



# DYNAMIC

## Steward

Exploring Partnership with God

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*When I began to grow in His grace, God planted in my heart a desire to give.*

## An act of joy

So immersed was Mary in her Savior's love that she one day did something very irrational. That was the day she made the biggest cash withdrawal in all her life (a whole year's wages), and spent it *all* on a bottle of perfume (Luke 7). What made her do something so foolish? Was the extravagant gift a means to be saved? Or was the gift an expression of her joy in being saved? Mary's understanding of the love of God and her experience of salvation gave birth to a life of gratitude. And her gift was an expression of this new life.

Giving was foreign to me before I experienced salvation in Christ. Whether it was to the church or to a poor man on the street, giving was something I just I could not afford to do—How could I give when I did not have enough to meet my own needs? But when I began to understand God's unconditional love, when I accepted His forgiveness, when I saw a better lifestyle in His Word, when I began to grow in His grace, something happened: God planted in my heart a desire to give. I found myself setting aside tithes and offerings; helping others in spite of my meager salary; and giving without feeling deprived of necessities. You see, I had experienced the grace of giving. Giving was now an act of joy. I could never have giving like this on my own; only God could give birth to such a joyous attitude in my life.

In an attempt to share the joy of salvation, one Christmas my family, impressed by the Holy Spirit, mailed copies of the book *Steps to Christ* and *Bible Studies for the Home* to all the high school principals in Zambia. That was two books each, to 350 people we did not know. Six months later, we received two positive responses. One wanted to know where he could find the book quoted so many times in the material we had sent him (He was referring to the Bible). Another said that was one of the best gifts he had ever received.

Consider my family's experience: On the surface, it seems like the two responses were not worth the time and money spent on 700 books. But because the books were given under the influence of God's infinite grace, the joy of two certainly outweighed the human effort put into the giving.

Paul encourages believers to excel in the grace of giving. He says *But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving* (2 Cor. 8:7). Oh the joy of giving in response to God's greatest gift of grace—our Savior, Jesus Christ!

# Application



## Grace giving

Velma Barfield killed four people, including her mother and fiance. So she sat, confined in the dark, cold prison cell, waiting for the day of her execution. Down the long corridor, the guard had just tuned into the local 24-hour gospel station. Through the music, through the words of the evangelist, the Holy Spirit crept into the dark, cold prison cell. And when He touched her soul, Velma wrote:

*I had been in and out of churches all my life and I could explain all about God. But I had never understood before that Jesus had died for me.*

During the next six years on death row, Velma ministered to those in prison. Just before she was executed she wrote:

*I know the Lord will give me dying grace, just as He gave me saving grace, and has given me living grace.*

**Introduction:** Tell the story in the sidebar. Ask for definitions of grace. Next, ask what members think is the connection between grace and giving.

**Main Study:** Using the selected texts in II Corinthians 8 and 9, have the class (either collectively or in pairs) discover the 14 principles of grace giving. The principles and supporting information are given below to help you moderate the study and discussion.

**Principle I** (8:1-4): Your circumstances and difficulties should not keep you from being generous.

- The Macedonians gave out of poverty and not abundance.
- They gave, not because they had to, but because they wanted to.
- Their giving far exceeded their financial ability.
- They viewed this special offering as a *privilege*, not as an *obligation*.
- Giving is viewed as Christian *grace*.

**Principle II** (8:5): Give yourself before you give your money.

**Principle III** (8:6, 7): Look for ways to excel in the grace of giving.

**Principle IV** (8:6, 10, 11): Fulfill your stewardship goals.

**Principle V** (8:8, 9, 24): Your love is expressed through your generosity

- Your only motivation to give should always be your love for Christ and His church.

**Principle VI** (8:8, 9): Recognize the link between the *grace of God* and the *grace of giving*.

- The grace of God should be the supreme motivating factor in true biblical stewardship.
- Your giving should be rooted in His giving.

**Principle VII** (8:12): Your willingness to give is more important than the amount you give.

**Principle VIII** (8:13-15): In God's economy, sufficiency of some ministers to the deficiency of others.

**Principle IX** (8:16-21): Use God's money judiciously and in prayer

- When expending God's money, honor Him by focusing on vital ministries and avoiding criticisms.

**Principle X** (9:1, 2): Your generous, spiritual giving, will positively influence the giving of others.

**Principle XI** (9:5-7): The attitude of your heart when you give is important to God.

- Give cheerfully and willingly, not grudgingly.

**Principle XII** (9:8-11): Your generosity moves the heart of God to meet all your needs.

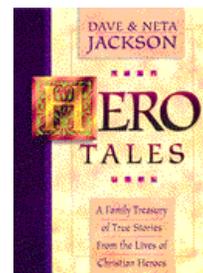
**Principle XIII** (9:11-14): Your generosity will result in praise and thanksgiving to God.

**Principle XIV** (9:15): Your giving should be a natural response to God's indescribable gift of Jesus.

**Conclusion:** Consider elements in our lifestyle, culture, and community that act as barriers to grace giving. Discuss ways we can be more like the Macedonian church. Emphasize the foundational need to have a deep, personal relationship with our Savior.

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*Adapted excerpt from the seminar, From the Foot of the Cross . . . to The Foot of the Throne, by Howard F Nourse, Executive Vice President, The Timothy Group: A Comprehensive Stewardship Agency. For information about their services: 3680 44th St, S E, Suite 280, Grand Rapids, MI 49512; Phone 616-224-4060; Fax 616-224-4061; email timgrp10@aol.com*



## *Hero Tales*

**by Dave and Neta Jackson**  
**Bethany House Publishers**  
**1996, 1997, 1998**  
**US\$ 12.99**

As Christians, we are a part of the family of Christ—a fellowship that has survived two thousand years, and now spans the entire globe. In our family there have been courageous men and women who risked, and sometimes lost, their lives to spread the gospel, stand up against evil and injustice, and serve those in need.

Dave and Neta Jackson, in the series *Hero Tales*, bring to life simple, true stories of Christian men and women of the past. Children will learn about people like Martin Luther, Harriet Tubman, Watchman Nee, and Corrie ten Boom. Each Christian hero is introduced with a pencil sketch and a short biography, followed by three short stories illustrating character qualities to emulate. Concluding each story is a summary sentence, an applicable Bible verse, and discussion questions to help children and parents reflect on the story and apply the learned principles to their own lives.

While the short anecdotes can be enjoyed by both adults and children, these books are geared towards families with children ages 6 to 12. Older children may be happy to read *Hero Tales* on their own; however the most value will be gained from these books if an adult reads with the child, taking the time for discussion. The questions facilitate the sharing of everyday experiences and challenges and can act as a springboard for a child to share important thoughts and feelings as well. These stories could also be used for children's stories in church or sermon illustrations.

*Hero Tales* can help challenge children and adults alike to be people of character, to serve God fully, and to trust Him in all areas of life. With these books, families can learn how God has been working through men and women in the past, and be affirmed that He continues to work through us today.

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*Eileen Dahl Vermeer, Freelance Writer, Orangeville, Ontario, Canada*

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## Quotes on grace . . .

Lord, I crawled across the barrenness to you with my empty cup, uncertain in asking any small drop of refreshment. If only I had known you better I'd have come running with a bucket.—*Nancy Spiegelberg*

As heat is opposed to cold, and light to darkness, so grace is opposed to sin.—*Thomas Benton Brooks*

Grace is an energy; not a mere sentiment; not a mere thought of the Almighty; not even a word of the Almighty. It is as real an energy as the energy of electricity. It is a divine energy; it is the energy of the divine affection rolling in plenteousness toward the shores of human need.—*Benjamin Jowett*

Grace is the love that gives, that loves the unlovely and the unlovable.—*Oswald C Hoffmann*

When the mask of self-righteousness has been torn from us and we stand stripped of all our accustomed defenses, we are candidates for God's generous grace.—*Erwin W Lutzer*

If God wants you to do something, he'll make it possible for you to do it, but the grace He provides comes only with the task and cannot be stockpiled beforehand. We are dependent on Him from hour to hour, and the greater our awareness of this fact, the less likely we are to faint or fail in a crisis.—*Louis Cassels*

God's grace turns out men and women with a strong family likeness to Jesus Christ, not milksops.—*Oswald Chambers*

A man is never so truly and intensely himself as when he is most possessed by God. It is impossible to say where, in the spiritual life, the human will leaves off and divine grace begins.—*William Ralph Inge*

A state of mind that sees God in everything is evidence of growth in grace and a thankful heart.—*Charles G Finney*

For grace is given not because we have done good works, but in order that we may be able to do them.—*St Augustine of Hippo*



## The wonder of grace

*Christ dying for us is the essence of biblical grace. Without Calvary we could never understand or experience grace. The cross is the ultimate demonstration of the depths and cost of God's grace.*

*Grace*—a simple, monosyllabic word, embedded in a depth of meaning. *Unmerited favor* is getting what we don't deserve. *Cheap grace* is claiming grace while choosing to live in sin. Further study finds us confronted with an ever broader range of meanings. A person can be graceful or move in a graceful way. Grace can be a noun or a verb. Depending on usage, it can function as an adverb or an adjective. Even in Scripture we see a wide diversity of its use.

For now, however, let's focus on *God's grace* towards us—sinners saved by grace. What kind of a picture does God's grace bring to us?

Grace has often been defined by comparing it with justice and mercy. Here's an example: Imagine yourself driving down the road, breaking the speed limit. A police officer stops you. If he gives you a ticket—that is justice—for you got what you deserve. If he lets you off with just a warning—that is mercy—for though you deserved a ticket, he did not give you one. However, if, instead of charging you, he personally escorts you to your destination—that is grace—for he gave you more than mercy, more than pardon, more than you ever expected, more than you could ever deserve.

Scripture presents grace as an integral part of the gospel. God loves us with an everlasting love—a love that drove Him to give His Son to die. Christ dying for us is the essence of biblical grace. Without Calvary we could never understand or experience grace. The cross is the ultimate demonstration of the depths and cost of God's grace. *Cheap grace* is a denial of the true effect of God's grace. Only one who has never truly experienced God's grace would be tempted to diminish the impact and effects of grace.

Thus the crucial issue goes far beyond just the meaning of a word. Do we really understand grace? Do we accept grace? Do we experience grace? Do we then, in turn, extend grace to others? Grace becomes relevant only when we experience and integrate it into our lives. Theory alone is useless.

There are three dimensions to grace—past, present, and future. *Past grace* is what God did for us on Calvary. He provided salvation for all who believe. *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 (Eph 2:4-5).*

*Present grace* is the realization of the promised presence of God—the presence that brings strength to live each moment of life in Him. *God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (2 Cor 9:8).*

*Future grace* is the promise that the future is already taken care of—God is in control. This means that victory is possible in Jesus Christ. Through His Holy Spirit He has provided everything we need to live daily in Him. *The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast (1 Pet 5:10).*

I understand three wonderful aspects to experiencing grace! The first is to accept God's grace—to accept His forgiveness and salvation. It seems almost too good to be true. How can God love us in such a way that He is willing to die for us? The Scriptures assure us that it is true. Paul states that we *are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus (Rom 3:24)*. The testimony of others who have experienced grace assures us that we also can have it. It is really as simple as believing that Jesus died for us; confessing our sins and believing He has fulfilled His promise to forgive us (1 Jn 1:9); and believing that because we have trusted in Him, we have eternal life (1 Jn 5:11-13).

The second aspect of experiencing grace is integrating it into life. We can move beyond accepting what God has done for us to what He can do *in us*. Part of the wonder of the gospel is that while God accepts us in our sin, He does not leave us there. When we accept Him as Savior and surrender our lives to Him as Lord, He begins a process of transforming us. He miraculously fills us with His Spirit (Eze 36:26, 27). Through His Spirit He brings the living presence of Christ into our hearts (Eph 3:16-19). God even makes us *partakers of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:3, 4)*. All of this becomes ours through a choice of the will to believe that God will do what He has promised. That leads to a choice to accept by faith that it is a current reality when we choose to accept it. And finally, a choice to make every decision,

every issue of life, an opportunity to surrender to His will and His control. It is fascinating to notice that even believing is the result of experiencing God's grace (Acts 18:27).

The third aspect of experiencing grace is to extend the grace we have experienced to others. In a sense, we can never fully experience God's grace until we integrate it into the way we treat one another. This is why Paul states *So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* (2 Cor 5:16, 17). Paul includes the ministry of leading others to salvation as part of the effect of grace. *Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith* (Rom 1:5). Even the gifts we have for ministry are part of this grace (Rom 12:6; Eph 4:7). When we share the gospel with others, we are extending God's grace to them. When we forgive those who have wronged us, we extend grace to them. Thus the one who has accepted God's forgiving grace goes on to experience it even more fully by treating others with grace.

Oswald Chambers has this powerful statement on grace: *The grace you had yesterday will not be sufficient for today. Grace is the overflowing favor of God, and you can always count on it being available to draw upon as needed. ' . . . in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses'—that is where our patience is tested (6:4). Are you failing to rely on the grace of God there? Are you saying to yourself, 'Oh well, I won't count this time'? It is not a question of praying and asking God to help you—it is taking the grace of God now. We tend to make a prayer the preparation for our service, yet it is never that in the Bible. Prayer is the practice of drawing on the grace of God. Don't say, 'I will endure this until I can get away and pray.' Pray now—draw on the grace of God in your moment of need. Prayer is the most normal and useful thing; it is not simply a reflex action of your devotion to God. We are very slow to learn to draw on God's grace for prayer.* (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, June 26.)

God invites us to come to Him at the throne of grace with the confidence that He loves us and has provided for all of our needs (Heb 4:16). We are believers. We have experienced His grace, and thus we accept the challenge of being stewards of God's grace as we minister to one another (1 Pet 4:10). Oh the wonder of God's grace!

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*Benjamin C. Maxson, Director, General Conference Stewardship Department*

*The least movement affects all nature; the entire sea changes because of a rock. Thus, in grace, the least action affects everything by its consequences; therefore everything is important. In each action we must look beyond the action at our past, present, and future state, and at others whom it affects, and see the relations of all those things. And then we shall be very cautious.*

—Blaise Pascal

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# Stewardship Window

Coming in 2001 . . .

## Seventh-day Adventist World Stewardship Summit

The 1999 General Conference Annual Council voted to conduct a World Stewardship Summit in early 2001. A number of issues confronting the Seventh-day Adventist Church indicate it is time for such a summit. Included in the items of discussion will be shifting giving patterns; long-range patterns of effective decline in giving; membership reactions to current promotional methods; as well as the growing challenges of increasing mission opportunities.

The summit will include officers and stewardship directors from all the world divisions and the General Conference, as well as other selected representatives. It will be designed to first look at the stewardship challenges and opportunities for the world church. This would be followed by an exploration of the conceptual and theological foundations for stewardship. Finally, recommendations will be made to the appropriate groups to implement strategies to address the issues discussed.

This proposed Stewardship Summit provides the opportunity for church leadership to carefully consider current issues in giving and stewardship as radical discipleship—the applied lordship of Jesus Christ. These two areas are critical to the future of the church. This Summit will provide an opportunity for dialogue and strategic planning so as to develop a more unified approach to stewardship.

We need your help. Please send us a list of issues that impact on or influence stewardship that you believe need to be included in this discussion by world church leadership. We will keep you posted on plans for, as well as the results of this summit.



## Circles of giving

Here are those excused from giving:

Those who believe *every man for himself*.

Those who believe that Christ made a mistake when he said *Go into all the world and preach the gospel*.

Those who regret that missionaries ever came to our ancestors.

Those who believe that the gospel will not save anybody.

Those who want no share in the final victory.

Those who believe they are not accountable to anybody for the trust they enjoy.

Those who are prepared to accept the final sentence: *Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of these, you did not to me*.

—Horace Bushnell

### Introduction

*Money—offerings, pledges, annual campaigns. It's all about money. Money is all that the church seems interested in.* Comments such as this leave many questions begging for answers. And the traditional response is, *The church is a nonprofit institution that is heavily dependent on donations. No bottom line, no mission.* But is that all there is to the church? Donations, bottom line, and missions? Could there be a much larger purpose that compels the church to seek offerings from members? I believe there is.

True giving provides for a deeper experience than does the habitual dropping of a dollar in the offering plate. True giving has everything to do with attitude; it is shrouded in an individual's personal relationship with God. Jesus said it clearly, *Your heart will be where your treasure is (Matt 6:21)*.

We pastors love to quote God's promise of liberality, *'Bring to the storehouse [THE CHURCH!] a full tenth of what you earn.... Test me in this,' says the LORD All-Powerful; 'I will open the windows of heaven for you and pour out all the blessings you need (Mal 3:10, emphasis mine)*. Do you hear what God is saying? He says *In all things, trust Me. In money, trust Me*. He says *If our relationship is to be a meaningful one, then it must be based on trust. Come, give our partnership a try. Come, trust Me*.

### Freedom-choice

*How do you calculate the amount of your offerings?* John asked his friends Bill and Ron.

*Simple*, answered Bill. *I draw a circle on the ground about eight inches in diameter. Then I hurl all my cash high into space, and I give to God all He directs to fall inside the circle.*

*How stingy*, Ron rebutted. *I draw a circle 15 feet in diameter. Then I stand in the middle and gently toss my dollar bills into the air. God has all that falls outside the circle.*

*Well*, John piously boasted, *I simply fling my currency as high as I can, providing God the opportunity to grab all He wants. What falls to the ground, I figure God doesn't need—so it's all mine.*

John's theology, although not scriptural, comes closest to God's way. Our Father allows all of our income to fall from Heaven. And He does not take our offerings by force, nor has He pre-programmed us to be giving robots.

Our God simply says, *I only desire your offerings if you give them freely and joyfully because of our relationship—Father and child*. He gives me the sanctified freedom to respond to His love-giving by returning to Him the only gift which is truly mine to give—my heart. And from my heart will abundantly flow God's tithe and my treasured offerings.

It is a freedom-choice. Take out the freedom to choose to give, and it is no longer a love-gift, it is no longer a response of a relationship based on love.

What size is your circle of giving? That depends, doesn't it! It depends on if we are talking about when we give to God? Or when we receive from God.

Self-centered humans seek micro-circles when giving. But when receiving—macro-circles are much preferred! Our Father longs for us to enjoy infinite circles to receive all He sends to us. *Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life AND godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness (II Pet 1:2, 3, emphasis mine)*.

### God and circles

Circles. God loves circles! All sizes of circles. He created circles—designed with circles. He incorporated circles in His design for this universe.

God loves circle-rainbows of promise too. Tradition tells us that anchoring God's rainbow is an elusive pot of gold. Of course! All the gold and silver is His! God, you see, does not need our gold. However, what the Lord sees at the end of His rainbow are His children who, *worth more than gold, even the purest gold (Ps 19:10)*, are bound to Him by the circle of His rainbow promise. What a relationship! More valuable than gold!

God loves the finite circles of micro-matter. Quarks circling neutrons, circling protons, circling atoms. The substance of His created children! We matter to our Father!

God loves the infinite circles of macro-space. Moons circling planets, circling suns, circling stars, circling solar systems, circling galaxies, circling quasars, circling—oh yes!—perfectly circling the very throne of God! Our God is an awesome God!

Yes, God loves circles—endless circles of infinite perfection. His creation is a limitless universe of the circles of His love! And we are included in the inner circle as His cherished children. The circle God loves most is the circle of His love-hugs with which He longs to embrace His children. That's why He emptied all of the treasury of heaven in the gift of Jesus for us!

## Grace killers

An elderly gentlemen had fallen behind in his tithing. After a renewing encounter with God, he placed the following note in the offering plate. *For value received, I (his name) promise to pay \$ \_\_\_\_\_. Yes, I've been receiving the blessings of God every day of my life! He has blessed me with every blessing! I promise to pay \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the church treasury.*

For *value received* is the joyous principle of Christian stewardship. There is no greater motivator to giving than the *value received* through our personal relationship with God!

In his book, *The Grace Awakening*, Charles Swindoll refers to *grace killers*. Manipulating guilt is an age old *grace killer*. We all have heard the traditional approaches to increase giving: *You'll be lost in Hell if you are not a faithful giver; Riches beyond measure are awaiting your liberality in supporting this ministry; Give to the church or to the IRS; Our church is headed for bankruptcy unless you double your offerings.* Grace killers ad nauseam!

A love-relationship, however, joyfully responds to the endless *benefits received* from *all of Heaven's treasury*. God's greatest gift—the largest of His circles—is the joy of unforced, free-gift giving as He modeled through His present of Jesus to us. What will be the measure of our love-relationship-response? It cannot be anything less than the gift of our heart—and a liberal offering in jubilant gratitude for His lavish love.

The result? A relationship-response that grows and continues to nurture our personal trust in Heaven's grace-gifts! And, as a blessed by-product, we will be witness to the church's financial resources being multiplied to share the good news of salvation with others inviting them into God's circle of love.

## Suggested conclusion

Responsively read the passage, *Right Living, Right Giving* (portions of 2 Cor 8 and 9, selected and paraphrased from Eugene H Peterson's *The Message*)

## Right-Living, Right-Giving

Now, friends, I want to report on the surprising and generous ways in which God is working in our church.

**This was totally spontaneous, entirely our own idea.**

What explains it was that you had first given yourselves unreservedly to God.

**Our giving simply flows out of the purposes of God working in our lives.**

You are familiar with the generosity of our Master, Jesus Christ.

**Rich as He was, He gave it all up for us. He became poor and we became rich.**

Your heart is in the right place all along.

**We will do what we can! Not what we can't!**

The heart regulates the hands.

**We're shoulder to shoulder with each other —one's surplus matching another's deficit.**

Now, if I said any more about this offering I'd be repeating myself.

**We're on board and ready to go!**

I want you to have all the time you need to make this offering in your own way. I don't want anything forced or hurried at the last minute.

**We remember: A stingy planter gets a stingy crop; a lavish planter gets a lavish crop.**

Good! I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting.

**God loves it when the giver delights in the giving!**

God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything.

**As one Psalmist puts it, "We throw caution to the winds, giving in reckless abandon. Our right-living, right-giving ways never run out, never wear out!"**

This most generous God who gives seed to the farmer that becomes bread for your meals is more than extravagant with you. He gives you something you can then give away, which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way, so that you can be generous in every way.

**Carrying out this work involves far more than helping meet the bare needs. It also produces abundant and bountiful thanksgiving to God. It is to prod us to live at our very best, showing our gratitude to God by being openly obedient to the plain meaning of the Message of Christ.**

Thank God for this gift, His gift! No language can praise it enough!

**And now—moved by the extravagance of God in our lives—we show our gratitude and praise through our generous offering.**



## Growing in grace

But for Grace, my soul had perished,  
Withered as the desert sand;  
Gone to shadows, and tormented,  
But for Grace's perfect plan!  
But for God's unceasing Mercy,  
But for Calvary's sacrifice;  
I had wandered, blind and thirsting,  
Fell to Satan's grim device.  
But the blessed blood of Jesus,  
Shed upon that cruel tree;  
Called me from the ling'ring shadows,  
Saved my soul, and rescued me!  
But for Grace, O Grace perfected,  
But for love's undying flame;  
I had never hoped in Jesus,  
Ne'er had even known His name!

—Carlos C. Beam

What does it mean to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? How can we be sure that we are growing in this knowledge? 2 Peter 1:2-11 answers these questions.

### I What it involves

#### A It involves the development of eight *graces*

- 1 These *graces* are listed in verses 5-7
- 2 Briefly defined
  - a) Faith is *conviction, strong assurance*
  - b) Virtue is *moral excellence, goodness*
  - c) Knowledge is *correct insight*
  - d) Temperance is *self-discipline*
  - e) Patience is *bearing up under trials*
  - f) Godliness is *godly character out of devotion to God*
  - g) Brotherly kindness is *love toward brethren*
  - h) Charity is *active goodwill toward those in need*
- 3 Note verse 8
  - a) We must *abound* in these eight *graces*
  - b) Only then can we be *growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ*
- 4 Therefore we are discussing something more than simply increasing our intellectual knowledge of Jesus Christ!
  - a) Knowledge has a place, but is just one of the *graces* necessary.
    - b) Peter is talking about growing in a fuller and more personal knowledge of Jesus Christ!
      - 1) Which comes by developing Christ-like attributes
      - 2) The more we grow in these *graces*, the more we really *know* Jesus (for He is the perfect personification of these *graces*)
  - 5 The word used for *knowledge* in verses 2, 3, and 8 means to *become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly, to know accurately, know well*
  - 6 Such knowledge comes only as we demonstrate these Christ-like *graces* in our lives

#### B Develop these *graces* in conjunction with each other

- 1 Notice the word *add* in verse 5
  - a) Before each *grace* mentioned, the word is implied
  - b) Suggests that each *grace* works with the others to produce an overall effect
  - c) Each *grace* is to temper and make perfect the *grace* that goes before it
  - d) Note the illustration
    - 1) *to knowledge (add) temperance*—the *grace* of self-control enables one to apply properly the knowledge one has
    - 2) *to temperance (add) patience*—self-control in turn needs the quality of patience to be consistent day after day
    - 3) So each *grace* is necessary, it is not a list from which to choose
    - 4) They all need to be developed in conjunction with each other

#### C It involves diligent effort

- 1 Notice the word *diligence* in verses 5 and 10
- 2 It means *earnestness and zeal*
- 3 To grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ requires much effort
- 4 We do not *accidentally* or *naturally* develop these *graces*

### II Why we should be *growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ*?

## A Grace and peace are multiplied in this knowledge (2 Pet 1:2)

- 1 *Grace* and *peace* are common forms of greeting in the New Testament
  - a) *Grace* is the greeting that requests God's unmerited favor
  - b) *Peace* is the greeting that requests the natural result of God's favor
- 2 These two blessings are *multiplied* in the knowledge of Jesus
  - a) All men experience God's favor and its result to some degree (Matt 5:45)
  - b) Only in Christ can one enjoy the *fullness* of God's favor and peace (Eph 1:3; Phil 4:6, 7)

## B All things pertaining to life and godliness are given through this knowledge (2 Pet 1:3, 4)

- 1 Only as we grow in this knowledge do we enjoy the true, full life available by God's divine power
- 2 Which includes *exceedingly great and precious promises*
- 3 Which enables us to be *partakers of the divine nature*
- 4 Which can free us from the *corruption that is in the world through lust*

## C Failure to grow in this knowledge results in spiritual myopia and amnesia (2 Pet 1:9)

- 1 Our vision is *shortsighted* if we are not growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ
  - a) What is the ultimate objective of being a Christian?
  - b) To become like Christ! *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29)*
  - c) As we have seen, this is what it really means to grow in the knowledge of Christ
- 2 Failure to so grow is an indication that we forgot why we were redeemed by the blood of Christ in the first place!
  - a) To have our sins forgiven, yes . . .
  - b) But then, that we might present ourselves to God and become what He wants us to be —like His Son!

## D We will never fall (2 Pet 1:10)

- 1 This does not mean we will never sin (1 Jn 1:8,10)
- 2 The word *fall* means *to fall into misery, become wretched, lose our salvation*
- 3 We will never fall so as to lose our salvation

## E An entrance into the everlasting kingdom (2 Pet 1:11)

- 1 This *everlasting kingdom* is likely the *heavenly kingdom* (2 Tim 4:18)
- 2 In other words, the ultimate destiny of the redeemed
- 3 What is meant by the idea of an *abundant entrance*?
  - a) You may be able to enter, not as having escaped from a shipwreck, or from fire, but as it were in triumph
  - b) By possessing the eight graces, we will be able to live victoriously in this life and to joyously anticipate what lies ahead (2 Tim 4:6-8)

Which of these *graces* have we developed best? In which are we most lacking? Are we making progress in the *knowledge of Jesus Christ*? If not, why begin now to do what is necessary to start making progress?

It happened some time ago, but the memory still blesses me when I think about it. I was going through the check-out line at the store.

Ahead of me was a small boy and he was obviously having a problem. Lying on the counter was a package of candy, and beside it was the little boy's money. The clerk spoke to him, and he began to dig first in one pocket and then the other pocket. Finally, he looked up at the clerk in silent despair.

I tapped him on the shoulder and asked, *How much do you need?*

He answered, *Eight cents.*

I said, *Let me help you, okay?* and I placed the eight cents in his hand.

The look of gratitude on his face will never be forgotten!

I didn't have to do that, but what a blessing. What a deep down good feeling I would have missed if I hadn't given the boy the eight cents. I believe it is those *didn't-have-to-do-it* kind of things that are the real seasoning of life.

The opportunities for such rich rewards are all around us if we will just take the time to recognize them; a word of praise, comfort, or encouragement, a card, or a note of appreciation for *just being you*— just little gestures of love and friendship when *you didn't have to do it*. What a difference they can make.

There is so much in the life of the believer that *we don't have to do* but when done always seems to bring God's special blessings to those who are the recipients as well as for those of us who do what we really didn't have to do.



*Grace can pardon  
our ungodliness and  
justify us with  
Christ's  
righteousness; it can  
put the Spirit of  
Jesus Christ within  
us; it can help us  
when we are down; it  
can heal us when we  
are wounded; it can  
multiply pardons, as  
we through frailty  
multiply  
transgressions.  
—John Bunyan*

## Under grace or under law ?

The Macedonians as an example of loving generosity (2 Cor 8:1-4, 9)! What do you think motivated this kind of giving? It was the grace of God. Christian giving begins under grace, not under law.

Under law, *I give to be accepted by God*. This motive is distinctive from religions that make giving a means to earn God's acceptance. (In Islam, for example, alms is one of 5 pillars—they give to be accepted by God.) Under grace, *I give because I have been accepted by a loving God*. Under law, *My giving is a duty which I resent*. This is the natural consequence of a works-righteousness mentality. Under grace, *My giving is a privilege which I enjoy*. Under law, *I give to keep God and others off my back*. Under grace, *I give as much I can to express my gratitude to God for His love*.

Many Christians misinterpret or misapply 2 Corinthians 9:7 to mean that it is wrong for us to call on or remind each other to make giving commitments. But this isn't Paul's point. He called on them to give in 1 Corinthians 16 and he reminds them to give in this very passage! Nor is it that we shouldn't give if we *feel* grudging or like we have to. Our human nature can generate such feelings. His point is that *God wants us to give with the right attitude*. We should give voluntarily and cheerfully because we are the recipients of God's lavish grace.

## Under grace

### Stewards or workers

It is easy to think of ourselves as owners and our money as exclusively our own property to be used to advance our own interests. While on a sociological level this may be true, it is completely false on a theological level. God says he is the Owner of all that we have (Ps 24:1). We are his stewards, entrusted with the privilege and responsibility to manage his resources to advance his purposes (1 Cor 6:19,20). And we will one day give an account to him for how we did in this (Matt 25).

Owners ask *How much of my money will I give to God?* Stewards ask *How much of God's money will I keep for myself?* It is appropriate for the steward to have enough to live on and provide for his family—but never to live luxuriously while the owner's affairs are neglected. Yet statistics reveal that as most Christians' income goes up, their percentage of giving goes down.

Owners ask *Will I enjoy this? Can I afford it?* Stewards ask *How will this affect my ability to advance God's purposes?* Certainly, being able to afford something is necessary but is not sufficient reason to buy something. For example, there are the needs of others to consider, for example (2 Cor 8:13-15).

Owners say *My finances and giving are my private business*. Stewards say *I will seek God's way so I can be faithful with His resources*. Instead of viewing our finances and giving as our private business, we, as stewards, must look to God's Word for guidance.

Says Louis Cassels, *If God wants you to do something, he'll make it possible for you to do it, but the grace he provides comes only with the task and cannot be stockpiled beforehand. We are dependent on him from hour to hour, and the greater our awareness of this fact, the less likely we are to faint or fail in a crisis.*

### Sowing and reaping (2 Cor 9:6-11)

If we live selfishly and self-protectively, we will *lose our lives*, but if we're willing to give ourselves away in love for others and out of trust in Christ, we will discover that God enriches our lives more than we give (John 12:24,25; Mark 8:34,35).

Through financial blessings God enables some to give even more to his work (2 Cor 9:10). Paul tells us that God is looking for people who can become bigger conduits. There is excitement in seeing God come through materially when we remain faithful in financial giving to the point where it brings us into unexpected need (Phil 4:18,19). There is also the security of a proven track-record of God's faithfulness (Mark 10).

There is joy in seeing God work through your giving to help others come to Christ, and get a chance at a new way of life. *How much should I give?* How much do you want to be blessed?

## Commitment and consistency

We should make giving commitments and fulfill them by giving consistently (1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 9:5). After prayerful consideration, we should be willing to go on record regarding what we will give to God's work in a given area, and then we should diligently lay aside the portion of our paychecks needed to meet that commitment. Many think this is legalistic and Spirit-quenching—that we ought to not plan in this area, but should instead just follow the Spirit's leading. However, in Paul's mind, there is clearly no contradiction between giving under grace and this principle.

This principle is important for a number of reasons: Many of the Church's needs are consistent. The rent and utility bills, for example, come with remarkable regularity! Our missionaries have regular needs. Needs require financial preparation in order to meet them. The best way to do this is to lay it aside little by little before the time comes. The church leaders need to plan its ministry, and since ministry costs money, we can do a better job of this if we have an idea of what the giving will be.

Covetousness will erode the contribution of inconsistent givers. For certain, we have all experienced this at one time or another. When we wait to give from what is left over, most often there isn't anything left to give. Somehow, when we wait to give, we manage to spend our resources on ourselves (be it intentional or not). On the other hand, when we set aside our tithes and offerings before we meet our own needs, we will reap the benefits of living and giving under God's grace (without feeling the pinch of limited resources).

## Christian giving brings abundant blessings (2 Cor 9:6-15)

At one time J Wilbur Chapman experienced a great sorrow that nearly shook his faith. In addition, his finances were almost depleted just when it was necessary for him to take a long trip to the western United States. One of the elders of his church who was a wealthy banker came to his home to offer a word of comfort and encouragement. As he left, he slipped a piece of paper into the pastor's hand. Chapman looked at it and was surprised to find that it was a check made out to him and signed by this rich friend. But the figures to indicate the amount of the gift were missing.

*Did you really mean to give me a signed blank check?* he asked.

*Yes,* said the man. *I didn't know how much you'd need, and I wanted to be sure you would have enough.*

Later Chapman commented, *While I never had to use that check, it gave me a secure feeling to know that thousands of dollars were literally at my disposal.*

God abundantly blesses Christians who give voluntarily and sacrificially (Mk 8:34,35). If we live selfishly and self-protectively, we will *lose our lives*. But if we're willing to give ourselves away in love for others, trusting the Lord to meet our needs, we will discover that God enriches our lives more than we could ever give to his work. Notice the blessings Paul says such Christian *sowers* will *reap*.

God is looking for people who can become bigger conduits. Godly givers also experience the blessing of seeing God work through their gifts to help other people on the deepest level. We become co-workers in ministries which we financially support. Through our money, we can touch lives in ways that we could not otherwise. What step of faith does God want you to take in this area? Begin consistent giving? Get advice on finances? Make a faith-promise gift? Increase your giving commitment? Reflect on your identity as a recipient of God's grace or as a steward?

*Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving. It is a self-existent principle inherent in the divine nature and appears to us as a self-caused propensity to pity the wretched, spare the guilty, welcome the outcast, and bring into favor those who were before under just disapprobation. Its use to us sinful men is to save us and make us sit together in heavenly places to demonstrate to the ages the exceeding riches of God's kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

—A W Tozer

## Hilarious giver

### Introduction

Alan Redpath in *Blessings Out of Buffetings* writes: *Once you see the matter of giving is centered in this lovely word grace, it lifts the whole act away from mechanics, from pressure and duty, from obligation and mere legalism. It lifts us up into the most lovely atmosphere of an activity which seeks by giving to convey to others all that is lovely, all that is beautiful, all that is good, and all that is glorious.*

The churches in Macedonia were going through extremely difficult economic times. They were so deep in poverty that Paul didn't even ask them to give toward the offering for the poor in Jerusalem. He knew they couldn't afford it.

But then they embarrassed Paul by *begging* for the opportunity to be a part of the project (2 Cor 8:1-4). They saw a great need and didn't want to be left out. They were so moved by the Holy Spirit's promptings they insisted on being a part of the *support of the saints* in Jerusalem.

### Begins with giving yourself (2 Cor 8:5)

How did they do it? *They first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God* (2 Cor 8: 5). That is always where stewardship must begin. *They first gave themselves unto the Lord.* They had an intimate love relationship with the Lord God. When you fall in love with the Lord Jesus you will give from the heart, because He is first in everything. These Macedonians, Paul says are an example to us of those who give by the principle of grace. Out of their love for the Lord, they gave *according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord.* There was no show, no competition. No one applied any pressure on them.

*You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich* (v 9). Jesus chose to give up the manifestation of His eternal glory, and take on all the abject poverty of a slave (Phil 2:6-8). He did it because He loves you. He did it so you could become extremely rich! You are rich in His grace. Rich in His love, rich in a right relationship with God, rich in the Holy Spirit, rich in promises, rich in power.

When you are the recipient of this kind of grace, you cannot help but respond in kind. Don't miss what happened in the heart of the Macedonian believers. God made them exceedingly rich in His grace, not financially rich. This is not *prosperity gospel* nonsense. This is not some religious, get-rich scheme! You put Christ first in every area of your life and give financially as He enables you and you will be enriched beyond measure. That is the principle of grace giving.

Ron Blue writes in *Master Your Money* (pp 19, 20): *Very few Christians would argue with the principle that God owns it all, and yet if we follow that principle to its natural conclusion, there are three revolutionary implications. First of all, God has the right to whatever He wants whenever He wants it. It is all His, because an owner has rights, and I, as a steward, have only responsibilities.*

*If I really believe that God owns it all then when I lose any possession, for whatever reason, my emotions may cry out, but my mind and spirit have not the slightest questions as to the right of God to take whatever He wants whenever He wants it. Really believing this also frees me to give generously of God's resources to God's purposes and His people. All that I have belongs to Him.*

*The second implication of God's owning it all is that not only is my giving decision a spiritual decision, but every spending decision is a spiritual decision. . . . As a steward, I have a great deal of latitude, but I am still responsible to the Owner. Some day I will give an accounting of how I used His property.*

*The third implication of the truth that God owns it all is that you can't fake stewardship. Your checkbook reveals all that you really believe about stewardship . . . your goals, priorities, convictions, relationships, and even the use of your time. A person who has been a Christian for even a short while can fake prayer, Bible study, evangelism, going to church, and so on, but he can't fake what his checkbook reveals.*

### The practice of grace giving (2 Cor 8:10-24)

Paul reminded the Corinthians that they made a pledge to give to the Jerusalem missionary offering (2 Cor 8:10-11). A year had now gone by and they had not fulfilled their promise. They had been caught up in bickering and fighting

A preacher, building up steam in his sermon, moving to a great crescendo, said *This church, like the crippled man, has got to get up and walk.*

The congregation responded *That's right, Preacher, let it walk.*

And he added *This church, like Elijah on Mount Carmel, has got to run.*

They responded *Run, let it run, Preacher. Let it run.*

The preacher continued *This church has got to mount up on wings like wings of eagles and fly.*

Again they agreed, *Let it fly, Preacher. Let it fly.*

Then the preacher added *Now if this church is gonna fly, it 's gonna take money.*

And they all spoke up in unison, *Let it walk, preacher. Let it walk. Let it walk.*

— Adapted from Clyde Murdock, *A Treasury of Humor*



with one another. There were divisions within the body. They were sidetracked with dissensions, immorality, and drunkenness, quarreling over spiritual gifts rather than keeping their eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Carnal preoccupations kept them from fulfilling their pledge to God.

Are making pledges wrong? We live everyday on the principle of pledges. I am living my life based upon pledges. I have pledged to pay the utility companies at the end of every month. I drive my cars on the promise that I will pay my car notes. I live in a house by promising to pay my mortgage monthly. How strange that some think it is wrong to make a sincere promise to give to God from what He has provided for us when we have already made pledges to hard-hearted human creditors.

## **It is all in the attitude (2 Cor 9:6, 7)**

Go ahead and do as you sense God leading you. Since He has blessed you bountifully go ahead and give as you purposed in your heart to do. Follow through with your pledge.

Don't do it *grudgingly*. The word means out of grief, sorrow, and pain of mind or spirit. Don't do it as if it were killing you. Don't give reluctantly as if you are grieving over what you have lost in the process. *Oh man I gave that ten dollars and I could have kept it and rented a couple of movies, eaten out or gone on a date. Why in the world did I do that?* Don't give *grudgingly or under compulsion*. Let it come from a heart that is overflowing with God's wonderful grace and love.

It is all in your attitude. *God loves a cheerful giver*. The English transliteration of the word for *cheerful (hilaros)* is hilarious. God loves a hilarious giver (2 Cor 9:7). He desires our giving come from a heart that is cheerful, joyous, prompt, ready to do anything. Is there a readiness and a joy in your giving? Or is there the attitude of an old gripe, grudgingly holding on to every penny? But neither does God want us to be like a drunken sailor who throws his money away on drinks for everyone. He wants us to be responsible givers who give out of a heart that is overflowing with God's grace.

## **God's promise to the grace givers (2 Cor 9:8-15).**

God does not bless us to enrich our own selfishness. He does it that His name will be glorified and that His eternal purpose will be accomplished. God is not in the modern American *prosperity gospel* movement. Often, in His all sufficient wisdom He works just the opposite to accomplish His purpose in our lives (2 Cor 9:10, 11). God blesses us abundantly so we can bless others abundantly.

He wants our giving to be a blessing, a means of producing thanksgiving to God (2 Cor 9:12). He takes your gift and uses it that His name will be glorified repeatedly. People see your gift and they offer up thanksgivings to God. Those who are recipients praise God and pray for you. Your gift keeps repeating itself in people's lives.

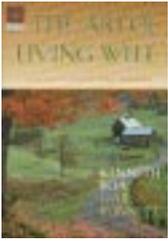
A prominent Christian businessman shared His testimony of how he came to Christ. It was during the great Depression. There was a missionary sharing the needs of the mission field. An appeal was made to continue the missionary work even in the midst of abject poverty. They took up an offering that night. This young believer sat there in the audience and knew that he had only one silver dollar to his name. That was all the money he had in this world. He said he could, at the moment feel the tremendous pull of the Holy Spirit leading him to contribute to this great need. All he had was that silver dollar coin. He said to the ladies, *I reached in my pocket and I took out that silver dollar, all I had in the world, and I laid it on the plate and gave my all to Jesus Christ, expecting God to meet my need.*

He then told how God greatly blessed him through the years. He had now come to a place of prominence, power and possessions. As he was standing there a woman in the audience spoke up and said, *I dare you to do it again!*

That is exactly what God calls us to do. He makes us exceedingly rich so we can become paupers again by making others rich. The Lord owns it all; we are His stewards. May the Lord bless you spiritually as He has blessed you financially.

A twenty-dollar bill and a one-dollar bill were talking one day. They were telling each other where they had been. The twenty said he had just been on a whirlwind trip. He had been to the casinos and to the movies. He had been to a baseball game and purchased hotdogs and beers. He had been passed on to the lottery and then a drug dealer. His life was full of extravagant travel. The one-dollar bill responded saying his life was boring. All he had done was travel from one church to another and another.

# Book Reviews



## ***The Art of Living Well***

by Ken Boa and Gail Burnett  
NavPress  
Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1999  
US\$ 8.00

Everyone desires a fulfilling and well-lived life, but living well is impossible without wisdom. Based on the proverbs of Solomon, the second book in NavPress' Guide Book series, *The Art of Living Well* examines the specific ways to apply wisdom to life, presenting the fruits of wisdom in relationships, jobs, actions, and much more. This intelligent, in-depth study gives practical tools to integrate wisdom into each area of life and learn to act instead of react to life situations.

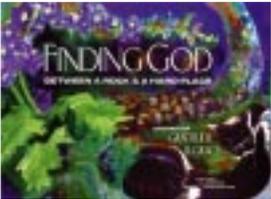
Designed for busy people, the daily excursions in these studies can be completed in less than thirty minutes and require no additional study helps, concordance, or even a Bible (the needed texts are included in the sidebars and appendices). The book includes five studies, each divided into five *daily excursions*. Most excursions take about 20 minutes to complete. Also included are optional *side tours* for those wanting to delve even deeper into the subject.

Personal experiences of the authors are inserted throughout the excursions. These stories give a realistic, down-to-earth connection between the student and the biblical truth.

This personal study guide can easily be adapted for use in a small group study session. Each unit ends with a session plan called *Sharing the Journey* that suggest questions and activities. A flip chart, some markers and these suggestions is all one needs to lead a small group study.

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*Reviewed by the staff of Dynamic Steward*



## ***Finding God Between a Rock And a Hard Place***

Compiled by Lil Copan and Elisa Fryling  
Harold Shaw Publishers  
Wheaton, Illinois, 1999  
US\$ 10.99

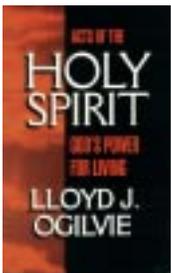
No story about God's light coming into a dark space is a small story, and every story that is a reminder of God's grace is our story. This collection of inspirational stories about everyday grace gathers together personal accounts from people next door and around the globe, from the famous and the lesser known. No matter what your background or circumstances, God's grace shows up everywhere: airports, grocery stores, hospital rooms—the details of our lives. Contributors include Madeleine L'Engle, Luci Shaw, Margaret Jensen, Corrie ten Boom, Kim Bolton, Larry Crab, and Patricia St. John.

Their stories will remind you of God's presence in our everyday lives, in the little things, in both the crisis and the mundane. Read the stories of people who experience God's love and grace, and you will be reminded that stories happen only to those who expect them, to those who have their eyes and ears and hearts open to the working of God's grace.

This book of answered prayers and signs of grace will encourage and affirm new believers and seasoned veterans alike. The uses of this book can be many—a gift of appreciation or encouragement; a source for sermon illustrations or children's stories; or a personal bedside story book.

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*Reviewed by the staff of Dynamic Steward*



## ***Acts of the Holy Spirit***

Harold Shaw Publishers  
Wheaton, Illinois, 1999  
US\$ 12.99

*The astounding, invigorating dynamics of the Holy Spirit have never been more present and available than now*, declares author Lloyd Ogilvie, who is currently serving as the 61st Chaplain to the United States Senate. With richness and practical insight, he uses the story of the Book of Acts to show the joy of living as God intends—with the limitless power of the *Holy Spirit* released in our lives.

Formatted like a detailed outline of the Acts, the topics discussed include the meaning of a Spirit-filled life, the adventure of following the Spirit's guidance, how to find forgiveness and joy, giving up idols, and living confidently in the power of Christ's Resurrection.

Use this book as your guide to follow the story of the early church. From their example, discover the firm foundation of God's church. In their victories, plan your own with the Holy Spirit.

Through the *Acts of the Holy Spirit*, join in the adventure of following the Spirit's guidance and living confidently in His power.

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*Reviewed by the staff of Dynamic Steward*

When Mother Teresa was a teenager, she was uncertain as to whether or not God wanted her to serve the poor of India. So she asked her parish priest, *How will I know I am called to India?* He replied, *You will know you are called by your joy.*

Robert Hudnut says that we can likewise discover the joy of knowing when God calls us. In *Call Waiting: How to Hear God Speak*, he shows us that God didn't speak only to people who lived 2,000 years ago. He still speaks today, and we can hear God's call at various listening points of life.

Many in today's society are dissatisfied with their lives because they lack a sense of vocation, or calling. We are often too busy to listen for God, and we pursue our own agendas rather than discover what God has in store for us. And yet we search for that sense of meaning, purpose and fulfillment that comes only from hearing from God. *God's call is waiting for you*, Hudnut says. *You have only to listen.*

In this book Robert Hudnut teaches us to listen for God by directing us to the examples of biblical characters who hear God. The short chapters are perfect for daily reflective reading or for extended times of learning. Through the chapters and the biblical accounts, you will find God nearer than you ever imagined. God promises to guide us. Our task is to learn to hear.

Eugene Peterson, translator of *The Message*, says of this book *We are flooded with information, but have to go looking for wisdom. Look here: put yourself in the company of Robert Hudnut's wise and reliable direction for those who seek to live well before and with God.*

Here's the book to take you on the path that reconnects you to your Father God. Through this book, you can learn the art of living in the presence of God, you can appreciate the peace that can only come from surrendering every moment to His will, you can listen for His prompting, you can move forward and upwards to the life He has planned for you.

Don't make the mistake of putting your life on hold. Get on the direct connection to a loving God who waits to speak to you,

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*Reviewed by the staff of Dynamic Steward*

Smede's book, as the title suggests, deals with the perennial question that believers ask regarding the toils and trials of this life, even a life that is *hid with God in Christ*, even a life where *all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord*, even a life where God promises that *I am with you always even unto the end of the world*. How does a Christian live with these promises—promises that, in a sense say that *it's all right when, in fact, at least from our perspective, it's all wrong?*

Of course, if anyone had the answer to that he'd be more than a prophet. The fact is we don't know. Smede makes no claims to the contrary: Early on, he writes: *I do not want to mislead you. I have no bag of religious tricks to make everything turn out well for you.* Thanks, but one would have to be incredibly gullible to think that he did.

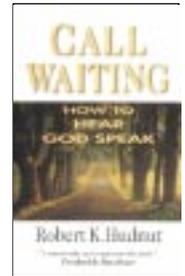
Nevertheless, his book does come across as being written by someone who passionately cares about the questions he asks. And time and again, in each situation, he comes back to the gist of the book, which is about grace. God's grace, and how it impacts our lives in each situation we confront, the idea being, no matter what happens, *my grace is sufficient for thee.*

All in all, though not a life-changing book (at least for me), Smedes book does in a very pastoral and caring manner deal with issues that all of us face at home, at work, in marriage, in church, on the street corner. He doesn't just deal with these issues intellectually; most people's problems are not intellectual; they are emotional, spiritual, personal, and here's where he does a good job with the book. He touches where people hurt; and, perhaps, for some, his gentle strokes might just be what they need.

No doubt, anyone reading it will come away with something helpful that they didn't have going in.

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*Clifford Goldstein, Editor, Adult Bible Study Guide*



## ***Call Waiting***

**by Robert K Hudnut**  
**InterVarsity Press**  
**Downers Grove, Illinois, 1999**  
**US\$ 11.99**



## ***How Can It Be All Right When Everything Is All Wrong***

**by Lewis B Smedes**  
**Harold Show Publishers**  
**Wheaton, Illinois, 1999**  
**US\$ 8.99**

# Resources

## Bible-Based Illustration on CD

Clip art and graphic illustrations abound in today's electronic culture. However, it still takes a lot of searching to find *biblical* clip art for most clip art with a Christian theme are limited to crucifixes and Easter lilies, steeples and Bibles. If this has been your experience, get yourself a copy of *Bible-Based Illustrations*.

On this CD you'll find everything from Adam to the beast in Revelation. This is a collection of 670 tiff images (620 in black and white and 50 four-color that are 300 dpi and ready for placement in a word processing document or for printing) that are not just generic symbols but beautiful, original illustrations based on actual biblical events. Besides the illustrations for Bible stories, there are images of modern day people sharing their faith, objects relating to worship, general subjects connected with church outreach, and Bible texts in beautiful borders.

The easy-to-use Artview.pdf opens in Acrobat Reader, allowing you to easily find the image you want. There is no need to download the whole CD; you simply select the picture you want and place it in your document.

All the artwork on this CD is original. Initially designed for the hearing-impaired, these illustrations are very detailed. The artist, Robert Wright, is offering this CD copyright-free, with no royalty fee for use of his artwork. A local church can find many uses for this CD—church newsletter, illustration in children's sabbath schools, Vacation Bible School, etc.

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## Editorial

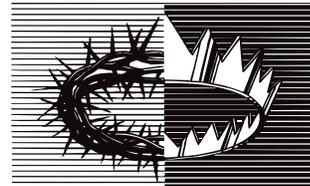
While editing this issue, I was drawn again and again to a story in the book, *Finding God Between a Rock and a Hard Place* (reviewed on p 14): Chris was in a hurry. This was not a day to lose time. Yet it happened: The traffic was extra heavy, the weather was extra cold. And in the middle of it all, an old woman, oblivious to the snow or the cars, was pushing a cart of groceries through the lanes of traffic. Ignoring the angry honking, Chris did what the Spirit prompted her to do. She stopped to offer the old woman a ride. The woman neither resisted nor acknowledged the offer. Angry, animal-like noises came from the woman as Chris helped her into the car. When asked where she lived, there were more noises and hand gesturing, all of which frightened Chris and her two children in the back seat. Attempts to interpret the woman's motions and eight miles later, Chris found the woman's home—a dilapidated shack. The woman made more noises and stared icily as Chris helped her out and carried the groceries. Then the woman slammed the door without a smile or a thank you. *Love is often untidy. . . . It is firm, unchangeable, and hard. It is often missing that feel-good quality we human beings are perennially on the prowl for. Real love isn't tidy. In fact, it's downright messy. Real love doesn't pass by the unlovely in pain. Real love doesn't look for a thank-you. It is its own reward* (p 95).

What makes the difference? What makes it all worthwhile? The grace of God working in you. Grace enables you to turn the other cheek, to love the unlovable, to give without knowing why (see Mwansa's lead article). Be it a casual observation or a good theological dissection, *grace* opens up a myriad of meaning—and many questions (some of which Maxson answers in his column). This issue tries to unveil the kaleidoscopic role of grace in the Christian life.

As in the story, your life probably lacks appreciation and rewards. But wrap your heart in the grace of God, and you'll forever find joy, abundant joy—a joy that makes it all worthwhile.

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*Fylvia Fowler Kline, Assistant Director, General Conference Stewardship Department*



**Stewardship Department  
General Conference of  
Seventh-day Adventists**



**Editor»** Fylvia Fowler Kline

**Editorial Assistants»** Sheri Clemmer »  
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**Contributing Editors»** Martin Anthony »  
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Sepang

**12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904  
(301) 680-6157 Phone  
(301) 680-6155 Fax**

**gcstewardship@compuserve.com  
FFKline@compuserve.com**