

Biblical Principles for “Thriving”

BACK TO BASICS
FOUNDATIONS FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

Things We Will Touch On

- How to use problems as the starting point to get on the road to thriving.
- God's two-for-one offer that most of us neglect.
- How our typical response to problems creates more problems.
- How the principle of grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) applies to everyday life.

Filling The Gap



Key Question

- And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
–2 Corinthians 12:9
- Are God’s solutions really sufficient?
– “Yes”? or “Yes.... But”?

Grace For His Glory Out Of Love

- In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself,
- according to the kind intention of His will,
- to the praise of the glory of His grace
- In all wisdom and insight
- He made known to us the mystery of His will,
- according to His kind intention
- which He purposed in Him
 - Summed up in Christ

Key Phrases from Ephesians 1

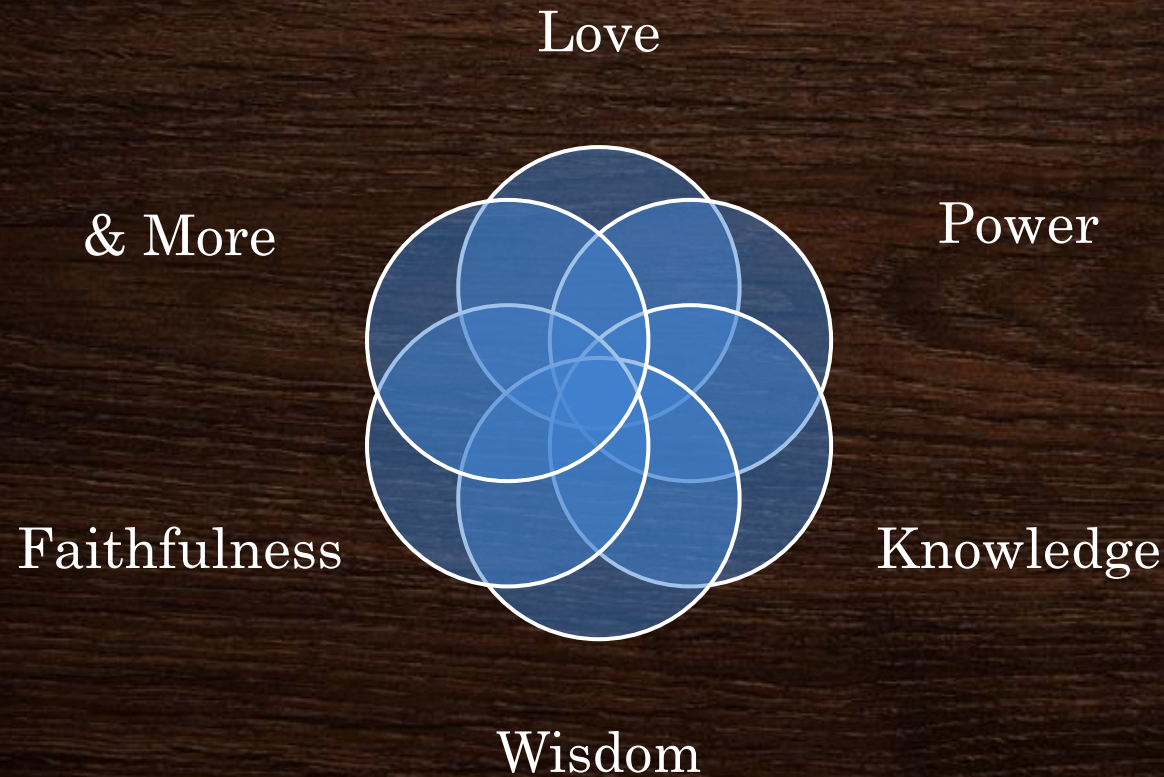
Working Definition of Grace

- God gives us what we need (and more), when we need it
 - As a free gift and through no merit of ours
 - Rom 11:6, Eph 2:8-10
- Salvation – Eph 2:8-9, Rom 5
- The desire and power for righteous living – Eph 2:10, Phil 2:13
- Common grace – Matt 5:45
 - * Hell -> includes “no light”
- Our daily bread
- Spiritual gifts – Rom 12
- Wisdom & Solutions – Jam 1



God's grace is essential part of solving “problems”

Grace Flows From God's Limitless...



Another working
definition.....

God's glory is His
going "public" with
His excellencies

His glory attracts
people to Him

Paul's Description

- The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;
- and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, that they would seek God.... though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist,
 - Acts 17:24-28 (Paul's message to the Athenians on Mars Hill)

God's Glory Through His Grace

“*to the praise of the glory of His grace*” *Ephesians 1*

- God's grace is designed to make Him look very good (glory), with one result that more people are attracted into a relationship with Him
- When we take things into our own hands, we do not receive His grace, and He is NOT glorified
- Taking things into our own hands is due to a lack of faith
- We can claim faith, but practically live like atheists
- This is a key underlying element of every counseling situation

David Spoke Of This

- “I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me and heard my cry.
- He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear and will trust in the Lord.
- How blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust, and has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.”

– Psalm 40:1-4

The Consequences of Seeking Our Own Solutions

- “I said to the Lord, “You are my Lord; I have no good besides You”.... The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied...”
 - Psalm 16:2&4
- Knock on effects -> you do not know how or where they will show up
 - The blue-eyed Dong girl
 - God is orchestrating everything
- Lot’s Choice
 - Moab and Ammon
 - Ruth, David’s great-grandmother

Grace Comes Through Faith

Grace

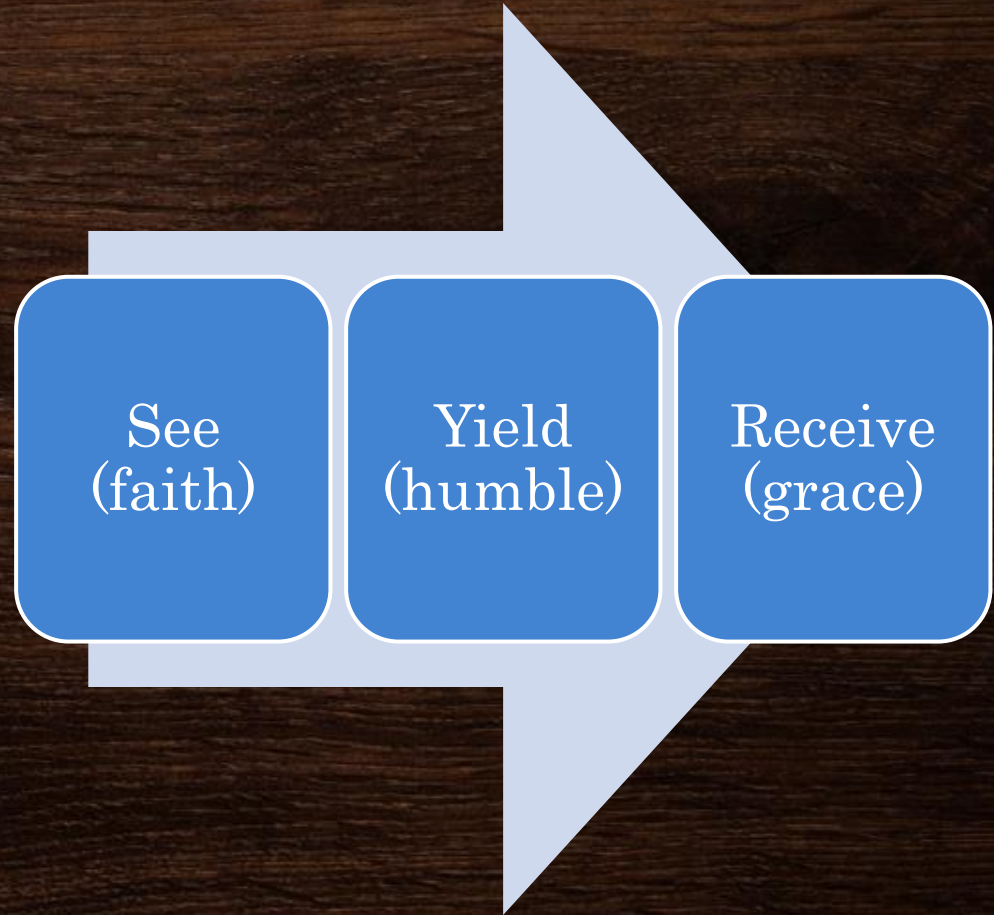
- “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship...”
 - Ephesians 2:8-10

Faith

- Acts 17 -> “that they would seek Him”
- “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”
 - Hebrews 11:6
- The demons believe and shudder (James 2:19). True faith means acting on it.

The Implied Requirement

- But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Submit therefore to God...
– James 4:6-7



The Connection of Faith With Grace

- “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”
 - Matthew 7:7-10
- A good God WILL provide (grace) if we humbly seek Him (faith)
 - The Four Pillars Of Trust

A Prayer For More Faith

Back to Ephesians 1

- “For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and [u]your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.
- I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.”
 - Ephesians 1:15-19
 - See also Romans 8

The Essential Role of The Word

- “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” Romans 10:17
- “The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” Psalm 19:7-8
- “But his delight is in the Law of the Lord, And on His Law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”
– Psalm 1:2-3

God's Two-fer (Matt 6)

- 25 “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”
- 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!
- Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
- “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own

The Folly Of Seeking “More” Than Grace

The Garden

- God created us to be dependent on Him
- His all-sufficient supply
- Satan’s temptation in the one area remaining

Solomon

- The futility of seeking
- Solomon – the extreme example, tried everything
- His initial conclusion – “I hated life”
- His multiplied sorrows – Kingdom split
- His final conclusion – “fear God”

Responses To Need



Embracing need
Seeking God



Desperately trying to
eliminate need
Looking elsewhere

Thrive Through Faith In Future Grace



The Grace of Wisdom

- “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”
 - James 1:2-8
- Doubting / Double-minded
 - Is it real?
 - Do I really want it?

The Prayer Of Faith

- The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.
 - James 5:16-18
- Characteristics
 - Righteous man
 - Faith
 - In line with God's plan
 - Specific

The Testing of Your Faith

- Why?
 - To show it
 - To strengthen and purify it – the crucible
- “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ”
 - I Peter 1:7-9
- Our natural selves do not like this!!!

From Problems → Relationship

“I Have Written To You, Because...”

Children

You know the
father

I John 2

Young Men

You are strong
The word of God
abides in you
You have
overcome the evil
one

Fathers

You know Him
who has been
from the
beginning

Where Do You Start With Problems?

- We typically start with our problems
 - How do I solve XYZ?
 - How to I make XYZ go away?
- Everything in life starts and ends with God
 - His all-sufficiency (Acts 17)
 - His plan for a purpose of love (Ephesians 1)
 - He created us to need Him -> in order to love us
 - Physical needs
 - Emotional / spiritual needs
- God's biggest goal is relationship with Him, as He is the answer to our deepest need

Beyond Problems To Thriving

- Every single need, every problem is an opportunity to seek God and ask for His help with unlimited resources
- His supply of that need results in our praise, and His glory reflected to those around us and admired throughout eternity
- Go all the way - not “my grace is sufficient” to a point, and then we need to take things into our hands.
- AND
- In between, stop and smell the roses. Consciously notice and rejoice in the myriad examples of His common grace

The Counseling Flip Side

- If counselee not willing to go all the way
 - Wants to maintain control = pride
- Means less grace
- Means doing more of their own thing = more problems
- The temptation for partial solutions is **STRONG**

Conclusion

- The more we seek our own solutions, the more problems compound
- We need to apply God-given answers, but people also need the framework of God's unlimited grace through (humble) faith in order to successfully apply those answers
- View everything through the lens of
 - God's goodness
 - Our need
 - His desire for relationship
- Seeing Him clearly (and yielding) leads to more grace

Advice To Myself

- #1 – Daily, consciously acknowledge 3 aspects of God's (common) grace, for example
 - Sunshine
 - Daily provision – clothes, food
 - Recent solution to problems
- #2 – Look at every problem
 - As a blessing of “need” to draw me to Him
 - As a “stage” on which He will display His glory through His grace
 - As an opportunity to grow my faith (in His ability)
- #3 – In counseling, recognize the underlying battle of belief vs. unbelief

Discussion

- How often do you take things into your own hands vs. rely on God's grace?
- How can you give someone hope through an expanded view of God and His available grace?
- How can you help someone understand that his need is actually a blessing from God?
- How can you help someone understand that his problem is God's way of motivating & moving him to the real goal of knowing Him and learning to love

The Four Pillars Of Trust

Trust in the Lord with all your heart – do not lean on your own understanding – in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight – Pr 3:4-6

God's
Love

God's
Wisdom

God's
Power

God's
Faithful
ness

Each pillar is an element of faith – a missing pillar hinders our ability to trust Him