

Theme: Christians enjoy their relationship with Jesus as they regularly practice the habits of grace - those activities which God has promised to use to give His grace and joy to His people.

## I. Intro - Series on the Habits of Grace

- A. Elders talking about topics for teachings
- B. Basics of walking with God are asked about a lot
- C. I was reading book on Habits of Grace
- D. We will do a short 5 week series on this

## II. The Habits of Grace

### A. Understanding the habits of grace

The habits of grace (sometimes called the means of grace, or the spiritual disciplines) are those activities given by God so that we might receive His grace, grow closer to Him, and experience the joy of knowing Jesus more.

1. Called means of grace, spiritual disciplines
2. I like “means of grace” - focus is on God’s grace
3. But “Habits of Grace” really caught my eye!
4. Stresses both God’s grace, and regular practice
5. The ways given by God for us to receive His grace
  - a. We don’t force grace - we receive it
  - b. But God tells us where His grace can be found
  - c. Mathis quote on how the habits of grace operate

I can flip a switch, but I don’t provide the electricity. I can turn on a faucet, but I don’t make the water flow. There will be no light and no liquid refreshment without someone else providing it. And so it is for the Christian with the ongoing grace of God. His grace is essential for our spiritual lives, but we don’t control the supply. We can’t make the favor of God flow, but he has given us circuits to connect and pipes to open expectantly. There are paths along which he has promised his favor. (David Mathis)

6. The ways given by God for us to draw close to Him
7. The goal: experience the joy of knowing Jesus

### B. Apostolic church defined by practicing habits of grace

They **devoted** themselves to the **apostles’ teaching** and to the **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayer**. Acts 2:42

1. The importance of this verse for the book of Acts
  - a. Luke gives several summary statements in Acts
  - b. This is the first and most important
  - c. This describes the life of the early church
  - d. This shows the format of their gatherings
  - e. This is a pattern for us to follow individually and as a local church
2. The regular habit of four means of grace
  - a. Devoted - not just occasional, hit or miss
  - b. Four habits of grace they practiced

1. Apostles doctrine - Word of God
2. Fellowship - gathered for worship; share life
3. Breaking of bread - the Lord's Supper
4. Prayer - cry out to God alone and together

### C. Habits of Grace: The Series

1. We are going to cover these four habits
  - a. The Word - hearing God's Voice (Ryan)
  - b. Prayer - having God's ear (Jer)
  - c. Fellowship - belonging to God's body (Scott)
  - d. The Lord's Table - fed by God's hand (Bret)
2. We hope this will help us grow in our practice of these habits of grace

## III. The Goal: Enjoying Jesus

- A. Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus Through Spiritual Disciplines
  1. The goal is not doing activities - it is enjoying Jesus!
  2. We only receive grace, joy as we seek to know Him
  3. The Christian life should be characterized by the joy of an ever deepening relationship with Jesus
- B. The early church: a community of joyful disciples growing in their relationship with Jesus
  1. The result of the habits of grace in Acts 2

Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:43–47

- a. A description of a joy filled, blessed church
  - b. They are growing in their knowledge & practice
  - c. Close to God and one another
  - d. All of this flows from v42 - the habits of grace
2. This goal is reiterated many times in the NT
 

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Acts 13:52

    - a. Another growth summary in Acts
    - b. Great persecution - but great joy in the Spirit
    - c. This is the goal - joy in the Spirit as we know Jesus

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup> I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup>and his incomparably great power for us who believe. Ephesians 1:17–19

- a. Paul's prayer (similar to many others)

- b. Wants Spirit to help us know God better
- c. To know the hope, riches, and power of God in us

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy 1 Pet1:8

- a. Do not yet see Jesus, but we love Him
- b. Our love & trust leads to inexpressible, glorious joy

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, <sup>3</sup> now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:2-3

- a. We should crave spiritual milk like a newborn
- b. The basis - tasted that the Lord is good

3. We practice the habits of grace to get a fresh taste of God's grace and to grow closer to Jesus, which results in inexpressible, glorious joy

#### IV. Applying the Word: Practical Application

##### A. Make sure we approach this in the right manner

1. Critical - do not approach this in a legalistic mode
  - a. This is about grace from beginning to end
  - b. God gives us the grace to seek Him in the first place
  - c. We receive more grace as we walk with Jesus
  - d. It is a cycle of grace - not legalism!
2. Remember the goal - the joy of knowing Jesus
  - a. Story about Steph & soccer - kick 5 times

- b. What our souls thirst and hunger for is Jesus
- c. We dupe ourselves thinking the world can slake that thirst and fill that hunger
- d. Closer we are to Jesus, the more we long for Him
- e. As we know and feed upon Him, joy fills our soul
- f. This is about joy - not guilt!

##### B. Practical tips for growing in the habits of grace

###### 1. Start small and grow

- a. Do not try to become a spiritual giant - begin small
- b. Begin with 5-10 minutes weekdays, grow over time
- c. Keep your plan simple - don't try to do everything

###### 2. Have a plan - when & what

- a. When - a set time that you have free each day
  1. Pick a time you are fresh, not tired
  2. Consider early morning, right before bed
  3. Might be during commute - listen to Scripture, worship music & pray
  4. Plan to come each Sunday - to participate!
- b. What - a set plan for what you will read, pray
  1. Use a devotional guide, or Bible book - check out YouVersion for many plans
  2. I like to listen to Word being read to me
  3. Pray what you read - for self & others

4. Have a simple prayer list - I use PrayerMate app & love it
5. Use worship music to worship God
- c. Keep it fresh - change it up periodically
  1. I follow a plan for a month or two usually
  2. Then I shift what I am doing to keep it fresh
  3. I change what I am reading, spend more time in prayer or worship, etc.
3. Consider an accountability partner
  - a. Might be a spouse or friend
  - b. They can ask each week how you have been doing
  - c. This really helps some people through tough spots

#### C. The Lord's Table - our Table of Grace

1. We will practice a habit of grace now
2. This is not just a ritual - it is a way Jesus meets us
3. Ask God to stir up your hunger for Him
4. Ask God to slake your hunger & thirst with Jesus

### Enjoying Jesus Through the Means of Grace

Acts 2:42  
July 31, 2016  
Communion  
Romans 15:13

Teaching keywords: means of grace; joy; passion for Christ; discipleship

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42