save the Lost (Luke 19:10; 5:31a-32)

The Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:18-27)

The camel and the eye of a needle is a parable of impossibility. In other words, salvation requires a miracle of grace. It can't be earned or deserved.

Q15. (Luke 18:18-27) How does the story of the rich young ruler show the impossibility of salvation without a miracle of God? Why does Jesus use a rich and outwardly righteous man to make this point? Where does grace show through?

Ransom for Many (Mark 10:45; also Matthew 20:28)

"Ransom" is *lytron*, "price of ransom," especially the ransom money for the manumission of slaves, with clear echoes of Isaiah 53:5-6, 12.

Lessons for Disciples

1. Jesus is declared "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), and ushers in the transition from the Old Covenant of the Law to the New Covenant of grace.
2. Grace is illustrated in John 3:16, where the Father gives his Son as a sacrifice for sin for all who believe.
3. Giving generously is closely aligned with grace.

4. Jesus' radical teaching on grace is to "love your enemies," and compares it to what the Father is like – kind to the ungrateful and wicked (Luke 6:27-28).
5. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) illustrates undeserved favor of the Samaritan to the Jew, as well as generosity beyond mere rescue.
6. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35) shows the extreme grace of the King in forgiving an immense debt, but also the requirements that receiving such a pardon places on the recipient – to show grace to others. This is capsulized in the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our debts in the same way as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12-15).
7. The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-31) shows the eagerness of the father to forgive and restore his beloved son who was dead to him.
8. The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) teaches us that God doesn't operate on a principle of mere fairness, but of unexpected generosity.
9. Jesus' actions of healing the sick, feeding the 5,000, etc. illustrate his compassion, another concept closely related to grace.
10. The story of the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11) illustrates how mercy triumphs over justice where there is repentance, another example of God's operating principle of grace.
11. The story of the repentant thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43) illustrates the principle of salvation by faith as well as the grace of God to sinful people who don't deserve it.
12. The story of the sinful woman who anointed Jesus' feet and washed them with her tears (Luke 7:36-50) teaches salvation by faith and God's rich grace for sinners.
13. Jesus' stated mission "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10) shows that he is intent on showing grace to the least deserving.
14. The story of the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-27) illustrates the impossibility of people being saved without a miracle of God – especially the rich and outwardly "righteous."
15. Jesus' saying that he came to give himself as a ransom for many, shows that we need such a ransom in order to be freed from our sins. The phrase "the many" echoes the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah 53, especially verses 11 and 12.

4. Balancing Grace and Law (Romans 3:21-26)

Martin Luther (1483-1546) is in despair about his sins until God reveals to him Romans 1:17, that salvation is a gift received by faith. "Righteousness" (*dikaioσynē*) is "the quality of being upright, fairness, justice, equitableness," here, "quality or state of juridical correctness with focus on redemptive action, righteousness."

4.1 Pervasive Sinfulness (Romans 3:22b-23)

None Is Righteous, No Not One (Romans 3:10-18)

St. Augustine (354-430 AD), "original sin" -- humans, through the fact of birth, inherit a tainted nature in need of regeneration, as well as a proclivity to sinful conduct (Romans 5:12-14; Psalm 51:5, 10; 32:1-2).

A doctrine related to "Original Sin" is sometimes termed "Total Depravity" -- "Every part of our being is *affected* by sin -- our intellects, our emotions and desires, our hearts (the center of our desires and decision-making processes), our goals and motives, and even our physical bodies" (Genesis 1:26-27; 3; Isaiah 64:6).

The Flesh (*sarx*)

The image of God (Latin *imago Dei*) in us is flawed, fallen. We are broken. John Wesley described it as "a bent to sinning." Paul referred to our unredeemed human nature as "the flesh" (*sarx*) (Romans 7:18; Ephesians 4:18). See Romans 3:23b; Galatians 2:21; Romans 7:24)

Q16. (Romans 3:22-23; Romans 5:12-14; Isaiah 64:6; Jeremiah 17:9) Is humankind basically "good" because of the image of God in us? Or basically evil because of deceitful hearts and our corrupt nature ("flesh") that is "bent to sinning"?

4.2 Justified by Grace (Romans 3:24-25)

This verse explains how God reconciled us using three rather different word analogies.

1. "**Justification**" comes from the field of law, the concept of right standing before a court or judge (Romans 3:24). "Justified" is *dikaioō*, "to practice justice," here in the sense of, "to render a favorable verdict, vindicate." When God is the subject, it means "be acquitted, be pronounced and treated as righteous" and thereby become *dikaios*, "righteous." This is a legal term. Psalm 103:12

2. "**Redemption**" is used when talking about prisoners of war and slavery, the concept of being freed by payment of a ransom or purchase price. "Redemption" is the noun *apolytrōsis*, originally, "buying back" a slave or captive, that is, "making free" by payment of a ransom. Here it is used figuratively, "release from a captive condition, release, redemption, deliverance" (1 Corinthians 6:19b-20; 1 Peter 1:17-19).

Q17. (Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 1:17-19) In what sense have we been redeemed from slavery? What slavery have we been freed from? What was the price of our manumission or freedom? In what sense are we free? In what sense are we still slaves?

3. "**Sacrifice**" is a word from temple worship, the concept of making an animal sacrifice to provide atonement for sins. "Sacrifice of atonement" and "propitiation" in secular Greek literature is *hilastērion*, that which serves as an instrument for regaining the goodwill of a deity; concretely,

a “means of propitiation or expiation, gift to procure expiation. Leviticus 5:5-6 and Leviticus 4:32-35. (1) **Bringing an animal** that has **no defect**. (2) **Confessing** the offerer’s sin over the animal. (3) **Laying his hands** on its head (see Leviticus 16:21); (4) **Slaying the animal** by cutting its throat; (5) **Collecting the blood**, putting **some** blood on the horns of the altar, pouring the rest at base of the altar; (6) **Burning the animal on the altar**. (John 1:29; Mark 10:45; Isaiah 53:5-6).

Q18. (Romans 3:24; John 1:29; Mark 10:45; Isaiah 53) In what sense is Jesus a sacrifice for our sins? Why is he punished for our sins instead of us? Why is he called the Lamb of God?

4.3 Reconciling Justice and Love (Romans 3:25b-26)

4.4 Righteousness by Faith (Romans 3:22)

The righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to believers, that is, treated as if it were theirs through faith (Philippians 3:9; Romans 4:3-5, based on Genesis 15:6).

“Credited” (NIV), “counted” (ESV, KJV), “reckoned” (NRSV) is *logizomai*, a mathematical and accounting term, “reckon, calculate.” Here, “place to one’s account, credit.”

Through Grace We Are Saved through Faith (Acts 15:10-11)

Lessons for Disciples

1. The righteousness from God through faith is a ‘right standing’ before God, and bypasses the Law of Moses (Romans 3:21-22).
2. The Gentiles sin without any law as a guide; the Jews sin even though they have the Law. Thus all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory and standards (Romans 3:22b-23).
3. Augustine’s concept of Original Sin asserts that humans inherit a tainted nature in need of regeneration and a tendency toward sinful conduct (Romans 5:12-14).
4. The doctrine referred to as Total Depravity, might better be termed Pervasive Sinfulness. It asserts that every part of our being is affected by sin and is corrupt, unable to find salvation (Isaiah 64:6; Jeremiah 17:9).
5. The New Testament uses the term “flesh” (*sarx*) to describe man’s unregenerate sinful nature (Romans 7:18, 24; Ephesians 4:18).
6. Justification is a legal term describing declaration of a right standing with God. This right standing comes to us solely through God’s grace (Romans 3:24).
7. Redemption is a term from the slave trade referring to paying the purchase price of a slave to set him or her free. The cost of our freedom is Christ’s death on the cross (Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 6:19b-20; 1 Peter 1:17-19).
8. Atonement is a term from temple worship describing how an animal sacrifice is offered to secure propitiation before God who has been offended by our sins (Romans 3:24)
9. The Old Testament animal sacrifice has been replaced in the New Covenant by Christ taking our sins upon him on the cross as the Lamb of God (John 1:29; Mark 10:45; Isaiah 53).
10. Christ’s atoning sacrifice demonstrates God’s justice that sins committed are actually punished in Christ so that we can be freely forgiven (Romans 3:25b-26).

11. God has shown forbearance, using animal sacrifice in the Old Covenant to typify the forgiveness of sins that actually took place in Christ for all sins, for all men, for all time (Romans 3:25).
12. When we put our faith in Christ we are declared righteous, in the same way that Abraham's faith was credited as righteousness (Romans 3:22; Philippians 3:9; Romans 4:3-5; Genesis 15:6).
13. In the final analysis, we are saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, not by obeying the Law or achieving moral perfection (Acts 15:10-11).

5. Balancing Grace and Good Works (Ephesians 2:8-10)

5.1 Rescue Needed (Ephesians 2:1-5)

The Need for a Rescue Operation (Ephesians 2:1-3)

(1) **Spiritual deadness** is caused by transgressions and sin. (2) **Followers of a corrupt culture.** (3) **Followers of Satan**, “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Genesis 3:1-7). (4) **Self-indulgent** (Ephesians 2:3a), “gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.” (5) **Under Divine judgment and righteous anger.**

Results of Rescue (Ephesians 2:4-6)

(1) His great **love** for us, (2) His richness of **mercy**, (3) A miracle of **new birth**, (4) Elevation to a spiritual authority, **position** “in the heavenly realms,” (4) Eternal **kindness** shown us forever.

5.2 Grace and Rescue (Ephesians 2:8)

“**Saved**” (*sōzō*), “to preserve or rescue from natural dangers and afflictions, save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue.” Here it means “save/preserve from eternal death.”

“**Grace**” (*charis*) means simply “favor.”

Q19. (Ephesians 2:8) From what have we been rescued by God’s grace? How has God personally rescued you from your situation before Christ? What did God’s favor have to do with your salvation?

5.3 Faith and Works

Working Our Way into the Good Graces of God (Ephesians 2:9)

The Pharisees’ rules, the “oral law,” were designed to be a “hedge” around the actual commands of the Mosaic Law, the Torah.

For Paul, “works” is short for “works of righteousness that earn God’s favor” (Philippians 3:9; Romans 11:5-6; Titus 3:5, 7; 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 4:4-5).

The Just Shall Live by Their Faith

“**Faith**” *pistis* means “the trust that a man may place in men or the gods, credibility, credit in business, guarantee, proof, or something entrusted.” (James 2:19).

Q20. (Ephesians 2:8-9) How does the idea of earning salvation by being good enough for God distort the essential gospel? With that scenario, what is the need for the cross? How does it affect a sense of self-righteousness? Of pride? Of looking down on others rather than loving them? Why is this kind of works-righteousness so ingrained in people? How does an understanding of salvation by grace change this picture?

An Essential Marriage of Faith and Works (James 2:17)

General sense of “works,” “a deed, an action,’ by contrast either with inactivity or a mere word” (used by James). (2) **Technical sense of “works,** works of righteousness to earn salvation (used by Paul, Philippians 3:4-6)

This Not of Yourselves (Ephesians 2:8b)

This grace is certainly not from us. It is the generous gift of the Giver, given against all odds, against all of our self-centered, rebellious history. Grace is certainly not from ourselves.

This salvation is certainly not from us. The rescue operation that culminated in the cross was launched by the Father with the willing cooperation of his Son. We had nothing to do with it

This faith comes from us, doesn't it? Only "sort of." John Wesley referred to "prevenient grace," grace which comes before, grace which precedes the actual event of our salvation (Acts 18:27; Matthew 16:16-17; John 6:44, 54b; 16:8-11).

All three are gracious gifts from God for which we can take no credit.

Q21. (Acts 18:27; Matthew 16:16-17; John 6:44) How does the Holy Spirit work in our lives to prepare us for salvation? In what sense is the Spirit's revelation important to faith? In what ways have you seen the Father "draw" people to Christ? What is the role of "free will" in salvation?

5.4 Sanctification and Grace-Inspired Works

It is *after* salvation has been received that God begins his real work in us, not before. This gradual change in us is known as "sanctification."

Working Out our Destiny (Ephesians 2:10)

Phrase "prepared in advance" (NIV), "prepared beforehand," "before ordained" (KJV), *prohetoi-mazō*, "prepare beforehand."

Sanctification: Working Out Our Salvation (Philippians 2:12-13)

"Work out" is the Greek verb *katergazomai*, "achieve, accomplish, do," as well as referring to the *fruit* of that action, "to cause a state or condition, bring about, produce, create." We are to *work out the implications and lifestyle of salvation* in our church community.

Q22. (Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12-13; James 2:17) How does the Spirit work in us after we are saved to form Christ in us? In what ways is this a process of "working out" our salvation? Why should you expect a person's life to change when they put their faith in Jesus? What is happening if there is no discernable change?

Lessons for Disciples

1. We are spiritually dead and need a rescue (Ephesians 2:1-3)
2. "Saved" (*sōzō*) might be better understood as "rescued." The word means "to preserve or rescue from natural dangers and afflictions, save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue" (Ephesians 2:8).
3. We are rescued by grace, God's favor that is undeserved (Ephesians 2:8).
4. Pharisees believed that if they were obedient to the Mosaic Law, and the oral law (the "hedge" around the Law), they would earn God's favor and be saved. Paul says that salvation can't be earned; it is a gift. To think that you could earn it is an insult to the cross (Ephesians 2:9; Romans 4:4-5).
5. God grants righteous standing to those who trust in him and his Messiah; salvation is by faith (Ephesians 2:8)

6. James' statement that "faith without works is dead," isn't opposite of Paul's teaching that salvation is a gift that can't be earned. Rather, James is saying that true faith will show up in our actions (James 2:17).
7. The gift of God that is "not from yourselves" includes both grace or favor, as well as salvation. Even the faith and the ability to repent are aided by the Holy Spirit through prevenient grace, grace that precedes salvation. We can take credit for nothing (Ephesians 2:8).
8. Grace influences us to put our trust in Christ. It does not compel us against our will. Grace is not "irresistible."
9. Grace also inspires sanctification and the "good works" that we do now that the Spirit lives in us (Ephesians 2:10).
10. "Working out our salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:11-12) refers to sanctification, not to our initial salvation.

6. Grace to Believe and Persevere (Romans 8:28-30; 1 Peter 1:4-5)

A clear linkage between God's grace, predestination, and salvation. (Ephesians 1:4-6; Romans 11:5)

Calvinists stress God's sovereignty in predestining people to salvation, minimizing man's part. Arminians see God predestining people to salvation based on his foreknowledge that they will put their faith in Christ.

See Appendix 2. A Brief Look at TULIP Calvinism
(www.jesuswalk.com/grace/tulip-calvinism.htm)

6.1 Predestination, Foreknowledge, and Election (Romans 8:28-30)

Predestination Plays a Definite Role in Salvation

(John 10:14-18, 26-27; 6:44, 65; Luke 10:22; Acts 13:48b; 16:14; 18:10b)

Foreknowledge and Predestination

"Predestined" (*prohorizō*) means to "decide upon beforehand, predetermine," meaning the same as "foreordain."

"Foreknew" (*proginōskō*) means basically, "to know beforehand or in advance, have foreknowledge (of) something." (1 Peter 1:1-2).

"Elect," "chosen" is Greek *eklektos* (from which we get our English word "elect"), "pertaining to being selected, chosen" (Romans 8:28-30).

6.2 The Role of Grace in Salvation

Foreknowledge combined with predestination: Romans 8:29 and 1 Peter 1:1-2? He doesn't foresee our goodness (Ephesians 2:8-9), but our response of *faith* in Christ.

Q23. (Romans 8:28-30; 1 Peter 1:1-2) I realize that this is a mystery, but how do you see God's foreknowledge working alongside his ability to predestine? If all this is by grace, how might faith and/or good works fit into this predestination?

The Glory of His Grace (Ephesians 1:4b-6)

Q24. (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-6) How does predestination function with God's grace? What is gracious about predestination? Why is his grace "glorious"?

Prevenient Grace or Enabling Grace that Prepares our Hearts

"Prevenient" is an archaic word meaning "coming before." Perhaps a better term is "enabling grace." Prevenient grace is God's gracious working through his Holy Spirit to convict people of sin, draw them to Christ (John 6:44), and (hopefully) lead them to receive Christ by their free will.

John 16:8. the Holy Spirit works in us to "convict," "prove wrong," "reprove," *elenchō*, "to bring to light, expose," "to bring a person to the point of recognizing wrongdoing, convict, convince someone of something," (Titus 2:11-12; Matthew 7:13-14).

John 6:44, 65. "Draw" means "to drag or draw with a pulling motion, attract." "Enabled," "it is granted," "given" is *didōmi*, "to give," here, "to grant by formal action, grant, allow" (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

Q25. (John 16:8; 6:44; 6:65) Why is it impossible for people to come to Christ without God's action to convict, draw, and enable them to come? How does God's preparation illustrate his grace?

6.3 Grace to Persevere

"Persevere" means "to persist in a state, enterprise, or undertaking in spite of counterinfluences, opposition, or discouragement."

Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints: "God's elect will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives" (Mark 13:13).

Protected by the Power of God (1 Peter 1:4-5)

"Reserved," "kept," *tēreō*, "keep watch over, guard," then "to cause a state, condition, or activity to continue, keep, hold, reserve, persevere."

"Protected," "guarded," "shielded," "kept" is *phroureō*, a military term, "to maintain a watch, guard something," then, "to provide security, guard, protect, keep."

Q26. (1 Peter 1:4-5) How does our faith function alongside God's protection to keep us to the end? How does this show God's grace?

No One Can Snatch You from God's Hand (John 10:27-30)

"Snatch" is the Greek verb *harpazō*, "snatch, seize," that is, take suddenly and vehemently. Here "to grab or seize suddenly so as to remove or gain control, snatch/take away forcefully."

Keeping Us from Falling (Jude 24-25)

"Keep" is *phyllassō*, a military term, "to carry out sentinel functions, watch, guard," here "to protect by taking careful measures, guard, protect." "be able," *dynamai* (from which we get our words "dynamic, dynamite").

Other Assurances of God's Keeping

(Romans 8:38-39; 2 Timothy 4:18; Philippians 1:6; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 1 Peter 5:10-11)

Q27. (John 10:27-30; Jude 24-25; Romans 8:38-39; 2 Timothy 4:18; Philippians 1:6; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 1 Peter 5:10-11) Why do you think there are so many assurances of faith in the New Testament? What is your favorite promise of God's role in keeping you in Christ to the end? How does your favorite promise give you powerful assurance of salvation?

Lessons for Disciples

1. Though we're not certain exactly how predestination works, the Scripture is clear that God predestines or foreordains events and people to come to him (John 10:14-18; 6:44, 65; Luke 10:22).
2. God's foreknowledge works with his predestination to save us (Romans 8:28). Since we know our future goodness isn't the basis of his foreknowledge, perhaps it is our response of faith that he sees ahead of time (Romans 11:5-6; Ephesians 2:8-9).
3. God's "glorious grace" is poured out in this predestined salvation (Ephesians 1:4-6).
4. Prevenient grace (or enabling grace) is a theological word that describes the gracious working of the Holy Spirit to convict people of sin, draw them to Christ, and (hopefully) lead them to receive Christ (John 16:8; 6:44, 65).

5. Many Scriptures speak of God's ability to guard his people and help them persevere with faith in Christ to the end of their lives (Mark 13:13; 1 Peter 1:5; John 10:27-30; Jude 24-25; Romans 8:38-39). Somehow this guarding power works in coordination with our faith (1 Peter 1:5).

7. Grace in Time of Need (Hebrews 4:16; 2 Corinthians 12:1-10)

7.1 The Throne of Grace (Hebrews 4:16)

Approaching the Throne (Hebrews 4:16a)

The blessings of this throne:

1. **Mercy** (*eleos*), "kindness or concern expressed for someone in need, mercy, compassion, pity, clemency."
2. **Grace** (*charis*). The word is now used as a benefit, a blessing, not just God being predisposed to show favor to us is in previous lessons.
3. **Help** (*boētheia*), "assistance offered to meet a need, help."
4. **Timely help** (*eukairos*), "pertaining to time that is considered a favorable occasion for some event or circumstance, well-timed, suitable."

Q28. (Hebrews 4:16) Why is approaching God's holy throne in prayer intimidating to some people? Why do we sometimes fear judgment and condemnation when we approach God. In what ways is God's throne the place where he dispenses "mercy and grace"? In what ways is your home a place where grace is given out?

Grace-Work

Ephesians 2:10; James 4:6, quoting Proverbs 3:34; Acts 11:23; 14:3; 1 Cor 16:3; 2 Cor 8:4.

7.2 My Grace Is Sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:1-10)

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7)

Paul was in danger of pride from these astounding revelations. "Conceited" (NIV, ESV), "too elated" (NRSV), "exalted above measure" (KJV) is *hyperairō*, "to have an undue sense of one's self-importance, rise up, exalt oneself, be elated."

Was the Thorn a Sickness?

"Was given" is the passive of *didōmi*, "to give" (Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20).

"Messenger" of Satan. "Messenger" is *angelos*, "spirit-being, angel."

Satan. This isn't just any messenger, but Satan's messenger or agent.

"Torment," "harass," "buffet," is *kolaphizō*, literally, "to strike sharply, especially with the hand, strike with the fist, beat, cuff," here figuratively, "to cause physical impairment, torment."

"Weakness" *astheneia*, "sickness, disease," then more generally, "incapacity for something or experience of limitation, weakness" (Galatians 4:13-15).

Paul's body is affected by this thorn or weakness.

Q29. (2 Corinthians 12:7) Why do we often feel so weak in times of sickness or affliction? Why are we tempted to stop ministering to others when *we* are struggling?

My Power Is Made Perfect in Weakness (2 Corinthians 12:8-9a)

"Grace" is *charis*, here "exceptional effect produced by generosity, favor."

"My power," literally, "the power" is the noun *dynamis* (from which we get our words "dynamo" and "dynamic") meaning, "potential for functioning in some way, power, might, strength, force, capability."

“In weakness,” *astheneia*, could refer to sickness or any other kind of weakness -- physical, psychological, financial, etc.

“Is made perfect,” is the passive of the verb *teleō*, which has the basic meaning of “bring to an end, finish, complete.” Here it carries the connotation, “find consummation, reach perfection” (Ephesians 3:20).

God’s Power in Us

(Isaiah 40:29-31; Philippians 4:11b-13; Ephesians 1:18-20; 3:16; Colossians 11:1, 28-29)

When I Weak, then I Am Strong (2 Corinthians 12:9b-10)

Weakness vs. Grace

Q30. (2 Corinthians 12:9) Why does God’s power flourish best when we feel weak? If God’s grace is “sufficient,” what is it sufficient to do or accomplish in or through us? What are the practical limits of the sufficiency of grace?

Grace Is Practical Help to the Needy

Jesus’ Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46).

Lessons for Disciples

1. In the New Testament, *charis* (“grace”) describes God’s favor. It can also refer to specific acts of God’s favor.
2. We are told to come before God confidently expecting to receive mercy and grace when we are in need (Hebrews 4:16).
3. Our houses can become “houses of grace” where our neighbors can come for help in time of need, as we become like our Father.
4. God has created us specifically to do good works (Ephesians 2:10).
5. When Paul pleaded with God to remove a “thorn in the flesh,” probably some physical ailment, God instead told him that God’s grace was sufficient, that God’s power is especially abundant in times of weakness, when we are most dependent upon him.
6. Sometimes *charis* (“grace”) is used nearly synonymously with God’s power and glory.
7. In the times we feel most weak and powerless, we may be on the threshold of experiencing God’s grace and power in greater measure than ever before.
8. Practical help for those in need is the practical expression of outflowing grace that Jesus wants to inculcate in his disciples.

8. Grace and Ministry (1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10)

Sometimes grace is used in the New Testament in terms of the “effect” of God’s grace (Acts 11:23, NIV).

8.1 Charismata -- Spiritual Gifts of Grace

charis – “favor”.

charisma – “gift, favor bestowed.”

(Ephesians 4:7, 11-16; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-6, 31).

Q31. (Ephesians 4:7; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-6) Why is there such a close relationship between “grace” (*charis*) and “gifts” (*charisma*)? What is the chief characteristic of a generous person? In what ways do spiritual gifts channel God’s grace?

Trustees of Divine Gifts (1 Peter 4:10)

“Steward” is *oikonomos*, “manager of a household or estate, (house) steward, manager,” then more generally, “administrator.” (Luke 19:13; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10; Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27).

Q32. (1 Peter 4:10) We are stewards of God’s grace. What are the responsibilities of a steward or trustee? In what way do we act as trustees of what belongs to God? In what way are spiritual gifts or the message of the gospel part of this trust we have been given?

Q33. Why are God’s gifts of grace an immensely greater blessing to those who attend church and are a functioning part of a congregation? How can isolating yourself from the Christian community involve selfishness and fear? How can it impoverish you?

8.2 Empowering Grace (1 Corinthians 15:9-10)

Selected by Grace for Ministry

Roles and ministries selected by grace (Ephesians 3:7-8; 1 Timothy 1:14-16; 1 Cor 15:9-10).

Q34. (1 Corinthians 15:10) How does your openness to God’s grace define your persona, who you actually are? How does your willingness to dispense God’s grace to others mold you into who God has designed you to be?

With God’s Grace Comes God’s Power

“Grace” is often paired with the word “power” in the New Testament (Acts 4:33; 6:8; 2 Corinthians 12:9a; Ephesians 3:7; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 2 Timothy 2:1).

God’s Grace Bestows Authority

(1) *Dynamis*, “potential for functioning in some way, power, might, strength, force, capability.”
 (2) *Exousia*, “the right to control or command, authority, absolute power, warrant” (Romans 1:5; 1 Corinthians 3:10; Romans 15:15-16a)

Spiritual Gifts and Individual Predestination

From Paul’s life it seems clear that sometimes God predestines an individual and gifts them far ahead of time to do a particular task (Galatians 1:15-16; Acts 9:15; Esther 4:14)

Lessons for Disciples

1. Sometimes *charis* (“grace”) is used in the sense of the concrete “effect” of God’s favor.
2. The word “gift” (*charisma*, pl., *charismata*) is closely related to the Greek word “grace, favor” (*charis*).
3. Spiritual gifts, given to believers by God’s grace, channel God’s grace through us to Christ’s body and the world (Ephesians 4:7; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 1:5-7).
4. We are stewards or trustees of spiritual gifts given by God’s grace, responsible to God to use them to build up God’s people and Christ’s work in the world (1 Peter 4:10; Luke 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27).
5. When we isolate ourselves, when we are absent from church, we interrupt or lessen the flow of God’s grace through spiritual gifts from us to the body and from Christ’s body to us. This is like burying our gift in the ground.
6. With God’s grace, gifting, and appointments to ministry come God’s power (Ephesians 3:7-8; 1 Timothy 1:14-16; Acts 4:33; 6:8; etc.).
7. We are formed to be the people we become by yielding to God’s spiritual gifts placed within us by his grace. If we don’t exercise those gifts, we stunt both our growth and limit what God has planned for us (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).
8. With God’s grace we receive spiritual authority to minister, not based on man’s ordination, but God’s appointment (1 Corinthians 3:10; Romans 15:15-16a).
9. Spiritual gifts and ministries may be part of God’s predestined plan for us (Galatians 1:15-16; Esther 4:14).

9. A Grace-Filled Way of Life (Luke 6:27-28; Col 4:5-6; 1 Peter 5:5-7)

9.1 Jesus Demands Grace-Filled Living

The Golden Rule of Grace (Matthew 7:12)

Radical Grace towards Enemies (Luke 6:27-28)

Jesus is not teaching ethics here, what is the proper or moral or just thing to do in a situation. He is teaching grace – showing favor to those who deserve nothing at all from us. People who may actually deserve punishment for their evil actions. We are to (1) love them, (2) do good to them, (3) bless them, and (4) pray for them (Romans 5:8).

Undeserved Generosity (Luke 6:30-35)

Overcoming Evil with Good (Romans 12:19-21)

The Father's Value System (Luke 6:35b-36)

Q35. (Luke 6:27-36; Romans 12:12-21) What is the difference between ethical behavior and grace? What is so radical about Jesus' teaching about loving one's enemies? What illustrations does he use of this outrageous grace?

9.2 Grace-Filled Conversations

Conversation that is Full of Grace (Colossians 4:5-6; Ephesians 5:16)

"Opportunity," "time" is *kairos*, here of "favorable time, opportunity."

"Make the most of," "make the best use of," "redeeming" is *exagorazō*, figuratively, "to gain something," especially advantage or opportunity, "make the most of."

In this context, *charis* probably bears a widely used meaning in common Greek, "a winning quality or attractiveness that invites a favorable reaction, graciousness, attractiveness, charm, winsomeness" (see Luke 4:22). NOT condemning conversation: defensive, hard, condescending, legalistic, holier-than-thou, critical, cold, naïve, manipulative, pushy, negative, judgmental, uncaring, selfish, ungracious.

"Seasoned with salt" tastiness, flavor, the way salt gives just the right tang to food to make it exquisite to the palate (Matthew 5:13). Grace and love *are* the unique tang of our testimony if we are Jesus-followers.

Gentleness and Respect (1 Peter 3:15)

Building Others Up (Ephesians 4:29-32)

The Peace that Grace Brings (1 Peter 3:8-9)

Sympathy (*sympathēs*) suggests putting ourselves in another's place, feeling their emotions. Sympathy is the opposite of selfishness and self-centeredness. **Affection for brothers and sisters** (*philadelphos*) The adjective describes the kind of love experienced in the family circle. **Compassion** (*eusplanchnos*). The Greek adjective suggests deep inner feelings for a person, a heart-tenderness. **Humility** (*tapeinophrōn*). The word suggests voluntarily taking a lower place, like Jesus did at the Last Supper when he took on the role of a slave washing the disciples' feet.

Q36. (Colossians 4:5-6; 1 Peter 3:8-9, 15; Ephesians 4:29-32) What would be the characteristics of a conversation with an unbeliever that might be termed “full of grace”? What guidelines should rule our ways of speaking? How can we avoid the bad examples set for us by leaders of our culture and our world?

9.3 Grace and Generosity (2 Corinthians 8:6-9)

Two English words: **Generous**, “liberal in giving, openhanded; marked by abundance or ample portions; characterized by a noble or kindly spirit, magnanimous, kindly.” **Liberal**, “marked by generosity, openhanded.”

The Generous Man Plans Big (Isaiah 32:8)

The Grace of Financial Giving (2 Corinthians 8:1-9; 9:6-8; Luke 6:37-38)

Q37. (2 Corinthians 9:6-9; 8:9; Luke 6:37-38) Is it possible to be grace-filled and stingy at the same time? Why is this so? What is the relationship between forgiving and giving generously?

9.4 Grace to the Humble (1 Peter 5:5-7)

“Be submissive,” “submit yourselves,” “be subject to,” “accept the authority of” is *hypotassō*, “subject oneself, be subjected or subordinated, obey.”

Humility for Elders (1 Peter 5:5b-6; Proverbs 3:34)

Q38. (1 Peter 5:5-6) Why is prideful living incompatible with showing grace? Why do you think God opposes the proud? What does humility have to do with repentance to enable us to receive God’s grace? How does pride prevent us from showing grace?

9.5 Salutations and Benedictions

Salutation: “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Benedictions: “Grace be with you.” “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

Lessons for Disciples

The New Testament is rich in teaching us how to live grace-filled lives.

1. The organizing principle of Christianity is love, which is another way of saying grace.
2. Though the Golden Rule has occasionally been stated negatively, Jesus formulated it to capsize the teachings of the Law and the prophets – to do to others what you would have them do to you (Matthew 7:12).
3. Jesus’ teaching on love for enemies is not ethical teaching – what is the proper, just, or moral thing to do in a situation. Rather, Jesus teaches radical grace toward undeserving enemies (Luke 6:27-28).
4. Jesus’ examples of radical grace in the face of attack are not given to teach the ethics of passivism, but of undeserving grace (Luke 6:29)

5. Unexpected, undeserved generosity is an expression of grace, in contrast to reciprocity (Luke 6:30-34).
6. Paul teaches us not to take revenge, but to overcome evil with good. Grace repays evil with blessing (Romans 12:19-21).
7. By showing grace we become true sons of our heavenly Father and adopt his value system of grace and mercy (Luke 6:35-36)
8. Grace should be shown in our conversations, especially with those who are not Christians. We are to treat them with gentleness and respect (Colossians 4:5-6; 1 Peter 3:15)
9. Our words should build up others and benefit them, that is, show grace to them. Especially we are to be kind and forgive, like God forgives us (Ephesians 4:29-32).
10. We are to love, show compassion and humility, rather than return insult for insult (1 Peter 3:8-9).
11. Grace includes a generosity and liberality of spirit (2 Corinthians 9:6-9)
12. Just as Jesus was rich and became poor for our sakes, so we should be generous to the poor (2 Corinthians 8:9).
13. As we forgive freely and give freely, God will forgive us and bless us (Luke 6:37-38).
14. We are to live humbly, because God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5-6).
15. Nearly every New Testament letter begins with a greeting of grace and peace, and concludes with a benediction of God's grace.