

# Grace – the Missing Ingredient for Real and Lasting Change in Counseling

*Grace Fellowship church, Pastor Brad Bigney*  
STUDENT NOTES

## I. What Is It?

- Hebrew word most often used for grace is 'chen' - it means "to bend, to stoop" And by and by, it came to include the idea of "condescending favor." It denotes the stronger coming to someone weaker who stands in need of help because of their natural weakness.
- The N.T. goes on to expand on that with the Greek word 'charis' – that's used 155x.
- The NT itself is a book of grace – full of this word 'grace'! 17x in the books of Acts, 24x in Romans, 28x in I & 2 Cor., 12x in the book of Eph., 10x in I Peter, and 8x in the book of Hebrews!

**Jerry Bridges**, "Grace is God's free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment."

**John Piper** ("Living by Faith in Future Grace"), "Grace is not simply leniency when we have sinned. Grace is the enabling gift of God not to sin. Grace is POWER, not just PARDON."

### A. Pardon – Means that God's Grace Meets You Where You Are

**Eph. 2:8-9** "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

**Titus 3:4-7** "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

### B. Power – Means the Grace of God that Meets You Where You Are Will Never Leave You Where You Are

**2 Peter 3:18** "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."



I got counseling from a wise Christian counselor. I read edifying books, biographies of those who made a difference because God was so real to them (such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Amy Carmichael, and Jonathan Edwards) and nonfiction by authors of substance (such as Philip Yancey, C.S. Lewis, and Henri Nouwen). I started praying through the Psalms so that I was not just pouring out my own thoughts but using the very words of God. I spent more time outdoors, praising the wisdom of the One who covers the woods with forget-me-nots, causes the sun to take the earth by its edges, and shows the hawk how to soar.

These **ordinary means of grace** kept me moving toward Jesus. But there was something else, even more important: I began to gaze inwardly upon God. My mind would go to Him, thinking of Him. Even while occupied with laundry or driving to the post office, I found my mind going to God with increasing frequency." *Idol Lies*, Dee Brestin, p.128-129.

- \_\_\_\_\_ "For two years, I sang all the verses to "Be Still My Soul" every night."
- \_\_\_\_\_ "I began to listen to MP3 sermons every day while I biked or got dressed and fixed my hair, grasping the truths I heard like a drowning woman gasping for air."
- \_\_\_\_\_ "I called two particularly strong Christian friends from my past, Sylvia and Ann, and asked if we could reignite our friendship. (They now come to my cabin from their respective states every year for a week of iron sharpening iron.)"
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### III. How Do I Use It?

**I Cor. 15:10** "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."



**2 Peter 1:5-9** “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence (*make every effort*) to add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love... for he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”

#### IV. How Do I Lose It?

##### A. Pride

**James 4:6** "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'"

**2 Samuel 22:28** “You will save the humble people; but Your eyes are on the haughty, that You may bring them down.” That’s just plain scary!

**Prov. 6:16-17** “These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.”

“The sin of pride carries with it God's swiftest and most severe judgment. It blinds you to other sins in your life and hinders you from repenting of them. Pride is the "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" or the (AIDS) of the soul. When a person dies as a result of acquiring AIDS, he doesn't really die of AIDS... rather, he dies of an AIDS-complicated illness like pneumonia, tuberculosis, or meningitis. Not unlike a cataract, the AIDS virus somehow blinds the eyes of its victim's bodily defense system. This prevents his auto immune system from seeing and consequently destroying those deadly viruses and bacteria that ultimately kill him.

Like AIDS, pride blinds you not only to itself, but to every other sin tucked away in the recesses of your heart and life. It causes you to hate correction and reproof. It hides your sin from you, it justifies your sin, it excuses your sin, and it keeps you from repenting of your sin. It deceives you into thinking that you're spiritually well when, in fact, you have deadly cancer and are in desperate need...” *The Complete Husband*, Lou Priolo, p. 21-22

“One of the most significant problems in marriage is that there is no economy of grace. With all their obvious difficulties, what is most shocking is the profound gracelessness of their marriage. There is no willingness to look within and confess deep-seated sins, so they never find sweet forgiveness. There is no vertical hope to carry them in dark and discouraging times. There is no rest that comes from entrusting each other to the God of grace. There is no faith that he will give them all they need to respond to each other in godly ways. As a result, their relationship is reduced to human demands, human performance, human failure, human judgment, and human punishment. There is no hope or power for change. And because they are not daily soaking in the fountain of God's grace, they do not extend it to one another.” *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, Paul David Tripp, p. 32 & 33

### **Useful Resources for Homework and further thinking:**

- Stuart Scott booklet – ‘Pride to Humility’
- C.J. Mahaney ‘50 Questions’
- My interview cards

### **B. Bitterness**

**Hebrews 12:15** "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root springing up causes trouble and defiles many." That's scary! You can miss the grace of God... You can miss it.

- a) A bitter person is suspicious and critical. They don't trust.
- b) A bitter person is ungrateful and complaining – they're very negative
- c) A bitter person is insensitive to others because they are self-centered and self-absorbed. Their focus is on their own hurts
- d) A bitter person is easily given over to depression as their focus is on themselves and how they've been wronged
- e) A bitter person gossips and slanders as they look for opportunities to get 'revenge' on the one who has hurt them.

### **Useful Resources for Homework and further thinking:**

- Lou Priolo booklet – ‘Bitterness’

### C. Idolatry

**Jonah 2:8** "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs."

An idol = **Anything** or **Anyone** that begins to **Capture** our **Hearts** and **Minds** and **Affections** more than God.

- Good Health
- A Material Thing
- Physical Appearance
- An Ideal ("Pro-life movement," "Peace Movement")
- Having a Christian or godly Marriage
- Money
- Being Treated Fairly
- Success / Position / Power
- Having a Hurt-Free / Pain-Free Life
- Other's Approval
- Worldly Pleasures (drugs, alcohol, food)
- Being in Control
- A Child or Children
- Having Your 'Needs' Met
- Another Person (man or woman)

Ask yourself **3 Questions** to help you get your hands around whether or not something is an idol:

1. Am I willing to sin to **Get** it?
2. Am I willing to sin if I think I'm going to **Lose** it?
3. Do I run to it for '**Refuge**' instead of turning to God?

### Useful Resources for Homework and further thinking:

- Ed Welch booklet – 'Motives'
- Bigney book – 'Gospel Treason'