



# CHARACTER PRINCIPLE LESSONS

Additional



## **Hope Christian Fellowship**

*Making Disciples Who Live & Love Like Jesus.*

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## How to use these Lessons

These lessons are great for small groups, one-on-one (person-to person) gatherings, and mentoring, or even at home with your own family.

We would like to suggest that you use the following format:

### LOOK BACK

Take some time to find out how the group or person you are meeting with is doing in their life. If you are meeting regularly, ask questions like, “How have you applied what you learned last time we met?” “Did you get to share your story or the gospel with anyone this week?”

Other questions to consider:

- Did you accomplish your goals from last time we met?
- What have been your greatest challenges? How did you deal with those challenges?
- What do you believe is working well in your life?

### LOOK UP

Do the lesson you have planned for this time together. Instruct your members to ask God to teach you what He wants you to learn from it. Ask questions like, “What did you like about this lesson?” “What did you find difficult to understand?” “Does anything from this lesson stand out to you?” “Is anything hitting your heart from this lesson?”

### LOOK FORWARD

Take a bit of time to ponder and pray. Pray that God will enlighten you and those you are meeting. Encourage them to write down what impressions they are receiving from the Holy Spirit, and to consider those things as their “assignment” for the coming week.

Ask them to share their “assignment.”

Other questions to consider:

- What are your highest priorities for this week/month?
- What are your plans to help you grow in Christ?
- How can we help you this week/month?



# GRACE

“Many favors are showered on those who please the king.” Proverbs 16:15

Webster defines grace as freely granted favor or goodwill, or an act of mercy, which could mean that we could cancel a debt or grant someone mercy by not holding them accountable for acts committed against us. Grace is an attitude of the heart. Grace will show up in one's character and without it we will fail.

Life is not always fair, yet we mostly try to be fair. Since life is a learning experience we grow in knowledge and by experiences coming from our discoveries by trial and error. God designed life around justice and demands obedience to his law as a mark or target for experiencing the fullness of life. The laws are rules to guide us; they become the way to life itself. No one can violate the laws of God - both moral and physical - without suffering the consequences. God's laws are laws of and for life, and any violation of them creates a spirit of deterioration and death. We cannot understand grace without understanding the goal of God and His Law in life.

Why then is grace so popular when life and success are really built around Law? There are 3 reasons:

1. People want success without earning it.
2. Since people see God as a miracle worker, they want the miracle without having to be obedient.
3. Grace is taught as a gift without equity.

Yes, grace is very important and we cannot live without it, but it is misunderstood and misused to the point that we cannot or do not want to live under Law. The rule of the Law (God's Law) must first be in place in order to make us functional. We cannot experience grace if we have no law, which is like playing a game with no rules. People want success without earning it. They want success by grace. However, grace can only be drawn from the deposits that you have made in your account. Since grace is intangible, we may build more equity than what really exists. Our reputation over the years could give us incredible, intangible equity, and in some cases a person may draw more favor than he or she deserves. That is real grace, but you cannot live that way very long or your past reputation will catch up with you and you will start falling because of overdrafts on your grace account.

Since life is based on sowing and reaping, we must sow and practice grace by being good, helping people, being thankful, forgiving others and doing favors. This builds equity with others. You are making deposits in people and building relationships. You will build a reputation and become known as a person of integrity. Because of your good behavior and generosity, people will believe in you. They will come to you for advice because they trust you as a person of your word.

The point is that you will have earned your position in life by following the laws of God; practicing good principles of grace that will help you find grace in other people in your time of

need. Yes indeed, when we have equity in others we can draw grace from that account. They will love you, help you, want to work for and even follow you.

Likewise, we find favor from God because we have kept His law, followed His principles and thus earned favor with God and our fellow man.

Therefore, what is grace? It is favor or goodwill freely granted from God and our fellow man derived from the respect we have earned as a result of the attitude and service that we have rendered to God and our fellow man. God grants favor to the humble. Salvation is a gift from God, but you cannot receive it without humbly asking Him for it. Once you have it, you must nurture it. The value we receive from our salvation is based on our giving or sowing of grace, not in the demanding of it.

**DISCUSSION:**

Did you ever ask for a favor and not receive it? If yes, why?

Can you explain how grace is earned?

Why do some very nice and good people never prosper?

**MEASURING UP TO THE PLUMB LINE:**

How well are you currently applying this principle in your life? (10 being highest, 2 being lowest).

Can you see the value of raising your rating?

**THOUGHTS TO PONDER:**

Grace is the extra 10-15% reward we get from our 100% effort.

# FAIRNESS

"A workman may eat from the orchard he tends; anyone should be rewarded who protects another's interests." Proverbs 27:18

"That's Fair," is a common expression used in business deals or any transaction. It is used when we consider something to be reasonable, just, of the common good, such as a fair deal, a just and honest transaction, or a decision made according to the rule. Generally, the word fairness applies when there are differences in opinions or disagreements. When a settlement is made, it may not be exactly what either party wanted, but based upon the situation it will be considered fair.

We live in a world that is ruled by law or force. We try to set ourselves up in a power base position, so we have the power to control. Sometimes, we use the power of wealth to control others. This kind of leadership follows the concept: "He who has the gold makes the rules." But there is a better way which is the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

In today's world, we glorify winners. We are encouraged to go for it, even if it is at the expense of others. While personal achievement and satisfaction are important, we should not let our desires blind us to the value of fairness. Some people have the attitude of, "Whatever works for me is fair." But that is self-centered and destructive. It creates a lot of conflicts and is unfair. Being fair will encourage others to help us rather than stand in the way of our goals. Learning to think and act fairly will benefit us in three ways:

1. We will develop friendships and gain respect even from our competitors.
2. Life will work in our favor rather than against us.
3. We become powerful negotiators.

Fairness is more than equality. Equality limits the incentive for personal creativity. It promotes unity and conformity rather than harmony. The true spirit of fairness creates an environment that promotes personal achievement and progress but not at the expense or destruction of others. By doing this, we can avoid unnecessary hurts and damaged feelings in others, but still achieve our goals. When our accomplishments are earned through fair dealings in wisdom and good judgment, few people will challenge our right to have the things we have. Plus a clear conscious will allow us to sleep better and live with less stress.

So how do we become fair? First, we must know what is morally correct. Fairness must be based on a standard of human rights or a system of laws used as a measuring stick. These laws and rights must be based on those endowed to us by our creator.

Second, in light of this, we must also develop a mindset of always considering other people's needs, growth, and maturity. What are their priorities, what do they really want, and what would they consider to be fair? By asking questions we discover where a person is at and we'll be better informed as to what will work and what won't.

Some people believe that everything is either right or wrong, but there are many good things in life that are neither right nor wrong. These are matters of fairness that should satisfy both parties. Yes, there are some absolute rights and wrongs, but many conflicts can be negotiated by fairness.

Thirdly, we must always be open and honest. We cannot expect others to be open and honest with us if they doubt our integrity. The more people know and understand us and the other people involved in the decisions, the more likely we'll be considered fair. Be like the mother who had two sons and each son wanted the last piece of the pie. She said, "We will split it. The one who cuts the pie will let the other choose which half he wants." You can't be fairer than that. It's not always easy to make fair judgments, because situations change. The rule of fairness is simple. Ask yourself if you'd like to be in the other person's shoes. If the answer is in doubt, you should reconsider, even if the decision is in your power. Because if you'll put forth the effort to be fair, you'll feel good about yourself and others will feel good about you.

**DISCUSSION:**

Which one of the three benefits works best for you?

Do you feel that you are appreciated as a person?

Name someone who you think is fair. What do you like about them?

Give two reasons why you think it pays to be fair.

**MEASURING UP TO THE PLUMB LINE:**

How well are you currently applying this principle in your life? (10 being highest, 2 being lowest).

Can you see the value of raising your rating?

**THOUGHTS TO PONDER:**

"Let's be fair . . ." is never appreciated more than when it comes from someone who has the upper hand.