GALATIANS

Living in maturity with GRACE

Day 1: Living in obedience without "earning" it

Read : Galatians 3:10-14; Philippians 3:12-14; Galatians 5:16

Saying YES to Jesus isn't the end of our faith journey. In fact, it's truly the beginning. Receiving His grace and believing in what Christ did for us should naturally lead us towards obedience to Him. Living in true obedience is done in *response* to who God is and the grace we have received, and not because we want to gain or earn something more from God. Spiritual maturity begins when we stop treating our obedience like a payment for His grace, and treat it as a response to the grace we have already received from Him.

This life long process of growing and maturing spiritually is called *sanctification*. This process starts the moment we accept the gift of salvation and believe in what Christ did for us. Accepting His grace should create a radical shift in our priorities, away from pleasing ourselves, and towards obedience to Him. Of course, no matter how hard we try, we could never do this on our own. We cannot manufacture our own obedience to God, without His strength. We need the guidance and enabling of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Galatians 5:16 tells us to "walk by the Spirit". The greek word for "walk" in this verse means for us to "walk with purpose, step by step". Paul is speaking about learning to walk under the direction of God as He leads us to true lasting obedience, and ultimately towards maturity in our faith.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh

- GALATIANS 5:16

- Ask yourself and honestly assess: Where am I trying to "earn" or manufacture my own Spiritual growth by checking off a "to do" list, rather than allowing the Spirit to guide and equip me in my faith journey?
- Am I experiencing a true re-ordering of priorities in my life as I am guided by the Spirit towards growth and spiritual maturity?

Day 2: Living beyond the law

Read : Galatians 3:15-25; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; Romans 8:3-4

Following God's laws doesn't automatically transform our hearts. We can attempt to follow every law that God gives us outwardly in our own strength, while still having resentment, judgement, fear, or self-righteousness in our hearts. God's laws teach us what is right and wrong, but simply knowing what they are doesn't mean that we

User Guide:

How to use this study guide:

- **Pray** : Ask God to reveal Himself to you.
- **Read :** Read the daily scripture, take notes, and write down anything the Spirit reveals to you.
- **Study :** Read the daily study section and prayerfully answer the discussion questions.
- **Act** : Take a step, even if it's small, to put what you are learning into action.
- **Gather & Share** : Gather with your GUMC small group and use the discussion section to share what you have learned, ask the hard questions, and receive prayer for anything you are struggling with.

- NOTE: If you need help finding a group - Reach out to our Discipleship Director, Melonie at: meloniep@gumchurch.com

understand God's purpose behind His laws. Only the Spirit of God can truly transform our hearts, guard our motivations, and embody us with the intended purpose behind the law. Even though laws can reveal our sin and our need for a savior, laws alone can not save us. Only Jesus can fulfill the law, and ONLY Jesus can offer us His saving grace.

As we become more mature spiritually, we should begin to learn the difference of using God's laws to judge, control, or focus on our own self-efforts verses humbly understanding that we cannot follow His laws in our own strength. Instead, we need to recognize our need for a savior.

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship… but do not have love, I gain nothing

- 1 CORINTHIANS 13:3

- Where am I focusing more on obeying the laws, verses having a heart that is transformed by Christ?
- After reading 1 Corinthians 13:1, are there any "clanging cymbals" in my life?
- Are there areas where I struggle to uphold Biblical truths without being tempted to use it to judge myself or others?

Day 3: Living like a child of God

Read : Galatians 3:26-4:7; Matthew 7:9-12; Romans 8:15; 1 John 3:1

God often calls us His children, His son's and daughters, and even His heirs. In return, He calls Himself our Heavenly Father. As we grow & mature in our faith, we grow and mature in our identity as adopted sons and daughters of the ONE true King! Paul reminds us in these verses that we are no longer slaves, but instead through Christ, we are part of the family of God. We no longer have to live in the fear or insecurity of losing our position because we made a mistake. A healthy child knows that they can make mistakes, receive correction, and learn from the hard things without the fear of losing their place in the family. They know that the correction and guidance they receive from their parents comes from a place of love. Children know that their parents truly want what is best for them. If our earthly, limited, and imperfect parents can treat their children this way, then how much more can our perfect unlimited Heavenly Father treat us? When we become more spiritually mature, we recognize our position as a loved child of God. This allows us to make mistakes, disappoint someone, or receive criticism without becoming defensive or striving harder to please or overachieve. Maturity allows us to acknowledge the mistake, take responsibility, and allow the Spirit to guide you with the wisdom to make things right and to receive His forgiveness. Maturity allows us to make mistakes without letting those mistakes become a verdict of our worth or our position. It also allows us to have grace and forgiveness for those around us.

Taking a moment to think about a recent failure or mistake:

- Did I take responsibility for it & move towards God's wisdom for help to make it right?
- Did I try to hide it, justify it, or become defensive and angry about it?
- Did I try to overcompensate, over apologize, or please others to make it feel better?
- Did I allow it to make me feel insecure in my value, worth, identity, or position?

GUMC Small Group Discussion

After you complete the weekly study, use these questions for your small group.

1. Where are you trying to gain Spiritual Maturity through your own self-effort verses through a relationship with Christ?

Which area(s) do you struggle with most:

- **Day 1** - WALKING BY THE SPIRIT: Being obedient through your own striving verses depending on the strength of the Spirit.
- **Day 2** - HEART BEHIND THE LAW: Following God's laws, but without the heart (like a clanging cymbal).
- **Day 3** - BEING A CHILD OF GOD: Trying to earn your position with perfection verses being secure as a child of God.
- **Day 4** - TEMPTED TO GIVE UP FREEDOM: Instead of living in the freedom of grace you go back to your old habits of striving.

2. Share the fears or habits you listed on Day 4

Did this reveal anything new for you this week?

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Day 4: Living in freedom

Read : Galatians 4:8-11; Colossians 2

It is possible for us to know and understand the gift of grace, yet get pulled back into performance, rules based, and striving "religion". However, as we grow in Spiritual maturity, we should begin to notice those old patterns, habits, expectations, and fears that can lure us back into bondage. Paul is warning the Galatians about returning to a "religion" of striving in their own strength verses living in the freedom of grace. God wants a relationship with us FIRST, and then He can transform our hearts as we spend time with Him. God cares way more about our hearts than He does our perfection in carrying out Spiritual practices. Our confidence should be in the freedom Christ offers, not in own striving, earning or perfectionism.

- Take a moment to think about the last time you were tempted to be lured back into those old habits of striving, perfectionism, or trying to "earn" your way, instead of living in the freedom of Christ. Make a list below of the old fears, or situations, that tempt you to depend on yourself rather than God. _____

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Day 5: Living on purpose

Read : Galatians 4:12-20, 2 Peter 1:3-8

Living in maturity is allowing God's grace to transform us. Paul is so burdened by the fact that the Galatians have been lured away from the grace of Christ, that he compares it to the pain of childbirth. He wants them to truly experience the transformational power of living a life of freedom through grace. Growth and maturity take time. None of us will get it right all the time, but we can become increasingly willing to learn and grow from our mistakes. *Look at the chart below and circle the areas that you struggle with most, then pray & ask God for His help today.*

Maturity in Grace	Bondage to Striving
I am loved and accepted by Christ	I need to prove my love and acceptance
I obey God because I trust in His goodness	I obey God because I fear failure or rejection
I own my mistakes, and use them to grow	I feel shame and guilt over my mistakes
I depend on the Spirit to transform me	I rely on my willpower, self-help, & discipline
I accept my limitations	I feel guilt when I rest, try not to let anyone down, and push past my limitations
I do my part, and trust God with outcomes	I try to manage or control outcomes
I can celebrate others without questioning my own worth	I compare myself to others in order to determine my worth
My goal is to become more and more like Christ through a relationship with Him	My goal is to be someone who doesn't make mistakes, need help, or disappoint others

3. Are there areas on the chart from Day 5 where you are still living in bondage to striving?

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What would need to change in your life in order for your maturity in grace to grow?

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As you share this with your group, grab a partner (or a group of 3) and pray for freedom in the areas you are each struggling with.

4. Questions or thoughts:

Write down any additional questions or thoughts you wanted to share with your group this week:

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