

Grace-Driven Discipleship Class Notes

Introduction:

This class will help us understand how God works in people's lives to bring them to faith and help them grow. We will look at how God's grace — His kindness, help, and power that we don't deserve — is working in every part of a person's spiritual journey.

One man who helped the church understand grace more clearly was **John Wesley**. He was a pastor and teacher from England in the 1700s. He helped start a great movement called **Methodism** — a church that focused on both preaching the gospel and helping people grow step by step in their walk with God. Wesley taught that grace is not just something we receive when we are saved — it is something that carries us from the beginning of faith all the way to heaven. God's grace is always with us, shaping us into who He wants us to be.

That's why this class is called **grace-driven discipleship**.

Discipleship means helping people follow Jesus. But we don't grow by our own strength. We grow by God's grace. Every step forward in the Christian life is powered by grace. And every part of the church's ministry should help people respond to that grace — whether they are just beginning to learn about Jesus or they have been following Him for years.

As pastors, our job is to help people grow. But not everyone is in the same place. Some don't believe yet. Some are just beginning. Some are growing strong. Others are hurting or confused. So we need to understand how God's grace works at each step of life — so we can meet people where they are and help them take their next step.

In this class, we will look at six ways God shows His grace to us:

- **Before we believe**
- **When we begin to feel our need for Him**
- **When we trust in Jesus and are saved**
- **As we grow and become more like Jesus**
- **As we learn to serve and follow His calling**
- **As we live fully for Him and look forward to eternity**

God is working in all of these ways. And the church must walk with people through each stage.

Discipleship — helping people follow Jesus — is not a straight road. People grow at different speeds. Life changes. People struggle, pause, and start again. So instead of seeing discipleship as a straight path, we'll picture it like a **roundabout** — people enter and exit at different places, and keep moving as God leads them.

This class will help you:

- Understand how grace works in every stage of life.
 - Learn how to disciple people through each stage of grace.
 - Think about what your church can do to help people grow in grace, from beginning to end.
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Prevenient Grace – God's Loving Pursuit

What is Prevenient Grace?

Prevenient grace is God's loving action to reach out and draw people into relationship with Him before they even know Him. It is God's grace that goes before us, preventing us from going so far away that we cannot come back. It is God seeking us and offering His love and friendship.

- Throughout history, God has been the pursuer:
 - He made covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and finally through Jesus (Genesis 9:8-13; 12:1-3; Exodus 19:3-6; 2 Samuel 23:5; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 26:26-29).
 - God's love is everlasting and seeking (Psalm 136; Jeremiah 31:3; Ezekiel 34:11-16).
 - He calls us before we are born (Isaiah 49:1) and follows us all our lives (Psalm 23:6).
 - God's pursuit makes salvation possible (Romans 5:6-11).
- Grace is God's free, powerful gift (John 1:16; Romans 3:24; 2 Corinthians 12:9).
- Jesus always seeks the lost (Luke 19:10), and God loves everyone (John 3:16).
- Faith is a free response we can choose (Galatians 5:1-6).

What Does This Look Like in People's Lives?

- God is already working in their hearts, drawing them through family, friends, church, or life events.
- They may feel curiosity or questions about God but are not yet believers.
- The Holy Spirit is gently guiding them (John 16:13-15).

Discipleship Focus for This Stage

At this early stage, our role as pastors and church leaders is to lovingly **walk alongside people who are not yet believers**, meeting them where they are and gently guiding them toward Jesus by reflecting God's grace in every interaction.

Here are practical ways to do this:

- **Show God's love through practical care:**
 - Offer ministries that meet physical and emotional needs such as food distribution, health clinics, child care, or help with daily struggles.
 - These acts of kindness open doors for deeper conversations and show God's love in real ways.
- **Build authentic relationships without pressure:**
 - Engage people through friendship and community activities, focusing on listening and understanding rather than preaching right away.
 - Let people experience consistent love and acceptance, which builds trust and opens their hearts to God's grace.
- **Develop a "Come and See" ministry:**
 - Ensure your church services, fellowship events, and small groups are warm, welcoming, and relevant — so inviting others feels natural for members.
 - Encourage the church family to be intentional in inviting friends who are skeptical or searching.
 - Create environments where seekers feel safe to ask questions and explore faith at their own pace.
- **Equip your congregation to be grace ambassadors:**

- Train members in hospitality, listening skills, and how to share their own stories of God's work in their lives.
- Encourage them to be patient and prayerful as God works through prevenient grace in their friends and neighbors.
- **Pray intentionally for God's grace to soften hearts:**
 - Lead regular prayer gatherings focused on those who don't yet believe.
 - Teach the church to pray for the Holy Spirit's work in drawing people closer to Jesus.
- **Use community events as opportunities to share God's love:**
 - Organize outreach events, celebrations, or service projects that attract people who may not come to church otherwise.
 - Use these as platforms to demonstrate grace in action and build connections.

By focusing on these steps, the church becomes a beacon of God's prevenient grace—welcoming, loving, and preparing people to take the next steps toward faith.

Convincing Grace – Helping People See Their Need for Jesus

What is Convincing Grace?

Convincing grace is God's work that opens a person's eyes to their sin, their need for forgiveness, and the emptiness without Christ. It moves people from curiosity to conviction, preparing their hearts to respond to the gospel.

- The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin (John 16:8-11).
- People begin to recognize their brokenness and the need for God's mercy.
- This grace prepares the way for repentance and faith (Acts 2:37-38).
- God calls people to repentance (2 Timothy 2:25).
- Jesus invites the lost to come to Him (Matthew 11:28-30).

What Does This Look Like in People's Lives?

- People experience a growing awareness of their sin or spiritual need.
- They ask deeper questions about salvation, forgiveness, and meaning.
- They may struggle with guilt, fear, or confusion but are open to the gospel message.

Discipleship Focus for This Stage

At this stage, the church's role is to help people clearly understand their need for Jesus and provide safe, supportive opportunities to respond to God's calling.

Practical ways to do this include:

- **Proclaim the gospel clearly and often:**
 - Preach sermons that explain sin, grace, and salvation in clear, simple terms.
 - Use testimonies and stories that connect with people's experiences.
 - Offer gospel invitations regularly during services or events.
- **Create response opportunities:**
 - Provide altar calls, prayer times, or small group invitations for people to express their faith decisions.
 - Have trained leaders available to pray with seekers and answer questions.
- **Offer seeker-friendly classes or groups:**
 - Run introductory Bible studies or "Christian basics" classes for those exploring faith.
 - Encourage honest questions and doubts in a safe environment.
- **Provide mentorship for seekers:**
 - Connect seekers with mature believers who can walk alongside them gently.
 - Mentors listen well, share biblical truths, and pray for growth.

- **Teach and encourage gospel conversations:**
 - Equip your congregation to share the good news naturally and lovingly in everyday conversations.
 - Offer training on how to listen well, share their own faith story, and present the gospel clearly.
 - **Pray for conviction and openness:**
 - Lead the church in praying specifically for those wrestling with God's call.
 - Trust the Holy Spirit to do the deep work of convincing hearts.
 - **Follow up with care and patience:**
 - Check in with seekers regularly to encourage and answer questions.
 - Understand that conviction can take time, and grace moves differently in every life.
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Justifying Grace – Responding to God's Gift of Salvation

What is Justifying Grace?

Justifying grace is God's powerful work that brings a person from conviction to forgiveness and new life. It is when God declares a believer "not guilty" through faith in Jesus Christ. This grace restores our relationship with God and begins our new identity as His children.

- Justification is a gift through faith, not earned by works (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8-9).
- It brings peace with God and freedom from guilt (Romans 5:1-2).
- Jesus' sacrifice covers our sins fully (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- This grace marks the start of a new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

What Does This Look Like in People's Lives?

- A person makes a personal decision to trust Jesus as Savior.
- They experience forgiveness, peace, and joy.

- They desire to follow Jesus and grow in their new faith.
- They often want to publicly identify with Christ through baptism and church community.

Discipleship Focus for This Stage

At this stage, the church's role is to help new believers understand and embrace the gift of salvation, celebrate their new life, and provide support for the journey ahead.

Practical ways to do this include:

- **Provide clear opportunities to respond:**
 - Regularly offer invitations for people to accept Christ in worship services or events.
 - Have trained prayer teams ready to support and pray with new believers.
- **Offer new believer classes:**
 - Teach foundational truths about salvation, grace, baptism, and the Christian life.
 - Help them understand what it means to be justified by faith.
- **Encourage baptism as public identification:**
 - Teach the biblical significance of baptism as an outward sign of inward grace.
 - Provide regular baptism opportunities.
- **Assign mentors or small groups:**
 - Connect new believers with mature Christians who can guide and encourage them.
 - Create safe spaces for questions and growth.
- **Celebrate new life in Christ:**
 - Publicly affirm and rejoice when people make decisions and get baptized.
 - Help the church family embrace their new brothers and sisters.

- **Encourage prayer and gratitude:**
 - Teach new believers to pray regularly and express thanks for God's grace.
 - Foster spiritual habits that nurture their relationship with God.
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Sanctifying Grace – Growing More Like Jesus

What is Sanctifying Grace?

Sanctifying grace is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, beginning at conversion and continuing until death. It is the Spirit's work to root out sin, make us holy, and restore us to the original righteousness God intended.

- The Holy Spirit empowers us to live holy lives (Romans 8:12-17; John 14:12).
- Sanctifying grace restores us to right standing and relationship with God (John 14:23).
- It reminds us we are pardoned, leading to grateful hearts (Romans 5:8-11).
- This grace gives us purpose (Matthew 6:33), power for living (Romans 1:8), and peace (Ephesians 2:14-16).
- Our relationship with God is life-giving, like the vine and branches (John 15).

What Does This Look Like in People's Lives?

- Believers experience ongoing growth in holiness and freedom from sin.
- They develop gratitude for God's pardon and grow in love for Him.
- Their lives bear fruit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and more.
- They find new purpose and power for daily living.
- They cultivate a deep, life-giving connection to Jesus.

Discipleship Focus for This Stage

At this stage, the church helps believers deepen their relationship with God and encourages practical growth toward holiness.

Practical ways to do this include:

- **Provide solid Bible teaching:**
 - Teach the Scriptures clearly to help believers understand God's call to holiness.
 - Use teaching to inspire grateful hearts and faithfulness.
- **Create small groups for spiritual growth:**
 - Facilitate groups where believers can encourage one another in living out their faith.
 - Provide space for sharing struggles and victories in sanctification.
- **Offer ministries for healing and restoration:**
 - Provide counseling, prayer, and support for emotional and spiritual healing.
 - Recognize when professional help is needed and assist in referrals.
- **Help believers discover their God-given purpose:**
 - Guide people to understand their role in God's kingdom and empower them to serve.
 - Encourage faithful obedience as a response to God's grace.
- **Encourage prayer, worship, and spiritual disciplines:**
 - Promote practices that connect believers deeply with God's life-giving Spirit.
 - Foster an environment where peace and joy grow.
- **Celebrate progress and perseverance:**
 - Acknowledge growth with the church family and remind believers of God's sustaining grace through trials.

Equipping Grace – Preparing Believers for Service

What is Equipping Grace?

Equipping grace is God's work in preparing and empowering believers to serve within the church and the world. It helps believers discover their gifts, develop skills, and grow in confidence to live out their calling for God's glory.

- God equips His people for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13).
- This grace empowers believers to carry out their specific callings (1 Peter 4:10-11).
- Equipping grace encourages growth beyond personal faith to active service (2 Timothy 2:2).

What Does This Look Like in People's Lives?

- Believers begin to identify spiritual gifts and callings.
- They gain practical experience in ministry roles.
- They grow in confidence and maturity as they serve.
- They understand their part in the body of Christ and the mission of the church.

Discipleship Focus for This Stage

At this stage, the church focuses on training, mentoring, and providing opportunities for service.

Practical ways to do this include:

- **Offer opportunities to explore and serve:**
 - Encourage people to try different ministries without pressure or fear of being stuck.
 - Provide short-term roles and diverse service options.
- **Provide training and mentoring:**
 - Teach practical skills for ministry and leadership.
 - Pair newer servants with experienced mentors.
- **Encourage sending out workers:**

- Support those called to ministry beyond the local church, including missions and specialized ministries.
 - Emphasize the mission of the church beyond its walls.
 - **Celebrate service and calling:**
 - Affirm and encourage those who serve faithfully.
 - Help the church see the value of every member's contribution.
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Sustaining Grace – Persevering in Faith Through Trials

What is Sustaining Grace?

Sustaining grace is God's ongoing help that strengthens believers to endure trials, sufferings, and spiritual challenges. It empowers Christians to remain faithful and steadfast throughout their journey of faith.

- God promises to uphold His people in difficulties (Isaiah 41:10).
- The Holy Spirit comforts and strengthens believers (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).
- Perseverance is a mark of true faith (James 1:12).
- God's grace is sufficient in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

What Does This Look Like in People's Lives?

- Believers face hardships but continue to trust God.
- They grow in patience, endurance, and hope.
- They rely on God's strength when their own is lacking.
- They testify to God's faithfulness despite challenges.

Discipleship Focus for This Stage

At this stage, the church supports believers to stay strong and faithful through encouragement and practical care.

Practical ways to do this include:

- **Provide pastoral care and counseling:**
 - Offer support for those experiencing trials or spiritual struggles.
 - Encourage seeking help and community support.
 - **Encourage spiritual disciplines:**
 - Teach prayer, Scripture reading, and worship as sources of strength.
 - Foster habits that build resilience in faith.
 - **Create support groups:**
 - Form groups focused on encouragement, healing, and perseverance.
 - Provide safe spaces for sharing burdens.
 - **Celebrate testimonies of faithfulness:**
 - Share stories of God's sustaining grace to inspire others.
 - Recognize perseverance as a victory in the Christian life.
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Glorifying Grace – Living as Fully Devoted Followers

What is Glorifying Grace?

Glorifying grace is God's ultimate work of bringing believers into full maturity and eternal fellowship with Him. It completes the journey of grace by fully conforming us to the image of Christ and preparing us for eternal life in God's presence.

- God promises to perfect His people and present them holy and blameless (Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).
- Believers are called to live as fully devoted followers, embracing the gospel fully (Romans 8:29).
- This grace looks forward to the final resurrection and eternal glorification (1 Corinthians 15:42-44; Revelation 21:1-4).

What Does This Look Like in People's Lives?

- Believers live with deep commitment to Christ in every area of life.
- They embody Christ's love, humility, and holiness consistently.
- They focus on glorifying God in all they do, in service, worship, and witness.
- They look forward with hope to eternal life and the resurrection.

Discipleship Focus for This Stage

At this stage, the church encourages believers to fully embrace their identity in Christ and live with eternal perspective.

Practical ways to do this include:

- **Encourage mature spiritual habits:**
 - Teach believers to live consistently in prayer, worship, and obedience.
 - Help them cultivate a lifestyle of surrender and holiness.
- **Promote servant leadership:**
 - Encourage believers to lead by example in humility and love.
 - Equip them to disciple others and multiply faith.
- **Focus on mission and witness:**
 - Inspire believers to share the gospel boldly and live as lights in their communities.
 - Support involvement in local and global missions.
- **Celebrate the hope of glorification:**
 - Remind believers of the promise of resurrection and eternal life.
 - Use this hope to encourage perseverance through trials.
- **Foster a community of accountability:**

- Create relationships that encourage growth toward Christlikeness.
 - Support one another in the pursuit of holiness and faithfulness.
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Putting It Into Practice — Starting a Grace-Driven Discipleship Pathway

Why Build a Grace-Driven Discipleship Pathway?

- Creates clear steps for growth from first hearing the gospel to mature service.
- Helps the church care for people at every stage, reducing stagnation or dropout.
- Encourages healthy movement and growth, leading to vibrant churches.

Assess Your Church's Current Ministries

- Identify existing ministries that connect with each stage of grace.
- Note strengths and gaps in outreach, evangelism, new believer support, spiritual growth groups, ministry training, and leadership development.
- Use a simple chart or checklist to map ministries to grace stages.

Design Ministries That Flow With the Stages

- Connect ministries so people move smoothly from one stage to the next.
- Avoid isolated silos—ensure ministries relate and communicate.
- Example: Outreach (Prevenient Grace) connects to evangelism and follow-up classes (Convincing & Justifying Grace); new believer classes feed into growth groups and ministry opportunities (Sanctifying & Equipping Grace).

Train and Equip Your Leaders

- Teach leaders Wesley's grace framework to disciple well at each stage.
- Provide training focused on recognizing needs and opportunities per grace phase.

- Encourage mentorship and coaching, with leaders walking alongside people personally.

Build a Culture of Invitation and Growth

- Create a welcoming, safe, and loving church environment.
- Equip the congregation to share their faith naturally through gospel conversations.
- Celebrate milestones such as baptism, ministry service, and spiritual growth to inspire others.

Monitor Progress and Adjust as Needed

- Gather regular feedback from leaders and participants.
- Use simple tools to track participation and growth in the pathway.
- Adapt ministries and strategies based on feedback and God's leading.

Summary

A grace-driven discipleship pathway is a living, growing journey that requires prayer, vision, leadership, and teamwork. The result is a community of fully devoted followers living out their calling.

Conclusion — Moving Forward in Grace-Driven Discipleship

Thank you for joining this class on grace-driven discipleship. We have walked through how God's grace moves in the life of every believer—from the first loving pursuit, through conviction and salvation, to growth, service, and living fully for Christ.

Remember, discipleship is not just a program; it is a lifelong journey shaped by God's grace. Your role as pastors is to guide people through these stages with patience, love, and prayer.

As you return to your churches, consider how you can start or strengthen a discipleship pathway rooted in grace. Begin by praying, assessing your ministries, and taking small steps toward connecting people with God's transforming work.

May God bless you as you lead His people to grow deeper in faith and serve Him with joy.