

The *Extraordinary Grace* Study

CHAPTER 1
HEARING THE CALL OF GRACE—ABRAM

QUESTION TO PONDER: If you could have God audibly speak to you right now as He did to Abraham, what would you want to hear? What question would you want Him to answer?

Read Genesis 11:26–12:9.

With the information you have about Abram before God spoke, how difficult do you think it would have been to obey God's directions?

How do you relate to this in your own life? Has there been a time when you knew what God wanted you to do but found it difficult to follow Him?

What specific things did God promise Abram in Genesis 12:1-3?

Genesis 12:9 says that Abram's journey to the Negev progressed in "stages." What does this mean to you today regarding your own journey?

Go back to the question to ponder. Has your perspective changed after looking at Abram's response and God's promises? If so, how?

Abram's life is the pattern for the modern believer in Jesus. He heard the call of grace. He believed God. He responded to the call by obeying, by acting on that call. How have you heard the call of grace and responded?

CHAPTER 2
LAUGHING BECAUSE OF GRACE—ABRAHAM

QUESTION TO PONDER: Have you ever had the experience of starting over? Describe this time of your life and the questions and feelings you went through.

In Genesis 18, we see that God meets Abraham at the oaks of Mamre. What is the significance of God meeting him at a tree? What other “trees” do we see in Scripture, and why do you think this is a significant place?

Earlier Abraham’s fear button was pushed by the Egyptians. What is your fear button, and how is it pushed?

What comfort do you get from God saying to Abraham, “Do not be afraid . . .”? Do you think God wants to speak to your deepest need through His grace?

Have you ever tried to manipulate circumstances? Ever tried to help God stay on your timetable? Has that effort thwarted God's work of grace in your life?

Fear leads to adversity. Grace leads to blessing. Fear causes pain and hurt. Grace yields laughter.

Read John 8:31–59. Those talking with Jesus bring up Abraham. How did Jesus use Abraham's life to present the truth about Himself? How did Jesus compare Himself with Abraham?

On the surface this seems like a heated argument at best, but how is Jesus loving these people who do not believe in Him? (He could have not engaged with them at all.)

Spend some time identifying the fears you have and ways you have "controlled." Confess your fear to God and give Him control over those areas of your life.

CHAPTER 3
THE WAY OF DISGRACE, OR,
LESSONS FROM A PROSTITUTE—RAHAB

QUESTION TO PONDER: What “past” do you have that makes you identify with Rahab? Is there anything you’ve done that makes you feel like you are disqualified from God loving you?

Read Joshua 2.

Put yourself in the place of someone inside Jericho. What would be going through your mind and why?

Compare and contrast the fear that Rahab had with the fear of Abraham. How did the two handle their fear?

Rahab lived an immoral life. Does it surprise you that God would spare her? Why or why not?

Is there a Rahab in your life, someone you think would never respond to God or be a candidate for God's grace? From this story, how can you effectively communicate God's love to this person?

What was Rahab's deepest need, and how did God meet that need?

How were others around Rahab affected by the grace she received?

Why do you think the story of Rahab is preserved for us today?

The walls of Jericho fell, but even more miraculous, the walls of our hearts can fall, and we can allow the grace of God to forgive and cleanse. Have you experienced this? Spend some time thanking God for His extraordinary grace.

CHAPTER 4
FINAGLING GRACE—TAMAR

QUESTION TO PONDER: Revenge is a common theme in film and fiction. How have you battled revenge in your life? Have you felt like getting back at someone recently? Are there some people too far gone for God to change?

Read Genesis 38.

As Tamar watched God eliminate her first and second husbands, what do you think went through her mind?

Put yourself in her place, in this arranged marriage, in this influential family. How would you have felt?

After Onan died and Tamar went into mourning, what do you think was happening in her heart?

Have you ever been promised something that didn't come to pass? How did this affect you and the other person?

When Tamar is discovered to be pregnant, Judah is ready to pass judgment. But Tamar's planning and cunning prevents this. What do we learn from Judah's admission in Genesis 38:26?

What was the deepest longing of Tamar's heart?

What is the deepest longing of your heart, and how do you think God wants to meet you there?

CHAPTER 5

THE APPLICATION OF GRACE, OR, WE WOULDN'T HAVE PSALM 51 WITHOUT THIS STORY—DAVID

QUESTION TO PONDER: Have you ever been surprised by the fall of a respected believer? How did this affect your relationship with the person and your view of God?

Read 2 Samuel 11.

Identify the underlying reasons for David's immorality with Bathsheba. Describe the lengths to which he tried to cover it up.

Read the account of Nathan's visit with David. Why do you think God sent the prophet?

Give three reasons why you think God used a story to convict David.

Have you ever been convicted of sin through unconventional means?

Read Psalm 51. How can you tell David is not just a man who is sorry he was caught but is a man filled with repentance?

Do you think David felt the forgiveness of God in his life? Why or why not?

David's story doesn't end with his failures. He isn't disqualified from life. Yes, there are dire consequences, but God shows His love and compassion in forgiving David. Have you ever experienced this kind of sorrow and mercy?

CHAPTER 6
PURSUED BY DESIRE, OVERTAKEN BY GRACE
—BATHSHEBA

QUESTION TO PONDER: Is there something you've done or failed to do that you feel God is punishing you for? What are the similarities of the story of Bathsheba to the modern-day issues of sexual immorality?

Read 2 Samuel 12:15–24.

The death of a child rips hearts apart and can tear relationships. In this account of losing an infant, we only see the perspective of David. What do you think Bathsheba is going through?

Compare and contrast the affair with Bathsheba, their first encounter, to what happened at this point in their relationship.

If “grace is a choice,” how does this story of David and Bathsheba exhibit that truth?

If you’ve asked God to forgive you of a wrong you committed in the past but still feel God is mad at you, have you really allowed yourself to receive grace?

Name some of the ways that you might be able to move to the next step in your relationship with God and receive His mercy.

CHAPTER 7
ANSWERING THE GREATEST QUESTION
—SOLOMON

QUESTION TO PONDER: What comes to mind immediately when you read this question: If God said, “Ask for whatever you want Me to give you,” how would you respond?

Read 1 Kings 3:5–9.

Break down Solomon’s answer to God’s question. What did Solomon proclaim, and what did he ask?

How did God respond to Solomon in 1 Kings 3:10–15?

Why do you think God was so generous with Solomon?

Do you think God wants to be generous with you, or is His blessing only for other people?

Looking at the totality of his life, Solomon made many mistakes. Like his father, his heart was led astray. In spite of this, God gave grace. What does this say to you about the grace available to your life?

How has God changed the desires of your heart over time? Compare how you would have answered the first question in this study earlier in your life with how you would answer it today.

CHAPTER 8
HE ALMOST MISSED GRACE IN A MANGER
—JOSEPH

QUESTION TO PONDER: Have you ever made a decision, big or small, when you almost missed something really good? Or, have you made a decision and chosen a path that led you away from something good?

Read Matthew 1:18–25.

Joseph had decided what he was going to do in this situation. Why do you think God went to these extraordinary lengths to change his mind?

How do you think Joseph's actions toward Mary affected Jesus? As the boy heard this story told later, how do you think it influenced Him?

How did Joseph respond to God? Do you see parallels between how Joseph acted and the responses of others we have studied?

“Grace is not about convincing others to believe.” Do you agree with this statement? How does this influence the way you interact with others about spiritual things?

The telltale sign that grace has invaded your life is when you want to give it to others. Have you seen that kind of grace at work in you?

Have you ever had a chance to “stick it” to someone and held back? How did that feel to absorb the pain they had inflicted instead of lashing out?

If Jesus was grace deployed, how might God want to deploy His grace through you?

CHAPTER 9
GRACE MADE FLESH—JESUS

QUESTION TO PONDER: If an outsider were to look at your life and judge all Christians by the grace you give, what would they observe? Give specific examples of the positive and negative.

In John 1 we read that Jesus was the Word made flesh. Jesus was God's perfect communication to a needy world. What does it mean to you that He was "Grace made flesh"?

Read John 3:1–21. As you read, focus on the theme of the grace of God.

How does this passage detail God's extraordinary grace?

Why do you think Christians can live with so little grace to give to others?

Walk through the final prayer on pages 145–146. How do you see the characters we have studied reflected in this prayer?

Would you add anything to the prayer?

Pray the prayer slowly, from the heart, emphasizing the parts that mean the most to you today.