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STUDY GUIDE

*habits  
of grace*

david  
mathis

Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines

# Habits of Grace

*Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual  
Disciplines Study Guide*

David Mathis

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Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines Study Guide

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# How to Use This Study Guide

I have designed this study guide to supplement individual and group studies of *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines* (Crossway, 2016). This workbook draws from and leans on the book such that it makes access to the book essential in understanding and benefitting from this study.

In this study guide, I have parceled out the book's introduction and eighteen chapters into thirty-one sections (or "days"). The hope is to make each section doable in one sitting and to make the whole study doable in one month (thirty-one days), if doing one section each day.

However, it is not my expectation that every participant, or even most, will undertake to complete this study in one focused month. Some may take a section every other day, or multiple in one day, or even only a day or two per week. My hope is that you'll be able to move at your pace, depending on how new or familiar the material is to you, whether you are studying in a group setting or with friends, or whatever life circumstances in which you find yourself.

Each day includes at least one brief passage of Scripture for your reading and meditation as well as one defined section to read from the book *Habits of Grace* before answering the questions. The questions are designed to rehearse and deepen your understanding of the most important information in the

chapters, as well as to engage your heart and inner person, and also inspire practical direction and life change.

My prayer for you is that God would richly bless your mind, heart, and daily life as you undertake this study and seek to engage more deeply with the principles and counsel of *Habits of Grace*. And I hope this study proves valuable for years to come. The principles and practices of God’s “means of grace” are not flashy or dramatic, but it is often fresh attention to the ordinary that is most life transforming and produces the greatest fruit in the long run.

I am indebted to Pam Eason for her remarkable work in carefully reviewing the first draft of this study guide and bringing her acumen in instructional design to bear on it. The study has been vastly improved by her skill and ingenuity, especially for visual learners. For the more right-brained among us, you have Pam to thank for the many creative ways to enrich the learning process by drawing pictures and finding fresh avenues for synthesizing the material into your own thoughts and applications.

If you plan to read the book’s foreword and preface, now would be a good time. When you turn the page to Day 1, we begin with the introduction.

Day 1

## Grace Gone Wild

God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:4–7

Read from the beginning of the introduction through the section “Where the Grace Keeps Passing” (pp. 21–26).

1. Refer to the section “Invading Our Space.” Name at least two ways grace has invaded humanity’s space.

2. You cannot control or manipulate the grace of God through your various habits and actions. A terrible way to misunderstand this study would be to think that somehow you can. Review the sections “Put Yourself in the Path of God’s Grace” and “Where the Grace Keeps Passing.” Draw two circles. Title one circle “My Actions and Efforts.” Title the other circle “God’s Grace.” Use symbols or lines, or whatever you would like, to show the relationship between the two circles.

3. Review the section “Flooding the Future.” God’s grace stretches back into eternity past and forward into eternity future. Ponder that and complete the following:

a) State a surprising fact that you learned from this section about God’s grace.

b) Draw a timeline and title it “God’s Grace in My Life.” Add and label points on the line to represent the stages of life you have passed through up to now (infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adult, etc.). Add notes to the timeline that identify the ways God’s grace came to you at these different points in your life, the way God’s grace came to

you before the timeline began, and the way God's grace will continue after it ends.

4. Ponder the grace that God showed you before you were even able to recognize it. Describe or illustrate with a graph or drawing (1) God's grace that was yours before you were ever born; and (2) God's grace that was already at work even before you first believed.

5. Review the section "Where the Grace Keeps Passing." Explain or illustrate what it means to "position" yourself "to go on getting as [God] keeps on giving."

6. Reflect on your reasons for choosing this study. Complete the following:

a) My goals for this study are . . .

b) As a result of this study, I hope . . .

c) My prayer for this study is . . .

Day 2

## The End of the Means

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:12–13

Read the section “What Means of Grace Means and Doesn’t” through the end of the introduction (pp. 26–33).

1. Review the section “What Means of Grace Means and Doesn’t.” Name the one who supplies your “exertions of effort” toward Christlikeness.

2. Carefully read Romans 15:18; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Philippians 2:12–13; Colossians 1:29; Hebrews 13:20–21; and 1 Peter 4:11.

Explain or illustrate with a drawing the dynamic of God working in you through your effort and actions.

3. Once again refer to the section “What Means of Grace Means and Doesn’t.” If you are a Christian, you experience both justification and sanctification. Explain or illustrate:

a) the function of grace in justification

b) the function of grace in sanctification

c) the difference between justification and sanctification

4. In the section “How to Receive the Gift of Effort,” I said that the way to receive the gift of God’s empowering our actions is to do the actions. If he gives the gift of effort, we receive that gift *by* expending the effort. When he gives the grace of growing in holiness, we don’t receive that gift apart from becoming more holy. When he gives us the desire to get more of him in the Scriptures, or in prayer,

or among his people, we don't receive that gift without experiencing the desire and living out the pursuits that flow from it. Essential to thriving in the means of grace is taking ownership of the reality, deep in your soul, that God's grace comes to you not only despite your effort (justification), but also in your effort (sanctification). His grace is never earned by your works, but it does work in you to produce holy desires and actions. Imagine that you are talking to a friend. Write an explanation or draw an illustration of this truth in a way that your friend could understand.

5. In the section "Lay Yourself in the Way of Allurement," I quoted Jonathan Edwards, who said that you can "endeavor to promote spiritual appetites by *laying yourself in the way of allurement.*" Identify the one who attracts or allures and the one who needs to be attracted or allured.

6. Read Luke 18:35–43 and 19:1–10. Both Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus put themselves in Jesus's path. Summarize or illustrate what their stories teach about receiving God's grace.

7. Review the section “The Great End of the Means.” Describe or illustrate “the great end” of the means of grace.

8. Read Philippians 3:7–8, John 17:3, and Hosea 6:3. Most likely, you want to cultivate habits of grace in your own life because you are aiming for one or more specific goals. Write your goal(s) below.

9. Once again, refer back to the section “The Great End of the Means.” Answer the following questions:

a) Why is it inadequate, or at least not ultimate, to say that the goal of Christian disciplines is spiritual growth, or godliness, or holiness?

b) What danger do you face if your focus becomes your own transformation rather than knowing and enjoying Jesus?

10. In the section “The Means of Grace and the Things of Earth,” I explained that this study focuses on what we might call the *special* means of God’s grace, as in the *special* revelation of his word, prayer, and his redeemed body. But God also is pleased to work for our spiritual good and benefit through *general* means of his grace—as in nature, food, sleep, exercise, music, and more. Describe or illustrate a recent experience in which one of God’s general means had a tangible effect on your soul.

11. Likely you’ve heard of the spiritual disciplines in the past and tried them yourself in some way, shape, or form. Review the last two paragraphs of the introduction. Summarize or illustrate how you expect this study to be different.



Part 1

# HEAR HIS VOICE



Day 3

## Shape Your Life with the Words of Life

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

Philippians 2:14–16

Read chapter 1 through the section “The Word Pervasive” (pp. 37–41).

1. In the section “The Word Original,” I quoted John Frame, who said that God’s word is “his powerful, authoritative self-expression.” List three ways God has revealed himself to you through his word.

2. Often we identify God's word with the Bible. This can be a good thing since the Bible is indeed God's word written. However, this limited category restricts your understanding of "God's word." Explain or use a drawing to illustrate how the categories "the Word incarnate" and "the word evangelical" enrich your understanding of God's word.

3. Refer to your answer to number 2 above. Explain or illustrate what practical effects your understanding of these categories will have on your efforts to immerse yourself in God's word.

4. Refer to the section "The Word Pervasive." Explain:

a) why God's voice is the most fundamental principle of the means of grace.

b) why God's word has a kind of primacy over prayer (having God's ear) and fellowship (belonging to Christ's body, the church).

5. Consider the various categories of God's word. First and foremost contemplate Jesus, God's Word. Next, reflect on the gospel, God's message to humanity. Finally, consider the Scriptures, God's inspired, inerrant written word. Answer the following questions:

a) Do your thoughts about these categories motivate you to create practices that will shape your life with the entire range of God's word?

b) If so, what specific practices come to mind?

c) Which practices, of those that came to your mind, seem most life giving?

d) Do you foresee turning these life-giving practices into lifestyle habits? Why or why not?

6. In the section "The Word Written," I encouraged you to fashion rhythms of life that help you revolve around having God's incarnate Word by God's gospel word through God's written word. In light of the practices that came to mind in number 5 above, and

before moving on to the specific ideas and suggestions that lie ahead in this book, take a few moments now to think about how these habits might fit into your current season of life. What regular rhythms and specific practices of life—daily, weekly, monthly, or however regular—do you see yourself using to engage yourself with God’s word?

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*“No Spiritual Discipline is more important than the intake of God’s Word. Nothing can substitute for it. There simply is no healthy Christian life apart from a diet of the milk and meat of Scripture.”—Donald Whitney*

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