Understanding and living out the gospel of grace is essential to the Christian life. As a person begins to understand the gospel, the depth of their sin is revealed which exposes the need for the gospel and highlights the grace of God.

After a sinner comes to Christ, the grace of God continues. Christians are not left on their own to live out the Christian life; rather, God provides assurance, the Word, the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, prayer, worship, fellowship, service, the Lord’s supper and baptism as a means of grace for growth. In regards to the means of grace, James Boice states, “If we are Christians, we know that God is going to continue his work with us until the day when we are made like Jesus. It might be through death. It may be at Christ’s second coming. How can we purify ourselves? We cannot, but God will do it if we use these means of grace” (Foundations of the Christian Faith, 456).

Sanctification is the ongoing work of God in our lives. The Shorter Catechism answers the question, What is sanctification? Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness (See 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 4:23,24; Romans 6:4,6; 8:1).

All this is possible because we are united with Christ by faith, through grace alone. Understanding and applying the gospel of grace is essential for growing in Christ. Sanctification cannot be clearly understood as a doctrine standing alone. It is built upon the doctrines of justification and adoption. G.I. Williams remarks, “Sanctification, which follows upon justification and adoption in the order of salvation, is also of God’s free grace. For it is not man who sanctifies himself but God only. It is accomplished in such a way that man himself is active and responsible in the process of sanctification” (The Shorter Catechism, 140).

What is the Gospel of Grace?

The gospel means good news. The gospel is good news for sinners who on their own can do nothing to save or redeem themselves. It is good news of God’s gift to those who believe in Christ alone for their salvation.

The grace by which we are saved is God’s free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment. “It is the love of God shown to the unlovely. It is God reaching downward to people who are in rebellion against Him. Grace stands in direct opposition to any supposed worthiness on our part” (Bridges, Transforming Grace, 21-22).

Jerry Bridges, author of The Pursuit of Holiness, said soon after its publication that the pursuit of holiness must be motivated by an ever-increasing understanding of the grace of God or else it can become oppressive and joyless (The Discipline of Grace, 7). This biblical truth became the foundation to Bridge’s The Disciplines of Grace.
The Seven Truths of the Gospel:
In Romans 3:19-26 there are seven truths about the gospel that need to be understood (The Disciplines of Grace, 47-57).

“No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”

1. No one is declared righteous before God by observing the Law (Verses 19-21).

God’s standard is perfect obedience to the law. If anyone fails in one aspect of the law, they are guilty of breaking all of it (James 2:10). Only perfect obedience is acceptable to God. If someone relies on obeying the law for his righteousness they are cursed. “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law” (Galatians 3:10).

Bridges shows that many Christians are more confident of God’s blessings if they have a ‘good day’ of obeying the law. He remarks, “To live by grace, we must rid ourselves of such thinking” (The Disciplines of Grace, 48).

2. There is a righteousness from God that is apart from the Law (Verse 21).

Since we cannot attain a sufficient righteousness by our own efforts, God has provided it for us. “It is important to realize that our Lord Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled the law of God, both in its requirements and its penalty. He did what Adam failed to do—render perfect obedience to the law of God. Then by His death He completely paid the penalty of a broken law. So, from the stand point of obedience to the law and paying the penalty for breaking the law, He perfectly fulfilled the law of God” (The Disciplines of Grace, 49). The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. We are, therefore, standing in the righteousness of Christ.

3. This righteousness from God Is received through faith in Jesus Christ (Verse 22).

There is only one way to receive the righteousness of Christ, and that is through faith in Christ. “Jesus Himself is always the object of our faith. This doctrine of trusting in
Jesus Christ alone for one’s salvation is a basic truth of the gospel. Without acceptance there is no salvation” (*The Disciplines of Grace*, 51).

The wonderful promise of the gospel is,

“that if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, ‘Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’ For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” (Romans 10:9-13).

4. This righteousness is available to everyone on the same basis, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Verses 22-23).

We also see that salvation is available to everyone because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Therefore, we are all guilty and stand judged before a holy God.

There is no room for comparison among sinners, and we are all sinners. “So if we live by the gospel every day, all tendency to compare ourselves with other believers, not to mention unbelievers, must be put away. Rather we must measure ourselves against God’s perfect standard and daily confess that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (*The Disciplines of Grace*, 52).

5. All who put their faith in Jesus Christ are justified freely by God’s grace (Verse 24).

We are declared righteous (absolved from guilt) by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. This is done freely to us but at the cost of Christ’s obedience and death for us. Justification cannot be purchased by good works. “We must keep in mind that our justification by God is based solely on the meritorious work of Christ and our union with Him. That is, God sees us legally as so connected with Christ that what He did, we did. To live by the gospel then means that we firmly grasp the fact that Christ’s life and death are ours by virtue of our union with Him” (*The Disciplines of Grace*, 53).

6. This justification is ‘Through the Redemption That Came by Christ Jesus’ (Verse 24).

Our justification and salvation are solely possible through redemption that came by Christ Jesus. We have been delivered from punishment of our sins through the payment made by Christ in His death. In other words Christ satisfied the wrath of God for us. The ESV translates 1 John 4:10 with the word propitiation: “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins”. Propitiation means to turn away wrath. We are redeemed. The penalty has been paid in full through the sacrifice of Christ.
7. God presented [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood (Verse 25).

Jerry Bridges says there are two important points we need to see concerning this propitiatory act of Christ. First, God gave Him as a redeeming sacrifice for us. God the Father provided the sacrifice of His Son to satisfy His justice and appease His wrath. Second, propitiation is appropriated to sinners through faith in the blood of Christ (The Disciplines of Grace, 57).

Through the blood of Christ our conscious is cleared. Hebrew 9:14 states, “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”

Through the blood of Christ we are cleansed. “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7b).

Through the blood of Christ we can enter the Most Holy Place. “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:19-22).

The Gospel—By Grace Alone Through Faith Alone (Ephesians 2:1-10)

All of this means that our salvation from start to finish is God’s doing, is God’s gift, is God’s love, is God’s power, is God’s decision. That is, salvation is by grace alone!

How dead is dead?

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. (2:1-3)

What is the meaning of ‘dead in your transgressions and sins’? James Boice describes our situation as “walking corpses.” We are dead toward God and alive to all wickedness, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature (Ephesians, 47). Man is not just drowning and in need of someone to throw them a life preserver. He is dead at the bottom of the ocean. Man is not just sick or unwell. Man is dead and, by nature, objects of wrath.

God’s Mercy and Grace (Ephesians 2:4-7)

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly
realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Our radical situation requires a radical remedy. “The state of the unsaved man or woman is humanly hopeless. But what is impossible for men is possible for God. A radical problem requires a radical remedy and God supplies it” (Boyce, 50).

Those who are dead in transgressions are made alive in Christ, through faith. Through God’s love, mercy and grace He gives life to walking corpses. Why did God do all that Paul describes in this passage? James Boice says, “There is only one answer: grace.” But then he shows that, “Paul expresses the thought not with one but with four words: Love, Mercy, Grace and Kindness” (55).

Saved by Grace Alone (Ephesians 2:8-9)
For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

The gospel declares that…
- God saved us
- God saved us by grace
- God saved us by grace through faith—not works

Let us, therefore, understand that there is no salvation whatsoever outside of Jesus Christ, for he is the beginning and the end of faith, and he is all in all. Let us continue in humility, knowing that we can only bring condemnation upon ourselves; therefore, we need to find all that pertains to salvation in the pure and free mercy of God. We must be able to say that we are saved through faith. God the Father has appointed his Son the Lord Jesus Christ that he might be both the author and finisher of our salvation. We are to deny ourselves and give ourselves to him wholly and completely, that all the praise might belong to him. (John Calvin. Justification by Grace Alone, www.the-highway.com/Calvin)
In your own words, write a definition of the gospel of grace.

Respond to this statement as a result of this lesson. “Understanding and living out the gospel of grace is essential to the Christian life. As a person begins to understand the gospel, the depth of their sin is revealed which exposes the need for the gospel and highlights grace of God.”

Boice states, “A radical problem requires a radical remedy, and God supplies it.” In Ephesians 2:4-7, what does God give for our radical remedy? What is His motivation?

According to Ephesians 2:8-9, the gospel declares that:

- God saved us
- God saved us by grace
- God saved us by grace through faith—not works

What should be your response to this truth of the Gospel? See Ephesians 2:10 and Romans 12:1.
ACCOUNTABILITY

1. How can your group support you as you live out the gospel in your life?

2. Have you been trusting in your own efforts for sanctification? How can the truths of this lesson fuel your walk with Christ?

3. How can you encourage one another to rejoice in the gospel of grace? How can you need to rely on God’s radical solution more for your radical problem?
**MISSION**

How does the truth of the gospel of grace change how you pray for non-believers?

Who are the three people (non-church, non-believers) you are praying for?

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________

Steps I have taken or will take to connect with them:

1. _____________________________________________
2. _____________________________________________
3. _____________________________________________
SUPPLICATION

Spend time praising God for the on-going grace of God in Christ for your life.

Pray for your lost neighbors, friends, and family.

Pray for Village Seven to be effective in the mission God has given it.

What needs do you have that your group can be praying for?

What is one area of godliness that you can pray for each other about?