

# LEADING **BY** GRACE

Life Coaching, Consulting, Public Speaking

## Seven Means of Grace

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Can we face a new season of our life with confidence and hope? Yes we can! Why? Because we have a sovereign God.

Every situation and circumstance is overseen and guided by the hand of our merciful, loving God. To think otherwise is to be ruled by the subjective, rather than the objective truth. Jerry Bridges explains that “His ways are higher than our ways (Is 55:9)... The sovereignty of God is often questioned because man does not understand what God is doing. Because He does not act as we think He should, we conclude that He cannot act as we think He would.”<sup>1</sup> Subtly and gradually, the doctrine of God’s sovereignty begins to be replaced by belief in a universe ruled by chance.

While most believers don’t consciously mistrust or question God, circumstances that we do not agree with or understand can tempt us to substitute our judgment for God’s, challenging, and even charging God. In the words of A. W. Tozer, “Wrong ideas about God are not only the fountain from which the polluted waters of idolatry flow; they are themselves idolatrous. The idolater simply imagines things about God and acts as if they were true. Perverted notions about God soon rot in the religion in which they appear.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet, throughout Scripture, God is described as omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing), and omnipresent (always present everywhere). Our God thus has absolute authority and ability to carry out His eternal purpose without being hindered in the least by a fallen world or sinful man. He is sovereign (Dan 4:17). For Christians, this knowledge brings assurance, peace and liberation from fear and anxiety. Even during times of perplexing mystery and difficulty we can trust God.

## Seven Means of Grace

Some time ago, following months of recurring infections and unrelenting fatigue, I was hospitalized with a bacterial infection which left me with severe pain, constantly feverish, and unable to eat. Stripped of human strength, I could do nothing but cry out to God. The truth of God's sovereignty shown me during that time changed my life forever.

Over a period of many weeks, God in His mercy, guided me through the Psalms of David, restored me to health, and taught me afresh that He is "Ruler of all things" (1Ch 29:12). As I briefly review seven of the means God used to effect my recovery, it is my hope that you will gain a renewed sense of God's sovereignty, vow to avail yourselves of God's wonderful means of grace, and make diligent use of God's provision.

### Humility

During my illness, God removed virtually all self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and self-confidence (we always retain some measure of these sins, no matter how desperate our circumstances). It was in absolute dependence on

Him - for my very life - that my journey toward recovery began. Do you need grace? Come to God with a humble heart and in utter dependence (Jas 4:6).

### Scripture

How His words comforted me! Let me encourage you to earnestly desire knowledge of Him, thirst and hunger for His presence, and meditate and listen for His voice as you study His Word. As Mary knelt at His feet, Jesus said, "Only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:42).

### Prayer

Prayer is privileged communication with God; His presence restores the faint in spirit. Without prayer, we neglect our life's central purpose - fellowship with God. J. C. Ryle has written, "Prayer is the life-breath of a man's soul. Without it, we may have a name to live, and be counted Christians; but we are dead in the sight of God... [T]he habit of spreading before Him our soul's needs is an evidence that we have the spirit of adoption... [Prayer] opens the treasury, and sets the fountain flowing. If we have not, it is because we ask not" (Jas 4:2-3)3.

## Confession of Sin

Confession is often too low a priority for us. Scripture specifies how God would have us respond to sin. While I was in the hospital, the Lord directed me to Psalm 32:5, “Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’ - and You forgave the guilt of my sin.” Freshly convicted of unacknowledged sin, I verbally confessed every conscious sin in my life to a pastor and to my wife and family. Please be encouraged to take similar actions when God shows you your sin.

## Worship

God is worthy of our continuous adoration and praise. Even in the most difficult times, we should be filled with awe, gratitude, and deep, holy affections for our glorious God, and worship Him accordingly (Heb 12:28).

Communion of the Saints God used my church family’s faithfulness as a means for support. Standing with me during my illness, they expressed their love through prayer and encouragement. So many Christians know only aimless, churchless, isolated Christianity. May that never be true of us!

## Testimony

In all circumstances, we should actively share the testimony of God’s sovereignty and the good news of His glorious gospel. Many sinners have been brought to repentance simply by hearing a testimony of God’s love and mercy in a believer’s life (Phm 6).

These seven means of grace helped me immeasurably during my recent trials. Armed with the fresh revelation of the sovereignty of God, may we enter every season in our lives by placing them in His hands with full confidence.

Notes:

1. Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Nav Press, 1994), pp. 28, 29
2. A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1961), p.4
3. J. C. Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 1993) p.76