

Grace – The Missing Ingredient that Keeps You Stuck and Unable to Change

I. Focus on Making a Disciple as Well as Solving the Problem

Six Elements of Disciple-Making Homework

A. Prayer

- Specifically
 - For their spouse to see them changing and to be encouraged
 - For me to have wisdom to know what to do
 - For them to see what God wants them to see about themselves
- Progressively
 - Praying Together
 - Fasting (use Bill Bright’s booklet, “7 Basic Steps”)
 - Day of prayer
 - Use “Valley of Vision” – collection of Puritan prayers
 - Set up a prayer journal

B. Bible Reading

C. Scripture Memory

- Select verses that are related to the rest of the homework that week
- Have a list with different categories for you to choose from (see website)

D. Worship Attendance / Small Group Attendance

E. Other Good Resources (Reading or Listening)

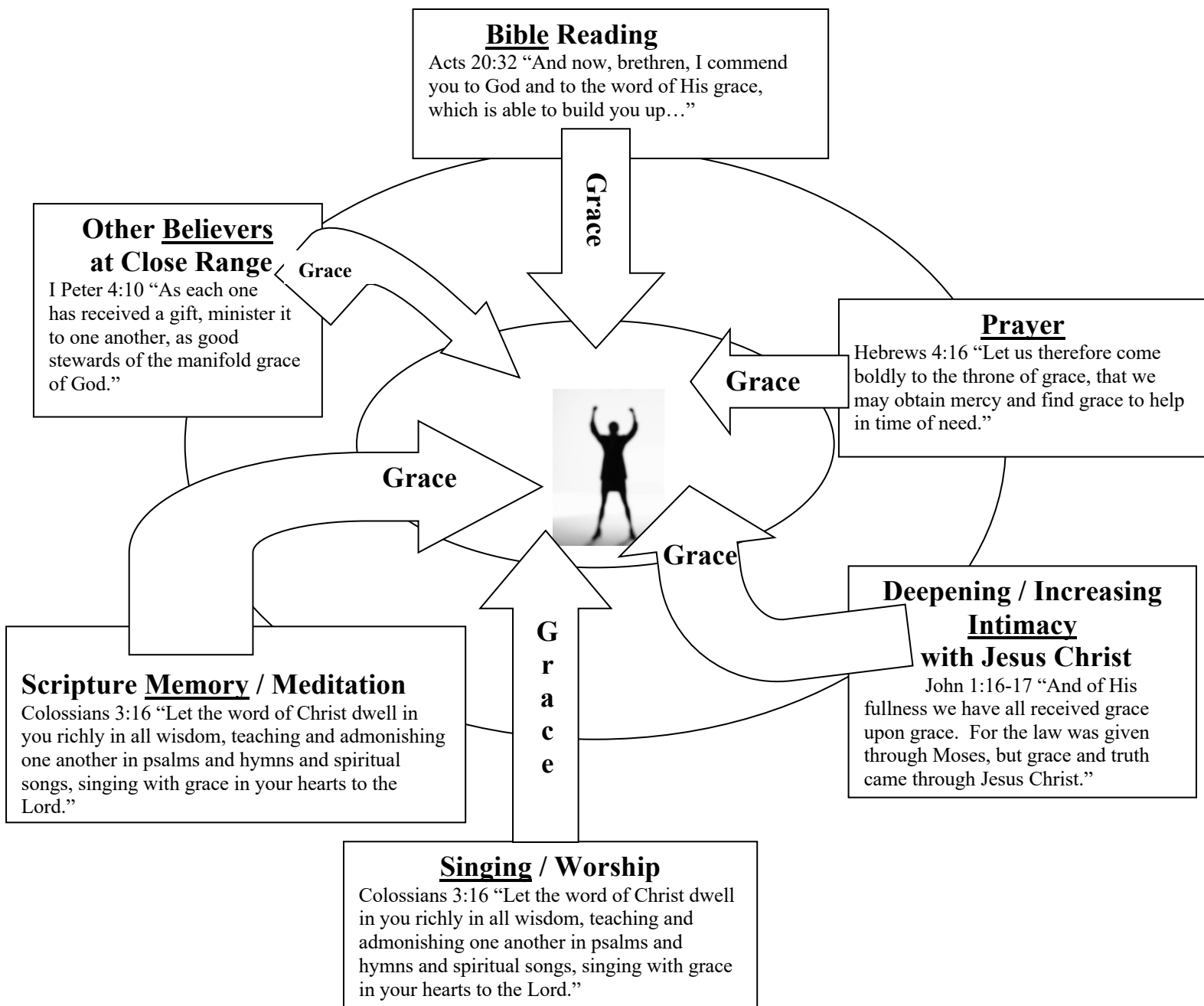
- CCEF site
- BCC site
- P&R site
- Faith Baptist Counseling (Lafayette, IN)
- Focus Publishing
- New Growth Press

F. Practical Works

James 1:22-24 “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.”

- Log List
- Loving Deeds / Humbling Acts of Service
- Date Night
- Couch Time
- Pride Interviews
- Y Diagram – teach it to someone else this week
- Catch Yourself
- Floor Tile
- Assign them to serve somewhere in the church (nursery, parking, welcome counter, sermon CD counter, setting up for conference, helping at VBS, etc.)

II. Show Them How to Tap into God’s Channels of Grace



“When my husband died, my world was so shaken that out of sheer survival I began to sing hymns to my soul each night. (In my book *The God of All Comfort*, I tell what a key part great music and its truth-filled lyrics played in helping me survive.) 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 especially was helped by Tim Keller’s sermons from Redeemer.com because they got to the root of my problem.)

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.) 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.

It was her CHOICE as to where she was going to turn, and what she was going to do... and she had to put forth EFFORT. It was not going to happen automatically.

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."

Look at the prescription:

God's Grace  **My Effort**  **God's Grace**

- **Singing** – "For two years, I sang all the verses to "Be Still My Soul" every night."
- **Bible** – "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."
- **Other Believers at Close Range** – "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.)"
- **Bible / Other Believers at Close Range** – "I got counseling from a wise Christian counselor."
- **Meditation / Other Believers at Close Range** – "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)."
- **Prayer** – "I started praying through the Psalms so that I was not just pouring out my own thoughts but using the very words of God."
- **Praise** – "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."

Where are You?

Taken from *Prayer* by Tim Keller, p. 258-260

Are you "sailing"?

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Sailing means you are living the Christian life with the wind at your back. God is real to your heart. You often feel his love. You see prayers being answered. When studying the Bible, you regularly see remarkable things and you sense him speaking to you. You sense people around you being influenced by the Spirit through you.

Are you “rowing”?

Rowing means you are finding prayer and Bible reading to be more a duty than a delight. God often (though not always) seems distant, and the sense of his presence is fairly rare. You don't see many of your prayers being answered. You may be struggling with doubts about God and yourself. Yet despite all this, you refuse self-pity or the self-righteous pride that assumes you know better than God how your life should go. You continue to read the Bible and pray regularly, you attend worship and reach out and serve people despite the inner spiritual dryness.

Are you “drifting?”

Drifting means that you are experiencing all the conditions of rowing- spiritual dryness and difficulties in life. But in response, instead of rowing, you are letting yourself drift. You don't feel like approaching and obeying God, so you don't pray or read. You give in to the self-centeredness that naturally comes when you feel sorry for yourself, and you drift into self-indulgent behaviors to comfort yourself, whether it be escape eating and sleeping, sexual practices, or whatever else.

Are you “sinking”?

Eventually your boat, your soul, will drift away from the shipping lanes as it were- and truly lose any forward motion in the Christian life. The numbness of heart can become hardness because you give in to thoughts of self-pity and resentment. If some major difficulty or trouble were to come into your life, it would be possible to abandon your faith and identity as a Christian altogether.

Conclusion -

In this metaphor we see that there are some things we are responsible for, such as using the means of grace- the Bible, prayer, and church participation- in a disciplined way. There are many other things we do not have much control over- such as how well the circumstances in our lives are going as well as our emotions. If you pray, worship, and obey despite negative circumstances and feelings, you won't be drifting, and when the winds come up again, you will move ahead swiftly. On the other hand, if you do *not* apply the means of grace, you will at best be drifting and if storms come into your life, you might be in danger of sinking.

In any case, you should practice the spiritual disciplines no matter what. *And practicing them is a lot like rowing*, and sometimes it is like rowing in the dark- you won't feel that you are making any progress at all. Yet you are, and when the winds rise again, and they surely will, you will sail again before them.

III. Help Them to Recognize and Repent of Any ‘Grace Blockers’

A. Pride

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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
- Physical Appearance
- A Material Thing

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- 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'

New Assignment

Name(s):	
Date:	Session #:

1. Pray *specifically* for the counseling process at least 3x this week

- Pray for yourself** that God would help you see what He wants you to see about yourself - and where you need to repent, change and grow.
- Pray for your counselor** to have wisdom and insight – to know where to work and what to do.
- Pray for your spouse** (if marriage counseling) to be encouraged in the process and to see the changes being made in your life.
- Set up a **prayer journal**
- Pray together as a couple** – husband, you initiate the prayer time.

2. **Attend:** Sunday Worship Small Group Other
Record principles that you can apply to your life right now. Come ready to share them.

3. Bible Reading:

Read the scripture passage(s) at least 5 different times (don't sit down and read it all in one sitting).

Record the day/time you read.

Record principles that you can apply to your life right now.

4. Memorize word perfect and be ready to explain:

5. Read / Listen:

- Underline the 10 most important sentences to you
- Write a 3-5 sentence summary of the reading and how it applies to your life
- Listen to the sermon CD _____

6. Do / Other:

Charges/Materials:
Next Appointment:

Our Part of Biblical Change: Prayer + Bible Study + Correct Thinking + Effort (I Timothy 4:7-9)
