

5 Keys To Receiving Abundant Grace

James 4:6-10

James 4:6-10 ⁶But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Introduction:

1. Happy Father's Day!!

- My dad taught me that serving others is a joy.
 - Even before my dad came to faith, he loved being a Cub Scout and Boy Scout leader
 - When we started coming to church, he didn't like it – but if he was asked to help out, he would do so with joy. One Thanksgiving Banquet he cooked in our single oven 200 cornish game hens and loved it.
- Maybe your dad gave you a loving example and/or some wise advice. What are some of life's most important lessons that you've learned from your dad?
- What are we teaching our children? Plenty of opportunity for shelter in place.
- As I walked 2 of my girls down the aisle, I wondered if I did enough to prepare them for their next stage of life.
- **What has your father taught you?**
 - What piece of wisdom has impressed you from your dad on your road to maturity?
- **James is sharing 5 nuggets of wisdom on how to be a vessel fully accessing God's grace.**

2. Proposition: James shares the wisdom of 5 keys to receive God's grace

- James 3:13-18 – Contrast between God's Wisdom and Man's Wisdom
- James 4:1-5 – Conflict occurs when we abandon God's Wisdom
- James 4:6-10 – In the midst of spiritual and world conflict, we need God's grace

3. The Meaning Of Grace

Ie/ Grace can mean many things:

- Artistic elegance (Dancing With The Stars)
- Athletic fluidity (Steph Curry)
- Generous heart (God's givers)
- Well Mannered (Henry Higgins teaching Eliza Doolittle)
- Shocking exclamation ("Goodness, gracious, great balls of fire!")
- **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**
- **Unmerited Favor** – getting what we don't deserve

- **Grace is God's enablement for salvation, sanctification and service.**
- **"Free sovereign favor to the ill-deserving" (Benjamin Warfield)**
- **"Love that goes upward is worship; love that goes outward is affection; love that stoops is grace." (Donald G. Barnhouse)**
- **Can you imagine** police officers with grace?
- Can you imagine rioters with grace?
- Could grace have eradicated slavery?
- Is grace the opposite of Jim Crow laws or the Chinese Exclusion Act?
- Could grace have worked a 180 degree course correction for Hitler, Mussolini or Hirohito?
- Can you imagine grace among Democrats and Republicans? Grace!
- Can you imagine grace in your marriage?
- How about grace in your work place?
- Are we showing grace to those that have wronged us?
- **Imagine all those people living graciously ... eeeee** (thanks Lennon)

5. God wants to flow his grace to us and there are 5 dams that block His grace:

- **Pride**
- **Devil**
- **Apathy**
- **Impurity**
- **Unconfessed Sin**

1. Submit Humbly (6-7a)

“But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”^{7a} Submit yourselves therefore to God.

- **"More Grace"** = lit. greater grace
 - "more" = *meizona*
 - "the ability and willingness of God to overcome sinfulness" (Moo, p. 191)
 - Augustine: "God gives what He demands"
 - He Giveth More Grace by Annie Johnson Flint

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
 He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;
 To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
 To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
 His power no boundary known unto men;
 For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
 He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

Proverbs 3:34 Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.

1 Peter 5:5 Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

- The tone of the day is a spirit of rebellion and the elevation of self
- There are a lot of proud people in government, in authority, in protests and in the pulpit
- Self-exaltation and pride prevent us from submitting
- **Submit** = *hupotagete* – obedience to a superior
 - The opposite of the world's message -

4 Characteristics of Pride

- **Smart Enough To Not Need God (1 Cor 8:1)**

1 Corinthians 8:1 ¹Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. **Knowledge puffs up**, but love edifies.

- People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

- **Capable Enough To Not Need God (1 Tim 3:6)**

1 Timothy 3:6 ⁶not a **novice**, lest being puffed up with **pride** he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

- **Powerful Enough To Not Need God (Lev 26:19; Ez 30:6)**

Leviticus 26:19 ¹⁹I will break the **pride of your power**; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.

Ezekiel 30:6 ⁶Thus says the Lord: "Those who uphold Egypt shall fall, And the **pride of her power** shall come down. From Migdol to Syene Those within her shall fall by the sword," Says the Lord God.

- **Religious Enough To Not Need God (Lk 18:11-12)**

Luke 18:11-12 ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

- Alvin Plantinga describes "pride" as "blend of narcissism and conceit that we detest in others and sometimes tenderly protect in ourselves" (Plantinga, Not the Way It's Supposed to Be).
- Plantinga again: "What sin makes God seem more irrelevant? God wants to fill us with his Holy Spirit, but when we are proud we are already full of ourselves. There's no room for God."

1 John 2:15-17 ¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

- The “pride of life” (*he alazoneia tou biou*) can only be found elsewhere in James 4:16 (“boast in your arrogance”). The NASB translates this phrase as “the boastful pride of life”. This sin is the inflation of our ego, pride, and boastfulness. The person afflicted with the pride of life finds self-esteem in degrees, jobs, positions, titles, cars, houses, and name brand clothes.
- “The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatness is.” (Phillip Brooks)
- “Humility is to make a right estimate of one’s self. It is no humility for a man to think less of himself than he ought.” (Charles Spurgeon)

Keys To Humility

- **Assessing Ourselves Accurately (Ps 8:3-5; Mt 5:3)**

Psalm 8:3-5 ³When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, ⁴What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? ⁵For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor.

- “The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatness is.” (Phillip Brooks)
- “Humility is to make a right estimate of one’s self. It is no humility for a man to think less of himself than he ought.” (Charles Spurgeon)

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- Realizing We Are Spiritual Beggars For Mercy
- "Poor" = to shrink, cower or cringe - like the beggars during the NT era
 - 2 words for poor - one is *penichros* used of the widow who Jesus saw give two small coins to the temple offering - she was poor but not a beggar
 - the word used in 5:3 is *ptochos* which means completely dependent on others for sustenance
 - beggars had no means of self-support - completely dependent on society
 - not materially poor, but spiritual poor
 - ie/ Luke 16:19-22 - rich man and beggar named Lazarus
 - the word for *beggar* is the identical word as *poor* in Mt 5:3

- **Caring For Needs Of Others (Mt 20:28; Phil 2:3-4)**

Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Philippians 2:3-4 ³Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

- **Without humility we are denying grace**
- We are telling God we don't need Him, we could do it on our own
- We can't legislate with God's grace
- We can't achieve justice without God's grace
- We can't overcome the deepest societal sins without God's grace
- We can't make an eternal difference without God's grace

2. Resist Defensively (7b)

^{7b} Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

- “Resist” = *antistete* – defensively withstanding attack
- Stand against the devil

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the **whole armor of God**, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the **devil**.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 ³ Share in suffering as a **good soldier** of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets **entangled in civilian pursuits**, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not **waging war** according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

Romans 16:20 ²⁰And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

- Unlike Darth Vader who claims that “Resistance is futile” – “Resistance is fertile”
- The devil is in control of a government that says we can solve problems apart from God
- The devil is in control of an educational system that says we can educate apart from God
- Politicians and protestors give in to the devil when they seek purposes apart from God

- We yield to sex outside of God's purpose
- We yield to success outside of God's empowerment
- We yield to salvation outside of Christ's Gospel

- Stand up for the purposes of God

- Ie/ One of our collegiates was very astute in our college discussion Friday night when he pointed out that the Jewish community was expecting Christ to be a political deliverer from the evil Roman Empire. Jesus came to defeat a bigger enemy – sin and death.

- If all we look for is a personal success or social improvement through Jesus and not deal with the heart of the Gospel, we won't have a real solution.
- The devil is not trying to get us into Satanism or demonic oppression like the movies. If the devil can get us to ignore God or deny our need of God in our life, the devil has won.
 - Don't give in to ignoring God – whether it is about your education, your career, your dating life, your marriage, your parenting or your spiritual life.
 - Don't let social justice distract us from God's justice on the cross and mercy through Christ
 - Otherwise, we're only putting a band-aid on a social issue caused by sin when Jesus' death on the cross takes the power of sin away

3. Worship Intimately (8a)

8a Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

- Another roadblock is we're apathetic towards God
- We've stopped loving Him like we used to
- Or perhaps you've never worshipped or loved Him
- Our spiritual life is like that Alaska Airline commercial – "Do you want to get away?"
- The fact that you got on line means you're not like some who saw Covid 19 as a way to get away from God and His people (unless your parents or spouse dragged you to hear us this morning)
- "draw near" = *engizo* – worship, align, give your allegiance to God
- The great sovereign God of the universe want to love us, lead us, guide
- He wants us to depend on Him and His sufficient grace
- Life and ministry have gotten so much harder in these last few years. I know it's for me to draw closer to Him.
- I've become weaker as an individual in what I can accomplish as a husband, father and pastor. But when I am weak, He is strong. His grace is sufficient for me.

1 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

4. Cleanse Morally (8b)

8b Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

- "cleanse" – wash
 - "hands" = what we do (not literal hands)
 - We've forgotten the importance of showering before a work meeting in the age of Covid and video conferencing
 - But we used to be concerned about physical hygiene more
 - But how about our spiritual hygiene before God?
- "purify" – sanitizers are the hottest things in the stores now

- Oh may we desire to cleanse our hearts from sin as we want to cleanse our hands from Covid
- “double-minded” – divided between God and the world
 - Purity focuses on God alone
 - Impurity allows other voices, idols and priorities
 - Trust in God alone!
 - Don’t rely on idols or politics or armies or courthouses
 - Don’t cover your bases by being open to every religion – choose correctly

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- God’s grace is that cleansing agent that cleanses us from **all** unrighteousness!!

5. Repent Mournfully (9-10)

⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

- “**wretched**” – *talaiporesate* – verb used only here – misery from sin
- That saved a wretch like me
- “**weep**” = *klausate* – “outward display of sorrow” (Kent, p. 151)
 - We learn more during times of sorrow than we do in times of joy
 - Our nation is learning more about ourselves as we weep for George, Ahmad and Breonna than we will over a Superbowl, a 4th of July fireworks or a booming stock market
- “**laughter be turned to mourning**”
 - God is a God of joy
 - He’s not a cosmic killjoy
 - But this passage speaks of always pursuing fun and pleasure and mourning the effect of sin.
 - Sinners need to repent
 - There’s a price for the fun we have, there’s a cost for the sin we commit
 - It went onto Christ!

Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalm 34:18 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

- When our heart is humbled through repentance of sin, resistance of evil, worship of God and submission to obedience, God will exalt us.
- **Exalt us** – we may not become popular with the world with these 5 keys to grace, but God will lift us up
 - The world will scoff at us for submitting to God, being humble, resisting the devil, cleaning up from sin and mourning our sinfulness.

- **But God will share His glory with us – because it's not about me, it's about Him!**

Matthew 23:12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Conclusion:

- 1. Identify areas in your life where you need God's grace.**
- 2. Remove our personal roadblocks to God's free flowing grace.**
 - Submit Humbly, Resist Defensively, Worship Intimately, Cleanse Morally, Repent Mournfully
- 3. Cry out to God for His grace for salvation, strength and ability to love others through Christ.**

John Newton – "Amazing Grace"

- His mother was a godly woman but she died when he was six
- His father was a wicked, irreligious sailor that washed away John's spiritual roots planted by his mother. John started sailing with his father from ages 11-18.
- He was a slave trader who reached such depths of wickedness
- At 20, in Sierra Leone, West Africa, he even became a slave himself who was given food by African slaves that felt sorry for him
- He was the captain of a slave ship until epilepsy ended his career
- Yet it was God's amazing grace that gripped John Newton
- On March 21, 1748, on board heading home to England in the North Atlantic ocean, God intervened to rescue the "African blasphemer." Newton was so impacted by this day that he would make note of it in his diary 57 years later when he wrote: "March 21, 1805. Not well able to write. But I endeavor to observe the return of this day with Humiliation, Prayer and Praise."
- That evening, we woke up to a violent storm. His room was being flooded. He was reporting to his post, but the captain stopped him to run another errand. The person who replaced was knocked overboard. After this dose of life and death, he uttered the first prayer in several years: "If this will not do, the Lord have mercy upon us."
- John Piper's biography recounts: "He worked the pumps from three in the morning until noon, slept for an hour, and then took the helm and steered the ship till midnight. At the wheel he had time to think back over his life and his spiritual condition. At about six o'clock the next evening it seemed as though there might be hope. 'I thought I saw the hand of God displayed in our favour. I began to pray: **I could not utter the prayer of faith; I could not draw near to a reconciled God, and call him Father . . . the comfortless principles of infidelity were deeply riveted; . . . The great question now was, how to obtain faith.**"
- He found a Bible and **read Luke 11:13**, which promises the Holy Spirit to those who ask. His response was: "If this book be true, the promise in this passage must be true likewise. I have need of that very Spirit, by which the whole was written, in order to understand it aright. He has engaged here to give that Spirit to those who ask: I must therefore pray for it; and, if it be of God, he will make good on his own word."
- After the storm cased, he spent the rest of the voyage in prayer and in reading the Bible. Afterwards, he journals: "Thus far I was answered, that before we arrived in Ireland, I had a satisfactory evidence in my own mind of the truth of the Gospel, as considered in

itself, and of its exact suitableness to answer all my needs. . . . I stood in need of an Almighty Savior; and such a one I found described in the New Testament. Thus far the Lord had wrought a marvelous thing: I was no longer an infidel: I heartily renounced my former profaneness, and had taken up some right notions; was seriously disposed, and sincerely touched with a sense of the undeserved mercy I had received, in being brought safe through so many dangers. I was sorry for my past misspent life, and purposed an immediate reformation. I was quite freed from the habit of swearing, which seemed to have been as deeply rooted in me as a second nature. Thus, to all appearance, I was a new man."

- He wrote his own epitaph that read:
JOHN NEWTON,
Clerk,
Once an Infidel and Libertine,
A Servant of Slaves in Africa,
Was,
by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior
JESUS CHRIST,
Preserved, restored, pardoned,
And appointed to preach the Faith
He had long laboured to destroy,
Near 16 years at Olney in Bucks;
And [28] years in this church.



- John Newton said that there will be three wonders when we get to heaven. It's a wonder:
(1) who is there
(2) who is not there, and
(3) the fact that I'm there!
- *Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.*

Discussion:

1. Where in your life do you need God's grace the most right now?
 2. What is your biggest hindrance(s) to opening yourself up to God's grace and why (Pride, Devil, Apathy, Impurity, Unconfessed Sin, Other)?
 3. How could the "Grace of God" transform our world inflicted with disease, division and depravity?
- **William Fenner: "The first step to grace is to see they have no grace; the first degree of grace is the desire of grace."**