



Lesson 1

GRACE: BEING LOVED BY GOD

*It has ever been one of the characteristics of the greatest saints that they have spent much time in meditating upon the love of Christ to themselves and to all God's people. Nothing has given them greater joy. Indeed, this is a characteristic of love at all levels; it delights in thinking not only of the object of its love, but also of the love it receives. Nothing therefore should give greater joy to all God's people than to meditate upon this love of Christ. **Indeed, our chief defect as Christians is that we fail to realize Christ's love to us.** How often have you thought about this? We spend time thinking about our activities and our problems, but the most important necessity in the Christian life is to know Christ's love to us, and to meditate upon it.*

—D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

OUR NEED FOR GRACE

- **Our Spiritual Condition.** We are separated from God, in bondage to sin, and under the condemnation of death.
- **Our Physical Condition.** We are in bodies that are subject to weakness, sickness, disease, dysfunction, and death.
- **Our Psychological Condition.** We are not only self-focused but also self-conscious—aware of our vulnerability, depravity, and mortality in a sin-cursed, dangerous world and feeling a sense of fear, shame, guilt, and emptiness.

Grace is God's _____ reaching out to the _____.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

—Romans 3:23-24

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

—Romans 5:8

GOD'S STORY OF GRACE (Luke 15)

- **Parable.** A story told to illustrate a particular spiritual truth.
- **Audience.** _____ (15:1-3).
- **Purpose.** To reveal the _____.

I'm always described as cocksure or "with a swagger," and that bears no resemblance to who I feel like inside. I feel plagued by insecurity.

—Ben Affleck

I think my biggest flaw is my insecurity. I'm terribly insecure. I'm plagued with insecurities 24/7.

—Madonna Ciccone

It's my insecurity that makes me want to be a comic, that makes me need the audience.

—Ray Romano

Arrogance is the camouflage of insecurity.

—Tom Fargo

Grace is free sovereign favor to the ill-deserving.

—B. B. Warfield

The very center and core of the Bible is the doctrine of the grace of God.

—J. Gresham Machen

Everything is of grace in the Christian life from the very beginning to the very end.

—D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

The parable of the prodigal son is about every one of us.

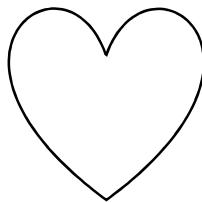
—Timothy Keller

1. GOD'S PATIENT LOVE FOR THE REBELLIOUS (15:11-13).

The Heart of the Rebellious:

_____ his own way.

_____ his father.



The Response of the Father:

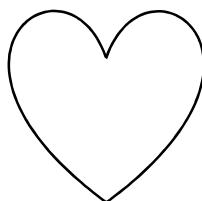
To ask one's father for one's share of the inheritance early was unheard of in antiquity; in effect, one would thereby say, "Father, I wish you were already dead." —Craig Keener

2. GOD'S PASSIONATE LOVE FOR THE REPENTANT (15:14-24).

The Heart of the Repentant:

_____ his own way.

_____ his father.



The Response of the Father:

Prodigal. Greek, *asotos*, "an abandoned, excessive, wasteful life." Literally, "unsavedness."

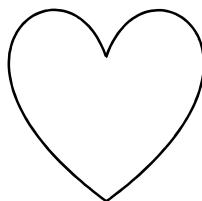
Whenever we find that our religious life is making us feel that we are good—above all, that we are better than someone else—I think we may be sure that we are being acted on, not by God, but by the devil. —C. S. Lewis

3. GOD'S PLEADING LOVE FOR THE RELIGIOUS (15:25-32).

The Heart of the Religious:

_____ his own way.

_____ his father and his brother ("this son of yours").



The Response of the Father:

Religious people commonly live very moral lives, but their goal is to get leverage over God, to control him, to put him in a position where they think he owes them. ...If, like the elder brother, you believe that God ought to bless you and help you because you have worked so hard to obey him and be a good person, then Jesus may be your helper, your example, even your inspiration, but he is not your Savior. You are serving as your own Savior. —Timothy Keller

There is nothing that any of us can do to inherit the Kingdom. We must simply receive it like little children. And little children haven't done anything. The NT world was not sentimental about children and had no illusion about any pretended innate goodness in them. ...Children are our model because they have no claim on heaven. If they are close to God, it is because they are incompetent, not because they are innocent. If they receive anything, it can only be as a gift.

—Brennan Manning

Walking the God-Centered Path This Week

- Evaluate your own heart. Are you running from God, doing your own thing? Are you prideful, thinking God owes you? Or are you aware of your sin and thankful for the incomprehensible love of God?
- In what ways do you find yourself still trying to earn God's love?
- Meditate on Ephesians 3:14-19. Allow God's love to flood your soul!
- Complete the Lesson 2 study on *Surrender: Being Loved Completely*.