

The Flow

12

Growing in God's Grace

1 John 2:12-14

Fostering Spiritual Growth in the Church

Michael Lim

Introduction

Grace separates Christianity from all other religions, so much so that **failing to grasp what grace means for believers is to completely miss the heart of what God wants for your life**. On the other hand, the more you receive grace into your life, the more doors open, allowing you to step into the freedom that was purchased on the cross.

Grace is a like life-force that flows from God into His beloved children throughout our lives. It touches us first at our salvation (saving grace) and then continues to pour into us as we learn (sanctifying grace) to understand all implications of salvation for our lives as we grow. As we embrace God's grace in greater and greater ways, we are increasingly transformed in how we perceive ourselves, those around us, and our gracious God.

A. New Believers- Saving Grace

God desires new believers to realize and embrace His saving grace.

1. Understanding Saving Grace

a. Saving grace is free, based on neither work nor ranking, nor score

“But the **free gift** is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the **free gift of grace** of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.” (Romans 5:15)

b. Saving grace is perfect- no sin precludes you from forgiveness, God, or heaven

“For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, **much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.**” (Romans 5:17)

A. New Believers- Saving Grace

God desires new believers to realize and embrace His saving grace.

2. Embracing Saving Grace

- Saving grace implies that you have [a new identity](#).

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Cor 5:17)

“For we ourselves **were once** foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.” (Titus 3:3)

“1 **Remind them** to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.” (Titus 3:1-2)

“But now that you have been **set free** from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.” (Rom 6:22)

B. Young Believers- Grace for All Times

Once believers realize saving grace, God takes them on **deeper journeys** into areas of their lives in which God wants us to see positive changes. He does so by **bringing grace powerfully into believers' lives** so that they can learn how to walk through any situation reliant on His grace.

1. Young believers are strong because they realize that their identity is secure both in Jesus and by Jesus- His perfect work on the cross means perfect grace is upon them.

“You then, **my child, be strengthened by the grace** that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 2:1)

2. Young believers learn to apply the truth of grace more and more in their lives.

a. In times of battle, grace fully provides!

B. Young Believers- Grace for All Times

Refining Our Confidence in Grace through Trials

Will God give me peace when mourning for a family member?

Will God give me strength through a tough working environment?

Will God give me freedom from selfishness in my relationship?

Will God give me faith during a time of doubt?

Will God give me wisdom to make a decision?

Will God give me a bigger heart to love Him and others?

Will God give me boldness to share the gospel?

Will God give me courage to step up and serve?

b. Through trials, young believers refine their [unseasoned faith](#): by learning to rely confidently on God's sanctifying grace to provide, they begin to mature into [veterans of spiritual warfare](#).

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c. Young believers also learn to see God's grace in wonderful moments, times of celebration, relaxation, and good health, so that in [every way](#), the grace of God begins to shine.

“For it is all for your sake, so that **as grace extends** to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.” (2 Cor 4:15)

C. Mature Believers- Graceful Ambassadors of Christ

The mature believer stage **brings together all previous experiences of the manifestation of God's grace in their lives**, from their confidence in God's saving grace to their assurance of both their constant need for God's grace and His abundant provision to sustain them.

1. Mature believers know that they can **rely on** God's provision of grace at all times.

“And **God is able to make all grace abound to you**, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.” (2 Cor 9:8)

“11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I **have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need**. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:11-13)

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2. Mature believers are humble before all, leaders, and preservers of unity.

"1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 **with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**"

(Eph 4:1-3)

3. Mature believers are graceful ambassadors of Christ.

"18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, **in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.**

20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (2 Cor 5:18-20)

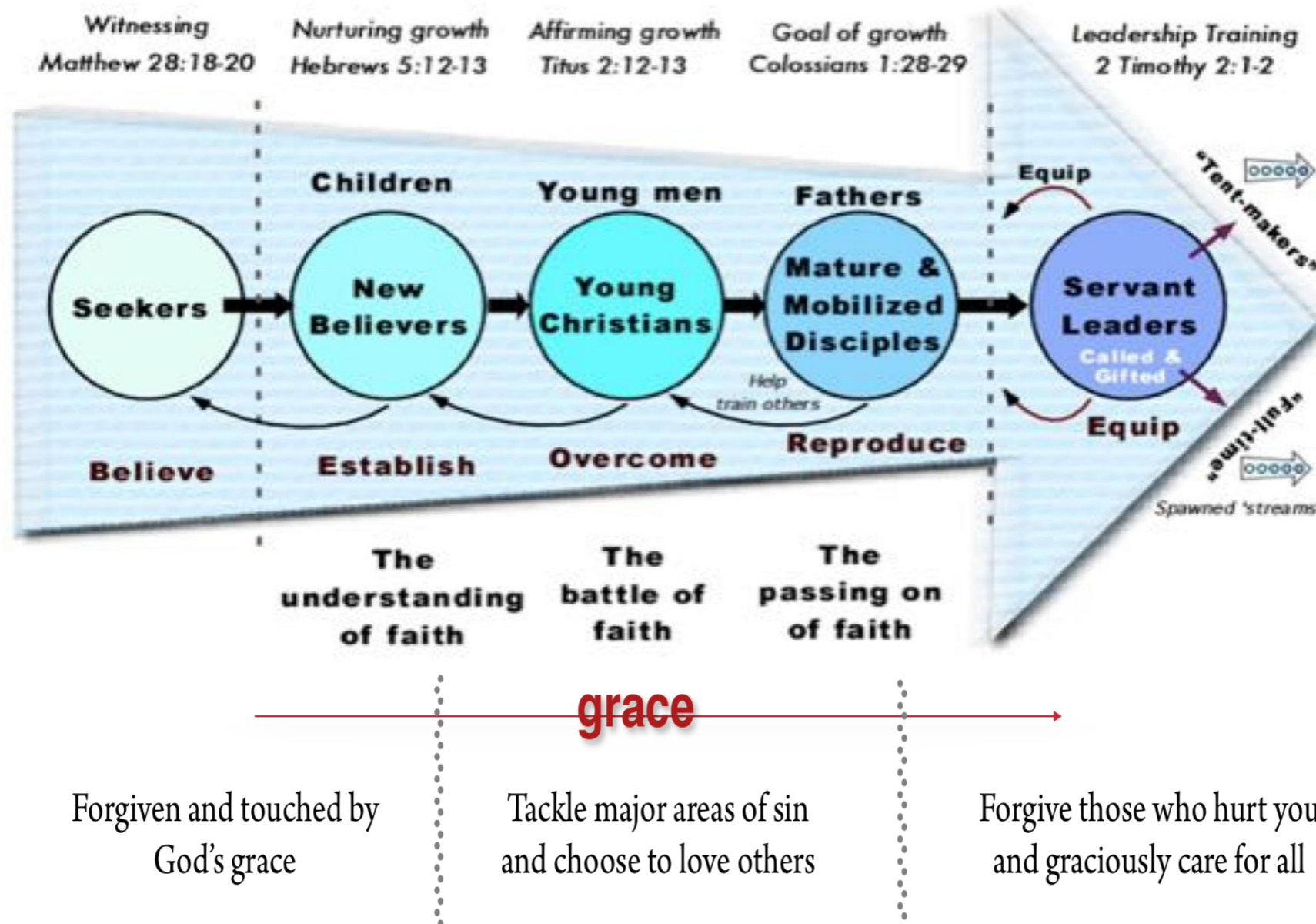
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4. Grace is foundational in the lives of a mature believer

- a. Reassuring thoughts of God's grace flow freely to them
- b. Thankfulness abounds for the love and mercy of God.
- c. Grace pours out from them to put away reluctance to forgive, and to forgive cheerfully
- d. Grace pours out from them to love all- God, family, friends, brothers and sisters, and enemies

Summary



Keep in perspective from where God has brought you, where you are now, and where God is bringing you in your spiritual growth. If you are a believer, no matter where you are now, be assured of where you are headed and **remember the grace of God that will take you there!**

Discussion

1. Choose one aspect of saving grace- free gift, perfect forgiveness, or new identity- and discuss how it changed your perspective of your faith.
2. Choose a trying time, or a wonderful time, in your life and share how confidence in God's grace transformed how you felt at that time or how you reflect back on that time now.