

1-2 How Can I Develop Christlike Character?

Developing Christlike character is the greatest challenge of the Christian experience. The process is human and divine.

Terms:

- *Grace*—the undeserved gift of Christ's power, which strengthens and transforms my character
- *The Word*—a name for Christ that stresses that He tells us what God is like
- *Edification*—ministering grace to other Christians

I. What grace is

- A. God's goodness to the undeserving (Romans 11:5) No one has ever earned salvation or anything else from God.
- B. Divine power (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) "grace, strength, power"= synonyms; whatever our weakest area is, that's where Christ is inviting us to seek His grace—don't resent your weaknesses, but view them as opportunities to experience God's grace
- C. Found in Christ (John 1:14, 16) the transforming grace of God cannot be experienced apart from Christ. It's not some magical power—it's the strong hand of the living Christ, reaching down to shape the misshapen heart, to bind up the broken life, to strengthen the faltering step. Christ is the fountain from which graces flows.

II. Who the recipients of grace are

A. The saved

1. **Saving grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)—we have to experience this before we can experience transforming grace!
 2. **Transforming grace** (Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 4:10) **TWO FACETS/KINDS OF GRACE**
- A. **The humble** (Proverbs 3:34; 1 Peter 5:5; James 4:6)—if I'm proud and self-sufficient, I'm in no condition to receive character-transforming grace.
 1. In submission to God (James 4:5-7)
 2. In submission to others (1 Peter 5:5-7)—if I can't submit, I can't receive grace.

III. How to get grace (2 Peter 1:5)

THREE MEANS OF GRACE

- A. **The Word of God** (2 Corinthians 3:18; Acts 26:18)—able to build me up and change me into the image of Christ, but I have to be exposed to the Word for this to happen. How can I know what God likes and dislikes if I never read His Word? Also, reading God's Word changes my mind—it changes the way I think involuntarily.
- B. **Prayer** (Hebrews 4:15-16)—Christ experienced what we experience, so He's the One Who can help us go through it! Kneeling at His throne, we can request His grace.
- C. **The ministry of other Christians** (Ephesians 4:29; 1 Peter 4:10-11; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Ephesians 3:16, 20-21)—God wants us to support each other! If you choose the wrong kinds of friends, you lose out, because you don't have this support system that God gave us.