

THE GRACE AWAKENING
STUDY TWELVE

Do You Really Model Grace?

Selected Scriptures

Are you an example of grace in your ministry? Do you encourage independent thinking? Do people feel free to ask questions without you feeling threatened or suspicious? Do you encourage liberty? Or do you hold people hostage to your control? Do you really model grace?

—Charles R. Swindoll

A spirit of grace in a church doesn't appear out of nowhere; it springs from the Holy Spirit through the hearts of the ministers. Who are the ministers? The pastor, certainly, but also everyone who leads by serving, including teachers, helpers, counselors, elders, deacons, sponsors, and committee members. When those who minister model grace from the heart, grace in all its sweetness flows free. So, minister, here's a question worth asking yourself: *Do I really model grace in my church ministry?*

Members may hear about grace from the pulpit, but when projects need doing and people need prodding, ministers sometimes resort to using *human ingenuity* and *personality power* to strong-arm a task to completion. When we're under stress, our tendency is to operate out of the flesh and be less than gracious. If we're to treat people with grace, we need a deeper, spiritual source.

When Zerubbabel had trouble motivating the Jews who had returned from captivity to complete the temple, the Lord urged the frustrated leader not to twist people's arms to get the job done but to rely on God's Spirit:

"This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts. 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"'" (Zechariah 4:6–7 NASB)

The mountain-sized challenge that loomed before Zerubbabel would be reduced to a stroll in the plain—not through the bulldozing might of ingenuity or personality but by the power of God's Spirit. In the end, God got the glory as the people exclaimed that by grace and grace alone the temple was built.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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So the first and most basic lesson for ministers who set out to model grace in their churches is this: *minister in the power of the Spirit, not the flesh*. As you do, five characteristics of grace-filled living will flow through your church like streams of sweet water.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you prepare your heart for this study, reread Zechariah 4:6–7 above. What mountain-sized challenges loom before you? Commit these challenges to the Lord in prayer. And ask the Lord to help you depend on the Spirit as you seek to model grace through the characteristics we'll examine in this study.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Centuries after Zerubbabel's reconstruction project, Herod rebuilt and expanded the temple and its courtyards into a massive edifice. While Herod with his ingenuity and power was erecting a temple of stone, God's Spirit was building a living and lasting temple "made without human hands" (Mark 14:58)—the resurrected body of Christ Himself and, by extension, the body of His church.

The following passages illustrate some of the ways the Spirit acts in us. "For we are the temple of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16), and His Spirit is at work in us to showcase His grace to the world.



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 **Observation: Modeling Grace in the First-Century Church**

Review the following five passages and, using the *Searching the Scriptures* method of observation, identify the “who,” “what,” and “how.” In other words, who are the people in each passage (proper nouns), what did they do (action words), and how did they do it (adjectives and descriptors)?

Acts 4:32–35

Who?	What?	How?

Acts 11:19–24

Who?	What?	How?

2 Corinthians 3:5–6

Who?	What?	How?



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2 Corinthians 3:17

Who?	What?	How?

1 Timothy 1:12–14

Who?	What?	How?

Now that you’ve identified the basic content of the verses, let’s construct a principle for grace-living based on each passage.



Interpretation: Modeling Grace in the Twenty-First-Century Church

A principle is a truth that can apply to anyone in any culture in any era. It’s like a fruit tree that we transplant from its original soil to the soil in our backyard. We discover the author’s intended meaning planted in the “soil” of his original audience’s hearts, transplanting it to our hearts today. Let’s interpret the principle in the first passage we observed: generosity (Acts 4:32–35).



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Generosity with Personal Possessions

According to Acts 4:32–35, members of the early church in Jerusalem “shared everything they had” (Acts 4:32) and, as a result, “there were no needy people among them” (4:34). We draw from their example this universal truth: *ministers who model grace are generous with their personal possessions with an absence of selfishness.*

List below some practical expressions of this principle for those who minister in the church?

Grace-oriented people are not stingy. They are generous with their money, with what they own, and with their time. They're not in it for what they get out of it; they're in it because they have the joy of giving. —Chuck Swindoll

Encouragement in Challenging Circumstances

According to Acts 11:19–24, the church leaders in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to encourage the Antioch Gentiles who were turning to faith in Christ. “When he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all” (Acts 11:23 NASB).

We infer from Barnabas’ example this universal truth: *ministers who model grace bring encouragement to challenging circumstances.* New works of grace, such as the gospel spreading to Gentiles, can be challenging for those stuck in the status quo. Traditionalism can suffocate God’s work when ministers aren’t encouragers. List below some practical expressions of this principle for ministers, particularly in new and challenging circumstances?

Grace-oriented people are not doomsday people. They're not naysayers. Rather, they say, “Trust God because He's sovereign and He's got a new thing in mind.” Bring cheer, bring hope, lift spirits, be a Barnabas. —Chuck Swindoll



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Ministry beyond the “Letter” of the Law

According to 2 Corinthians 3:5–6, Paul based his adequacy on God who called him to minister by the leading of the Spirit, not the letter of the law, “for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6 NASB). We glean this universal truth: *ministers who model grace minister beyond the letter of the law*. A grace-awakened shepherd doesn’t bash the sheep over the head with ultra-dogmatic teaching.

Paul modeled grace through his authenticity (2:17), relational style (3:1–4), and servant mind-set (3:6). List below some practical expressions of this principle for those who minister in the church, particularly regarding Bible teaching?

I believe in the inerrant Word of God with all my heart, but I also believe it’s not a club to beat people with. —Chuck Swindoll

Liberty for Creative Expression

According to 2 Corinthians 3:17, Paul equated the presence of the Spirit with liberty: “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (NASB). We can draw this universal truth: *ministers who model grace allow liberty for creative expression*. There’s an absence of lock-stepped rigidity in how people express their gifts.

List below some practical expressions of this principle for those who minister in the church, particularly regarding creative expressions?

If you’re listening to teachers who hold you hostage, get away from there. There is only One worth following all the time, and His name is Jesus Christ. —Chuck Swindoll



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Release from Past Failures

According to 2 Timothy 1:12–14, Paul brought up his checkered past not to draw attention to himself but to God’s grace. The principle is this: *ministers who model grace release others and themselves from past failures.*

List below some practical expressions of this principle for those who minister in the church, particularly regarding creative expressions?

Modeling grace may not happen overnight. It’s a process of growth that comes as we follow Peter’s counsel in our final passage.



Correlation: A Command for All Ministers

Peter wrapped up his second epistle with this warning and command that are fitting for ministers who seek to model grace:

So be on guard; then you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:17–18)

We’re not alone in our journey of ministry. Jesus Christ is our faithful guide. Why would Peter draw our attention to Jesus as the ultimate model of grace?



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Application: How Can You Model Grace in Your Ministries

Through the power of the Spirit, we model Jesus' grace to others when we demonstrate generosity, encouragement, ministry beyond the "letter," liberty, and release from past failures.

You've explored how these principles might be put into practice, but now get personal. Which principle stands out to you as one in which you can grow in expressing grace? And in what practical ways can you model this principle this week?

As we said in the beginning, a spirit of grace in a church doesn't appear out of nowhere; it springs from the Holy Spirit with Christ's guidance through the hearts of the church's ministers. Wherever you minister and to whomever you minister, may grace overflow to those who thirst for what the Spirit has to offer through you.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for Your reminders of grace through the principles of generosity, encouragement, freedom, and forgiveness. Your Son modeled all these qualities so well. Help me to follow His lead and display His grace to those to whom I minister. In His gracious name I pray, amen.



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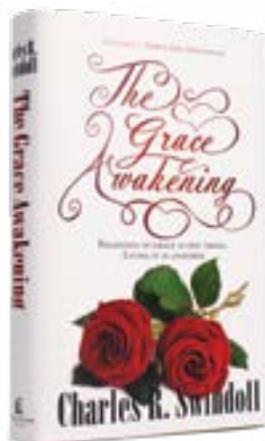
Selected Scriptures



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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

