

Bryan Chapell, *Holiness By Grace* (2001)

Session One: Introduction and Chapter One

Discussion/Thought Questions

Introduction: My Soul's Delight (pp. 7-13)

Key thought: Grace is not only the means by which God once justified us, it is also the means by which we are continually encouraged and enabled to serve him with undiminished delight (p. 10).

1. Is our holiness a consequence of what we achieve, or of what God chooses to see (pp. 9-10)?
2. Why is it so difficult for us to see ourselves the way that God does? (p. 10)
3. How might the message of grace actually lead to a loss of commitment to holiness? Is this a legitimate concern? Why or why not? (pp. 11-12)

Chapter 1: The Power of Joy (pp. 17-37)

Key thought: When we understand that our works in themselves earn us no merit with God, then the only reason to do those works is love for him. Thus, we learn to serve God not for personal gain but for his glory—hot for love of self but for love of the Savior (p. 32).

1. What does God require of us (pp. 18-19)?

2. Dr. Chapell writes that “our efforts before God will never earn us entry into his kingdom, or obligate him to love us.” What are some “religious” activities that you try to oblige God to love you (pp. 19-20)?
3. What advantages do we think will come to us when we trophy our good works? Why can we not leverage God with our good works (pp. 20-21, 23)?
4. What ultimate purpose does God desire to fulfill in our lives through our obedience (p. 25)?
5. Why is God more moved by our desperation than by our claims of goodness? How does knowing that God listens to our cries of desperation encourage repentance? (pp. 25-29)
6. If our best works are only “filthy rags” and merit us nothing, then why should we do good works? (pp. 31-37)

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Session Two: Chapter Two

Discussion/Thought Questions

Key thought: Faith in our union with Christ is the key to overcoming sin in our lives (p. 51).

Chapter Two: United for Life (pp. 39-65)

1. What is “sanctification”? (p. 41)
2. How are we united to God? (p. 41)
3. How does our union with Christ result in the death of pride and despair (pp. 43-46)?
4. What is the basis of our identity or being on a daily on going basis? (p. 47)
5. What does God provide for us through our union with Christ’s life? How can I receive credit for what I did not do (pp. 47-51)?
6. Dr. Chapell observes that “most Christians instinctively try to validate, or ground, or justification in our sanctification (i.e. we instinctively try to keep our justification in effect by our good behavior).” Can you think of times where you have tried to live the Christian life in that way? What was the result (p. 53)?
7. How does confidence that your status with God in Christ does not change free you from fear that your performance will affect Christ’s love for you (p. 54)?
8. Can you secure *more* of God’s love by doing your duty? Have you ever felt that this was possible? How so? (p. 56)
9. How does confidence that your ability to obey God does change energize your living in a way that pleases God? (p. 59)
10. What is a vital realization as we seek to progress in our faithfulness to God? Spell out some ways that this realization keeps us from pride and despair in the Christian life (p. 62).

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Session Three: Chapter Three

Discussion/Thought Questions

Chapter Three: Repentance that Sings (pp. 69-90)

Key thought: Repentance is fundamentally a humble expression of a desire for a renewed relationship with God—a relationship that we confess can be secured only by his grace (p. 84).

1. How can the pursuit of self-perfection assault our souls? How can striving after holiness apart from the provisions of our union with Christ become enslaving (pp. 69-70)?
2. How can even words of repentance become a religious ritual that we use to barter forgiveness and blessing with God? Why is this a problem (p. 71)?
3. How does the holiness of God cause us to view our wrong words and actions? How does the holiness of God cause us to view our *good* words and actions (pp. 71-78)?
4. What are some of the differences between false and true repentance (pp. 79-80)?
5. In what way does a correct assessment of our right and wrong deeds lead to a desire to offer confession (pp. 80-81)?
6. In what way does knowing that God is holy and that our best works will not merit pardon for sin lead us to a longing for grace (pp. 81-82)?
7. What is the essence of repentance? Have you ever thought about repentance this way? How does an over-reliance on the biblical origins of the word falsely shape our understanding of repentance (p. 82-3)?
8. What is the relationship of remorse and changed behavior to repentance (p. 83)?
9. How can the sorrow of repentance lead to a heart of singing? Why is this rejoicing important (pp. 88-90)?

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Session Four: Chapter Four

Discussion/Thought Questions

Chapter Four: Escape from Temptation (pp. 91-110)

Key Thought: By faith we believe that God will make a way of escape [from temptation]; by faith we believe that he has regenerated and secured us in Christ so that we have both the desire and the ability to use his means of rescue; and, by faith we act on his promises despite great opposition (p. 101).

1. Is it true that the heart that loves God longs to keep from sinning? In what ways do we still find sin appealing and alluring even after we become Christians (p. 92-3)?
2. The Bible tells us that our temptations are not unusual or unique to us, but rather are common to all human beings. How does realizing the commonness of our temptations actually strengthen us to face those struggles (pp. 93-5)?
3. How does the realization that “the seeds of every sin are in me” rescue us from vulnerability arrogance as we approach the problem of temptation (pp. 95-6)?
4. How does the Bible reveal the horror of temptation? How does the Bible reveal the power of temptation (pp. 96-100)?
5. What sovereign promise does God make regarding the strength of the temptations we face? What sovereign promise does God make regarding a way out of the temptations that we face? Why is it hard for us to believe this promise (pp. 100-2)?
6. What role does human resistance have in defeating the power of temptation? What role does prudential avoidance have in defeating the power of temptation (pp. 102-06)?
7. What role does a clear perception of our Savior’s love for us have in overcoming temptation (pp. 107-10)?

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Session Five: Chapter Five

Discussion/Thought Questions

Chapter Five: Constrained by the Law of Freedom (pp. 111-134)

Key Thought: This foundational understanding of grace—that God loves us on the basis of his actions and through no accomplishment of our own—has two wonderfully freeing implications. Grace frees us from having to gain God’s acceptance by our personal efforts to keep his law, and from having to satisfy him by meeting new standards that others create for us (p. 113).

1. Does teaching about grace tempt people to think that God does not have standards that we should honor? How does this happen (pp. 111-3)?
2. What is ego-nominianism? Why do we make new laws for ourselves and others that are not clearly established in God’s Word? What are we saying about our importance and status when we make laws not found in God’s Word (pp. 113-6)?
3. What is neo-nominianism? What cultural examples of neo-nominianism are evident in your setting? How can criticism of others for their neo-nominianism become an excuse for ignoring others’ needs and only doing what we want? (pp. 116-20)
4. How is making prudential choices different than establishing extra-biblical rules? Are such prudential choices important? Are they biblical? Why (pp. 119-20)?
5. What is antinominianism? How does the law of love free us from antinominianism (pp. 121-2)?
6. What aspects of the law of love are in effect for believers today? How does having clear biblical standards free us from confusion in ourselves and control from others (pp. 122-23, 130-33)?
7. How can talk about duty be gracious? How can talk about duty be ungracious (pp. 126-28)?
8. What does it mean that “the imperative rests on the indicative and [the] order is not reversible? What difference can this principle make in your life and relationships (p. 129)?
9. How does our union with Christ free us from “autonomianism”? By freeing us from the law as a performance standard, how does grace free us for service of others (pp. 130-3)?

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Session Six: Chapter Six

Discussion/Thought Questions

Chapter Six: Fighting with all his might (pp. 135-156)

Key thought: Faith that God has made us new, has made us his, and has made us able are essential before we will experience God's victory over compelling and compulsive sin (p. 142).

1. Why does Paul tell us to put on the armor *of God* in spiritual warfare? What are some common misconceptions about the armor of God, such as who provides it, how we use it, and whose strength enables its use (p. 135-8, 147)?
2. If all we are depending on to help us overcome Satan are our own right beliefs and accountable behaviors, what is our spiritual situation? What is the context for our use of spiritual disciplines (p. 139)?
3. How does confidence in Christ's embrace strengthen us for spiritual warfare (pp. 139-40)?
4. What is the nature of the "mighty power" that God provides for spiritual warfare (pp. 140-3)?
5. What is the nature of our spiritual adversary? Think through some of the delusions of evil with which you are familiar; do we take spiritual opposition seriously enough (pp. 143-5)?
6. How does faith in God's making us new creatures enable us to fight our Adversary (pp. 145-8)?
7. Is there any degree of human effort involved in resisting sin? If so, what is the nature and function of this effort (pp. 149-50)?
8. Why does spiritual warfare involve praying in the Spirit? (pp. 150-3)
9. How does the Holy Spirit change us? To what does the Holy Spirit direct us in order to transform us? What is the most powerful spiritual weapon for the Spirit use in transforming us (pp. 153-5)?

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Session Seven: Chapter Seven

Discussion/Thought Questions

Chapter Seven: What's Discipline Got to Do with It? (pp. 159-182)

Key thought: Discipline is evidence of God entering our world to rescue us from spiritual danger that we could not or would not handle on our own. Thus, God's discipline is not contrary to grace but, in fact, *is* grace (p. 180).

1. Is God's discipline contrary to his grace? How does the absence of discipline indicate the absence of care? (pp. 159-61)
2. Is biblical discipline of believers punitive? If not, why not (pp. 162-4)?
3. If our hardships are not punitive, then why does God allow them? What are some ways that God's discipline makes us tender? (p. 164-6)
4. What are some ways that God's discipline makes us hard? (pp. 167-8)
5. How do our trials enable us to know God? How do the trials of others enable us to know God? (pp. 168-72)
6. Dr. Chapell writes, "Discipline is a means to gain a special vision of God's love—a means of seeing special things about ourselves and about God." Can you think of ways that you learned things about God and yourself in a recent time of trial that you wouldn't have learned otherwise? (p. 173)
7. Why does God's discipline start for believers? How does it serve to give us confidence in our standing with God? (p. 173-5)
8. What does God's willingness to discipline us indicate about the priority of our personal sanctification in his plans for us? (p. 177-80)

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Session Eight: Chapter Eight

Discussion/Thought Questions

Chapter Eight: The Power of Mercy (pp. 183-205)

Key thought: Lasting service comes when we serve God *from* his acceptance, not *for* his acceptance. The former kind of service rejoices in his mercy; the latter seeks to merit (or purchase) his approval. When we confuse these motives, we inevitably begin to serve God out of selfish motives that will not sustain faith or service (p. 193).

1. What motives other than mercy could Paul have used to try to motivate us? Why did he choose mercy above all other motivations to inspire our service to God? (pp. 183-4)
2. “The inevitable consequence of obedience without delight is the erosion of holiness,” Dr. Chapell writes. How does reflection on the mercy of God motivate you for Christian service? (pp. 184-87)
3. How does mercy get eclipsed as a motivation for us? How can trials help us to reconsider the mercy of God in our behalf? (pp. 187-8)
4. Why is guilt an “effective” motivator? Why is guilt destructive, even if it is temporarily “effective”? If people change their behavior in order to get rid of their guilt, who are they ultimately trust to take their guilt away (pp. 188-90)?
5. Who is the most pleased when Christians use guilt to punish and condemn themselves? How do we become like the enemy when we fall into a cycle of guilt and self-motivated life change? (pp. 191-2)
6. What is the relationship between guilt, grace, and gratitude? (pp. 192-3)
7. When you read the sentence, “Stop doing that, or God will...” how did you finish the sentence? Did your response reveal a belief in a changeless or conditional divine love (p. 196)?

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Session Nine: Chapter Nine

Discussion/Thought Questions

Chapter Nine: Works that Really Matter (pp. 207-24)

Key thought: This side of heaven we will not see how most of our small acts of kindness, or even our great acts of courage that are unnoticed or misunderstood, fit into God's eternal plan. But we walk and act in the faith that such actions are eternal, because God promises this is so. The grace that makes our righteousness more significant than we can imagine or arrange should inspire a willingness to serve where the world will not notice and to give of ourselves when no one else will bother (p. 214).

1. If God does not measure our worth by what we do, then why should we bother to serve him (pp. 207-9)?
2. In what way does our righteousness endure forever? How does righteous influence continue? How does righteousness itself endure? (pp. 209-15)
3. How does the recognition that every good work that we do fits into God's eternal plan and purpose change our perception of our lives and efforts (pp. 214)?
4. Why is it important for us to know that God remembers us apart from our accomplishments and/or failures? (pp. 215-8)

5. What qualities of his own does God transfer to us to enable our righteousness to endure? How does God transfer these qualities to us? (pp. 219-23)
6. What does the "present value of the blood of Christ" mean for the work that you do today for God? (pp. 222)

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Session Ten: Chapter Ten

Discussion/Thought Questions

Chapter Ten: That's Not Fair (pp. 225-43)

Key thought: Those who desire just recompense from God on the basis of their own great labors have not yet faced their greater need of his generosity. To claim God's blessings, we must appeal to grace rather than to justice (p. 227).

1. How does the parable of Matthew 20 subvert our typical "moral" accounting? Which should we desire more, justice or grace (p. 226-7)?
2. How does Jesus use of the master's equal compensation of the latecomers help us to value rightly his purposes and people? (pp. 227-30)
3. Have you ever felt resentful of those who came to Christ on their deathbeds? How does a biblical understanding of the purposeful living that comes only from serving God mitigate our potential resentments of such ones (pp. 231)?
4. How does looking at our contributions from God's gracious perspective and purposes change our assessment? How about considering other's contributions from God's gracious perspective (pp. 232-4)?
5. At the end of the day, what is the basis of our standing in God's kingdom? Is there any room for boasting and comparison with others? (pp. 234-5)
6. This side of heaven, will we ever resolve the tension between human responsibility and divine provision in sanctification? As we learn to acknowledge God's provision, what will be the results? (pp. 236-7)
7. What is the ultimate basis of our trusting God? How does this help us reconcile some of the difficult intellectual questions that come to us in the Christian life (pp. 238-40)?