



Tracing Grace Bible Study for Women

Grace is God's unmerited favor, given with abundance, promise, rhythm, gifts, power, reach, words and hope.

Week 1: Abundance of Grace

One hallmark of any interaction with Jesus is grace. Christians receive grace and then more grace—grace served on top of grace—grace and then, in place of that, more grace. The point is that Christ is full of grace, and those who know Him get showered with grace.

John 1:16

- From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace; CEB
- We all live off his generous abundance, gift after gift after gift. MSG
- Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. NIV

Life Application

Scarcity mentality refers to people seeing life as a finite pie, so that if one person takes a big piece, that leaves less for everyone else. An abundance mindset refers to the paradigm that there is plenty out there for everybody and life is best lived with an expanded awareness of combined capabilities.

Woman with Chronic Bleeding Condition – Mark 5:25-34

Nothing is more important to Jesus as that moment he is connecting with you. Know that you are beloved and known by God. Reach out and touch the robe of Jesus; ask for the reminder of the abundant grace that comes from him.

Prayer of Adoration and Thanksgiving

When Jesus was preparing to ascend to his Heavenly Father, he gave the disciples one last promise: *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:20). "I am with you always" ...what words of comfort these are!

- Make a list of the things in your life for which you are most grateful.
- Who has God placed in your life that has blessed you?
- In what ways has God been your rock and foundation in the bad times?
- In what ways has God been visible in good times?
- What is the one thing in your life for which you are most grateful?

Pray:

Gracious God, Creator of the Universe, I come before you with adoration for your grace...

(give God thanks for the things in your for which you are grateful)

You have placed these people in my life which have enriched and blessed me...

(name and give God your thanks for special people in your lives)

In the times which I have walked the Valley of the Shadow, you have been there...

(tell God about the dark times when God was your rock)

And in the good times, I remember that you have blessed me with your love...

(thank God for the good times provided in your life)

Of all the blessings you have poured down, I am most grateful for...

(share with God this precious thing in your life)

I praise and give thanks for you God, my Father, for being my rock of salvation.

AMEN

Scriptures of Grace

God offers grace for us to celebrate the goodness of life, grace to carry us forward when we're struggling, grace to rein us in from our sins and grace to offer abundantly to others.

Visual Art

Abecedary letters - Grace upon Grace

Discussion

1. How are you looking for blessings and how you recognize blessings when they come?
2. How do you see life – with a scarcity or abundance mindset?
3. What makes it a struggle to accept the grace (blessings) God wants to give to you?

Week 1: Daily Practice

During this week, center on the thought of God's grace being more than you could ever imagine and then believe it's yours!

As you read, ask: **What does this verse say about God? What does it say about people? What does it say to me?** Read each verse in your bible and perhaps include reading one or two verses before or after, or even the entire chapter. Try the practice of Lectio Divina by reading each verse four times: First, READ for content. Secondly, MEDITATE on the meaning. Thirdly, PRAY for understanding/discernment. Finally, CONTEMPLATE how you can apply this scripture as an action or a behavior change in your life.

Scripture Study for the Week:

- Thursday, Sept 16 – **John 1:16**
 - And from His fullness we have received grace upon grace.
- Friday, Sept 17 – **Ephesians 3:20**
 - Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think according to the power at work within us.
- Saturday, Sept 18 – **Psalms 65:11**
 - You crown the year with your bounty and your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.
- Sunday, Sept 19 – **Philippians 4:19**
 - And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in Christ Jesus.
- Monday, Sept 20 – **Proverbs 3:9-10**
 - Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.
- Tuesday, Sept 21 – **2 Corinthians 9:8**
 - And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.
- Wednesday, Sept 22 – **Deuteronomy 28:12**
 - The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of His bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands...

God gives us grace when we are not at our best and even when we are at our worst! Whatever we are called to be or to do, God's grace is enough and is truly limitless! Consider how you can model God's abundance in doing one "lavish act of grace" this week.



Week 2: Promise of Grace

The Trinity is one God existing in three Persons. We can believe in the promises of God extended to us through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:13

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

Life Application

We often make promises to ourselves, but then break those promises. Nothing boosts self-esteem and confidence like making a promise to yourself and keeping it.

Rahab – Joshua 2:1-24; 6:17, 22-23

The story of Rahab portrays her as more than a stereotype or object. She was clever, she thought on her feet, and she exhibited faith in the God of the Israelites, who were her nation's enemies. She was brave! She believed in the promise of God and, through grace, became the deliverer of her people and family.

Prayer of Consecration of the Holy Spirit

The following prayers are part of one of the earliest known novenas (repetitious prayers prayed over several days). They are addressed to the Holy Spirit and as a plea for the virtues we need to live the Christian life. Perhaps these short prayers will become a mantra throughout your day as you encounter challenges.

Prayer for today:

Holy Spirit, grant me the Spirit of Grace, that I may treat other people with loving kindness and caring concern, modeling Christ's love on the cross.

Respond: How would this look in your life going forward today? What would you change? What are some ways you could model this as you meet people throughout the rest of the day? Make a list for yourself.

Scriptures of Grace

It is a wonderful thing to know that our belief in the Holy Trinity brings us God in Three Persons to provide us with all we need in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Visual Art

Keltic Knot – Holy Trinity

Discussion

1. When God whispers your name, what name does he call you?
2. You are *chosen, called, created* by God... what other words can you fill in?
3. Paul's blessing points to the trinity. How would you describe the trinity to someone else?

Week 2: Daily Practice

God wants us to be completely assured that we know He promises to give us grace every day and in every situation.

As you read, ask: **What does this verse say about God? What does it say about people?**

What does it say to me? Try the practice of Lectio Divina: READ for content, MEDITATE on the meaning, PRAY for understanding/discernment, CONTEMPLATE how you can apply this scripture as an action, or a behavior change in your life.

Scripture Study for the Week:

- Thursday, Sept 23 – **2 Corinthians 13:11-14**
 - Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints shall greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- Friday, Sept 24 – **2 Peter 1:3-4a**
 - His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life 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.
- Saturday, Sept 25 – **Isaiah 41:10**
 - Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
- Sunday, Sept 26 – **John 3:16**
 - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- Monday, Sept 27 – **Joshua 24:14**
 - And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed.
- Tuesday, Sept 28 – **2 Corinthians 1:20**
 - For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.
- Wednesday, Sept 29 – **Romans 8:28**
 - And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Prayers of Consecration of the Holy Spirit for during the coming week:

Day One – *Holy Spirit, grant me the Spirit of Wisdom, that I may despise perishable things of this world and aspire only after things that are eternal.*

Read Mark 10:17-22, about a rich young man who came running to Jesus to ask what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus reminded him of God's Ten Commandments for righteous living to which the young man replied he had honored since he was a boy. Then Jesus offered an astounding challenge: "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor...then come follow me." Since the young man had great wealth, he was greatly disappointed and went away very sad.

- In what ways can perishable things of the world – the key word is perishable – create a hold on our lives?
- In what ways can we share our blessing of material things with the marginalized? The hungry? The sick and needy?
- Are you familiar with ministries at Resurrection that help us to share our abundance? Make a list.

Day Two: *Holy Spirit, grant me the spirit of Understanding, to enlighten my mind with the light of your divine truth.*

In what ways does God's promise of Grace help you to know that God is a loving God and that we can believe his promises? Consider the following acronym:

- G = God's
- R = Riches
- A = At
- C = Christ's
- E = expense
- In what ways do you understand God's gift of grace from this acronym?

Day Three: *Holy Spirit, grant me the Spirit of Counsel, that I may ever choose the sure way of pleasing God.*

As Jesus was preparing for his journey to the Cross, he comforted his disciples for his departure. We read in John 14:26-27, Jesus promised the Father would send the Counselor or Advocate (names for the Holy Spirit) to teach them, to remind them of what Jesus had taught them and to bring them peace.

- In what ways do you see God's grace fulfilled in this promise to the disciples?
- In what ways does this promise provide comfort for you in times of walking through the "Valley of the Shadow?"

Day Four: *Holy Spirit, grant me the Spirit of Fortitude, that I may overcome with courage all obstacles.*

When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippian Church, he was in jail under threat of execution. Yet this letter is called the "Joy Letter" for it is filled with refrains "to rejoice!" Read Philippians 4:10-13. Paul related some of the dire circumstances which he had experienced while preaching the Gospel. Yet, he remains very positive: "I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength."

- In what ways can we take encouragement from Paul in the tough times?
- In the dark hours?
- In the times in which we are challenged to our limit?
- As Christians, in what ways can we be a rainbow in someone else's cloud?

Day Five: *Holy Spirit, grant me the Spirit of Knowledge, that I may know God and know myself.*

In 2 Timothy 2:16-17 Paul advised his protégé Timothy, "Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good."

- In what ways is intentional study of the Scriptures useful for our journey of knowing more about God and helpful in becoming deeply committed Christians? Make a list.



You can be sure of God's forgiveness, compassion, presence and always, God's love. Pay close attention to the good things around you this week. Can you see the ways in which God's promise of grace touches your life in both good moments and hard times?



Week 3: Rhythm of Grace

Christianity is not full of demands or an empty practice. It is a relationship with Jesus that restores and energizes your life.

Matthew 11:28-30

- Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.
MSG

Life Application

Self-care means doing things to take care of our minds, bodies, and souls by engaging in activities that promote well-being and reduce stress. Doing so enhances our ability to live fully, vibrantly, and effectively. The practice of self-care also reminds both you and others that your needs are valid and a priority.

Woman who Washed Jesus' Feet – Luke 7:36-50

Jesus sees this woman's lavish display of humility, nurture, generosity, and love. She embodies love for Jesus and reveals prophetic insight through her broken heart and tears, while Jesus extends to her a new life ahead.

Prayer of ACTS

The A.C.T.S. model for praying helps us to remember all the things we want to share with God from joy to confession to thanksgiving and showing our love for God. Pray using these prompts to form your conversation with God.

A = Adoration – *tell God what he means to you, let God know of your love for him*

C = Confession – *tell God how you have "missed the mark" and ask for forgiveness*

T = Thanksgiving – *give God thanks for the blessings you have received in your life*

S = Supplication – *ask God for the needs of others and for your own needs as well*

Scriptures of Grace

God calls to us to come and to rest and He also want us to rejoice in our faith, to "lighten up" and maintain a balance and a rhythm of both giving and receiving, of both serving and resting.

Visual Art

Rhythm of Heartbeat

Discussion

It is no small take to take care of yourself when you are in the middle of the mess.

1. What do you need to let go of – perfectionism, self-doubt or control?
2. Are you living your life on the treadmill of exhaustion and using busyness as a status symbol?
3. What would it feel like to be unyoked from religion, rules and comparison?
4. How can you invest in life-giving self-care, this week?

Week 3: Daily Practice

Often, one of the hardest things for women to do is rest. We continually set our pace on "exhaustion" cycle and keep going and going and going, leaving ourselves last on the list as our lowest priority. But our Lord expects us to pay attention to the second part of His second commandment, which says He expects us to also love ourselves!

As you read, ask: **What does this verse say about God? What does it say about people?**

What does it say to me? Try the practice of Lectio Divina: READ for content, MEDITATE on the meaning, PRAY for understanding/discernment, CONTEMPLATE how you can apply this scripture as an action, or a behavior change in your life.

Scripture Study for the Week:

- Thursday, Sept 30 – **Matthew 11:28-30**
 - Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.
- Friday, October 1 – **1 Corinthians 14:15**
 - What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.
- Saturday, October 2 – **Psalms 4:8**
 - I will lie down and fall asleep in peace because you alone, LORD, let me live in safety.

- Sunday, October 3 – **Mark 6:31**
 - Many people were coming and going, so there was no time to eat. He said to the apostles, "Come by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while."
- Monday, October 4 – **Psalms 150:3-5**
 - Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
- Tuesday, October 5 – **2 Corinthians 5:17**
 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
- Wednesday, October 6 – **Romans 12:2**
 - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Prayer of ACTS during the coming week:

Use the A.C.T.S. model to form your daily prayers – Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. Evaluate the process:

- Does this make praying a little easier and keep you focused?
- In what ways do you like this approach?
- Or, perhaps, in what ways does this approach not work for you?

When you sense you might be practicing religion instead of enjoying a relationship with Jesus, it's time to lay your burdens down and walk with God in His "unforced rhythms of grace." Self-care helps, and it starts with the choice to make your well-being a priority. Consider making the time and choosing what makes you happy, rejuvenated, relaxed, fulfilled, and at peace. Those are the self-care habits to start and continue through the good times and bad.

What are the biggest self-care benefits you see when you regularly make time for it? Can you give yourself grace in one definite way this week?



Week 4: Gifts of Grace

Spiritual gifts are empowerments for building up the church and extending the Kingdom of God.

Romans 12:6

- We have different gifts that are consistent with God's grace that has been given to us. CEB
- Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to use them accordingly... AMP
- So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't. MSG

Life Application

If there is one identifying factor that makes each and every single human being on this planet unique, it's the ability to express their own personal gifts and creative talents. No matter how small the gift or talent might seem to be, we each have something special to share that sets us apart from anyone else.

Mary and Martha – Luke 10:38-42

Jesus' visit to the home of Mary and Martha provides an opportunity to consider different responses to a shared experience. Differences between the two sisters emerge not just in how they honored Jesus in this passage, but also in how they express grief in John 11. Yet in the end, they stood together in Jesus' close circle of friends.

Prayer of Agape Love

Right in the middle of Paul's message to the Corinthians about Spiritual Gifts in chapters 12 and 14, we find Paul's beautiful and profound writing on **love**. The word love in the Greek is **agape** and is almost untranslatable. It describes a condition of selfless concern for the welfare of others which is not based on the loveliness of the person but on a loving kindness toward that person. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a to learn of this kind of love before you pray.

Let us follow these prompts to pray with **agape**:

- Pray for those you know who are suffering from various illnesses and disabilities
- Pray for those who are marginalized, discriminated against, struggling with daily life
- Pray for those who are homeless and hungry and living on the edge of society
- Pray for those who have wronged you unfairly or who have treated you with anger
- Pray for those in need of a kind gesture and those who are in need of a friend

May we be persons spreading agape throughout our world and among acquaintances over the coming week. AMEN.

Scriptures of Grace

Each person has God-given gifts to share. A gift is something freely given, offered in the hope that it will be joyfully received and responsibly used. The Spirit gives spiritual gifts, transcendent and gracious bestowals, to accomplish God's mission in the world through the church.

Visual Art

Build the Kingdom

Discussion

God made us on purpose for a purpose with our own unique gifts to bring to the world.

1. What is your gift you bring to the world?
2. How does Grace look on you?
3. Serving others breathes life into us, tell about a time you served. How did it feel?

Week 4: Daily Practice

We all are given gifts to help build up the Kingdom of God. Some of us are leaders or teachers, others are made to be followers and helpers. We may be called to offer hospitality or to be encouragers, or to be mighty prayer warriors or quiet comforters. One person's gift may be kindness or patience and another's gift may be generosity. Every person and every gift matters.

As you read, ask: **What does this verse say about God? What does it say about people? What does it say to me?** Try the practice of Lectio Divina: READ for content, MEDITATE on the meaning, PRAY for understanding/discernment, CONTEMPLATE how you can apply this scripture as an action, or a behavior change in your life.

Scripture Study for the Week:

- Thursday, October 7 – **Romans 12:6-8**
 - We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.
- Friday, October 8 – **1 Peter 4:10-11a**
 - As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.
- Saturday, October 9 – **2 Timothy 1:6-7**
 - For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.
- Sunday, October 10 – **1 Corinthians 12:4-6**
 - Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.
- Monday, October 11 – **Ephesians 4:11-13**
 - And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature adulthood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...
- Tuesday, October 12 – **Hebrews 13:2**
 - Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

- Wednesday, October 13 – **Proverbs 31:25-28**
 - She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her...

We may think of gifts as only special talents, but they can also be our personality traits such as being joyful, easy-going, accepting, loyal, friendly, honest or forgiving. What are the things people like or love about you? What do you like or love about yourself? What gifts of grace can you use to make God smile upon you this week?



Week 5: Power of Grace

Grace is the divine life, power, and ability of God flowing and operating through us, enabling us to properly function and operate in whatever God calls us to do in this life. Grace is the power that God willingly gives us to help us do what we could never do on our own.

Acts 4:33

- With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. NRSV
- And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. NKJV
- The apostles gave powerful witness to the resurrection of the Master Jesus, and grace was on all of them. MSG

Life Application

We don't have to be held back by shame and fear of vulnerability; this limits our potential. Shame robs us of the resources and the energy we need to do the work of productive change. The antidote to shame is vulnerability, kindness, and compassion, leading to a life full of goodness, dignity and purpose.

Esther

Esther is a female Jewish orphan, the least powerful member of the less powerful gender of a powerless people in the mighty Persian Empire. Yet she skillfully navigates the power structure of the Persian court in order to attain her goal, the salvation of her people.

Prayer of Examen

Popularly attributed to Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus, this prayer focuses on a specific time, perhaps the previous day or week. This examination is not intended to be a tallying of failures or successes but an inward and outward evaluation of our relationship with God. The prayer of examen *always* includes a word of grace.

How to pray the Examen:

1. Place yourself in God's presence. Give thanks for God's love and provision for you.
2. Pray for the grace to understand how God is moving in your life.
3. Review your day — recall specific moments and your feelings at the time.
4. Reflect on what you did, said, or thought in those instances. Were you drawing closer to God, or further away? If there anything you need forgiveness for?
5. Look toward tomorrow — think of how you might draw nearer to God's plan for your life. Be specific.

Scriptures of Grace

Sometimes women are labeled "aggressive", "strong-willed" or even "loud" when they speak up, stand tall or act with courage. But the Bible tells us that grace can be a powerful tool of faith and it can be used boldly to the glory of God.

Visual Art

One Heart, One Soul Cross

Discussion

We need to stop what we are doing and put down our agenda and choose to see others

1. Is there someone who comes to mind for you to make room at the table of your life?
2. How can we welcome others to our table?
3. How can we pay attention and see them?

Week 5: Daily Practice

We can be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live with our whole hearts despite the risks and uncertainty. God may be calling you to "reckless grace", "radical grace" or "disruptive grace," a purposeful willingness to show grace even in the face of the hardest trials and tribulations.

As you read, ask: **What does this verse say about God? What does it say about people?**

What does it say to me? Try the practice of Lectio Divina: READ for content, MEDITATE on the meaning, PRAY for understanding/discernment, CONTEMPLATE how you can apply this scripture as an action, or a behavior change in your life.

Scripture Study for the Week:

- Thursday, October 14 – **Acts 4:33**
 - With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all.
- Friday, October 15 – **Ephesians 2:8**
 - For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.
- Saturday, October 16 – **Acts 4:31**
 - And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.
- Sunday, October 17 – **Joshua 1:9**
 - Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.
- Monday, October 18 – **1 Peter 5:10**
 - And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.
- Tuesday, October 19 – **Psalms 34:4-5**
 - I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.
- Wednesday, October 20 – **1 John 1:9**
 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 -

Grace allows us to get back to knowing, in our souls, that we are really good human beings – and that others are too. Can you think of a time when powerful grace turned a difficult situation into something better? Try the power of radical grace in at least one difficult situation this week.



Week 6: Reach of Grace

God's primary mode of working in the world is through people. We are meant to serve God by doing God's work in this world, to embody God's love and justice so that we might heal the world and help others.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

- Looking at it one way, you could say, "Anything goes. Because of God's immense generosity and grace, we don't have to dissect and scrutinize every action to see if it will pass muster." But the point is not to just get by. We want to live well, but our foremost efforts should be to help others live well. MSG
- Everything is permitted, but everything isn't beneficial. Everything is permitted, but everything doesn't build others up. one should look out for their own advantage, but they should look out for each other. CEB
- "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but not everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others. NIV

Life Application

Loving our neighbor means to give of time, talent and resources. It also means to speak up for the vulnerable and marginalized. Love expressed by doing to others what we would want them to do to us is a way of living and being; and practiced toward others, it is to seek the good of the other – to bless, encourage, care for, and serve the other.

Samaritan Woman at the Well – John 4:4-42

The woman is the first character in the Gospel to engage in sustained theological conversation with Jesus. Following the exchange, she goes into the city to tell others about her experience and through her words, many come to faith.

Prayer of Meditation

In the Christian tradition, meditation is a method of prayer in which we spontaneously respond to God in a type of conversation with God, which has no set formula, but exposes our deepest concerns, questions, longings and joys.

The Latin root *med* denotes care and cure; the Hebrew root word *haga* is translated as "meditation."

In Psalm 19:14, we read, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you O Lord, my rock and redeemer." It is the heart, not the mind, that meditates. Meditation can be understood as a disciplined spiritual exercise that prepares us to enter into a profound and intimate relationship with God. Sustained meditation leads beyond our distracting, self-conscious, and inwardly focused thoughts to a state where we are receptive to the voice of God.

Prepare to Meditate

- Choose a time of day that is usually quiet and uninterrupted
- Find a quiet place around your home that will lend itself to meditation
- Decide how much time is best for you
- Find a comfortable sitting position with your body balanced

Beginning to Pray

- Slow your breathing by taking a deep cleansing breath
- Center on a word which can become your *mantra* (a sacred word or phrase)
- Choose an image on which to focus and use your mantra
- Sit in silence; empty your mind of the cares and concerns of the day
- As you end, take time to refocus on your surroundings and close with a prayer or scripture

Scriptures of Grace

As Christians, we are called to reach out to the poor, disabled, hungry and homeless to offer grace through both simple and profound acts of service. We are the hands and feet of Jesus.

Visual Art

Warby Parker Glasses

Discussion

Consider times you have felt part of a community. What have been the benefits? The hardships?

1. What can we do to extend the reach of grace to others?
2. What are ways we can serve in the best interest of others?
3. Where do you like to serve?

Week 6: Daily Practice

We God created us to care for each other as members of the human family, to cooperate with him in sharing love, doing justice, and practicing kindness. Serving others shapes us spiritually; when we serve others, we become more like Christ.

As you read, ask: **What does this verse say about God? What does it say about people?**

What does it say to me? Try the practice of Lectio Divina: READ for content, MEDITATE on the meaning, PRAY for understanding/discernment, CONTEMPLATE how you can apply this scripture as an action, or a behavior change in your life.

Scripture Study for the Week:

- Thursday, October 21 – **1 Corinthians 10:23**
 - All things are permitted, but not all things are of benefit. All things are permitted, but not all things build people up.
- Friday, October 22 – **Galatians 5:13-14**
 - For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to be self-serving, but through love, serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
- Saturday, October 23 – **Acts 20:35**
 - In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'
- Sunday, October 24 – **Luke 22:27**
 - For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.
- Monday, October 25 – **Proverbs 19:17**
 - Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his deed.
- Tuesday, October 26 – **Deuteronomy 15:7-8**
 - If among you, one of your brothers or sisters should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother or sister, but you shall open your hand to them and lend them sufficient for their need, whatever it may be.
- Wednesday, October 27 – **1 Timothy 6:17-19**
 - As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Prayer of Meditation for the coming week:

Practice meditation during the coming week using the steps outlined in Beginning to Pray. As with anything we learn to do in life, meditation takes some practice before you will feel comfortable with this type of prayer.



We are Jesus' disciples in this modern age which still has so many problems needing to be addressed. Sometimes you may feel it is just too much. You might think the issues are all so big and what can one person do? But, we must think about how we are all parts of the body of Christ. What can you give or where can you serve this week to show the reach of God's grace?



Week 7: Words of Grace

Words do more than convey information; they can cause harm or give life! To imitate Christ, we are to avoid unwholesome—or worse, meanspirited—language and instead, let the words we speak stem from the overflow of our hearts.

Colossians 4:6

- Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. CEB
- Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. NIV
- Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out. MSG

Life Application

When speaking, ask yourself, Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind? We can each be conscious of the words that we often take for granted and run them through a filter before saying them aloud. Slowing down and choosing our sentences with care helps us to consider how they sound to others, and if they offer benefit or harm.

Hannah—1 Samuel 1:1-19

A model of determination and faith, Hannah offers words of prayer that result in a blessing. She then sings a hymn of thanksgiving to God, capturing the key themes of the stories that will follow. Hannah illustrates the outsized impact of one woman devoted to and confident in the Lord.

Prayer—The 23rd Psalm

When we read the Bible, we are reading the Word of God. In Psalm 34:8, David wrote,

*Taste and see how good the Lord is!
The one who takes refuge in him is truly happy!*
CEB

When reading the Scriptures, taste and digest them as you read. There are four R's which are the basis of this approach:

- Reading
- Reflecting
- Responding
- Resting

Exegesis of the 23rd Psalm (a critical reading and interpretation especially of Scripture)

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;*

The Palestinian shepherd was with his sheep on a twenty-four/seven basis. The "green pastures" were small tufts of grass on the hillsides. The sheep depended on the shepherd for this provision.

He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

The shepherd sought "still" waters as was danger in swift, running waters.

*He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.*

The shepherd was constantly on guard for the safety of his sheep and the sheep depended on him for their safety.

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*

At night the shepherd would find a safe place for the sheep and then lie down in the opening to prevent the sheep from wandering.

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.*

The psalmist finishes with the comforting thought of God's provision for us and the peace of dwelling with God.

Prayer for today:

Listen as Psalm 23 is read; remember who the Shepherd is and what he does for his sheep.

Scriptures of Grace

Most of us like to see ourselves as nice people who live by the motto, "If you can't say something nice, say nothing at all!" But, if we are really honest, we know we sometimes slip up. Scripture gives us words of grace to practice, even when we are tired, angry, ill or just out of sorts.

Visual Art

Encouraged in Graciousness

Discussion

The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation- not put them down- not cut them out. The call of Christ is to work with one another for God's glory—not against one another for your own.

1. How can we show up and be our best selves?
2. Grace looks good when the annoying becomes amazing! What does that look like to you?
3. Do you focus of the Prince of Peace, or on your position, prestige or pride?
4. How do you celebrate a sister in Christ who experiences successes?
5. Are you threatened by the success of others?

Week 7: Daily Practice

When we become a Christian, there is an expectancy that a change of speech follows, because living for Christ makes a difference in our choice of words. When our hearts have been changed by the power of God, a change is reflected in our words. Our words are full of blessing when the heart is full of blessing. So if we fill our hearts with the love of Christ, what is true, necessary, and kind comes out of our mouths..

As you read, ask: **What does this verse say about God? What does it say about people?**

What does it say to me? Try the practice of Lectio Divina: READ for content, MEDITATE on the meaning, PRAY for understanding/discernment, CONTEMPLATE how you can apply this scripture as an action, or a behavior change in your life.

Scripture Study for the Week:

- Thursday, October 28 – **Colossians 4:6**
 - Your speech should always be gracious and sprinkled with insight so that you may know how to respond to every person.
- Friday, October 29 – **Proverbs 16:24**
 - Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.

- Saturday, October 30 – **Ephesians 4:29**
 - Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.
- Sunday, October 31 – **1 Peter 3:15**
 - But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...
- Monday, November 1 – **Psalms 19:14**
 - Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.
- Tuesday, November 2 – **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**
 - Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- Wednesday, November 3 – **Luke 6:45**
 - The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Prayer of the Four R's for the coming week:

Using these passages, follow the guidelines below:

Psalm 8:3-5

Psalm 139:1-6

Psalm 119:105-106

- **Read** a segment of each Psalm slowly.
- **Reflect** and meditate on what you have read.
 - Was there a portion of the text that touches your heart?
 - Did the meaning of the passage become more alive to you?
- **Respond** by writing your thoughts down or turning it into a simple prayer (10-12 words).
- **Rest** in the thought of what this passage means in your life.
 - What was fresh and new about reading the Scripture today?
 - What new insights did you gain?
 - In what ways do you see God's grace pictured in this Psalm?



Our words should demonstrate the power of God's grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives. May God enable us to use our words as an instrument of His love and saving grace. Can you commit to a full day this week only saying nice things to every person you encounter? Select at least one person you can contact this week who would be blessed by a compliment or a kind card.



Week 8: Hope of Grace

Hope is the confident affirmation that God is faithful, that He will complete what He has begun. It is a confident expectation which waits patiently and ardently for God's purposes to be fulfilled. We can be certain in our hope!

Titus 3:7

- So, since we have been made righteous by his grace, we can inherit the hope for eternal life. CEB
- God's gift has restored our relationship with him and given us back our lives. And there's more life to come—an eternity of life! You can count on this. MSG
- So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. NRSV

Life Application

The worst isn't the last thing about the world. It's the next to the last thing. The last thing is the best!

Mary Mother of Jesus – Luke 1:26- 38

Mary loved God and wanted to serve Him with all her heart. But she was just a poor girl in an insignificant town, from a humble family, with little expectations that her life was going to be any different than most. When the angel Gabriel came to Mary to tell her she was chosen and favored by God to be the mother of His son, despite her own fear, she exhibited great courage and character.

The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6:9-13. Jesus' disciples asked him, "Lord teach us how to pray" and Jesus answered with a compilation of excerpts from prayers that are part of the traditional Jewish prayer book.

- *"Our Father who is in Heaven"*
 - Jesus used the word Abba to address God, a very intimate name which could be translated loosely as "Daddy"
- *"Hallowed be thy name"*
 - an Aramaic line familiar to Jews, the first line of the Kaddish, a traditional mourner's prayer, and a refrain used throughout Jewish Orthodox prayer service

- *"Thy Kingdom Come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*
 - from the aleinu prayer used at the conclusion of each prayer service in the observance of Yom Kippur – the Jewish Day of Atonement
- *"Give us this day our daily bread"*
 - from the first part of the Jewish grace after meals
- *"Forgive us our sins"*
 - repeated many times in the Yom Kippur prayers
- *"For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory"*
 - recited in the synagogue during the Sabbath morning prayer and just before reading of the Torah
- *"Forever and ever"*
 - adaptation of the Hebrew phrase which literally means from generation to generation
- *"AMEN"*
 - Hebrew word drawn from the verb to believe; in Jewish prayer, it means, I believe this

Prayer for today:

Pause to reflect as The Lord's Prayer is slowly read aloud.

Scriptures of Grace

We are living in a world where hope has taken a beating. Troubling issues and constant unrest can become almost unbearable. Christians are not asked or expected to close our eyes to these in order to appear "holy." Instead, we must turn to our faith, lean in and hold on tightly to God's unwavering hope.

Visual Art

Hope of Forever

Discussion

Grace looks like being still and letting God fight your fight.

1. What fight are you in that you need to let God fight?

Grace looks like measuring your worth by the great amount of love God has for us and nothing else!

2. What do you hope for?

Week 8: Daily Practice

Our world can be a pretty dark place. But there is a hope that is always present. Read these passages and let the hope of God encourage your heart and soul. It is a hope you can count on!

As you read, ask: **What does this verse say about God? What does it say about people?**

What does it say to me? Try the practice of Lectio Divina: READ for content, MEDITATE on the meaning, PRAY for understanding/discernment, CONTEMPLATE how you can apply this scripture as an action, or a behavior change in your life.

Scripture Study for the Week:

- Thursday, November 4 – **Titus 3:7**
 - So, since we have been made righteous by his grace, we can inherit the hope for eternal life.
- Friday, November 5 – **Romans 8:24-25**
 - For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we must wait for it with patience.
- Saturday, November 6 – **Isaiah 41:10**
 - Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
- Sunday, November 7 – **Romans 15:4**
 - For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
- Monday, November 8 – **Lamentations 3:24**
 - The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him.
- Tuesday, November 9 – **1 Thessalonians 5:8**
 - But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.
- Wednesday, November 10 – **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**
 - So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Prayer of The Lord's Prayer for the coming week:

Develop the habit of praying the Lord's Prayer several times throughout the week.

1. In what ways do you find God's grace in these prayers?
2. What does that grace mean in your life?



Hope, along with faith and love, is one of the three theological virtues. As a virtue, it is both a blessing from God and something we must decide to do. It's both a noun and a verb, a gift and a practice. Faith in God is the root of hope, and hope is lived out in love. As we draw to the close this study, let us press on with hope arising from a God of immeasurable love. Take a moment to write down three things about which you genuinely feel hopeful. Practice hope this week by intentionally looking for and speaking about positive changes in your life, your church and/or the world.