

# The 8 Graces of Marriage

*Developing a culture of grace in your marriage*

## I. RESTORATION of MARRIAGE

*Healing the damage of sin on marriage*

1. *Confession* — *Owning my sin*
2. *Forgiveness* — *Letting go of my hurts*
3. *Teachability* — *Opening up to input*
4. *Speaking Truth* — *Giving input in love*

## II. PURPOSE of MARRIAGE

*Fulfilling God's purpose of marriage*

5. *Commitment* — *Saying "I will" forever*
6. *Agreement* — *Making "Us Decisions"*
7. *Headship* — *Leading like Christ*
8. *Submission* — *Submitting like Christ*

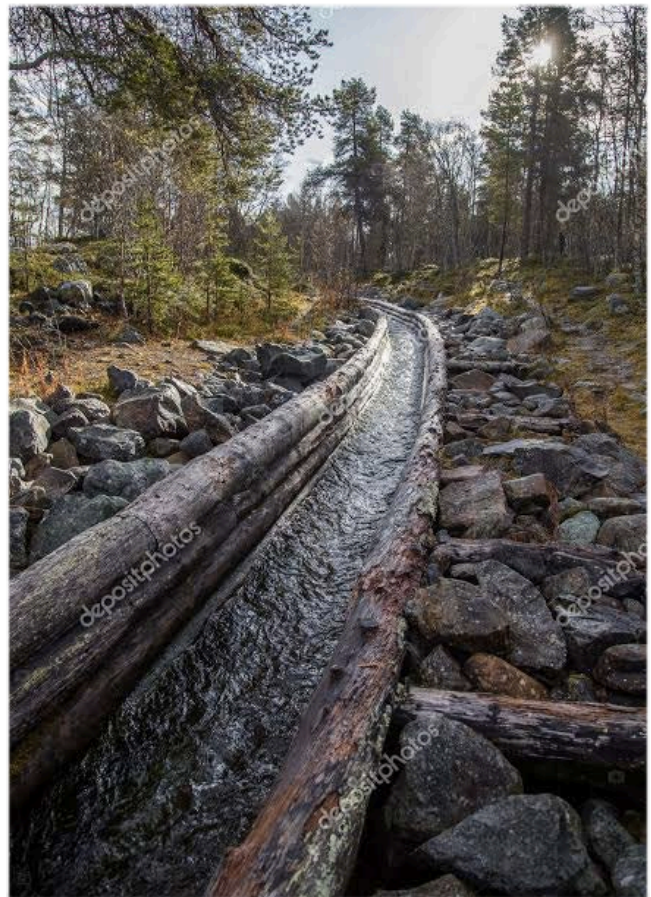


# Introduction

A healthy relationship with God is vital to having a healthy marriage. If we look to our spouses to fill our deepest needs which only God can fill (unconditional love and acceptance, ultimate significance and purpose), we will drown them.

I first need to experience God's grace to be a conduit of grace to my spouse.

Marriage is a gift  
that God has given us to  
**EXPERIENCE** His grace  
and  
to be a **CONDUIT**  
of His grace to another.



The 8 Graces of Marriage are 8 relational principles that help us do these better.

The 8 Graces of Marriage are based on this truth:

The more we understand the grace God has shown us in Christ, the more we can give grace to another.

When we develop a **culture of grace** in our marriage, our relationship will thrive, be healthier, more fulfilling and reflect God's grace to the world.

*“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Pet. 3:18*

Marriage was designed by God to function in a culture of grace and it works best this way.

Grace is the **oil** in the engine of our marriage.



Regardless of the state of your marriage, your family background, your culture, and your personality, **these 8 relational habits can be learned** and can change your marriage!



# The Restoration Graces

Marriage is like a garden...

The principles taught in The 8 Graces help us diagnose where grace is missing in our marriage as well as show us the remedy.



Relational Sin is a pest infestation in the garden of your marriage which is treated by grace.

The 4 Restoration Graces come first because they help us clean out and destroy the pests (SIN) in the garden our marriage.

## RESTORATION of MARRIAGE —

*Healing the damage of sin on marriage*

### 1. Confession                      2. Forgiveness

▶ *Conscious sins and hurts*

*(Like visible weeds and pests — bugs & rats)*

### 3. Teachability                      4. Speaking Truth

▶ *Blind spots and areas of resistance*

*(Like unseen underground pests — worms & fungus)*

Correct diagnosis leads to correct treatment.

## Group Discussion

- What are some challenges we can face in looking to God rather than people to meet our deepest needs?
- What have you found to help you look to God for your ultimate source of love, acceptance, significance?
- Describe what a “culture of grace” looks like in marriage.

## Couple Discussion

- In what ways are you tempted to look to your spouse for needs that only God can meet?
- What happens to you and to your spouse in this situation?
- Describe the state of the garden of your marriage?

## Personal Promise

- *“I will deepen my relationship with God, seeking Him as my primary and true source for love, acceptance and significance.”*



# Grace #1 Confession

# Grace #1 Confession

## — *Owning my sin*

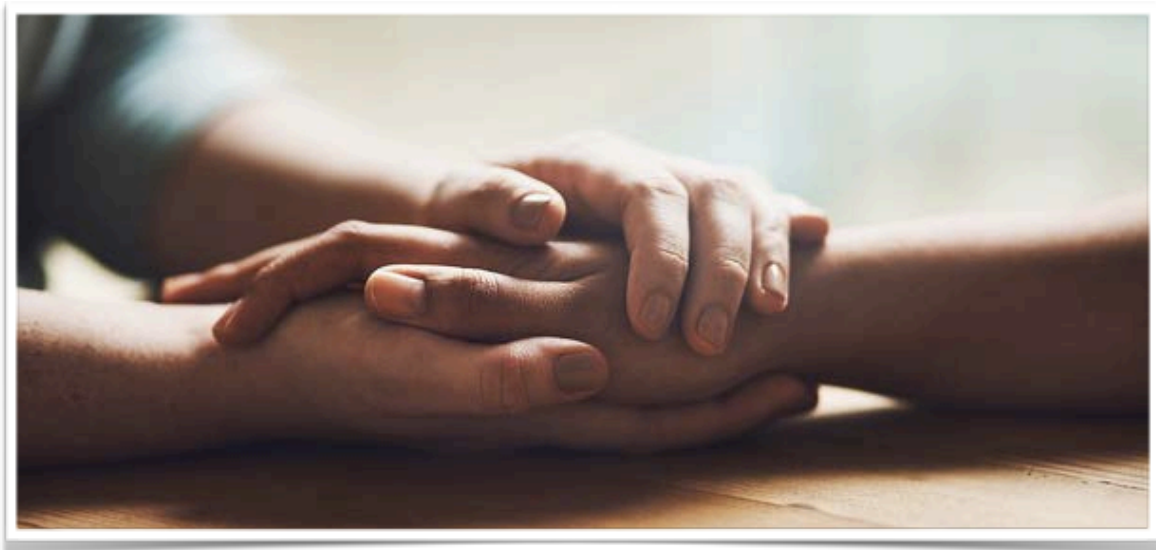
*“When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.*

*(Psalm 32:3-4)*

*“He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.” (Prov. 28:13)*

### **Confession is...**

- Accepting God’s view of my behavior.
- Owning my sin (“I was wrong”)
- Naming it to the other person.





True humble confession of your sin is an expression of grace to your spouse because it reduces sin's capacity to damage your relationship.

But...

*"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick." (Jeremiah 17:9)*

We avoid confession using many techniques:

Example: A conflict over money....

- Lying — *"I wasn't shouting."*
- Noble Motive — *"I'm trying to save us money..."*
- Shifting Blame — *"You've no clue how hard my job was today."*
- Comparing Wrongs — *"You should be more careful with money."*
- Exploding Anger — *"You never understand money!"*
- Deflective Humor — *"Okaaay, put me in the dog-house."*
- Worse Example — *"You should've grown up in my home!"*
- Half Confession — *"Sorry if I got a little loud & if that hurt you."*
- Silence — Not talking or walking out the door

Genuine Confession says...

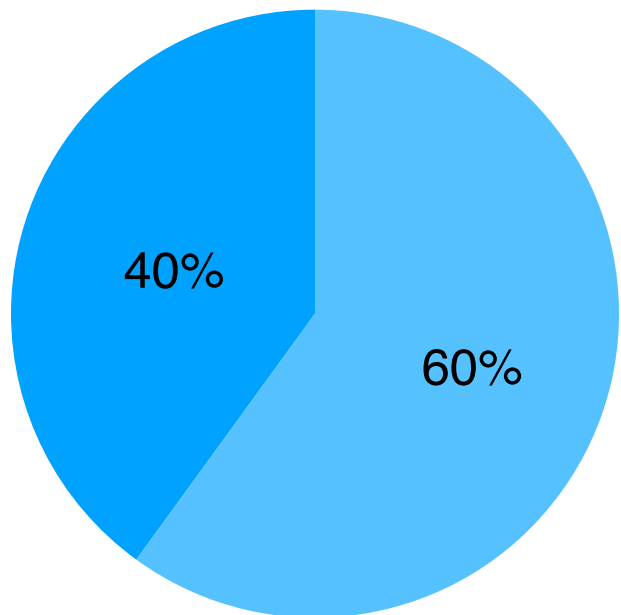
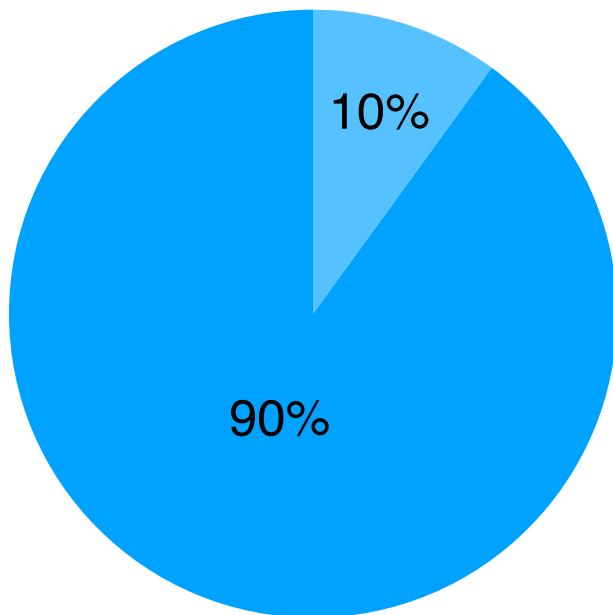
*"I was wrong for shouting at you,  
and I see that I hurt you."*

Name it and Own it

*“Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” Jam. 5:16*

*“When we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7*

**Confess YOUR part of the blame —  
no matter what the percentage is.**



## Group Discussion

- What are your common ways to avoid confessing?
- What is difficult for you about confession?
- What helps encourage you to confess your wrongs?

## Couple Discussion

- How do each of you tend to avoid confession?
- Talk about times when confession has broken a road block in your relationship.
- Talk about times when you did NOT confess and how this affected your relationship. Why do you think you avoided owning up?

## Personal Promise

- *“I will work to show the Grace of Confession by owning my sin and naming it to you.”*



Teaching Video #3

# Grace #2

# Forgiveness

# Grace #2 Forgiveness

## — Letting go of my hurts

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.” (Eph. 1:7-8)*

*“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.” (Eph. 4:32-5:1)*

*“Peter asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “Not seven times, but seventy times seven.” (Mat. 18:21-22)*

### **The Bible teaches...**

*...since God has so freely forgiven me such a large debt, how can I not forgive my brother in other matters, which are so comparatively small?*

**Christ-like FORGIVENESS** is a choice I make to say,  
*“I will not demand payment for your sin, though you deserve it. I choose to not allow your sin to negatively affect our relationship. I will not use it against you in the future.”*

## What is Biblical Forgiveness?

- ▶ Forgiveness doesn't negate consequences or need for change.
- ▶ Forgiveness recognizes that deep hurts can take time to heal.
- ▶ Forgiveness is not pretending something never happened.
- ▶ Forgiveness does not have to be instant.
- ▶ Forgiveness does not require an apology from the other.
- ▶ Struggling to forgive does not mean refusal to forgive.
- ▶ Forgiveness cannot be demanded.
- ▶ Forgiveness does not mean trust is instantly restored.
- ▶ Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation.

If I choose to forgive my spouse,  
what happens to me and  
what happens to my spouse?





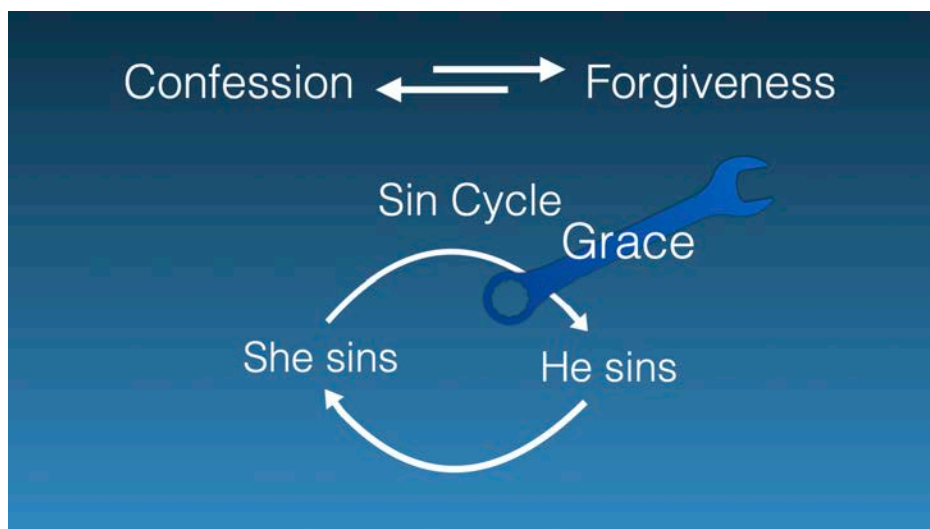
## UNFORGIVENESS may be revealed by:

- ▶ Over-reaction to an offense
- ▶ Using past failures in arguments
- ▶ Withholding physical intimacy
- ▶ Unwillingness to serve one another
- ▶ Lack of joy and laughter
- ▶ Cutting remarks or sarcasm

The Grace of  
Forgiveness  
is a gift.



Grace throws a wrench into the Sin Cycle.



## Group Discussion

- Why is forgiveness so difficult?
- What are the results of unforgiveness?
- How do the Graces of Confession and Forgiveness work together and break the sin cycle?

## Couple Discussion

- What kinds of things are hard for you to forgive?
- Find an example when your spouse forgave you and describe how you felt and how it affected your relationship.
- Think about your most common arguments. How could applying the Graces of Confession or Forgiveness clean out these pests?

## Personal Promise

- *“I will work to show you the Grace of Forgiveness by letting go of my hurts and not using them against you in the future.”*



Teaching Video #4

# Grace #3

# Teachability

# Grace #3 Teachability

## — *Opening up to input*

*“The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.” Prov. 12:15*

*“Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe.” Prov. 28:26 “Listen to advice & accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.” Prov 19:20*

*“A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.” Prov. 1:5*

*“Reprove a wise man and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.” (Prov.7:8b-9)*

**Biblical teachability is about gaining wisdom through every means God gives us.**

**The Grace of Teachability makes it possible for couples to leverage their differences for a powerful advantage in life.**

*“Show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.” 1 Pet. 3:7*

## My spouse can help me...

- By telling things I don't know about myself.
- Become more like Christ.
- By talking talk straight to me.
- By giving me fresh insight that God uses to make me a better person, disciple, father, worker, friend, etc.

Our differences help us gain a more complete perspective.



## What are signs that I lack teachability?

- Talking about a touchy subject starts a war.
- It's never a “good time” to discuss differing viewpoints.
- When an issue is brought up, I talk on and on to argue my point without listening or letting my spouse speak.



## How can we encourage teachability?

- Give permission to your spouse to give you input
- Schedule dedicated times for input
- Create cue words to offer input to one another



## Group Discussion

- What's hard about receiving input from another?
- What helps us become more teachable?
- What can happen in a marriage when there's a lack of teachability?

## Couple Discussion

- Talk about times when one of you was teachable and the other was able to give helpful input?
- How are your spouse's perspective and giftings an incredible resource for you?
- Give your spouse permission to speak into your life to help you please the Lord better.

## Personal Promise

- *"I will work to exhibit the Grace of Teachability by opening up to your input into my life and valuing your perspective."*



Teaching Video #5

# Grace #4

# Speaking Truth

# Grace #4 Speaking Truth

## — *Giving input in love*

The Grace of SPEAKING TRUTH is...  
lovingly telling my spouse something that he/she is either blind  
or resistant to, regardless of the response.

*“Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word  
spoken in right circumstances. Like an earring of  
gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprov-  
er to a listening ear.” (Prov. 25:11-12)*

*“If your brother sins, go and show him  
his fault in private.” (Matt. 18:15)*

*“The tongue of the wise makes  
knowledge acceptable.” (Prov. 15:2)*

The prophet Nathan’s approach to King David teaches us much  
about speaking the truth in love. (2 Sam. 12:1-14)

Nathan...

- ▶ was **motivated** by obedience to God, not by fear of man
- ▶ had **David’s best interest** in mind, not his own
- ▶ **carefully tailored his words** to reveal David’s blindspot.
- ▶ **focused on David’s sin** against God,
- ▶ approached David **privately and gently**



### Speaking the Truth in love considers...

- Motivation — *Check your heart*
- Timing — *Choose wisely*
- Respect — *Do not push*
- Wording — *Craft carefully and with prayer*
- Word Pictures — *Help another see*

### Applying pressure to control uses...

- Nagging — *Badgering won't help*
- Emotional or spiritual manipulation — *Dangerous tactic*
- Harshness — *Never helps*
- Threats — *Manipulative*
- Shaming — *Destructive*

*Note: Some of these can be categorized as abusive.*

## Group Discussion

- How is speaking truth, rightly motivated and wisely done, an expression of grace?
- What's hard about speaking truth to another?
- Why are nagging, manipulation, harshness, or threats all poor ways of getting my spouse to change? What results from these behaviors?

## Couple Discussion

- Recall a time when you or your spouse spoke truth about a sin or a blind spot and you benefited.
- Discuss what elements are crucial for you to have a constructive time of giving and receiving input.
- What are helpful and affirming ways to pause a discussion or conflict when circumstances prevent immediate resolution?

## Personal Promise

- *"I will work to show you the Grace of Speaking Truth by giving you loving input and considering carefully my attitude, words, and timing."*



Teaching Video #6

# The Purpose Graces

PURPOSE of MARRIAGE —

*Fulfilling God's purpose of marriage*

- 5. Commitment      6. Agreement
- 7. Headship        8. Submission





## God's purposes for marriage include:

- ▶ Experiencing deep friendship
- ▶ Reflecting the relationship of Christ to His church.
- ▶ Making us more like Christ
- ▶ Reflecting God's character to the world
- ▶ Being fruitful and subduing the earth
- ▶ Disciple-making at home and in the world.

Marriage was NOT primarily designed for our own happiness and fulfillment.

However, a husband & wife who live by God's purposes in marriage do find JOY in one another and in living for a purpose greater than themselves.



Grace #5  
Commitment



# Grace #5 Commitment

## — *Saying “I will” forever*

*“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’. Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” (Matt. 19:4-6)*

God designed marriage to be a permanent relationship, reflective of His own nature and His relationship with His people.

The Grace of COMMITMENT is...  
the pursuit, by choice and without regard for personal cost, of what is in the best interest of your spouse, saying...

*“I commit myself to you forever.  
I will work hard to make this relationship a success.  
I commit to staying forever, solving problems,  
and seeking wisdom from God and others.”*

The Grace of Commitment allows us to change through the years without risking the loss of the each other's love.



**Important:** If your spouse is **emotionally, spiritually, or physically abusive**, the *Grace of Commitment* does NOT mean you must endure abuse. In fact, your commitment to your spouse's good means you **seek outside help for counsel and intervention**.

**Possible warning signs of a struggle with commitment in marriage:**

- Unforgiveness
- Bitterness
- Coldness / Distance
- Laziness / Not caring
- Regret or Fantasy
- Ignoring Problems

## Strengthen your commitment

- by reaffirming your commitment in words, actions, events,
- by avoiding threats, comparisons, and statements of regret
- by protecting yourselves from sexual temptation
- by learning to “speak” your spouse’s love languages:

#1 *Words of Affirmation*

#4 *Quality Time*

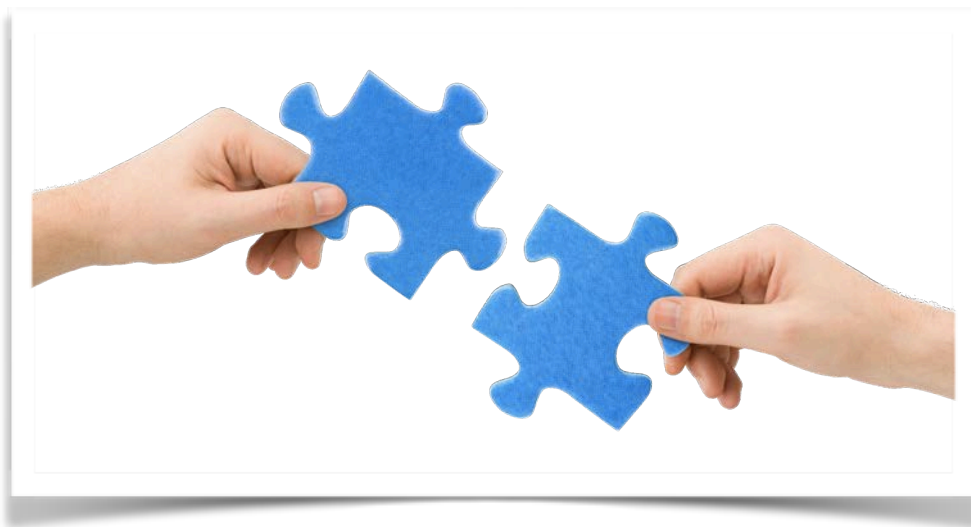
#2 *Gift Giving*

#5 *Physical Touch*

#3 *Acts of Service*

Commitment in marriage is NOT just about our happiness —  
it’s about the purpose that God designed for  
our unique team contribution to His Kingdom.

God uses our different personalities and strengths to conform us  
to Christ and to bring glory to Him in a way that would be  
impossible if WE weren’t married.



## Group Discussion

- Why is a rock-solid commitment to one another so important for success in marriage?
- How has the biblical call to marriage commitment been falsely used to keep someone in an abusive marriage?
- What can we say to a friend who says, *“I’m so unfulfilled and unhappy in my marriage and tired of hanging on”*?

## Couple Discussion

- How can personality, giftings, and strengths bring out the best in one another?
- Discuss how your spouse has helped mold you into a better person, worker, parent, and disciple of Christ.
- Determine your spouse's love languages and how you can learn to “speak” them better.

## Personal Promise

- *“I will work to show you the Grace of Commitment by never using words of regret, doubt or threat, by working to solve problems, together or with outside help, and by striving to speak your love language.”*



Teaching Video #7

# Grace #6 Agreement



# Grace #6 Agreement

## — *Making “Us Decisions”*

The Grace of AGREEMENT allows us to make “*Us Decisions*”, which are decisions that both husband and wife are fully committed to because they believe the decisions are the wisest and best choices.

*“Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4:1–3)*

How can 2 very different people make “*Us Decisions*”?

*“Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.” (James 1:9)*

**How to practice the Grace of Agreement:**

- Commit to making an “*Us Decision*” before proceeding.
- Patiently listen to the other’s perspective.
- Summarize the other’s viewpoint.
- Respect the other’s expertise and opinion.

## What would be some results from making healthy “Us Decisions”?

- Wiser decisions by combining our knowledge and experience
- Replaces emotional fights with profitable discussions
- Eliminates blaming and resentment
- Creates unity in parenting and decisions involving others
- Protects a couple from manipulation and spiritual abuse



Consider areas in your lives that would benefit from learning to make healthy “Us Decisions”.

- ▶ Money & budgets
- ▶ Church involvement
- ▶ Parenting
- ▶ Frequency of sex
- ▶ Involvement with extended families
- ▶ Holidays and vacations
- ▶ Hospitality & entertaining
- ▶ Hobbies and use of free time
- ▶ Social needs & ways of recharging

## Group Discussion

- Share an “Us Decision” you made as a couple. How did you make it and what problems were avoided?
- What aspects of making “Us Decisions” are difficult?
- What have you found as a couple to be helpful when attempting to come to agreement in an “Us Decision”?

## Couple Discussion

- Discuss times when an “*Us Decision*” was NOT attempted. What results followed?
- Tell your spouse what would help you in practicing the Grace of Agreement more in your marriage?
- Each of you share specific areas that need more joint discussion to reach true “*Us Decisions*.”

## Personal Promise

- *“I will strive to practice the Grace of Agreement by patiently listening to your perspective and agreeing to wait for “Us Decisions” before moving forward on important things in our lives.”*



Teaching Video #8

# Grace #7

# Headship

# Grace #7 Headship

## — *Leading like Christ*

### A new kind of leadership

*“Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matt 20:25-28)*

The husband’s HEADSHIP, like Christ’s over the Church, is never used to please himself, but to serve the interest of his wife and family, as they follow God’s will.

Biblical Headship = Privilege Responsibility

Biblical Headship = Superiority, Value, Abilities

Biblical Headship = God’s Role and Design

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”*  
(Eph. 5:25)



## Husband...

- ▶ chooses to love her unconditionally
- ▶ creates an environment for her to grow mentally, emotionally and spiritually
- ▶ works so she can fulfill her potential
- ▶ serves her even if it costs him personally

The Bible says we are **joint heirs**, equal heirs of God's grace.

**Nowhere does the Bible say a man should subdue his wife or force her to submit.**

## Misuse of Headship

- ▶ Using power or **coercion to control** and get one's way.
- ▶ Abuser wants **power without responsibility** to serve & protect.

The husband is the head by **stepping up to protect, gently guiding and loving** his wife and family.

The Grace of Headship **affects "Us Decisions"** because a good leader identifies problems, gets in front of those issues, builds agreement, and works toward solutions.

## Group Discussion

- What do you believe are the roots of our misunderstandings of God's design in headship in marriage?
- What could hinder men from leading well in a marriage?
- Men: What are things that encourage you to lead well?

## Couple Discussion

- Discuss examples of headship, both good and bad, you have observed in your families and friends.
- How have these examples from families / friends as well as cultural perspectives of headship affected your own understanding and practice in your marriage?
- Husband: How can you reflect Christ more in your specific role?

## Personal Promises

- Husband: *"I will work to practice the Grace of Headship by never using power to pressure or control you, but by showing Christ-like leadership through serving, protecting, and loving you."*





Teaching Video #9

# Grace #8 Submission

# Grace #8 Submission

## — *Submitting like Christ*

*“The LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a **helper** fit for him.” Gen. 2:18*  
ezer = equal before God and perfect counterpart.

Biblical headship and submission are **NOT** about traditional “division of labor” in the home.

All women, both married or single, are uniquely able to reflect certain aspects of God’s character:

- ▶ Inviting others in
- ▶ Helping others grow
- ▶ Working together in partnership



In marriage, a wife has the additional calling of Christ-like submission.

The Grace of Christ-like Submission is...  
respecting her husband in his role and  
fulfilling her role as his essential counterpart,  
serving together as a unique team for God's purposes."



Once sin entered the world, the marriage  
relationship became harder:

Man's temptation is autonomy by domination or abdication.

Woman's temptation is autonomy by resistance or manipulation.

*"Your desire shall be for your husband, and  
he shall rule over you." Gen. 3:16*

This desire is a **negative quality of resistance** to his headship,  
temptation to manipulate, deciding she alone knows what is right.

## Christ-like Submission

- ▶ Jesus is the perfect example in how He submitted to His Father
- ▶ Voluntary choice to honor God
- ▶ Supports God's will for her husband (not husband's sin)
- ▶ Shows respect to her husband as Church shows to Christ

A wife's respect towards her husband is like rocket-full in his tank.

Christ-like  
Headship



Christ-like  
Submission

**KEY:** Every couple must come to agreement before God in how their biblical roles are uniquely applied within their jobs, home life, and ministries.

## Group Discussion

- What do you believe are the roots of our misunderstandings of God's design in submission in marriage?
- How can our culture's view of submission affect our own ways of interacting in our marriages?
- Would you agree with the following statement: A truly biblical complementarian marriage relationship, in practice, actually looks much like an egalitarian marriage approach.

## Couple Discussion

- Discuss examples of submission, both good and bad, you have observed in your families and friends.
- How have these examples from families / friends as well as cultural perspectives of submission affected your own understanding and practice in your marriage?
- Wife: How can you reflect Christ more in your specific role?

## Personal Promises

- Wife: *"I will work to practice the Grace of Christ-like Submission by respecting you in your role and fulfilling my role as your essential counterpart, serving together as a unique team for God's purposes."*

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Teaching Video #10

# Practicing The 8 Graces



## Group Discussion

For each of the following situations, which Grace or Graces may need to be applied to the marriage? (See suggested answers below.)

1. What if there are a lot of passive aggressive cutting remarks and/or sarcasm in the marriage?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?
2. What if the husband or wife has suggested that their marriage was a mistake or has used ultimatums or threats?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?
3. What if it is too difficult for a couple to listen to one another's opinions on a topic and end up giving in to keep the peace?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?
4. What if one feels the other's words or tone are often too harsh and overly critical when discussing things?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?
5. What if there are lots of excuses or deflections regarding hurtful words or actions?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?

6. What if there are topics a couple can not talk about because one of them refuses to discuss these topics or overreacts?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?
7. What if past sins or hurts continue to be brought up and even used as ammunition in arguments?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?
8. If one of them fantasizes about who he/she should have married or dreams of not being in the marriage?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?
9. In parenting do they feel unified or undermined by the other?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?
10. What if a husband is passive and uninvolved in making family decisions?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?
11. What if a wife is nagging or manipulating her husband in an attempt to control decisions?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?
12. Are there struggles in the areas of emotional or physical intimacy?  
— Which Grace(s) may need to be applied?

## Couple Discussion

- Looking at the summary sheet, each of you pick 2 Graces you would like to work on personally to bring more grace in your marriage.

## Personal Promise

- *“I desire to create a culture of grace in our marriage and become a conduit of God’s grace towards my spouse by learning to own up to my sin quickly, let go of my hurts, open up to input, speak truth in love, solidify my commitment, patiently listen and work towards joint decisions, and figure out together how our biblical roles are uniquely applied within our marriage.*

## Suggested Answers to Group Discussion Questions

1. *Grace of Speaking the Truth in love and/or Grace of Forgiveness*
2. *Grace of Commitment*
3. *Graces of Agreement and/or Grace of Teachability*
4. *Grace of Speaking the Truth in love*
5. *Grace of Confession and/or Grace of Teachability*
6. *Grace of Teachability and/or Grace of Agreement*
7. *Grace of Forgiveness and/or Grace of Confession*
8. *Grace of Commitment*
9. *Grace of Agreement*
10. *Grace of Headship and/or Grace of Agreement?*
11. *Grace of Agreement and/or Grace of Submission*
12. *This could be about circumstances, timing or mechanics but often is a combination of unresolved issues that need one or more of the 8 Graces.*