

Transforming Grace --- Living Confidently in God's Unfailing Love

Lessons One & Two: The Performance Treadmill

Lesson Reference: Chapters 1 & 2

Objective: Discover the source of our blessings

1. What do the following verses say about your spiritual condition apart from Christ?

- Isaiah 53:6

- Romans 3:10-20

2. Why is it important to focus on your spiritual condition apart from Christ in order to understand God's grace?

3. Many Christians believe that their justification is based on grace, the blessings in their Christian life are based on works, and their future glorification will be based on grace. Where is the error in this thinking? (See Galatians 3:3 and Philippians 1:6)

4. Look at the following verses. What do they teach about trying to mix grace and works as the basis for a relationship with God?

○ Romans 11:6

○ Galatians 5:2-6

5. What do you think makes it so hard for a person to rely on God's grace rather than his own efforts?

6. What insights do the following verses give you about God's view of your sin?

○ Leviticus 16:1-34

○ 2 Samuel 12:9-10

○ 1 Kings 13:21-22

7. What is the relationship between the grace of God and the righteousness of Christ?

- Romans 3:22-24

- Galatians 5:2-4

- Ephesians 2:4-7

8. Which person needs God's grace more: the conscientious, dutiful, hardworking Christian, or the most decadent, hard-living sinner? Explain your answer.

Lesson Application: *Decide on one specific thing you plan to do this week to guard against depending on your performance to earn God's favor. For example:*

- *For one day keep a running tally on a 3X5 card of the times you think sinful thoughts. Each time you mark the card, stop and thank God that your forgiveness was procured at Calvary, and that His grace you are growing in Him.*

- *Make a list of God's blessings in your life in the last year. Put a check beside anything on your list you earned through your behavior.*

- *Make a list of some of your accomplishments in life. Put a check beside any that you achieved on your own efforts, without any help from God.*

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Lessons Three & Four: Grace ---- It Really is Amazing

Lesson Reference: Chapters 3 & 4

Objectives: Look at faith in Christ works vs. our works

Discuss the magnitude of God's forgiveness

1. Read Ephesians 3:19-26. There are two aspects to our justification. First, God removes our guilt from us and places it upon Jesus. Second, He credits Jesus' righteousness to us. What practical difference does it make to your life that God has removed your sin and given you Jesus' righteousness? How should this fact affect the way you feel? The way you live?

2. Read Ephesians 2:1-9. Fill in this chart to help show the contrast Paul makes between what we deserve and what God has done for us.

Our spiritual condition before we have faith in Christ	What God has done for us In Christ

3. What do the following verses show us about God's forgiveness?

❖ Psalm 103:12

❖ Isaiah 38:17

❖ Isaiah 43:25

❖ Micah 7:19

4. Is it possible to go beyond the point where God can forgive? Explain how a person might feel he has sinned one too many times to receive God's forgiveness, and why those feelings are wrong.

5. Fill in the following chart based on Titus 3:3-7.

Characteristics of man and what he has done	Characteristics of God and what He has done

6. What does it mean when we say that Christ made atonement for our sins? Look at the following verses and see how they help you understand atonement.

❖ John 3:36

❖ Romans 3:25

❖ Hebrews 2:17

❖ 1 John 2: 2; 4:10

Lesson Application: *Decide to do either of the following things to help experience God's forgiveness more fully.*

a. Memorize one of the verses about God's forgiveness in question 3.

b. Write a letter to the Lord confessing once and for all the things that you still feel He has not forgiven. Then burn the letter and thank Him that "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

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Lesson Five: Does God Have a Right Pt. I

Lesson Reference: Chapter 5

Objective: Examine Christian Entitlement

1. Matthew 20:1-16 is the story of a generous landowner. Read this story and then answer these questions.

a. Assuming the landowner represents God, what do we learn about the character of God from this story?

b. What can you observe about human nature and how people tend to respond to the good fortune of others?

c. With which worker do you identify?

d. Why do people tend to think of the landowner as unfair instead of generous?

e. What does this story tell about what God's grace means?

2. Luke 7:1-10 is another helpful story. Read this story and then answer the following questions.

a. On what basis did the Jewish elders appeal to Jesus to heal the centurion's servant?

b. What was the centurion's perspective on what he deserved?

c. Do you tend to operate like the elders or the centurion? Explain.

3. a. According to Luke 17:10, what sort of attitude are we to have about the things we do for the Lord?

b. How easy is it for you to feel that way?

4. What do the following verses say about our right to demand anything from God?

○ Job 41:11

○ Romans 11:35

5. What do the following verses tell us about the source of all that we have?

○ 1 Chronicles 29:14,16

○ Isaiah 26:12

○ Acts 17:25

○ James 1:17

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Lesson Six: Does God Have a Right Pt. II

Lesson Reference: Chapter 5

Objective: Discuss Contentment

1. We are not created equal, nor are we given equal opportunities throughout life. Each of us has our own unique set of circumstances. Those of some people are much more favorable than others. How do you think God wants you to respond to this fact?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 1:20.

a. What does this verse tell you about God's promises and how they are filled?

b. How does this verse help you let go of your expectations and focus on what God has already done?

3. The world is set up on a system of rewards for achievement at school and in the workplace. Why doesn't God use the same system when it comes to our relationship with Him?

4. We are told in 1 Timothy 6:6 that if we stop expecting or demanding certain things, we will enjoy contentment.

a) Are you failing to experience contentment in some areas of your life? If so, name some areas in which you struggle.

b) In which of these areas do you need to take some action?

c) In which areas do you need a change of attitude?

5. Compare and contrast what you think is the gratitude, attitude, and level of contentment between the two groups of laborers in Matthew 20: 1-16.

Lesson Application: *Search your heart. Do you base your hope for improved circumstances in your life on trust in God's love and contentment with whatever He decides, or do you focus on what you think you deserve? Do you think your attitude expresses more humble trust or resentful demanding? Write out a prayer expressing your thoughts and feelings to the Lord.*

b) Give an example of how the wrong motives can completely undermine a good action.

4. a) **Read the following verses and list some of the wrong motives people can have for trying to live a “good” life.**

○ John 12:42-43

○ Galatians 6:12-13

○ Ephesians 2:8-9

○ Colossians 2:16-23

b) What other wrong motives can drive people’s actions?

5. a) **Look at the following verses and list some of the pure or godly motives that *should* be behind our actions.**

- Romans 12:1

- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

- 2 Corinthians 7:1

- Colossians 3:12, 23-24

- Revelation 4:11

b) What other good motives can people have?

Lesson Application: *Memorize one of the following verses. Remind yourself of the vastness of God's grace when you fall into doing things to try to earn His love.*

Jeremiah 31:3; Romans 8:38-39; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Ephesians 2:8-10

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Lesson Eight: Compelled by Love Pt. II

Lesson Reference: Chapter 6

Objective: Examine our Motives for Commitment, Obedience, and Discipline

1. Examine for a moment the motivations behind some of your actions. For each of the following areas of your life, determine how often you think you are motivated by impure motives instead of pure or godly motives. Rate your motives on a scale of 1 to 5 (1= impure motives, 5 = godly motives). ***Be honest with yourself and God***

- ___ Time spent in prayer
- ___ Time spent in praise and worship
- ___ Bible study
- ___ Bible reading
- ___ Memorizing Scripture
- ___ Building relationships with non-Christians
- ___ Helping young Christians grow
- ___ Fellowship with other believers
- ___ Serving others
- ___ Giving financially to God

2. In the previous question you may have become aware of some less-than-pure motives in your life. What do you think you can do to help purify your motives in an area?

3. Share a time when you felt pressured by a sense of duty and obligation in your Christian life instead of a sense of joy, peace, and love.

a) What was the source of this sense of drudgery in your life?

b) What helped you put things back in the right perspective?

4. a) If a person does something even though he doesn't feel like doing it, does that mean his motives are wrong? Explain.

b) How are our feeling and motivations related?

5. Do you think it is possible to keep your motives pure at all times? Explain.

Lesson Application: *Spend more time in prayer and medication. Make a list of all the things you do on a weekly basis to serve God and to enhance your relationship with Him. Ask God to help you evaluate your commitments and the motives behind them. Consider: Are there "good" things you're doing primarily to please others? Is it possible that God may want you to give up any of these? Have you failed to make commitments that you know the Lord has asked you to make?*

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Lesson Nine: The Proof of Love Pt. I

Lesson Reference: Chapter 7

Objective: Discover God's Love Language

1. Read John 14:15, 21,23.

a) Why do you think obedience is such an important way to express our love to God?

b) What do you suppose often makes obedience so difficult?

c) Share a time when you showed the Lord your love through an act of obedience.

2. a) Ephesians 5:17 tell us to "understand what the Lord's will is." God's will is revealed to us in the specific directions given in the ethical commands of Scripture. How does our attitude toward these commands change when we understand His grace and the purpose of the commands?

5. The laws of Moses deal with moral issues are still an important standard because they are the natural outcome of love. Explain what you believe the right decision would be in each of the following situations. How do the Ten Commandments influence your decision, and how is this actually the decision of love?

a) A man meets a woman he finds very attractive. She has the potential to be a close friend in a way his wife has not been. What should he do and not do in relating to this woman? What should he do in his relationship with his wife?

b) A woman finds that she is pregnant with her fourth child. Her husband has just informed her that he is having an affair and will file for divorce. She has no way to support herself. Should she consider having an abortion? Why, or why not?

c) A family is struggling to survive. They never have enough to eat and other necessities are scarce. The husband has an opportunity to make a lot of money on a business deal if he tells some lies in the process. What should he do?

Lesson Application: *Read all Colossians 3 on your own. Ask God to show you what He wants to do in your life this week. Write down your thoughts. If you feel comfortable, share your thoughts with the group. Accountability to others is a great help when it comes to making difficult changes.*

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Lesson Ten: The Proof of Love Pt. II

Lesson Reference: Chapter 8

Objective: Examine & Discuss Sanctification

1. a) **What is the ultimate goal of our obedience?**
 - Romans 8:29

 - 2 Corinthians 3:18

 - Philippians 1:9-11

 - b) What difference does knowing this goal make to you?
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2. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Do you think that growing in our faith is optional?

3. Discuss legalism as it pertains to the following areas. Give a biblical example, a personal/modern day example, and Scriptural reference(s) that speak to that issue.

I. Fences:

II. Differing Opinions:

III. Spiritual Disciplines:

IV. What Others Think:

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Lesson Twelve: The Sufficiency of Grace Pt. I

Lesson Reference: Chapter 10

Objective: Discover the Power of Grace

1. In 2 Corinthians 12:2-10 we find a powerful passage about suffering and the sufficiency of God's grace. Read this passage and then answer the following questions.

a) What explanations does Paul give for why his physical suffering is not removed?

b) Why do you suppose we don't always get a clear explanation of why we are allowed to suffer certain things?

c) Why can God express His power in our lives better through our weaknesses than through our strengths?

2. Think of a weakness in your life. It could be a physical problem, an emotional weakness, or difficult circumstances. In what specific ways have God's power and grace become real in your life through this trial?

3. a) Do you tend to feel closer to God when your life is relatively trouble-free or when you have problems? Why do you think this is the case?

b) Is it necessary for us to experience troubles to be close to God? Why or why not?

c) What can a person who has a pretty easy life do to get close to God short of praying for trials?

4. What attitudes do the men in these passages display toward God in the midst of their suffering?

○ Psalm 13 ---

○ Psalm 73:1-3, 13-17, 23-28 ---

○ Lamentations 3:19-33 ---

5. In the story of the Israelites' wanderings in the wilderness we see the total dependence of man upon God in a dramatic way. Read Deuteronomy 8:2-3.

a) Why do you think it seems so easy for us today to fall into the sin of thinking we are self-sufficient?

b) Why is it a sin to think we are self-sufficient?

6. **What do the following verses say about how God works in our trials?**

Genesis 50:20 ---

Romans 8:28-29 ---

Lesson Application: *Read aloud the poem by Annie Johnson Flint found on pages 183-184. Then express your needs to the Lord and acknowledge His sufficiency. Confess your need to respond more to His working in your life.*

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Lesson Thirteen: The Sufficiency of Grace Pt. II

Lesson Reference: Chapter 11

Objective: Discover the Power of Grace

1. Read 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 and Ephesians 3:8.

a) What was Paul's perspective on his own ability to fulfill the job God had given him to do?

b) How do Paul's words help encourage you in whatever God is asking you to do?

2. **Look at the following verses. How do they drive home the point that it is God who enables us in everything we do?**

○ Isaiah 26:12 ---

○ 1 Corinthians 3:6 ---

○ 2 Corinthians 3:4-6 ---

- Colossians 1:28-29 ---

3. As believers we will stand before the Lord and receive rewards by God's grace based upon how we have lived this life. All of our growth and strength for service come from God. All the fruit of our labors is the result of God's grace. We must labor. God doesn't do that for us. But we must labor in dependence on His grace to enable us. Read 1 Corinthians 3:7-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, and Ephesians 6:7.

a) What is the basis of the rewards we receive as Christians?

b) What happens to the Christians whose labors have had no eternal value?

c) What is the purpose of these rewards? See revelation 4:9-11.

Lesson Application: *What service or ministry has God given to you? (This may include raising your family, teaching Discipleship class, being available for a friend in need, sharing the gospel with a neighbor, etc.) If you are having trouble answering this question, spend some time in prayer, asking God to show you ways you can begin to serve Him right where He has placed you.*

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Lesson Fourteen: Appropriating God's Grace

Lesson Reference: Chapter 12

Objective: Explore How God's grace is applied to our lives and made real in our experience

1. Hebrews 4:14-15 encourages us to go to God in prayer, asking for the grace we need. What does this passage give as some of the reasons why we can approach God with confidence? (See also Hebrews 2:18.)

a) Read Hebrews 7:25 and 1 John 2:1. How could the fact that Christ is interceding for you affect the way you pray?

2. If we are to experience the grace of God, we must regularly expose ourselves to the Word of God. Why is this important or necessary?

3. To experience God's grace, we must humble ourselves and trust that God is in control regardless of the difficulty of our circumstances. Read 1 Peter 5:5-7.

a) What are we told to do in these verses?

b) What is the end result of our humility? When will we receive this end result?

4. God's grace is given to us through the ministry of others. Colossians 3:12-14 gives us a list of qualities that are the result of God's grace at work in our lives.

a) How do the qualities listed in these verses enable us to be ministers of God's grace to others?

b) What do these verses say about how God thinks of us?

Lesson Application: *Choose one of the qualities listed in Colossians 3:12-14 and commit to asking God every day for a week to increase that quality in your life.*