

God's Grace

God's Grace
Sermon Notes:

God's Grace

Devotional - Day 1

Day 1 - God's Grace – our only way to salvation

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: Ephesians 2:4-10 (NIV)

(4) But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, (5) made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. (6) And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms with Christ Jesus, (7) in order that in the coming ages, He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (8) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – (9) not by works, so that no one can boast. (10) For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Devotional

God's grace – what is it? One way to remember is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. It is God's kindness, mercy, unmerited favor, and forgiving love. God's grace is a gift given to us that we don't deserve in any way, shape or form. Yet this gift cost God everything. The Bible has 131 verses that mention grace, 42 for gracious, and 4 for graciously. Besides the scripture given above, an old hymn about God's marvelous grace came to mind. Verses 1 and 4 explain very clearly what God's grace is: *Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt. Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured, there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt. Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, freely bestowed on all who believe. You who are longing to see His face, will you this moment His grace receive?* (Grace Greater than our Sin by Julia H. Johnston and Daniel B. Towner, © 1938)

A.W. Tozer, in his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, says, "...so grace is His goodness directed toward human debt and demerit. It is by grace that God imputes merit where none previously existed and declares no debt to be where one had been before. Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving. It's use to us sinful men is to save us and to make us sit together in heavenly places to demonstrate to the ages, the exceeding riches of God's kindness to us in

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Christ Jesus, the only channel through which God's grace flows out to us."

The only way any of us can enter into a relationship with God is because of His grace toward us. We are dead in our sins and separated from God. (Romans 3:23) God's mercy withholds the punishment that we deserve for our sins, then grace gives us blessings that we don't deserve either. (Romans 6:23) God chose to cancel our debt and replace it with His righteousness (imputes merit where none existed), by sacrificing His only, perfect Son, Jesus, in our place. (John 3:16) This gift of grace is the greatest treasure that God gives to us – to those least deserving of it. Anyone can receive the gift of grace. There is no cost to the person receiving the gift, it is free to all who accept it, though the immense cost was paid through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. This gift, once received, is ours to keep forever – God does not take it back. God's gift of grace is so extravagant. He loves us so much, that understanding what it cost God should bring us to tears and repentance. He knows everything we have done and still extends grace to us.

Question to Consider:

Will you this moment His grace receive? If you have accepted God's gift of grace – thank Him. If you haven't – do you want to know more about how to receive salvation? If so, please talk to your Community Group Leader or one of the Pastors.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I know that you have extended grace to me, in spite of my behavior and in spite of my sins. You are such a good and loving God who comes to all those who need You and call on You – no matter what. I need You in my life, Father. I know that I am far from perfect and that my sins are not hidden from you. Yet I know that You love me and forgive me unconditionally. Thank you Lord, for your grace. Help me to always focus on You and help me to see the clear, narrow path in front of me so that I can walk in Your ways and in Your love. Thank you, Father. I love You. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Question to Consider

What does the gift of God's grace mean to you? How does this gift make a difference in your daily life?

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Devotional - Day 2

Day2- God's Grace – It's the same for everyone who believes

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

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

(1)For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. (2)He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. (3)About nine in the morning, he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. (4)He told them, “You also go and work in my vineyard and I will pay you whatever is right.” (5)So they went. He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. (6)About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, “Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?” (7)“Because no one has hired us,” they answered. He said to them, “You also go and work in my vineyard.” (8)When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, “Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last one hired and going on to the first.” (9)The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. (10)So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. (11)When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. (12)“These who were hired last worked only one hour,” they said, “and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.” (13)But he answered one of them, “I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? (14)Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. (15)Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?” (16)So the last will be first and the first will be last.

Devotional

This parable that is only recorded in Matthew's gospel, describes how grace works from God's point of view. The landowner (God), went to the marketplace several times during the day (6 am, 9 am, 12 noon, 3 pm, and 5 pm) to hire workers (believers) to work in his vineyard (God's kingdom).

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The work day represents the life of the believers spent in service for God's kingdom. Only those hired at 6 am were offered the pay of 1 denarius, which was a very generous pay for day workers. The denarius represents eternal life. The other workers were promised "whatever is right". When evening came (the believer's life was over, either by death or Jesus returning), the landowner pays the workers, in reverse order from when they were hired. Those who worked 1 hour received a denarius. In fact, all the workers received 1 denarius, regardless of the amount of time they worked. The first men who agreed to the denarius were very upset and felt that the landowner was being unfair. They worked longer and harder and felt that they deserved more money.

The parable's most obvious lesson is that God gives the same abundant grace to everyone who believes in Jesus. There is no partiality. It does not matter if you come to Christ early in your life and serve the kingdom many years, or you have a deathbed conversion – we all receive the same eternal life. We all get to live in the Father's house (John 14:2). We are all heirs and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). We don't receive a part of heaven – we get the whole thing! The ground at the cross is level. Everyone receives God's complete, abundant grace, which is so much more than we deserve. It is Father's good pleasure to give the redeemed the kingdom (Luke 12:32) – every person and in equal abundance.

A.W. Tozer, in his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, says, "We must keep in mind that the grace of God is infinite and eternal. As it had no beginning, so it can have no end, and being an attribute of God, it is as boundless as infinitude."

A story was told about a teacher who spent time before the final exam to review with the class. When it was time for the exam, the students were instructed to leave them face-down on the desk until everyone had received one. When the students turned the exam over, every answer was filled in. The bottom of the exam said, "This is the end of the Final Exam. All the answers on your test are correct. You will receive an 'A' on the exam. The reason you passed the test is because the creator of the test took it for you. All the work you did in preparation for this test did not help you get the 'A'. You have just experienced.....GRACE!!" The teacher then asked each student, "What was your grade? Did you deserve

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the grade you are receiving? How much did all your studying for this exam help you receive your final grade?"

Have you thanked your Creator today because of the grace you have experienced?

Question to Consider:

Since the eternal life we will receive is the same whether we do a little or do a lot to serve God in this life, what incentive do we have to make an effort to serve God? In what ways is God's Grace not unfair?

Prayer:

Thank you Father that your grace is sufficient to redeem all who believe. Whether You call someone early or late in life, it is Your decision to have mercy on whom You will have mercy. Help us to rejoice when any sinner comes to repentance. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say. Amen. (2 Thess. 2:16-17)

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Question to Consider:

What does Jesus mean in Matthew 20:16 when He says, "So the last will be first and the first will be last"? What does that look like in your everyday life?

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Devotional - Day 3

Day3- God's Grace – God's grace in the Old Testament

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: Nehemiah 9:16,17,19a, 26-28,31,33 (Amplified Bible)

(16)But they (Israelites) and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their necks, and did not heed Your commandments. (17)They refused to obey, nor were they mindful of Your wonders and miracles which You did among them; but they stiffened their necks and in their rebellion appointed a captain, that they might return to their bondage [in Egypt]. But You are a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of steadfast love; and You did not forsake them. (19) You in Your great mercy forsook them not in the wilderness...(26)Yet they were disobedient and rebelled against You and cast Your law behind their back and killed Your prophets who accused and warned them to turn to You again; and they committed great and contemptible blasphemies. (27)Therefore You delivered them into the hand of their enemies, who distressed them. In the time of their suffering when they cried to You, You heard them from heaven and according to Your abundant mercy, You gave them deliverers, who saved them from their enemies. (28)But after they had rest, they did evil again before You; therefore You left them in the hands of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to You, You heard them from heaven and many times You delivered them according to Your mercies. (31)Yet in Your great mercies, You did not utterly consume them or forsake them, for You are a gracious and merciful God. (33)However, You are just in all that has come upon us; for You have dealt faithfully, but we have done wickedly.

Devotional:

Many Christians believe that the Old Testament does not put much emphasis on God's grace; that the God of the Old Testament is a God of judgement, vengeance, laws, and rules, while the God of the New Testament is one of love, mercy, and grace. Nothing could be further from the truth.

A.W. Tozer, in his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, says, "The Old Testament is indeed a book of the law, but not of law only. Before the

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great flood, Noah ‘found grace in the eyes of the Lord’ (Genesis 6:8). After the law was given, God said to Moses, ‘Thou has found grace in my sight’ (Exodus 33:17). God will always be himself, and grace is an attribute of His Holy being. He can no more hide His grace than the sun can hide its brightness. No one was ever saved other than by grace from Abel to the present. Since mankind was banished from the Garden of Eden, none has returned to the divine favor except through the sheer goodness (grace) of God.”

God’s mercy is all through the Old Testament, starting with Adam and Eve. After the Fall, God knew what they had done, yet He still came to talk to them. (Genesis 3:8-11) God could have immediately executed judgement with physical death because of their disobedience, but God had mercy on them and although they were underserving, God promised a solution through a descendant of Eve. (Genesis 3:15) God had mercy on Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Rahab, David, and so many more throughout the Old Testament. Just read the book of Judges to see this cycle repeated.

The history of God’s chosen people is a story of God’s grace, over and over again. The reading from Nehemiah comes after the Israelites had returned to Jerusalem after the exile to Babylon. Under Ezra, the Temple had been rebuilt and under Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem had been rebuilt. The people had gathered to hear the reading of the Book of the Law. As they listened to a recounting of their history, they were struck by the cycle of disobedience, crying out to God, and how God in His mercy, would hear them, forgive them, and come to their aid. This happened over and over and over again. Yet God continued to show mercy to His chosen, yet rebellious people. The Israelites then promised to follow all the laws given by God to Moses.

John 1:17 says, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” The law shows us that like the children of Israel, we can’t keep the law and only through God’s grace that came by way of Jesus, can we be forgiven – every day of our lives.

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Question to Consider:

The scripture from Nehemiah teaches us about God's response to a sinful, disobedient people. How does that give you hope?

Prayer:

Abba Father, thank you for Your unrelenting mercy towards me. I am continually sinning and being disobedient. I know that I don't deserve Your love, compassion, and mercy, yet You forgive me each and every time. You are righteous and Holy, while I am wicked. While I was still a sinner, in Your mercy, You sent Your Son to die for me. Thank you, thank you, my Lord. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Question to Consider:

Isaiah 30:18 says, "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore He will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him." How has the Lord continued to show you mercy? How has He blessed you this week?

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Devotional - Day 4

Day 4— God's Grace – Freedom in God's Grace

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: Romans 5:20-6:2, 6:12,14-18,22 (NIV)

(20)The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, (21) so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (1)What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? (2)By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? (12) Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. (14) For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. (15)What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! (16)Don't you know that when you offer yourself to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey – whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (17)But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. (22) But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Devotional

A.W. Tozer, in his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, says, “We can never know the enormity of our sin, neither is it necessary that we should. What we can know is that ‘where sin abounded, grace did abound much more.’” This quote from Romans 5:20, means that no matter the depth of our sin, God's grace is more than enough. Paul understood that this justification through faith apart from works could become a license to sin. Freedom from sin is NOT freedom to sin! So Paul asks, “Should we keep on sinning so that grace can increase? Should we keep on sinning because we are now under grace?” He answers both questions emphatically – NO, ABSOLUTELY NOT! The short reason is given in verse 2 –“How can we who have died to sin, still live in it?” Dead people don't sin. Paul uses the rest of chapter 6 to explain why. First, when Jesus died,

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believers died with Him (vs. 5,6,8). Second, when Christ arose, believers were made alive in Him (vs. 4b,5). Third, believers are commanded to practice what we have become in Christ – dead to sin and alive to God. (vs. 11,13). We can not use the excuse that we can't help sinning or that we can't control ourselves. We do not have to keep sinning! The truth is that the Holy Spirit gives us self-control. We are a new creation in Christ. To continue to walk, act, and be the sinful person we used to be, makes what Christ did on the cross null and void. We are forgiven! We are new! Sin is a choice, not a compulsion. We are not slaves to the law now, so sin does not have to rule us. If we keep on sinning, we are proclaiming sin as our master. We can not claim Christ as our Lord and yet obey the desires of the Old Self. Freedom in Christ is much more than liberation from the law; it is more than an escape from wrath and hell. We have the freedom to live in love, conforming to Christ's image, free to enjoy the world on a whole new level. We are free to give our lives completely to God and to let Him do with us as He chooses (6:17-19). We do not have to give into the excuses, the lies of sin. We are freed from sin, free to be righteous children of God! I John 3:6 says, "No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him." This doesn't mean that we don't sin, we do and we will. It says that we no longer live a life of continual sin. When we do sin, God's grace and forgiveness are sufficient.

Question to Consider:

How do you live in your "freedom of grace"?

Prayer:

Father God, thank you for securing my freedom from sin through the death and resurrection of Your son Jesus. Please help me through the Holy Spirit to resist the temptation to continue in sin. Because of Your great mercy and compassion, please forgive me when I do sin. I repent but need your help to keep me from returning to my sin. You know everything about me and my sin is not hidden from You. I am unworthy of your mercy and kindness. All praise to God my merciful Father, forever and ever. Amen

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Question to Consider

Which way would you rather live – as a slave to God or a slave to sin? Why?

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Devotional - Day 5

Day 5— God's Grace – God's Gracious Judgment

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: John 8:2 – 11 (NIV)

(2)At dawn He appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around Him, and He sat down to teach them. (3)The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group (4)and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. (5)In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” (6)They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing Him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. (7)When they kept on questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them. “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” (8)Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. (9) At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. (10) Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” (11)“No one sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you.” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Devotional:

This story is about another incident where the Pharisees tried to embarrass and discredit Jesus, but first and foremost, it is a beautiful illustration of God's grace. God fully intended for this sin of adultery to be punished to the full extent of the law (Deut. 22:22). But the woman would not bear her punishment. Jesus would be punished in her place (Isaiah 53:5-6). God deals with guilty sinners on the basis of His grace and truth. This story illustrates John 1:17, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” The scribes and Pharisees had judged this woman according to the law which clearly condemned her (and the conspicuously missing man), but Jesus showed her grace.

All of us, like this woman, have been caught in the act of sin and stand condemned by God's holy law. Plus, God's grace and love do not negate His truth and justice. “The wages of sin is death.” (Rom. 3:23) Jesus does not excuse this woman's sin nor condone it. He chooses to show her

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grace. It is God's privilege to show grace to us undeserving sinners. Even though God extends grace to us, His justice and holiness must be upheld. God's grace is not without cost. It is upheld and paid for by Jesus when He came to Earth to offer Himself as the perfect and final sacrifice for sin that God's justice demands.

The woman's pardon was not dependent on her behavior, but it became the motivation to change her behavior. God grants forgiveness as a free gift to all who put their trust in what Jesus did on the cross for their sin. His free grace then becomes the motivation to live in holiness to please the one who gave Himself for us.

As we finish this week of studying the grace of God, let us sing along with John Newton's "Amazing Grace" as we praise and thank God for loving us so much.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found – was blind but now I see
Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!
Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.
And when this flesh and heart shall fail, and mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess within the veil, a life of joy and peace.
When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun;
We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun.

(Chris Tomlin) My chains are gone; I've been set free. My God, my Savior has ransomed me. And like a flood, His mercy rains. Unending love, Amazing Grace!!!!

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Question to Consider:

How does it make you feel to know that Jesus personally paid the price for you to enjoy God's grace?

Prayer

Father, God. Thank you for your amazing grace that you freely give to a sinner like me. Thank you for sending Jesus to pay the cost of my sins to satisfy Your justice and holiness. Please help me to leave my life of sin and live in the freedom of Your grace until Jesus comes again. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Question to Consider:

How will you use your gift of grace to leave your life of sin behind?



Week #7: God's Grace

GOAL:

Grace in its most simple definition may read like this: Grace is getting something we do not deserve. When we apply God's grace to the way He treats us, in spite of our sin, it can be nothing short of awe inspiring. In our humanity, we can see grace acted out in such ways as radical forgiveness. Have you ever heard of a family forgiving someone who had murdered a loved one? While this deservedly amazes us, we more often see humanity withholding grace at all costs. We often see an attitude that says, "I'll never forgive and I'll never forget." How does God extend grace? We receive God's saving grace through faith alone when we accept Him as our Lord and Savior. The Word of God says that the Lord forgives our past, present and future sins, not holding them against us. (see Psalm 103:11-12; Isaiah 38:17; Micah 7:19; Romans 4:7-8) May this be an encouragement to you this week as we explore God's radical grace.

LOVING GOD:

- * Memory Verse: **Ephesians 2:8-9** "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast."
- * 2 minutes of silence
- * Devotional: choose one of the 5 devotionals for this week on the Grace of God to read aloud to the group.
- * Question to Consider: this will come from the devotional as well
- * 2 minutes of silence

BUILDING COMMUNITY:

- * Growing Connected Questions
 - In your life, what is one small way you experienced grace? (ie... Receiving a warning at a traffic stop instead of a ticket. Or, when someone stepped in when you did not have enough money to pay the cashier. etc..)

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- How does it feel to hear or think of these small examples of grace?
- What stood out to you from this past week's message?

MAKING DISCIPLES:

* Bible Study Scriptures:

Read the following Scriptures out loud in the group: **Ephesians 2:1-10;**
Romans 6:1-4

* Questions:

- To fully understand grace, we need to consider who we were without Christ and who we become with Christ. Observe these Biblical truths concerning grace and what it does when we receive it in the following chart. Spiritually, we were destitute, blind, unclean, and dead. Our souls were in peril of everlasting punishment. But then grace!

Who we were without Christ and Grace:	Who we are in Christ with Grace:
We were born in sin. (Psalm 51:5)	Grace is what saves us (Ephesians 2:8)
We were guilty of breaking God's holy laws. (Romans 3:9-20, 23; 1 John 1:8-10)	Grace is the essence of the gospel, meaning good news! (Acts 20:24)
We were enemies of God. (Romans 5:6, 10; 8:7; Colossians 1:21)	Grace gives us victory over sin. (James 4:6)
We were deserving of death and unrighteous. (Romans 6:23a, Romans 3:10)	Grace gives us "eternal encouragement and good hope". (2 Thessalonians 2:16)
We had no means of justifying ourselves. (Romans 3:20)	Jesus Christ is the embodiment of grace, coupled with truth (John 1:14)

- Which of the above truths make you appreciate God's radical grace more?
- Read **Romans 6:1-4**. In what ways do people abuse God's grace? How can we guard against doing this?
- Read **Ephesians 2:1-10**. According to these verses, how are our lives described before we were made alive in Christ? What do these verses tell us God has done for us because of His grace? According to verse 10, what should be our response to God's grace?

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* Application:

- How does my understanding of the grace of God affect my relationship with Him?
- If I truly understand and believe this about God, how will it affect the way I live?
- What is God saying to me? What am I going to do about it?

* Daily Devotionals:

- Read the daily devotions for Week #7 “The Grace of God.”

*Going Deeper (The following are added optional resources for you to help you grow in your understanding of this week’s attribute(s) of God):

- 1 - If you want to take the challenge, get a copy of A. W. Tozer’s *The Knowledge of the Holy*, and read chapter 19.
- 2 - Definition of grace
<https://www.gotquestions.org/definition-of-grace.html>
- 3 - Article on why Christians struggle with receiving grace
<http://frankpowell.me/christians-struggle-grace>
- 4 – Article on God’s grace
<https://www.startingwithgod.com/knowing-god/gods-grace/>
- 5 – Read **Titus 3:3-8**. Describe how our lives were before Christ made us alive in Him. List what God, in His grace, has done for us. Use this list to express your gratefulness to Him for all He has done. What is to be our response to God’s grace? (see v. 8)

Prayer Requests