

Participant's Guide

THE GRACE COURSE

An **8-Session Guide** to Experiencing
Freedom and Fruitfulness in Christ

STEVE GOSS

& Freedom in Christ Ministries

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COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

“The awesomeness of God runs through this course—we can all come to the knowledge that we have been set free by grace.”

“For the first time in the decades I’ve been a Christian, I’m suddenly ‘getting’ it—that actually this is *grace* and it is amazing.”

“*The Grace Course* has introduced Christ back into my life, knowing that I love Him and He loves me.”

“Understanding that it’s not about my performance but He just wants my heart is what blew me away. It’s great!”

“*The Grace Course* helped me to realize that there is nothing I can do to make God love me more or love me less, and to choose to serve Him purely out of love.”

“It brings out truths that have been hidden to so much of the Church for so long.”

“During the course I felt a progressive lifting, the burden just going, and I feel so light now.”

“All of the presenters shared what happened to them and that honesty really comes across.”

“It was so refreshing to enjoy, delight and soak in the truth of God’s Word and receive it in my heart.”

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INTRODUCTION

WHY TAKE PART IN THIS COURSE?

Do you want to keep growing as a Christian, and bear more and more fruit that will last forever? By God's grace—and only by His grace—you can! The objective of *The Grace Course* is to help you experience God's grace in such a deep way (in your heart as well as your head) that love for Him becomes the main motivator in your life.

Here's a flavor of what you will learn:

- how to deal with the false motivators of guilt, shame, fear, performance, and pride;
- why doing things for God because you feel you have to is worth precisely nothing;
- how to get rid of that “low grade fever” of guilt in your life;
- that you can hold your head up high no matter what's in the past;
- you need fear nothing and no one except God Himself;
- how to deal with sins that grip you;
- how to operate in the authority of Jesus to disciple the nations;
- the true meaning of unity and why it is so important;
- that if you want to be really fruitful, it starts with resting and brokenness;
- how practically to renew your mind so that you will be transformed.

As you experience His grace like never before, our expectation is that you will go on to bear more fruit than you ever thought possible!

HOW CAN I GET THE MOST OUT OF IT?

Do your best to get to each session and catch up with any you have to miss (ask your group leader for access to the video if available).

Use the YouVersion devotional on The Bible App, which will accompany you through this course (see page 8).

Ensure you take the opportunity to go through *The Steps To Experiencing God's Grace*, a kind and gentle process during which you ask the Holy Spirit to show you any areas of your life where you may need to repent.

The course includes strategies for standing firm in the freedom won and renewing your mind on an ongoing basis—make them part of your daily life.

As you become aware of areas where your thinking is not in line with biblical truth, write them in the Lies List at the end of the book and work out what is actually true from God's Word.

You will be introduced to "Stronghold-Busting," a straightforward and very effective strategy for renewing your mind (see Romans 12:2) that will help you deal with the lies you uncover and stand firm in your freedom. Make it part of your daily life.

Read the accompanying books to reinforce the teaching.

MAKE YOUR *GRACE COURSE* EXPERIENCE EVEN BETTER!

The Grace Course is at the heart of *The Grace And Freedom Project*, a collaboration between a number of leading producers of discipleship and devotional resources.

That means there are some wonderful additional resources you can take advantage of as you go through *The Grace Course*. Read about them below. Scan the QR code to find out more or go to:



www.GraceAndFreedomProject.com

THE WONDER OF GRACE VIDEO SERIES

An 8-session series of short, punchy videos presented by Sidhara Udalagama that cover key themes from *The Grace Course*. The themes of the sessions correspond to the *Grace Course* sessions. We recommend you watch them in the days before each session—they will give you a great introduction to what we will be looking at and get you thinking!

Available to stream from Freedom In Christ's Discipleship Hub (no additional charge for those who have access to *The Grace Course* videos on the platform), and from RightNowMedia.

DAILY NUGGETS OF GRACE YOUVERSION DEVOTIONAL

A 56-day (8-week) daily devotional designed to accompany you on your journey through *The Grace Course*. Begin it on the day you attend the first session of *The Grace Course* and you'll receive concise, relevant, thought-provoking messages each day for eight weeks.

Available on The Bible App from YouVersion—search for "Daily Nuggets Of Grace." There is currently no charge for this.

THE GRACE CONNECTION BY STEVE GOSS

Steve Goss, author of *The Grace Course*, has written this book specifically for participants on the course. It fleshes out the principles taught on the course to help you connect with grace at a deeper level than ever before.

Published by Freedom In Christ Ministries International. Kindle version available.

40 DAYS OF GRACE BY RICH MILLER

A revised and updated version of this 40-day devotional book by Rich Miller that has been so popular with participants on the original *Grace Course*. It is designed to be used directly after *The Grace Course* for a six-week period and will help participants process the principles they learned and put them into practice.

Published by Freedom In Christ Ministries International. Gift edition published by Christian Art Gifts.

MEET THE VIDEO PRESENTERS



Leisha Lyn-Cook lives in Kingston, Jamaica, and is an entrepreneur in the baking and pastry industry. Her business produces the most amazing cakes! She serves as a Small Group Facilitator and member of the missions ministry in her church and has also worked in youth ministry. She loves to participate in short-term missions with Operation Mobilization and managed to squeeze in a mission trip to Greece on her way to filming *The Grace Course*. She is part of the Freedom In Christ Jamaica team, and her greatest desire is to impact the world for Christ and to see lives truly changed through the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

Josh Shaarda came to know Christ as a young child and went on to study at Bible College. However, having made some bad choices, he was filled with shame and guilt, and hated himself. He had a revelation of how complete God's unconditional love and forgiveness are and offered himself afresh in gratitude to serve him. Soon after, he met Mandy, who became his wife (they have five children), and they set off to share God with an unreached tribe in a remote part of Nigeria. They have now served in Africa for 21 years. Currently based in rural Uganda, Josh leads Freedom In Christ Uganda and for the past 12 years has been using the Freedom In Christ discipleship materials in villages and prisons with great results.

Nancy Maldonado was born in the Andes mountains of Ecuador, where she built forts and caught tadpoles with Rob, her childhood friend. They went on to marry and lived many adventures as missionaries in Spain, but their greatest adventure was parenting Josue and Sofia in a postmodern secular society. Nancy is part of Freedom In Christ's international team and is responsible for translating discipleship resources into Spanish. She loves trying new recipes, discipling women, bright colors, and Earl Grey tea with milk. She spends much of her time traveling around South and Central America with Rob, who is Freedom In Christ's Latin America Director. Nancy is one of the presenters of *The Freedom In Christ Course* and is much loved by viewers of it.

Rob Davies is married to Katharine and has three children and a very large and hairy dog. He loves the great outdoors. He's been Freedom In Christ UK's Executive Director since 2016 and prior to that was a missionary to Uganda. Through many adventures on the mission field and at home he's learning—more often than not the hard way—to trust that God's grace is always sufficient for life, leadership, and possibly most pertinently, for parenting. He's passionate about seeing people from all walks of life—every generation and every nation—embrace the freedom Jesus has won for them, and step into all God has prepared in advance for them.

Sidhara Udalagama grew up in Sri Lanka but has spent her adult years in England working in full-time ministry after graduating with a masters in organizational psychology. She currently works at a global not-for-profit organization as a communications specialist and speaker.



Alongside working in ministry, Sidhara has worked with corporate and not-for-profit organizations as a leadership development coach involved in staff training and the development of organizational-health focused content. She is a prolific communicator of the Bible with a passion to see people fulfill their potential in this world and become all that God created them to be.

Sidhara is married to Dev and enjoys eating, traveling the world, and repeating those two things . . . preferably together!

session **01**

FREE!

OBJECTIVE



To understand that what really matters to God is not only *what* we do but *why* we do it.

FOCUS VERSE

We love because he first loved us.

1 John 4:19

**FOCUS TRUTH**

In Christ we are perfectly loved and accepted for who we are, not what we do. From that position of security, we can make a free choice to serve God because we love Him, and get rid of any other false motivation.

**CONNECT**

One definition of grace is “getting what you don’t deserve.” Tell the group about a time you got what you didn’t deserve. What did you deserve? What did you actually get?

If you watched *The Wonder Of Grace* introductory video for this session, what was the main thing that struck you?

PRAYER & DECLARATION

Dear Father God, thank You for adopting us as Your children through Jesus Christ, and for giving us the privilege of calling You “Abba, Father”! As I begin this journey of knowing You more and understanding Your amazing grace, I submit to You so that Your truth will become true not just in my head, but in my heart. Amen.

I HAVE BEEN SET FREE BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS. I CHOOSE TO SUBMIT MYSELF TO GOD, AND I RESIST ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING THAT WOULD TRY TO COMPROMISE MY FREEDOM IN HIM.

WORD



THE STORY OF THE TWO BROTHERS—LUKE 15:11-32

Jesus said that He came to give us life in all its fullness. And He meant it. He wants to do amazing things in you and through you.

The Grace Course is designed to help you experience God's amazing grace like never before so that you can be more fruitful in God's Kingdom than perhaps you ever imagined.

We're going to explore the barriers to experiencing grace in our lives and how to remove them.

> THE YOUNGER BROTHER

Jesus deliberately paints a picture of the worst behavior imaginable in the culture of that time. The younger brother showed no respect for his father. He slept around. He took a job looking after pigs.

Out of desperation he returns home knowing he has blown any chance of being received back as a son and hoping he might possibly get paid work.

He expects—and deserves—to be disowned or at best severely punished.

But instead his father throws a magnificent banquet and gives him three very significant things:

The robe would have been the best robe in the house, perhaps the father's own robe. It says clearly that the son had once again been given the right to enjoy the place of "right standing" with the father.

The ring enabled the son to make the father's official mark on documents to authorize expenditure. He had squandered his father's wealth, but the father gives him free access to the bank account.

The sandals: only the father and the sons were allowed footwear in the home. The father is declaring that this boy is still his son and is completely restored to the family.

> TWO SCENES FROM THE STORY

Scene 1: The younger son at the point that he collapses into his father's arms and casts himself on his mercy. He stands there dirty, smelly, broken. Acutely aware of his failure. Deeply ashamed of what he has become. He can scarcely believe it as it dawns upon him that his father still loves him, that he is forgiven and will not be punished.

Most of us get stuck in this first scene. We know we're forgiven and loved by God. But perhaps we still feel that we're essentially the same no-good failures we always were.

It's as if our understanding of the Gospel has got as far as Good Friday: Jesus died to forgive my sins and I'm going to go to heaven when I die. But right now? Well, I may be forgiven. But I'm still the same no-good let-down to God I always was.

Scene 2: Just minutes later the son is standing there, dressed in the finest robe, with the father's ring on his finger and sandals on his feet, feasting on the finest food. He is acutely aware of his

past failures and knows he does not deserve all this. But it is dawning on him that he has not just been forgiven. He has also been completely restored to his former position, with free access to everything his father owns.

Which of these two scenes most accurately represents how you see yourself in relation to God right now?

We make it through to the second scene when we understand that Easter Sunday is not just to celebrate the fact that Jesus rose from the dead but also celebrates the fact that we rose from the dead with Him and became someone completely new at the deepest level of our being.

If you know Jesus, you are completely restored right now. Deep down inside you are a totally new person. And God doesn't just love you. He absolutely delights in you.

○ THE FATHER IS WAITING FOR YOU

If you have never responded to Jesus and do not yet know Him, Father God is waiting for you. No matter what you've done or what has been done to you, you can respond to Him in your heart and choose to accept His free gift of salvation.

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT 1



1. What does “grace” mean to you?
2. The father gives the younger son three gifts that symbolize things that God has given to you. Which gift is most meaningful to you? Why?

> THE OLDER BROTHER

Jesus looked like a religious teacher, but He didn't behave the way the religious people expected Him to. In particular, He mixed with the “wrong” crowd, and they were saying, “This man welcomes sinners and even sits down to eat with them” (see Luke 15:2).

This story is part of Jesus' response, and the elder brother is clearly meant to represent these religious people.

He had not turned away from his father and thrown everything back in his face. He had stayed and worked hard. He had done what was expected of him.

His motivation was the inheritance that he would one day receive in return for “slaving away” day after day. To him, it was clearly a transaction: you earn the father's favor by what you do.

The father's love and acceptance had as little to do with his good outward behavior as it did with the younger son's bad outward behavior.

God's love, acceptance, and favor have nothing to do with our behavior, good or bad. But everything to do with His grace.

Instead of working in the fields for years, the older brother could have been enjoying everything the father had. What a tragedy to go through life slaving away to try to earn something that in fact you already have.

We can be like him. We do not know what we already have or who we are in Christ. On one level we know we are saved by grace, not by obeying rules. But we slip into thinking that being a disciple of Jesus means somehow having to maintain that favor by doing the right things.

Jesus' story makes clear that God's acceptance of us, today, tomorrow, and every day after that, does not depend on what we do or fail to do. It depends solely on His grace.

God does not want us to fail but He gives us freedom to fail. However, even if we fall flat on our face and make a complete mess, God will pick us up, dust us off, and welcome us back.

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT 2

- 1. The younger brother has been received back as a son, but the elder brother refuses to go into the house with the father, preferring to remain in the fields acting like a slave. Why do you think he does that? Which son do you identify with more?**
- 2. If you knew for sure that God's acceptance of you and love for you did not depend on how well you behaved, how might that change the way you live?**

> SLAVING OR SERVING?

Some of us are sidetracked by the world out there and its false promises and become like the younger brother.



The younger son went to a “distant land,” whereas the elder brother stayed at home. But in the story we do not find him in the home with the father. Instead he is out in the fields “slaving away.”

The younger son hoped that he might become a hired servant and earn anything that came from the father. But the older son had beaten him to it and had assumed the identity of a hired servant.

Both walked away from their true identity as sons. Both removed themselves from their relationship with their father.

Both ended up thinking they had to earn the father's favor.

At the start of our Christian life, most of us identify strongly with the younger son. We know we need forgiveness and salvation and are so grateful to receive them.

At that point we begin a new relationship with our Heavenly Father. And the idea is that we begin a journey of knowing Him and becoming more and more like Him.

But some of us are sidetracked by the world out there and its false promises and become like the younger brother.

Others are sidetracked by religious rules and become like the elder brother, thinking that being a Christian is about doing the “right” things.

But when discipleship becomes just obeying rules, the Christian life is a joyless trudge. It’s supposed to work the other way around.

As the younger son returns to his old duties, he knows that, even if he chooses

not to do them, the father will still love him and he will still be his son.

Knowing what he now knows about the father and out of this incredible new relationship with him, won’t he choose to do them and do them well, not because he *has* to but because he *wants* to, not to earn anything but purely out of love?

> WHAT WE DO MATTERS

“

A day will come at the end of the age when God will test what we have done to see if it has any real value.

”

Paul tells us that a day will come at the end of the age when God tests what we’ve done to see if it has any real value (1 Corinthians 3:12–15).

He uses the analogy of a building that’s on fire and says that the fire will burn up the things that are of no value—“wood, hay, straw”—while things we do that are of value—“gold, silver, precious stones”—will remain forever.

Jesus tells us that some will come to Him at the end of time and say they did amazing things like driving out demons and performing miracles in His name. Are those wood, hay, and straw or gold, silver, and precious stones? Well, Jesus says He will say to them, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (Matthew 7:22–23).

> IT’S NOT JUST WHAT WE DO BUT WHY WE DO IT

Two people can do the same thing. One will delight God and count for eternity; the other will not.

What’s the difference?

“If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3).

If our motivation is not love, then no matter how good our actions look, they are worth precisely nothing. They are wood, hay, and straw. What is important to God is not just what we do but why we do it.

When God chose an unlikely candidate, David, to be king of Israel, Samuel said, “The LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

When Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15), He was simply explaining a fact. If I love Him, I will obey His commands. I just will.

“We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). When we know how much He loves us, we will love Him back. We

just will. We will find ourselves doing the things that please Him automatically, not out of obligation.

That is why understanding grace is crucial. Then we can be like Paul, who said it’s “Christ’s love [that] compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14 NIV).

God wants our motivation to be love and nothing but love.

The Grace Course will give you the opportunity to root out “false motivators” such as shame, guilt, fear, pride, or the need to perform and please others.

> THE FATHER

The Father is looking out for you, whether you are in full rebellion or slaving away in the fields. When He sees you, He will run out and embrace you—and call for the robe, the ring, and the sandals. Will you put them on?

When He tells you that all He has is already yours—His whole, vast, rich

estate—will you come back inside the house and enjoy it with Him?

From that position of love and security, will you do the things He has prepared for you to do, not because you have to, but just because you love Him?

Will you make Jesus not just your Savior, but your King?

REFLECT



Think about what you are doing to serve God across the whole of your life. Are these things motivated by your love for God or by other things?

Ask God to help you understand what needs to change so that your motivation becomes love and nothing but love.

Why do you think that God puts so much importance on your motivation being love?