

Summary

- a) This session is the sixth of ten sessions that looks at a vital principle that fosters Spirit-led living.
- b) The sixth principle that we will examine is this: God's grace empowers you to obey what His truth demands, enabling you to abide in Christ deeper and yield Christlike fruit in abundance.

Obedience and Abiding

- a) The abiding life hinges on obedience to Jesus' commandments. As Jesus told His disciples, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love" (John 15:10).
- b) If you read only this verse, it would seem the abiding life is solely dependent upon you. But this is only half the story.
- c) In the new covenant, God changed the *you shall nots* of the law to *I wills*. The Lord took on the responsibility to do a work for you and in you, so you could keep Jesus' commandments.
- d) Under grace, the Lord vowed to do eleven things for you and in you before giving you the requirement to obey His commandments (see Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:25-27).

Grace and Truth in Jesus Christ

- a) John stressed the difference between the law and grace in the first chapter of his gospel, stating, "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17 NKJV).
- b) If you think about it, the external commandments of the law are truth without grace.
- c) Even though these commandments are spiritual, holy, righteous, and good, they have no power to make you spiritual, holy, righteous, and good. These commandments can only expose your weaknesses, sins, and the utter depravity of your flesh.
- d) They are like a mirror, revealing your flaws. But these commandments have no power to fix you. Just as you cannot take a mirror and rub away your blemishes, defects, and wrinkles, no external commandment can make you righteous.
- e) The external commandments of the law are like a scale, saying to the obese person, "You weigh five hundred pounds. Thou shalt lose three hundred pounds." Yet these commandments cannot lift a finger to help the obese person lose a single ounce.
- f) The indwelling Spirit operating by grace, on the other hand, says, "Since you weigh five hundred pounds, I am going to empower you to lose three hundred pounds by giving you a love for fruits, vegetables, and exercise. I will also make junk food, fast food, and a sedentary lifestyle repulsive to you."
- g) Francis Frangipane, in his classic book *Holiness, Truth, and the Presence of God*, said,

If you hear a teaching and feel as though it were unattainable in your condition, you have only heard half the message. You missed the grace that is always resident in the heart of God's truth. Truth without grace is only half true. Remember this always: grace and truth are realized in Jesus Christ (John 1:17). What God's truth demands, His grace will provide.¹
- h) Pay close attention to the last statement. *What God's truth demands, His grace will provide.*
- i) Here's what this means. Whenever God's truth makes demands upon you—be holy as I am holy, be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, make yourself ready, return to your first love, overcome apathy and lukewarmness, purify your heart, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

deny yourself and take up your cross—God’s grace provides you with the power needed to obey these requirements from the heart.

- j) This brings me to the sixth law of the Spirit-led life. God’s grace empowers you to obey what His truth demands, enabling you to abide in Christ deeper and yield Christlike fruit in abundance.
- k) Since many Christians are confused about what grace actually means, I will give my definition of grace and then expound upon it throughout this session.

The Traditional Definition of Grace

- a) If you were to ask many Christians to define grace, in all likelihood you would hear a response such as, “It is the unmerited favor of God that forgives our sins and saves us.”
- b) Although true, it is far from capturing the richest and fullest meaning of grace. This traditional definition merely reveals God is kind and His blessings are free and cannot be merited by good works. Though accurate, it is incomplete, lacking scriptural substance, for grace has a far richer and deeper meaning.
- c) The Greek word for grace is *charis*, which occurs in the New Testament 155 times in 147 verses. As you can see, grace is a vital subject you desperately need to understand.
- d) Strong’s Greek Lexicon defines *charis* as a “benefit, favor, [or] gift.”
- e) Thayer’s Greek Lexicon states grace is “good will, loving-kindness, favor” and “is used of the kindness of a master toward his inferiors or servants, and so especially of God toward men.”
- f) Thayer’s goes on to state grace is “the favor of God or of Christ, to which all blessings, especially spiritual, are due” and “contains the idea of kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved,” granting “to sinners the pardon of their offenses.”
- g) Taking these definitions into consideration, you can see how many evangelical Christians derive the traditionally accepted definition of grace as the “unmerited favor of God that forgives our sins and saves us.”
- h) Though there is definitely truth in this traditional definition, grace goes far beyond the unmerited favor of God, the gift of salvation, and the forgiveness of sins.

Defining Grace

- a) One of the best definitions of grace, defined by Jesus Himself, is when Paul sought deliverance from a thorn in his flesh. After crying out for help three times, Jesus told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).
- b) When Jesus—the Man who was raised from the dead and now shines like the brightness of the sun—defines grace, we need to listen. His definition of grace trumps what any seminary professor, Greek scholar, theologian, world-famous author, or pastor says about grace.
- c) According to Jesus, grace is simply God’s power at work in our weakness. Or put another way, grace is God’s enablement or God’s ability applied to us when we have no power or ability.
- d) This idea is confirmed by both Strong’s and Thayer’s definitions of grace. Strong’s goes on to state that grace is “especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life.”
- e) Did you catch that? Grace is the indwelling Spirit’s influence upon the heart, reflected in the life—or you could say, reflected outwardly in behavior.

- f) This is demonstrated in Acts 11:23 when Barnabas came to the church at Antioch and “saw what the grace of God had done” (NIV). The Holy Spirit’s inner enablement upon the believers’ hearts at Antioch was evident outwardly, resulting in Barnabas seeing the fruit of God’s ability at work.
- g) In addition to Strong’s definition of grace, Thayer’s also states grace is “the spiritual condition of one governed by the power of divine grace.” This description corresponds beautifully with what Jesus said. Grace is power, and when this power governs your life, it results in a favorable spiritual condition.
- h) Several more verses confirm grace is God’s power. For example, Paul said he was made a minister “according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of His power” (Eph. 3:7-8, emphasis mine).
- i) When Luke described the first-century church, he wrote “with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” because “abundant grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33, emphasis mine).
- j) Where there is abundant grace, there is also great power, for grace is the power of God.
- k) Webster’s Dictionary also confirms grace is the power of God, defining grace as “unmerited divine assistance given humans for their regeneration or sanctification.”
- l) So, whether you use the term power, enablement, ability, empowerment, influence, or assistance, grace is far more than unmerited favor, the forgiveness of sins, or salvation. Unfortunately, many Bible-believing, church-attending Christ followers don’t know this.
- m) After studying grace for many hours, looking up all the New Testament Scriptures, consulting various lexicons and dictionaries, and reading numerous books about grace, here is my definition of grace:

Grace is the unmerited power of God, enabling you to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, to be who God calls you to be, and to do what God calls you to do, operating when you are conscious of your need by giving you new desires and the ability to respond to God’s truth from the heart.

- n) Since this is a rich definition, let me break apart the components of this to make it easier to digest.

Grace Is Unmerited

- a) One aspect of grace is not debatable: God’s grace can never be earned.
- b) Paul said, “Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt” (Rom. 4:4 NKJV).
- c) This means grace can only be received, not achieved.
- d) No amount of obedience, good works, or religious discipline can earn more of God’s grace, for grace does not depend upon how long you pray, how often you fast, or how much of the Bible you read.
- e) Grace is absolutely free from human merit or obedience.
- f) Grace is when God does something for you or in you based solely upon His goodness and kindness.
- g) The moment you think you can attain grace by lengthy prayer, extended fasting, or teeth-gritting obedience, then grace has ceased to be grace (see Rom. 11:6).
- h) Grace can never be achieved, only received. And the way to receive grace is by faith.
- i) As Paul said, “It is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace” (Rom. 4:16).

- j) Faith is the secret password that unlocks God's grace. To receive more grace, therefore, you have to stop trying harder and learn to believe better. You have to stop trying to achieve and reprogram your mind to receive.
- k) Faith is the only way you can receive grace and faith does not depend upon your works.
- l) Faith is stirred up within you by simply believing and declaring what Jesus Christ has already finished for you on the cross and what the Holy Spirit has finished in your spirit.

Grace Is Power

- a) Repeating what Jesus told Paul, He said, "My grace is . . . power" (2 Cor. 12:9).
- b) Grace is the Holy Spirit's unmerited power for ability, enabling you to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, to be who God has called you to be, and to do what He has called you to do.
- c) Since grace is power, grace gives you spiritual strength to live victorious. Paul confirmed this when he told Timothy, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1).
- d) So, grace is God's power which makes your spirit strong and results in Christ dwelling fully in your heart, enabling you to live by Christ's indwelling life (see Eph. 3:16-17).
- e) Sadly, many believers fail to live by the grace of God. Yes, they know how to receive God's grace for salvation, but few have been trained and equipped to live by God's grace every day of their lives.
- f) Yet Paul said clearly, "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Col. 2:6). Paul was basically saying, "As you received grace when you were born again, live by grace every moment of your life."
- g) The power of God, the power of His grace, did for you what you could never do: saved you, gave you a new spirit that is righteous, holy, and Christlike, raised you up with Christ, and seated you with Christ in heavenly places.
- h) And if the power of God's grace did all of this for you at salvation, He will certainly give you the power of His grace to live a victorious, overcoming life—to live by His indwelling life.
- i) Living by grace is learning how to rely on the Lord's resident, resurrection power for ability, so you might become like Jesus in motive, thought, and deed, and live as He lived, relying moment by moment on the Spirit for life, power, and assistance.

Grace Enables You to Overcome

- a) Contrary to many popular teachings today, grace doesn't cover sin or excuse sin. Grace gives you the power to overcome sin.
- b) Grace is the power that transforms you internally, so you can live like Christ lived. Grace is the power that changes you from the inside out, so you can demonstrate to the world what Jesus Christ is actually like.
- c) Paul wrote, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:11-12).
- d) Notice God's grace instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly.

- e) The Greek word for instructing literally means “to train children.” This word stresses training, correction, and discipline not the impartation of knowledge.
- f) If you read my book *The Eternal Blueprint*, you probably remember the Greco-Roman adoption process I described in great detail. A young, immature heir is groomed by a child trainer for his father’s inheritance. The father appointed one of his slaves to prepare the child for heirship through intense discipline and correction. The slave’s mandate was to remove every trace of immaturity, rebellion, independence, and selfishness from the young child, so he would not squander his father’s inheritance when he was deemed mature enough to handle it.
- g) Similarly, the indwelling Spirit, who is the “Spirit of grace,” is your personal child-trainer (Heb. 10:29). As your child-trainer, the indwelling Spirit gives you greater measures of grace so that you can experience deeper levels of sanctification.
- h) As the word instructing implies, the Spirit’s grace trains, corrects, and disciplines you so you might overcome sin, live a holy life, and eventually be placed as a mature son into Christ’s eternal inheritance (see Rev. 21:7).
- i) Everything Jesus calls you to overcome in Revelation 2-3—including losing your first love, compromising in the face of persecution, false doctrines, the influence of Jezebel, apathy and indifference, and lukewarmness—is only possible by God’s enabling grace.
- j) With all this in mind, if you hear any teaching about grace that gives you liberty to compromise, flirt with the world, live selfishly, or sin, I assure you it’s not biblical grace. True grace gives you the power to overcome sin, not be overcome by sin.

Grace Enables You to Be

- a) In our success-oriented, bigger-is-better American culture, an unfortunate mindset has crept into the thinking patterns of many Christians. It is a belief system that places a higher priority and value on what we do rather than on who we are.
- b) Many believers, when seeking to know God’s will, focus all of their energy on what they are supposed to do instead of who they are supposed to be.
- c) Don’t get me wrong. Whether you are an accountant, pastor, writer, software developer, teacher, missionary, stay-at-home mom, or entrepreneur what you do is important. But it’s not more important than who you are and who you are called to be.
- d) Paul said, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10).
- e) In Christ, grace makes you who you are. More than your genetics, education, and ethnicity, grace is what truly makes you who you are.
- f) Anything godly you have—whether joy in the midst of trials, peace during a crisis, uncompromising resolve in the face of temptation, integrity in a world of broken promises, or selfless love in an age of narcissism—is a result of God’s grace working in your life.

Grace Enables You to Become Who God Calls You to Be

- a) Not only does grace make you who you are, but grace enables you to become who God has called you to be. This goes far behind your ministry calling. I am talking about your eternal calling to be the inheritance of the Father as a mature, Christlike son and the inheritance of Christ as His equally yoked bride (see Eph. 1:17-18; Heb. 2:10; Rev. 19:7).

- b) Grace is also how you inherit eternal intimacy, eternal glory, and eternal authority. Paul said, “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).
- c) Your eternal inheritance in Christ, summarized by eternal intimacy, eternal authority, and eternal glory, is not an automatic birthright of the believer. It is given to believers who overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil (see Rev. 21:7). And make no mistake about it—overcoming in this way is only possible by God’s grace.
- d) Like Paul said, God’s grace builds you up, sanctifies you, and enables you to inherit all God’s promises—both in this age and in the age to come.
- e) Grace is the only way you can be transformed into the likeness of Christ, become an overcomer, be made ready as the wife of the Lamb, and be placed as a mature son into the inheritance of Christ for all eternity (see Rom. 8:29; Rev. 2-3; Rev. 21:7).
- f) A significant aspect of becoming God’s inheritance and sharing in Christ’s inheritance is having Christ formed in your heart and soul. And this can only happen as you receive ample supplies of God’s grace on a daily basis.
- g) To be God’s inheritance and to share in Christ’s inheritance requires a pure heart established in righteousness. This was one of Jesus’ primary themes in His famous Sermon on the Mount. He called believers to have a heart of humility, meekness, mercy, righteousness, purity, integrity, and love. This challenging mandate can only be fulfilled in one way: by God’s grace.
- h) Grace makes you who you are, and grace enables you to be who you are called to be—in motive, thought, desire, and deed. Paul made this clear when he wrote,

To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power . . . according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 1:11-12)
- i) According to Paul, grace enables you to become worthy of your calling by having the desire for goodness and the work of faith established fully in your heart and soul.

Grace Enables Spiritual Alignment

- a) God desires to align your living condition with your legal position. Even though God sees you in Christ as righteous, crucified, resurrected, ascended, enthroned, and victorious, He desires to close the gap between who you are in Christ and who you are in experience.
- b) Grace is how the Spirit closes this gap, aligning your living condition with your legal position. Grace is how the Spirit actually makes you righteous and victorious in your heart, soul, and body. And grace is how the Spirit actually gives you authority to reign in life, even when facing trials, tribulations, and testing.
- c) Along these lines, Graham Cooke said, “Grace is God’s empowering presence that enables you to become the person that God sees when He looks at you. Who you truly are in Christ.”
- d) When God’s grace operates in your life, His enabling power transforms you into who you already are in Christ.

Grace Enables You to Do

- a) I don’t know about you, but when it comes to God’s grace, my observation is many believers swing from one end of the pendulum to the other.

- b) Before we receive a revelation of grace, we labor endlessly doing works for God, often to the point of exhaustion and burnout. But then, after receiving a revelation of grace, many retreat into passivity, apathy, and lukewarmness, doing nothing at all, claiming grace as an excuse not to exert any effort. Both are ditches you can fall into.
- c) Dallas Willard said, “Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning.”
- d) Paul, speaking about how grace empowers you to work and labor, said, “His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me” (1 Cor. 15:10).
- e) Carefully observe what Paul said here. I labored even more than all of them. That means Paul worked tirelessly to advance the gospel, to the point of being poured out like a drink offering (see Phil. 2:17). But Paul did not work like this by his own power. He said yet not I, but the grace of God with me.
- f) Grace enabled Paul to work, labor, travel, preach, minister, write, plant new churches, build up existing churches, correct, rebuke, pray, and suffer. Grace enabled Paul to do what God had called him to do.

Grace for Good Works

- a) Augustine said, “Grace is given not because we have done good works but in order that we may have power to do them.” Paul said, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).
- b) Expressed in modern-day terms, God wrote your biography before the foundation of the world, and He calls you to live according to His script.
- c) But here’s what you have to realize about your God-given story: It is impossible to fulfill it in your own strength or power. Grace—and grace alone—is how you receive the ability to do what God has called you to do.
- d) Whether God has called you to be an engineer, author, housewife, software programmer, pastor, consultant, athlete, coach, or missionary, one thing is clear: God’s grace is what gives you the ability to do what He has called you to do.

Grace Enables You to Multiply Your Talents

- a) Paul said, “Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly” (Rom. 12:6).
- b) Grace gives you gifts and talents, which you need to do what God has called you to do. Peter basically expressed the same truth, stating, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:10).
- c) Grace not only enables you to be who God has called you to be. Grace empowers you to do what God called you to do, enabling you to be a good steward of the gifts and talents the Lord has graciously given you.
- d) Never forget the servant in the parable of the talents, who was severely rebuked and judged because he failed to multiply the gifts, talents, and resources the Lord gave him through diligent work, discipline, and labor (see Matt. 25:24-30).
- e) If “grace” has put you to sleep spiritually and you no longer labor by the Spirit to advance the gospel—employing the gifts, talents, and resources the Lord gave you—you are no longer living by grace. You are squandering and wasting grace, for which you (and I) will give an account at the judgment seat of Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:10).

- f) That's why Paul warned us not to receive the grace of God in vain but to labor by God's grace for the sake of the gospel (see 2 Cor. 6:1).

Grace Operates When You Know Your Need

- a) Referring to Paul's cry for deliverance from his thorn in the flesh, Jesus answered him, saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).
- b) We already saw grace is power. But notice carefully the optimum context for God's grace to operate within you. Jesus said power is perfected in weakness. This is probably not the news you wanted to hear.
- c) Because of the fall, sin has made us inherently self-reliant, proud, and fiercely independent. As the enemy told Eve, the fruit from the tree of knowledge transformed us into our own gods (see Gen. 3:5 KJV). That means the last thing any of us want to do is rely on God.
- d) In our stubborn pride, most of us would rather get a root canal than be weak, broken, and impotent. Like the four-year old who insists I can do it, we insist on living for God in the power of the soul until the cross has worked within us, stripping, breaking, and crucifying us.
- e) But once you taste of the beauty and glory of the exchanged life, where Christ lives rather than you, your perspective changes. You begin to view weakness different.
- f) "Most gladly," wrote Paul, after Jesus invited him to rely on His grace, "I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Cor. 12:9). Weakness, brokenness, and impotence—including the humble realization, acceptance, and embracing of these conditions—is the only way the power of Christ may dwell in you.
- g) After Paul received a revelation of grace operating in weakness, he boldly proclaimed, "Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).
- h) Catch the last phrase: When I am weak, then I am strong.
- i) This is a life-changing paradox that confronts stubborn self-reliance face to face. If you are weak—and you realize, accept, and embrace it—then the resurrection power of Jesus Christ, His unmerited grace, will operate in your life. When you are weak, then you are strong, for it's only when you have come to the end of yourself that the Spirit's power for ability operates within you.
- j) Grace is diametrically opposed to pride, for God resists the proud but He gives grace to the humble (see James 4:6). Humility is exchanging self-reliance and living by self-life in your soul for relational dependence upon Christ and living by His indwelling life in your spirit.
- k) This type of humility positions you for what James called greater grace (see James 4:6). And you desperately need the fullest measure of grace to please the Lord, overcome sin, become who He wants you to be, and do what He wants you to do.

Apart from Christ You Can Do Nothing

- a) When Jesus taught on the abiding life, He said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).
- b) This doesn't mean you can't live for God, work for God, and serve God in the power of the soul. This is what many in the church are presently doing, and it's why the church is in such a mess. No, Jesus was referring to bearing true spiritual fruit—the fruit of union with His indwelling Spirit.
- c) What I am about to say is both humbling and freeing: who God has called you to be, what God has called you to do, and the life God offers you to live in Christ is humanly impossible.

- d) Just as you can't save yourself, place yourself into Christ, raise yourself up with Christ, and seat yourself with Christ in heavenly places, living by the indwelling life of Christ is humanly impossible.
- e) "Not by might nor by power," said the Lord through the prophet Zechariah, "but by My Spirit" (Zech. 4:6).
- f) If the Lord doesn't do it by His Spirit, we are simply doomed. There is no hope for us, no solution for our depravity, and no remedy for our condition.
- g) Paul realized this in his struggle with the flesh, proclaiming, "Nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (Rom. 7:18). He also told the Corinthians, "I am nothing" (2 Cor. 12:11 NKJV).
- h) The sooner we realize that apart from Christ we are nothing, we can do nothing, and nothing good dwells in our flesh, the sooner we can rely upon God's supernatural grace and live by Christ's indwelling life.
- i) In prayer, I like to say to the Lord *I am nothing, I can do nothing, and in my flesh dwells no good thing*. This reminds me afresh of my great need for God's empowering grace. This helps me remember that it is not by might nor by power, but it is truly by His Spirit alone.

Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

- a) Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). The NLT puts it this way: "God blesses those who . . . realize their need for him."
- b) Poverty of spirit is knowing your absolute and utter need of God and His empowering grace. Poverty of spirit is becoming like a spiritual beggar, who truly realizes apart from God's enabling grace you can never be transformed into a worthy bride for Jesus or an overcoming son for the Father.
- c) Poverty of spirit is sheer reliance on God and His power to conform you into the image of His Son, so you can be the inheritance He desires.
- d) The Laodicean church, whom Jesus severely rebuked, was the polar opposite of poverty of spirit. Their pride and self-satisfaction blinded them to their true condition. They simply could not see their utter need for God's enabling, transforming grace.
- e) Jesus explicitly told them, "You do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (Rev. 3:17, emphasis mine).
- f) Their greatest problem was not being wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, for God's grace is powerful enough to transform the rankest of sinners into a worthy bride for the Lamb.
- g) The real issue was the Laodiceans were oblivious to their utter depravity. They were blinded to their desperate need for God's enabling, transforming grace.

The Flesh Is Worthless to God

- a) Though God loves you deeply, the flesh is worthless to God. Only Christ—Christ in you, Christ living in you, and Christ living through you to produce fruit from His indwelling life—has any value to God and is pleasing to Him.
- b) Jesus condemned the flesh once and for all on the cross. Those who still live in the flesh cannot please God.
- c) Until you see the flesh as God sees it, both the evil side expressed by lawlessness, depravity, and defiling sins, and the good side expressed by self-righteousness and good works from the soul, the operation of grace will be limited within you.

- d) But when you know your utter need of God's grace, then His transforming power for ability can operate within you, enabling you to be who God has called you to be and to do what God has called you to do.

Grace Gives You New Desires to Obey

- a) Paul said, "You are not under law but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).
- b) Being under grace does not minimize the need for obedience. Rather, grace changes the way you obey and the depth at which you obey.
- c) Instead of external compliance, behavior modification, and bodily restraint produced by the law, grace transforms your spirit and heart, giving you the desire to obey God fully.
- d) Grace changes obedience from a grin-and-bear-it obligation in the power of the soul to a delight and joy in the power of the Spirit. Grace doesn't make obedience optional but possible.
- e) When grace transforms your heart, it gives you new desires to prize humility above pride, meekness above stubbornness, peace above anxiety, and obedience to God's Word above the passing pleasures of sin and conformity to culture.
- f) How, then, do you receive more grace so your heart can be transformed, and you can obey God fully? By welcoming the Spirit of grace to dwell fully in your heart and allowing Him to live His life in you and through you (see Eph. 3:16-17).

Divine Influence Upon the Heart

- a) As mentioned earlier, Strong's defines grace as "divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life."
- b) When grace influences your heart, you develop new desires that want to obey God fully. As a result, your new godly desires affect your thinking, motives, behavior, and actions.
- c) Grace changes the obligation to obey God to the desire to obey God.
- d) Grace gives you a new want to in your spirit, which eventually works its way into your heart, soul, and body (see Rom. 7:22 NIV).
- e) When you live by grace, allowing the Spirit of grace to dwell in your heart fully and live His life through you, your spirit's intrinsic desire to obey God's commandments begins permeating your heart. This enables you to be obedient from the heart, changing robotic compliance to external commandments to a burning passion in your heart to obey God's commandments and voice fully.

Most of the Church Is Focused on the Externals

- a) For centuries, because the church had so little understanding of the heart, the entire emphasis was on externals—what they did for God, how they lived for God, how they served God, and what they built for God.
- b) For almost two thousand years, the church related to God externally when the Lord designed us, regenerated us, and chose to dwell within us so we could relate to Him internally.
- c) What would it look like if we started living from the inside out rather than the outside in? What could we become if we broke the religious pattern passed down from generation to generation, which focused on the externals?

- d) What could we accomplish if we exchanged working with our hands to working from our hearts—waiting on the Lord to change our hearts, empower our obedience, and give us His precise instructions and directions?
- e) The only way to find out what this would look like corporately is to begin individually. One person at a time learning to live from their heart, empowered by God's grace.
- f) When grace changes your heart, you do things because you want to rather than doing them because you have to.
- g) Grace doesn't just change your actions. Grace changes the motives and intentions behind your actions.
- h) Grace makes obedience to God's commandments as natural as breathing, causing sin to be appalling rather than appealing and righteousness to be beautiful rather than boring.
- i) Grace is the triumph of desire over the burden of demand—inspiring obedience from a transformed heart yearning to obey God, evicting the legalistic tendencies of external compliance and outward conformity.

Grace Motivates You to Respond

- a) Grace motivates you to respond to God's prior work in your heart with full and complete obedience.
- b) Recall from session 6 that the Holy Spirit is the helper not the doer. The indwelling Spirit will do His part, but He expects you to do your part as well. You have a vital role in working out your salvation.
- c) When it comes to living by grace, many believers make the grave mistake of becoming passive. After realizing grace is unmerited and is received not achieved, many fear nullifying God's grace by their effort and end up doing nothing. This is a catastrophic mistake.
- d) Grace is not opposed to effort; grace is opposed to earning. And there is a huge difference between the two.
- e) Many sincere Christ followers think if they obey enough, pray enough, fast enough, read the Bible enough, or witness enough, then God will like them, accept them, endue them with power, and bless their circumstances.
- f) This mindset hinders God's enabling power from flowing into their lives because they are trying to earn grace.
- g) On the other hand, effort revolves around doing your part in cooperation with God's enabling grace. In this partnership of grace, the Lord will not do your part, and you can't do His part.
- h) Take note of the following statements:
 - God doesn't give you His grace because you pray but when you pray.
 - God doesn't give you His grace because you fast but when you fast.
 - God doesn't give you His grace because you read the Bible but when you read the Bible.
- i) This means prayer, fasting, and reading the Word are spiritual disciplines positioning you to receive more of God's endless supply of abundant grace. These practices do not put God into a corner, demanding His favor because you performed up to some religious standard.

Grace Is Always Prior

- a) Paul said, “Just as you have always obeyed . . . work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13).
- b) Even though grace is not mentioned in this verse, it is a beautiful description of living under grace. What some have called the division of labor between you and God under grace.
- c) Simply put, the indwelling Spirit is always at work within you, stirring and stimulating your heart to fully carry out the Lord’s requirements.
- d) God’s work within you is always prior, but you still have a solemn responsibility to respond to the work He initiates with wholehearted obedience.
- e) If you ignore, suppress, or reject His prior work, you will squander God’s grace and waste His precious work within you.

Your Responsibility in Grace

- a) Even though God is at work in you for His good pleasure, living by grace is all about respond-ability. You are responsible to respond to God’s ability.
- b) Corrie Ten Boom said, “It is not my ability, but my response to God’s ability, that counts.”
- c) Under grace, you are responsible to respond in obedience to the new desires God works into your heart. Living by grace is working out by obedience what God has already worked into your spirit.
- d) Many believers who understand grace misunderstand their responsibility in grace.
- e) Clearly seeing how God has taken their responsibility under the law and fulfilled it Himself, they mistakenly believe they have no responsibility but to worship. But Paul made it clear you do have an obligation under grace and that is to live from your spirit and put to death the sinful deeds of your body by the Holy Spirit’s power (see Rom. 8:12-13).
- f) Under grace, you are commanded to not let sin reign in your body and to consecrate your body to God as a living sacrifice (see Rom. 6:12; Rom. 12:1).
- g) You are called to cooperate with grace by denying yourself, taking up your cross daily, following Jesus wherever He goes, and obeying all of His commandments.
- h) Grace motivates you to respond to God’s prior work in your spirit—to work out the salvation in your spirit fully into your heart, soul, and body.
- i) The Lord does not just mandate your obedience. He mandates that you also rely on Him to fully obey. This is why Jesus’ yoke is easy and light, for whatever God’s truth demands, His grace provides.
- j) When you respond to God’s prior work in your heart, asking Jesus for the grace to obey Him fully, you will discover the joy of being yoked to Christ in moment-by-moment, relational dependence upon Him.

¹ Francis Frangipane, *Holiness, Truth, and the Presence of God* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2011), p. 23 in the Kindle App.