

Biblical Pillars for a Family Foundation
Pillar Three: *Grace – Home in Philadelphia*

I. Grace – Home in Philadelphia

- A. Character of the home – Grace
1. Not less than truth – we saw that last time
 2. In addition to truth **John 1:14, 1:17**
 3. Gives life **2 Cor. 3:4-6**
 4. Produces righteousness **Titus 2:11-14**
- B. Why “Philadelphia?” **1 Peter 3:8**
1. Phileo = love
To treat affectionately or kindly, to welcome (as a guest). To love, like, be fond of, or approve.
 2. Adelphoi = brothers **Luke 10:25-37**
 3. Home is to be characterized by an enjoyment, a “like” of one another. Sometimes it can mean more to say you “like” someone than to say you “love” them. When you receive grace from the Lord and extend it to each other, you’ll have “philadelphia.”

II. What is Grace?

- A. **Gift of God** to a person or group granting them favor in His sight.
(Jeremiah 31:1-4; **Ezekiel 16:1-14**; Jonah 4:11; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9; **Titus 2:11, 3:7**; Hebrews 2:9)
- B. **Means of securing** a relationship with God.
1. **Galatians 3:11** – no one by obeying is “justified” (Romans 4:4-5)
 2. **Romans 3:24** - justified as a gift by His grace (Romans 3:22)
- C. **Attributes and Aspects of Grace**
1. Means of maintaining a relationship with God (**Colossians 2:6-7**)
 2. Something we grow in (**2 Peter 3:18**)
 3. Given to the humble (Prov. 3:34, **James 4:7**)
- D. **G**od’s
Riches
At
Christ’s
Expense
- E. **Characteristics**
1. Unmerited (can’t earn it) **Romans 4:5**
 2. Characterized by exposure w/ acceptance **Romans 5:8**
 3. Costly for the giver **Romans 8:3**
 4. Not necessarily received **John 1:11**
 5. Contrasted with mercy - Grace is a gift I don’t deserve to be given and mercy is withholding a judgment I do deserve to be given.

III. Grace – What Does it Look Like at Home?

- A. Principles
 - 1. Can't take someone else any further than you have been
 - 2. Can't give what you don't have
 - 3. Doesn't have its source in you – it is derivative gift (derives from God)
- B. Characteristic
 - 1. Being able to love even when they're wrong
 - 2. Humble; not judging others on the basis of own 'rightness' in an area
 - 3. Not marked by ignoring wrongdoing or calling sin OK **(Isaiah 5:20)**
- C. Married Couple:
 - 1. Husband with a wife (1 Peter 3:7)
Understanding, protecting, respecting and cherishing as with high value
 - 2. Wife with a husband (Eph. 5:22-24)
Respecting, submitting, not controlling, gentle spirit
- D. In parenting
 - 1. Parent with a child (Eph. 6:4; **Col. 3:21**)
Not provoking to anger or frustration, training, disciplining, providing for
 - 2. Child with a parent (Eph. 6:1-3)
Obeying, honoring, even when sometimes parents are wrong or sinful

Warning

Failure to appropriate grace leads to bitterness towards others (Heb. 12:15)

Grace Steps

- Grace** is the **third building block of the family**, after centering on **Christ** and **on truth**. And interestingly, we can't center on Christ without grace, and if we pursue truth without grace, we will become arrogant and judgmental and will begin to miss our own shortcoming.
- Understand **and accept the grace of God towards each of us**. We don't deserve it, but Christ's death for our sins enables us to receive His favor.
 - Recognize the call of God for **us to give that which we have received**, and absolutely nowhere is that more imperative than with our family.
 - Do not make the mistake of thinking it is natural – 'natural' grace is usually *license*. Grace is spiritual, given us by God to give to others.
 - Do not lose heart – in Christ, there is abundant grace to try again, both with Him and with our family members (Romans 5:20)

Direction Shift or Action Points for Me/Us?

- 1.
- 2.

Please complete the homework on the following pages.

Homework

1. Complete the "Grace Assessment" on page 4 to see where you and your family are in this important dimension of grace.
2. BONUS (Meaning you will get more out of this course if you do this exercise.) Read the attached article. Underline significant sentences and share the five best with your family at breakfast or dinner.

Grace Assessment Self-Evaluation Tool

Please rate yourselves on each of the following questions so you will have a better understanding of where your family is on this important area of family life.

Depending upon the way the question is worded, the rating scale is as follows:

1=No 2= Seldom 3= Sometimes 4=Often 5= Regularly
2=Don't Understand 3=1 Yes, 1 No 4=Mostly 5=Completely
5=Yes

1. I know that Jesus Christ died to pay for my sins and, because of my faith in Him, I am sure He has forgiven all my sins, past, present and future. I know I am going to heaven only because of my faith in Christ alone. (John 5:24; 6:40) _____
2. The adults in my family understand the gospel expressed in number 1 above, have also believed on Christ and thereby received His gift of eternal life. _____
3. I understand that my ongoing relationship with God is also by grace. My failures are reasons for me to be drawn nearer to him in faith and gratitude and not reasons to ignore my sin nor to beat myself up over them. (Colossians 2:6) _____
4. I realize that the gospel is also meant to be the picture of my relationship with my spouse and children if I am married. Not judging them by the 'law' of my expectations, I am committed to loving them wherever they are, speaking truth, applying consequences as necessary. (Ephesians 4:31-32) _____
5. In areas of my natural strength, such as following through on tasks or being a good problem solver or math or writing or whatever, I avoid judging others in light of my strengths. I see these abilities as gifts from God and not anything by which to shame or control others. (Romans 12:31 Corinthians 4:7) _____
6. I do not struggle much with putting myself or others down. I am aware not only in my mind but in my practice that the only thing I can boast in is the cross of Christ my Lord (Galatians 6:14), so I have little reason to get down on myself/others. _____
7. When people disagree with me, even about important things such as faith in Christ as the means of gaining a relationship with God or some deeply important political or philosophical issue, I do not hold them in contempt. The love of Christ for them and the capacity to pray for them still characterize me. (Matthew 5:44) _____
8. I enjoy giving to others because of how much I have been given. _____
9. Even in great loss, I know God's presence and kindness are sufficient for me to make it through, regardless of which way it turns. (2 Cor. 12:9-10) _____

10. I have accepted the challenge given to all Christians to share their faith with others in a spirit of meekness and confidence (Colossians 4:6, 1 Peter 3:15). _____
 11. My children know I can be approached without fear. _____
 12. Giving thanks is more characteristic of me than complaining. _____
- TOTAL _____

60 - 50 = Help mentor others in grace 49-40 = This is worth working on this year.
 39 or below = Need help. Contact the Family Life Department to get a biblical counselor.

Discipleship Journal

Issue 22 July-August, 1984 / How to Experience God's Grace

God's grace is forever active in our lives, yet we often fail to recognize it. Hence we fail to appreciate it. Here are some thoughts that should help us experience God's grace moment to moment.

By Jeff Jernigan

DRIVING TO THE HIGH SCHOOL TO pick up my son from wrestling practice one day, I rounded the corner and was confronted immediately by a sobbing little boy and collapsed bicycle in the middle of the road some yards ahead. The lad had suffered a minor mishap. But to him the world had stopped in humiliating, painful tragedy.

The bike, obviously new, had entwined itself in the child's legs and now lay partially on top of him. From his age it was easy to guess this was his first two-wheeler and probably he was on a maiden voyage. This pitiful, crying youngster—scraped palms, bloodied knee, stuck there in the middle of the road so helpless and frightened—touched me deeply.

Stopping the car, I gently helped the boy extricate himself from his bike, loved his hurts, and sent him on his way, tears drying. The inclination of the stronger to help the weaker by voluntary decision is grace.

GRACE IN DISCIPLINE

When our children were little and it was necessary to discipline them, we had a habit that quickly restored joy. No matter what the offense, after discipline we would set them in our laps, wrap loving arms around them, and say, "I forgive you, and I love you very, very much." That genuine confirmation of love and acceptance changed their demeanor instantly. They would leave our laps knowing that while their behavior was not approved, they were. Their personhood was valued, they felt good about themselves, and it showed on their faces.

Once I disciplined my daughter and, in impatience, sent her off to her bath without either an "I forgive you" or an "I love you." Passing the closed bathroom door later I was arrested by the sound of despairing tears and pleading voice: "Oh God, my daddy doesn't want me anymore, he didn't say he loved me!" Crushed, I entered immediately and pulled a very wet little girl into my lap and asked her forgiveness!

It was primarily the lack of acceptance that wounded her so deeply. Though assurance of forgiveness is important, it was the assurance of love her prayer focused on. The assurance of my esteem brought firm, settled joy back into her countenance. To be accepted by another is to experience grace.

Our youngest son remembers well his first visit to the dentist. It was one of those “get acquainted” visits. He had difficulty understanding all the strange instruments, ominous chairs, racks of bottles and machines, and banks of lights. It all seemed menacing to a four-year-old.

But when the dentist explained that everything there was designed to promote his health—a statement confirmed by Mom in a glance—his confidence was restored.

Grace is like that. Through God’s grace we are provided only those things that produce well-being: salvation, forgiveness, justification, righteousness, pardon, power, freedom, and more—all undeserved, all desperately needed.

WHAT IS GRACE?

Words like favor, beauty, thankfulness, gratitude, delight, kindness, benefit—all are derived in New Testament Greek from the same root that gives us the word “grace.” It is easy to see why grace as a concept gets so diluted.

Webster’s New World Dictionary alone gives six different definitions. Most would say grace is the unmerited favor of God. Somehow, that doesn’t clear the fog. What is grace?

Grace certainly is not a reward for our works, those commendable things we do that are pleasing to God. Paul reminds the Romans, “If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God” (Romans 4:2). Paul then says that grace depends on faith. If it were not so the first of Abraham’s descendants to fail to please God would have negated all the promises of God to Abraham’s descendants. Since the promises rest on grace, not works, they remain available to us today.

Grace is a reality in the Christian life. In Christ God esteems us worthy of acceptance and, helping our weakness, makes available to us freely everything necessary for our well-being. That is grace. It needs to be experienced, not simply appropriated.

As Christians, we need not acquire grace in the sense of appropriation; it is already ours in Christ. Thus Peter writes, “Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:2–4).

The sense of “has given” in this passage is an action done to us the existing results of which are both certain and positive, now and forever. Grace is, then, not the result of works, but the power that enables works. As Paul says, “. . . God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8).

HOW TO EXPERIENCE GRACE

How then can we experience more grace? If grace characterizes God’s constant approach to men, then there is a response on our part that will allow us to know Him more fully and to experience that grace. It is not earned, but received by the open hand of faith as a function of our relationship with Christ. It is not a matter of obtaining something not there; it is a matter of recognizing what is constantly present for all mankind (Titus 2:11). Our ability to recognize grace grows as our relationship with Christ grows.

This lesson was driven home to me recently by a fascinating illustration.

If you place a bee in a large bottle and lay the bottle down horizontally with its base to the window, the bee will persist until exhausted in its attempts to find a way through the glass to the light. If only the

bee would turn around and fly away from the window, it would realize that it possessed the power already to find freedom! The open neck of the bottle is there, waiting to be used. But the bee, not knowing how to recognize this grace, fails to experience it.

Too often misunderstandings and traditional expectations keep us, like the bee, from recognizing what is already provided, robbing us of freedom and joy. Our powers of spiritual observation must be trained, through practice, to recognize expressions of God's grace in action.

The other day our freezer broke. In my heart I grumbled as I threw out nearly ten pounds of meat. But within moments after the freezer was repaired, a friend called and asked if he could stop by and put something in the freezer. Our church had bought nearly 100 pounds of beef for us as a gift, and it required freezing immediately. God wasn't concerned about the ten pounds; He wanted the freezer fixed to protect the 100 pounds He was ready to give us! The circumstances involved in the provision of this needed gift were evidence of God's grace in action.

Put yourself for a moment in the place of the little boy with the bicycle, the daughter needing love, or the child frightened by the strange and unknown things in the dentist's office. Even as adults we experience these same kinds of events. Similarly, all of us have at some time been helped with our hurts, experienced the forgiveness and acceptance of others, or turned a fear into a friend. But do we recognize these occasions as experiences of grace?

Jonah certainly did not think it was grace when God asked him to do the unthinkable—take a message to Israel's enemy designed to bring revival and reprieve from God's judgment. What good could come from preserving such a wicked people?

Yet the Assyrians were known for their vicious practice of destroying totally a conquered foe. Because of the revival that followed on Jonah's preaching, there ensued a short period in their history when they discontinued that practice. It was during that time that God used the Assyrians to take the northern ten tribes of Israel captive.

If God had not changed the hearts of the Assyrians earlier, Israel would not simply have been disciplined, it would have been destroyed. It is good to be reminded by history that, though we don't understand the purpose or see the result, even hard times are an evidence of grace.

The key to recognizing the grace we experience in ordinary people and circumstances is abiding in Christ. Jesus promised in Jn 14:21 that to those who kept His Word He would disclose, or reveal, Himself. As we grow in our application of the Word we will experience a greater awareness of Christ's involvement with us.

When Paul mentioned in 1 Cor. 2:12 that we have received the Holy Spirit in order to know the things freely given us by God, he had in mind the ministry of the Spirit in enabling us to see clearly and be aware of His gifts. One of the implications of this ministry for the believer is a growing awareness of the gift of grace. We can pray and ask for help in seeing more clearly the outworking of this gift in our lives.

John Newton, the old converted sea captain, understood well the grace of God. After years of rebellion and debauchery, as a slave trader committed to a cruel and vicious way of life, he became a believer. Newton went on to become an Anglican minister. Breaking with tradition, he held large meetings regularly in addition to traditional church services. Crowds gathered to hear his testimony of the grace of God.

Until his death at 82, Newton never ceased to marvel at God’s mercy and grace that had so dramatically changed his life. He is best remembered for the hymn, “Amazing Grace.” Three verses not usually published in hymnals express the infinite goodness of God’s grace:

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

Yes, when this heart and flesh shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
the sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
will be forever mine.

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**On Your Own
God’s Grace In Nature**

Preparation: Study Psalm 104.

1. How is God’s grace manifested through the earth itself and the elements (cf. Psalm 104: 1–10)?
2. How does God make provision for animals and men through nature (Psalm 104:10–18)?
3. How has God made provision for men and animals to live together cooperatively (Psalm 104:19–30)?
4. What impact do these thoughts have on the Psalmist (Psalm 104:31–35)?