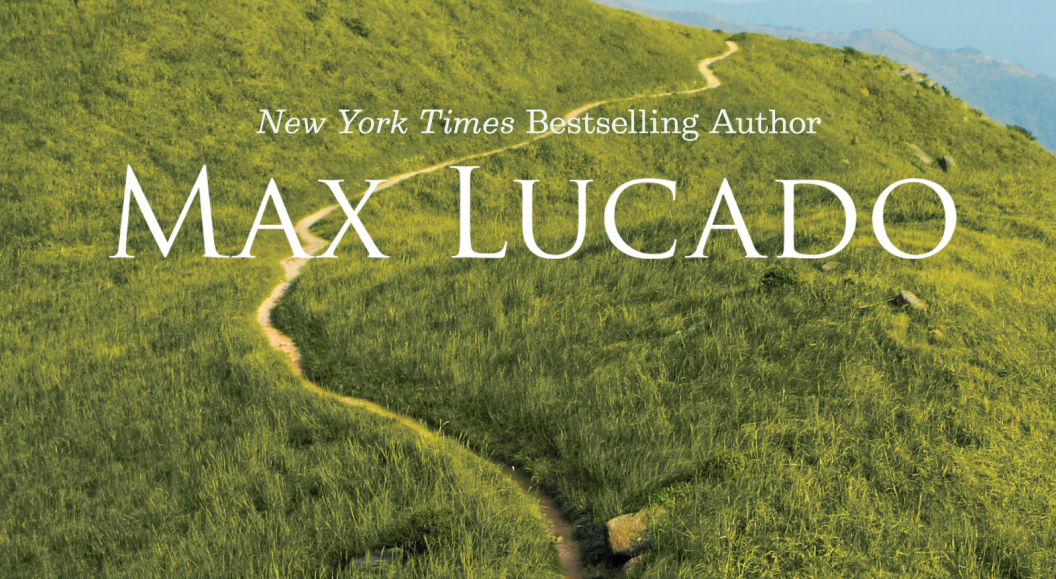




New York Times Bestselling Author

MAX LUCADO

IN THE
GRIP OF GRACE



A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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ISBN 978-0-8499-2137-7 (Library Edition)

ISBN 978-0-5291-0051-1 (2014 repack)

ISBN 978-0-7180-9120-0 (20th Anniversary edition)

ISBN 978-1-4002-2465-4 (2021 repack)

ISBN 978-1-4002-2822-5 (IE)

The Library of Congress has cataloged the earlier edition as follows:

In the grip of grace / Max Lucado

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p. 163).

ISBN: 978-0-8499-0952-8 (tradepaper)

ISBN: 978-0-8499-1809-4 (repackage)

ISBN: 978-0-8499-1143-9 (original)

1. Christian life. 2. Grace (Theology) I. Title

bv4501.2.l821 1996 96—9078

248.4—dc20

cip

Printed in the United States of America

21 22 23 24 25 LSC 6 5 4 3 2 1

THE PARABLE OF THE RIVER

MAPPING THE PARABLE				
	The Hut-Building Hedonist (Romans 1:18-32)	The Fault-Finding Judgmentalist (Romans 2:1-11)	The Rock-Stacking Legalist (Romans 2:17-3:20)	The Grace-Driven Christian (Romans 3:21-25)
STRATEGY	<i>indulge myself</i>	<i>compare myself</i>	<i>save myself</i>	<i>entrust myself to Christ</i>
GOAL	<i>satisfy my passions</i>	<i>monitor my neighbor</i>	<i>measure my merits</i>	<i>know my father</i>
DESCRIPTION	<i>fun-lover</i>	<i>finger-pointer</i>	<i>burden-bearer</i>	<i>God-lover</i>
PERSONALITY	<i>laid back</i>	<i>stuck-up</i>	<i>stressed-out</i>	<i>peaceful</i>
SELF-ANALYSIS	<i>I may be bad, but so what?</i>	<i>I may be bad, but I'm better than . . .</i>	<i>I may be bad, but if I work harder . . .</i>	<i>I may be bad, but I'm forgiven.</i>
THEOLOGY	<i>disregard God</i>	<i>distract God</i>	<i>reimburse God</i>	<i>seek God</i>
BUMPER STICKER	<i>"Life is short. Play hard."</i>	<i>"God's watching you, and so am I."</i>	<i>"I owe, I owe, it's off to work I go."</i>	<i>"I'm not perfect, but I'm forgiven."</i>
FAVORITE ANIMAL	<i>tomcat</i>	<i>watchdog</i>	<i>beaver</i>	<i>eagle</i>
SPENDS TIME LOOKING	<i>over the menu at the options</i>	<i>over the fence at the neighbor</i>	<i>over the list of requirements</i>	<i>over the abundance of God's blessings</i>
VIEW OF GRACE	<i>Who, me?</i>	<i>Yes, you!</i>	<i>Not me!</i>	<i>Yes, me.</i>
VIEW OF SIN	<i>No one is guilty.</i>	<i>He is guilty.</i>	<i>I'm always guilty.</i>	<i>I was guilty.</i>

WORK ETHIC	<i>What I do is my business.</i>	<i>What you do is my business.</i>	<i>What God demands is my business.</i>	<i>What God does is my business.</i>
FAVORITE PHRASE	<i>Live it up!</i>	<i>Straighten up!</i>	<i>Get to work!</i>	<i>Thank you!</i>
BOUNDARIES	<i>If it feels good, do it.</i>	<i>If he feels good, note it.</i>	<i>If it feels good, stop it.</i>	<i>If it feels good, examine it.</i>
CONDITION	<i>bored</i>	<i>bitter</i>	<i>weary</i>	<i>grateful</i>
PAUL'S PRONOUNCEMENTS	<i>You have no excuse for the things you do.</i>	<i>You have no authority for the judgment you make.</i>	<i>You have no solution for the problem you have.</i>	<i>You have no reason to fear.</i>
KEY VERSE	<i>"God left them and let them go their sinful way." (1:24)</i>	<i>"If you think you can judge others, you are wrong. When you judge them, you are really judging yourself guilty because you do the same things they do." (2:1)</i>	<i>". . . people cannot do any work that will make them right with God." (4:5)</i>	<i>". . . those who are right with God will live by trusting in him." (1:17)</i>

STUDY GUIDE

Written by Steve Halliday

Each of these short studies is designed not only to help you think through and apply the ideas developed in *In the Grip of Grace* but also to help you interact with the biblical passages that prompted those ideas.

The first section of each study, “Looking Back,” excerpts portions of each chapter and supplies questions for personal or group study. The second section, “Looking Deep,” helps you dig a little deeper into Scripture’s perspective on the topic under discussion.

INTRODUCTION

THE GREATEST DISCOVERY OF MY LIFE

LOOKING BACK

1. An epistle for the self-sufficient, Romans contrasts the plight of people who choose to dress in self-made garments with those who gladly accept the robes of grace.
 - What do you think Max means by “self-made garments”? Have you ever worn such “garments”? If so, explain.
 - What do you think Max means by “the robes of grace”? Are these “robes” in your wardrobe? Explain.
2. God used the book of Romans to change the lives (and the wardrobes) of Martin Luther, John Wesley, John Calvin, William Tyndale, St. Augustine, and millions of others. There is every reason to think he’ll do the same for you.
 - What comes to mind when you think of the book of Romans?
 - What do you know of the men Max mentions in this paragraph—Luther, Wesley, Calvin, Tyndale, Augustine? How did Romans change their lives?
 - How can the book of Romans change your own life? Do you think it will? Explain.

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 1:16–17.

- How do these two verses explain the theme of Romans?
- How does Paul use these verses to describe what he plans to unfold in the rest of his book?
- Do you believe you have a good understanding of the topic described in these verses? Explain.
- Are these verses being “lived out” in your daily life? Explain.

2. Read Galatians 3:26 (NIV).

- How does this verse compare to Romans 1:16–17?
- What is common to each?

THE PARABLE OF THE RIVER

LOOKING BACK

1. Though they did not know where they were, of one fact they were sure: they were not intended for this place.
 - How did the sons know they were not intended for their new surroundings?
 - In what way is this statement a description of our own circumstances?
2. One chose to indulge, the other to judge, and the third to work. None of them chose his father.
 - With which of the three brothers are you most likely to identify? Explain.
 - What is wrong with the responses of each of the three sons?
3. All four brothers heard the same invitation. Each had an opportunity to be carried home by the elder brother. The first said no, choosing a grass hut over his father's house. The second said no, preferring to analyze the mistakes of his brother rather than admit his own. The third said no, thinking it wiser to make a good impression than an honest confession. And the fourth said yes, choosing gratitude over guilt.
 - What reasons did each of the three brothers give for refusing the offer of the eldest brother? Have you ever heard people

give similar reasons for refusing Jesus' offer of salvation? If so, describe them.

- How did the fourth brother choose “gratitude over guilt”?
4. As you read of the brothers, which describes your relationship to God? Have you, like the fourth son, recognized your helplessness to make the journey home alone? Do you take the extended hand of your Father? Are you caught in the grip of his grace?
- Answer the questions above.
 - How does someone know whether he or she is “caught in the grip of [God’s] grace”?
5. What does Max mean by each of the following, and what do they all have in common?
- The Hut-Building Hedonist
 - The Fault-Finding Judgmentalist
 - The Rock-Stacking Legalist
6. I might as well prepare you: The first chapters of Romans are not exactly upbeat. Paul gives us the bad news before he gives the good news. He will eventually tell us that we are all equal candidates for grace but not before he proves that we are all desperately sinful.
- Why do you think Paul began with the bad news before he explained the good news?
 - When we explain the gospel to someone, do we usually follow Paul’s pattern? Explain.

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Ephesians 1:7–8.
- According to verse 7, what do we have in Christ?
 - According to what measure were we given these things, according to verses 7–8?
2. Read Ephesians 2:4–9.
- How are love, mercy, and grace related to each other in verses 4–5? What do these three work together to achieve?
 - What future grace will we experience, according to verse 7?
 - What do you learn about grace in verses 8–9? How does this affect you personally?

GOD'S GRACIOUS ANGER

LOOKING BACK

1. God does not sit silently while his children indulge in perversion. He lets us go our sinful way and reap the consequences. Every broken heart, every unwanted child, every war and tragedy can be traced back to our rebellion against God.
 - Why do you think God doesn't stop us before we "go our sinful way"?
 - Do you agree that "every war and tragedy can be traced back to our rebellion against God"? Explain.
2. God is angry at evil. For many, this is a revelation.
 - What does it mean that God is "angry" at evil?
 - Was this a revelation to you? If so, explain.
3. Many don't understand God's anger because they confuse the wrath of God with the wrath of man. The two have little in common.
 - How is the wrath of God different from the wrath of man?
 - Do the two kinds of "wrath" have anything in common? If so, what?
4. Every star is an announcement. Each leaf a reminder. The glaciers are megaphones, the seasons are chapters, the clouds are banners. Nature is a song of many parts but one theme and one verse: *God is.*

- How does nature proclaim that God exists?
 - If this is true, then why are there atheists?
5. The question is not, “How dare a loving God be angry?”, but rather “How could a loving God feel anything less?”
- Have you ever met someone who thought love and anger couldn’t coexist? If so, why did they believe this?
 - Why does Max believe that God must demonstrate both love and anger? Do you agree? Why or why not?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 1:18–20 (NIV).
 - Against whom is the “wrath of God” being revealed, according to verse 18? How is it being revealed?
 - Why is the “wrath of God” being revealed, according to verse 19?
 - Why are men “without excuse,” according to verse 20?
2. Read Psalm 19:1–6 (NIV).
 - What do these verses teach us about God’s creation?
 - What does God’s creation teach us about God?

GODLESS LIVING

LOOKING BACK

1. If there is no ultimate good behind the world, then how do we define “good” within the world? If the majority opinion determines good and evil, what happens when the majority is wrong?
 - How would you answer Max’s two questions above?
 - Without God, can there be any truly “good” or “evil”? Explain.
2. What dike does the God-denying thinker have to stop the flood? What anchor will the secularist use to keep society from being sucked out to sea? If a society deletes God from the human equation, what sandbags will they stack against the swelling tide of barbarism and hedonism?
 - What kind of anchor is society’s trust in?
 - What biblical examples of godlessness serve as wake-up calls for our society?
3. Mine deep enough in every heart and you’ll find it: a longing for meaning, a quest for purpose. As surely as a child breathes, he will someday wonder, “What is the purpose of my life?”
 - Have you ever struggled with a longing for meaning or a sense of purpose? If so, describe the struggle. If not, why not?
 - What is the purpose of your life?

4. With God in your world, you aren't an accident nor an incident, you are a gift to the world, a divine work of art, signed by God.
 - Do you ever feel like an “accident” or an “incident”? If so, when are such feelings most likely to occur?
 - Do you believe you are a “gift to the world, a divine work of art, signed by God”? Explain.
5. Ironically, the more we know, the less we worship. We are more impressed with our discovery of the light switch than with the one who invented electricity.
 - Do you agree that the more we know, the less we worship? Explain.
 - Why do you think it seems so easy to forget God?
6. According to Romans 1, godlessness is a bad swap. In living for today, the hut-building hedonist destroys his hope of living in a castle tomorrow.
 - How do people make this “bad swap” today?
 - Did you ever choose a “hut” over a “castle”? If so, describe the situation. What caused you to make a change?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 1:21–32.
 - What is the awful sin described in verse 21? What happens to those who commit such a sin?
 - What is the sin described in verses 22–23? How is this related to the sin of verse 21?
 - What is the sin described in verse 24? Does this seem related to the sin of verses 22–23? Explain.
 - How does verse 25 summarize verses 21–24?
 - Work through verses 26–32, noting how the passage intensifies as it progresses. What is the significance of this?
2. Read Ephesians 2:10.
 - How are believers described in this verse? What task are they given to do?
 - How firm is God in his intention for believers?

GODLESS JUDGING

LOOKING BACK

1. Ever wrestled with the deathbed conversion of a rapist or the eleventh-hour conversion of a child molester? We've sentenced them, maybe not in court, but in our hearts. We've put them behind bars and locked the door. They are forever imprisoned by our disgust. And then, the impossible happens. They repent. Our response? (Dare we say it?) We cross our arms and furrow our brows, "God won't let you off that easy. Not after what you did. God is kind, but he's no wimp. Grace is for average sinners like me, not deviants like you."
 - What did you think when you read of Jeffrey Dahmer's reported conversion? Be honest.
 - What would you say to a person who told you, "If your God could forgive Jeffrey Dahmer or Adolf Hitler, I want no part of him"?
2. It's one thing to be repulsed at the acts of a Jeffrey Dahmer (and I am). It's another entirely to claim that I am superior (I'm not) or that he is beyond the grace of God (no one is).
 - What repulses us about the acts of a Jeffrey Dahmer? Why does one set of sins seem worse than another?
 - Why is it so easy for us to believe we are superior to others?

- Why can Max say that no one is beyond the grace of God?
3. The easiest way to justify the mistakes in my house is to find worse ones in my neighbor's house.
 - What does Max mean by the statement above?
 - Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
 4. The request Dahmer made is no different than yours or mine. He may make it from a prison bunk, you may make it from a church pew, but from heaven's angle we're all asking for the moon. And by heaven's grace we all receive it.
 - Why was Dahmer's request no different than yours or mine?
 - What does Max mean that "from heaven's angle we're all asking for the moon"?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 2:1–11.
 - Why do those who pass judgment on others have no excuse? What are they actually doing when they pass judgment (verse 1)?
 - What warning is given in verses 3–4?
 - How can someone show "contempt" for God's kindness and patience, according to verse 5?
 - Both a warning and a promise are given in verses 6–10. Describe each of them and to whom each are given.
 - What is the purpose of verse 11? Why is this important to say here?
2. Read Matthew 20:1–16.
 - In a single sentence, what do you think the point of Jesus' parable is?
 - What does he want us to know?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 4:5.
 - What does this verse tell us *not* to do? What does it tell us to do?
 - What does it say God will do? What does it say will be the result?

GODLESS RELIGION

LOOKING BACK

1. Faith is intensely personal. There is no royal lineage or holy bloodline in God's kingdom.
 - Why is faith "intensely personal"?
 - What does Max mean that "there is no royal lineage or holy bloodline in God's kingdom"? Are you glad for this? Explain.
2. Paul is accusing the Jews of trusting the symbol of circumcision while neglecting their souls. Could he accuse us of the same error?
 - How is it possible to trust a symbol while ignoring the spiritual reality the symbol represents?
 - Answer Max's question above and explain your answer.
3. Symbols are important. Some of them, like communion and baptism, illustrate the cross of Christ. They symbolize salvation, demonstrate salvation, even articulate salvation. But they do not impart salvation.
 - How do communion and baptism illustrate the cross of Christ?
 - Why can't symbols impart salvation?
4. From God's perspective there is no difference between the ungodly partygoer, the ungodly finger-pointer, and the ungodly pew-sitter. The penthouse gang, the courthouse clan, and the church choir need the same message: without God all are lost.

- Why is there no difference between the three groups mentioned above?
 - What is the remedy for all three groups mentioned above?
5. There is only one name under heaven that has the power to save, and that name is not yours.
- How is the modern world apt to respond to Max's statement above?
 - How would you respond to someone who objected to Max's statement?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 2:17–3:18.

- What claims of superiority does Paul say Jews were making (2:17–20)?
- What questions does Paul ask of the Jews (2:21–23)? What answers does he assume?
- What is the connection of verse 24 to the preceding passage? In what way is this verse a conclusion?
- What value does circumcision have, according to 2:25–29? What two kinds of people are contrasted?
- What advantages does Paul say Jews have (3:1–4)?
- What major problem is being discussed in 3:5–8? How would you answer the apostle's questions?
- What major teaching is developed in 3:9–18? How does Paul do this? What does he conclude?

2. Read Acts 4:10–12.

- How was the lame man healed according to verse 10?
- How does Peter describe Jesus according to verses 10–11?
- What claim does Peter make in verse 12? How is this significant?

CALLING THE CORPSES

LOOKING BACK

1. For all of our differences, there is one problem we all share. We are separated from God.
 - What does it mean to be “separated from God”?
 - What are some of the evidences that a person is separated from God?
 - How did we all come to be separated from God?
2. A dead flower has no life. A dead body has no life. A dead soul has no life. Cut off from God, the soul withers and dies. The consequence of sin is not a bad day or a bad mood, but a dead soul.
 - What does Max mean by “a dead soul”?
 - Why is the consequence of sin “a dead soul”?
3. We don’t need more religion; we need a miracle. We don’t need someone to disguise the dead; we need someone to raise the dead.
 - How is religion different from a miracle?
 - Who needs to be raised from the dead?
4. We are the corpse, and he is the corpse-caller. We are the dead, and he is the dead-raiser. Our task is not to get up but to admit we are dead. The only ones who remain in the grave are the ones who don’t think they are there.

- What does it mean to “admit we are dead”? What are the consequences if we don’t admit this?
- How can someone not know they are “in the grave”? Do you know anyone like this? If so, explain.

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 3:21–26 (NIV).

- What two kinds of “righteousness” are contrasted in verses 21–22? What kind does God endorse?
- What does verse 23 tell us about ourselves? How is this significant?
- How does verse 24 solve the problem of verse 23?
- How do verses 25–26 explain how God can be perfectly just and yet declare us not guilty?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17–18.

- What does it mean to be “in Christ”? How does one get to be “in Christ”?
- What is true of someone who is “in Christ”? Is this true of you? Explain.

WHERE LOVE AND JUSTICE MEET

LOOKING BACK

1. What if, perish the thought, heaven had limitations to its coverage?
 - Answer Max's question above.
 - Do you know of anyone who believes heaven has "limitations to its coverage"? If so, describe what they believe these limitations to be.
2. It's one thing to make good people right, but those who are evil? We can expect God to justify the decent, but the dirty? Surely coverage is provided for the driver with the clean record, but the speeder? The ticketed? The high-risk client? How in the world can justification come for the evil?
 - In God's eyes, are there any "good people" (see Luke 18:19)? Any "decent" people? Any with a "clean record"? Explain.
 - How *can* justification come for the evil?
3. Salvation is God-given, God-driven, God-empowered, and God-originated. The gift is not from man to God. It is from God to man.
 - Why is it important to emphasize that salvation begins and ends with God?
 - Why is it important to remember that salvation is a gift?
4. Is God going to lower his standard so we can be forgiven? Is God

going to look away and pretend that I've never sinned? Would we want a God who altered the rules and made exceptions?

- What would be bad about God lowering his standard so we could be forgiven?
- Would you want a God who altered the rules and made exceptions? Explain.

5. Ponder the achievement of God. He doesn't condone our sin, nor does he compromise his standard. He doesn't ignore our rebellion, nor does he relax his demands. Rather than dismiss our sin, he assumes our sin and, incredibly, sentences himself. God's holiness is honored. Our sin is punished. And we are redeemed.

- How did God "sentence himself"? What does this mean?
- How does the cross both honor God's holiness and secure our redemption?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 4:4–8.

- What two things are contrasted in verses 4 and 5? How are they different?
- How does Paul use the words of David to support his contention in verse 5?
- What does it mean to "trust God"? Is this a one-time event, or an ongoing action? Explain.

2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21.

- What did God do, according to verse 19? How did he do this? What was the result?
- What did God do, according to verse 21? Why did he do this? What was the result?

3. Read Colossians 2:13–15.

- How were we described in verse 13? How did God respond to this condition?
- How did God do this, according to verse 14?
- In what way does the cross show God's "triumph"? How is this possible?

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS NOT DUE

LOOKING BACK

1. I don't always know the *occasion* of my sins. There are times when I sin and I don't even know it!
 - How is it possible to sin and not be aware of it?
 - Describe any instances you can think of in which you belatedly realized that you had committed some sin.
2. The cost of your sins is more than you can pay. The gift of your God is more than you can imagine.
 - Suppose you only sinned once in your entire life. Could you pay that kind of debt? Explain.
 - In what way is the gift of God more than we can imagine?
3. Grace is risky. There *is* the chance that people will take it to an extreme. There *is* the possibility that people will abuse God's goodness.
 - Do you agree that "grace is risky"? Why or why not?
 - In what ways have you seen that grace is risky? How have you seen people abuse God's goodness? Have you ever done so? Explain.
4. Grace fosters an eagerness for good. Grace doesn't spawn a desire to sin. If one has truly embraced God's gift, he will not mock it.

In fact, if a person uses God's mercy as liberty to sin, one might wonder whether the person ever knew God's mercy at all.

- Why does grace foster “an eagerness for good”? How does this work?
 - Do you agree with Max's last statement? Why or why not?
5. The vast majority of people simply state, “God may give grace to you, but not to me. You see, I've charted the waters of failure. I've pushed the envelope too many times. I'm not your typical sinner, I'm guilty of _____,” and they fill in the blank.
- Have you ever heard someone make a statement like that above? If so, describe what was said. How did you respond?
 - Do you ever feel as though you could make such a statement? How would you “fill in the blank”? What does God's Word say about this?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 4:13–24.

- According to verse 13, how did Abraham receive God's promise? Why is this important (v. 14)?
- Who may receive the benefits of the promise (vv. 16–17)?
- Why is Abraham a particularly good example of a man who lived by faith (vv. 18–22)?
- What part of Abraham's example do verses 23–24 encourage us to follow? Have you followed this example? Explain.

2. Read Galatians 3:2–14.

- Paul asks at least five questions in Galatians 3:2–5. What are they, and what answer does the apostle expect for each?
- What does Abraham illustrate in this passage (vv. 6–9)? How does this compare to the Romans text above?
- How many people are justified through the law according to 3:10–12?
- How can we appropriate the promise to Abraham according to 3:13–14? What benefit does this bring?

MAJOR LEAGUE GRACE

LOOKING BACK

1. These guys didn't make it to the big leagues on skill; they made it on luck. They weren't picked because they were good; they were picked because they were willing.
 - How does Max compare the striking ballplayers with the replacement players?
 - Did the replacement players recognize their good fortune? How do we know?
2. If the first four chapters of Romans tell us anything, they tell us we are living a life we don't deserve. We aren't good enough to get picked, but look at us, suited up and ready to play!
 - In what way are we "living a life we don't deserve"? How is this like the replacement ballplayers?
 - How did we come to be "suited up and ready to play"? How did this happen? Who is responsible?
3. Peace with God. What a happy consequence of faith! Not just peace between countries, peace between neighbors, or peace at home; salvation brings peace with God.
 - How would you describe "peace with God"? Of what does it consist?

- How is peace with God better than other kinds of peace?
4. Christ meets us outside the throne room, takes us by the hand, and walks us into the presence of God. Upon entrance we find grace, not condemnation; mercy, not punishment.
 - Imagine yourself being led into the throne room of God by Jesus. How do you feel?
 - On what basis can we expect to find grace, not condemnation; and mercy, not punishment?
 5. Because of God's grace, we go from being people whose "throats are like open graves" (Ps. 5:9) to being participants of God's glory. We were washed up and put out, now we are called up and put in.
 - In what ways are people whose "throats are open graves" different from those who are "participants in God's glory"?
 - In what way were we "washed up and put out"? In what way are we now "called up and put in"?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 5:1–3 (NIV).
 - How are we "justified," according to 5:1? What does it mean to be "justified"? What result does this produce?
 - What does it mean to "stand" in "grace"? What result does this "standing" produce?
 - What two things don't seem to go together in 5:3? In what way does Paul put them together?
2. Read Isaiah 53:4–6.
 - What did Jesus do for us according to verse 4? What does this mean?
 - What happened to Jesus, according to verse 5? For what purpose did this happen?
 - How are we pictured in verse 6? What did the Lord do about this situation? Are you glad for this? Explain.

THE PRIVILEGE OF PAUPERS

LOOKING BACK

1. Christ welcomes us to his table by virtue of his love and our request. It is not our offerings that grant us a place at the feast; indeed, anything we bring appears puny at his table. Our admission of hunger is the only demand.
 - Why do our offerings appear puny at God's table? Why do we so often bring them anyway?
 - What does Max mean by admitting our "hunger"? How do we do this? Have you done this? Explain.
2. God didn't look at our frazzled lives and say, "I'll die for you when you deserve it."
 - Had God said such a thing, how would that affect you right now?
 - Has anyone ever deserved for God to die for them? Explain.
3. Isn't there anyone who sees you for who you are and not what you did? Yes. There is one who does. Your king. When God speaks of you, he doesn't mention your plight, pain, or problem; he lets you share his glory. He calls you his child.
 - Are you ever tempted to think of yourself by what you have done in life? What is wrong about such thinking?

- What does it mean to share God's glory? How does this affect you in practical terms?
4. Are you aware that the most repeated command from the lips of Jesus was, "Fear not"? Are you aware that the only phrase to appear in every book of the Bible is the one from heaven, "Don't be afraid"?
 - How is it significant that Jesus' most common command was "fear not"? What does this assume?
 - Why would God so often tell us not to be afraid? What is the best way to overcome such fear?
 5. Consider the list of blessings at God's table found on pp. 93–94.
 - Which of these blessings is most precious to you? Why?
 - Which of these blessings seems most distant to you? Why?
 - How can knowledge of these blessings practically affect the way you live?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 5:6–8.
 - For whom did Christ die, according to verse 6? When did he die? Why did he die?
 - What contrast does Paul play up in verses 7–8? By doing this, who and what does he wish to exalt? Explain.
2. Read Matthew 5:6.
 - What group of people does Jesus describe in this verse? What promise does he give to them?
 - Do you believe you are included in this group? Explain.
3. Read Psalm 103:8–18.
 - List the characteristics of God described in this passage. How is each important to you personally?
 - List the characteristics of human beings described in this passage. How does this list mesh with the first list?

GRACE WORKS

LOOKING BACK

1. How can we who have been made right not live righteous lives?
How can we who have been loved, not love? How can we who have been blessed, not bless? How can we who have been given grace, not live graciously?
 - How would you answer Max's questions above?
 - In your own life, what are the greatest hindrances to living righteously, loving, blessing, and living graciously?
2. Perhaps we don't sin *so* God can give grace, but do we ever sin *knowing* God will give grace? Do we ever compromise tonight, knowing we'll confess tomorrow?
 - How would you answer Max's questions above?
 - What is wrong with compromising tonight if we know we'll confess tomorrow?
3. Christ has taken your place. There is no need for you to remain in the cell.
 - What "cell" is Max talking about?
 - What specific kinds of "cells" are you most likely to enter? Explain.

4. Baptism is a vow; a sacred vow of the believer to follow Christ. Just as a wedding celebrates the fusion of two hearts, baptism celebrates the union of sinner with Savior.
 - What parallels do you see between baptism and marriage? What differences are there?
 - In what way does baptism celebrate the union of sinner with Savior? What kind of union is this?
5. Before Christ our lives were out of control, sloppy, and indulgent. We didn't even know we were slobs until we met him. Then he moved in. Things began to change. Not overnight, but gradually. What we threw around we began putting away. What we neglected we cleaned up. What had been clutter became order.
 - Did you know you were a "slob" before you met Christ? Explain.
 - How have things changed in your own life since Christ moved in? Could an outsider notice the changes? Explain.

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 6:1–12.
 - What is the problem Paul addresses in 6:1? Is this still a problem today? Explain.
 - How does Paul answer his own question (vv. 2–4)?
 - What truth does Paul lay out in verses 5–7? Is this truth helpful in a practical sense? Why or why not?
 - What promise is given in verse 8? How does this connect with verse 11? What practical admonition does Paul then give in verse 12?
2. Read Titus 2:11–12 (NIV).
 - What has appeared "to all men"? What did this do (2:11)?
 - What does grace teach us to do (2:12)? How does it do this?
 - In what way is Titus 1:16 the flip side of 2:12?
3. Read Acts 26:20.
 - How does this verse reinforce the message of Titus 1:16 ?
 - How does this verse reinforce the message of Titus 2:12?

TURNING YOURSELF IN

LOOKING BACK

1. From the beginning God has called for honesty. He's never demanded perfection, but he has expected truthfulness.
 - If God knows everything already, why would he demand honesty from us?
 - If God knows everything already, why is it foolish not to be completely honest with him?
2. Confession does for the soul what preparing the land does for the field. Before the farmer sows the seed, he works the acreage, removing the rocks and pulling the stumps. He knows that seed grows better if the land is prepared. Confession is the act of inviting God to walk the acreage of our hearts.
 - In what ways is confession like a farmer preparing his land for crops?
 - Is confession a regular practice of yours? Why or why not?
3. Confession seeks pardon from God, not amnesty. Pardon presumes guilt. Amnesty, derived from the same Greek word as *amnesia*, "forgets" the alleged offense without imputing guilt. Confession admits wrong and seeks forgiveness; amnesty denies wrong and claims innocence.

- Why should we seek pardon, not amnesty? In your own words, what is the difference?
 - How can we admit wrong and guilt without beginning to loathe ourselves?
4. Those who keep secrets from God, keep their distance from God. Those who are honest with God, draw near to God.
 - Is it really possible to keep secrets from God? Explain.
 - Why does honesty draw a person close to God?
 5. May I ask a frank question? Are you keeping any secrets from God? Any parts of your life off-limits? Any cellars boarded up or attics locked? Any part of your past or present that you hope you and God never discuss?
 - How would you answer Max's question above?
 - What areas of life are hardest for you to discuss with God? Why?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 6:18–23.
 - From what have believers been set free (v. 18)? To what have they become slaves?
 - What choice is laid out in verse 19? What choice are you making in this regard?
 - What question does Paul ask in verse 21? How would you answer him?
 - What contrast is made between verses 21 and 22?
 - What contrasts are made in verse 23? How are these crucial?
2. Read James 4:7–10.
 - What commands are given in this passage?
 - What promises are made in this passage?
 - In your own words, what is the main point of this passage?
3. Read James 5:16.
 - What does this verse instruct us to do? How often do we comply? Explain.
 - What promise is given here for those who do what they are instructed?

SUFFICIENT GRACE

LOOKING BACK

1. There are times when the one thing you want is the one thing you never get.
 - What one thing do you want that you've never received? How do you react to this?
2. When God says no to you, how will you respond? If God says, "I've given you my grace, and that is enough," will you be content?
 - Why do you think God sometimes tells us no?
 - Are there any specific things you can do to be content with God's grace when he denies a request? If so, what are they?
3. Don't you find it encouraging that even Paul had a thorn in the flesh? There is comfort in learning that one of the writers of the Bible wasn't always on the same page with God.
 - Do you find it encouraging that even Paul had a thorn in the flesh? Explain.
 - Why does it help to remember that the writers of the Bible were real people with real problems?
4. You wonder why God doesn't remove temptation from your life? If he did, you might lean on your strength instead of his grace.

- What kind of temptations regularly give you the most difficulty? How do you deal with them?
 - In what areas are you tempted to lean on your own strength rather than his grace? When you do so, what is usually the result?
5. For all we don't know about thorns, we can be sure of this. God would prefer we have an occasional limp than a perpetual strut.
- What "thorns" keep you from strutting?
 - Why is it better to "have an occasional limp than a perpetual strut"?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7–9 (NIV).
 - Why was the "thorn" given to Paul (v. 7)? Who gave it to him? What was the "thorn's" task?
 - What was the apostle's response to the thorn (v. 8)?
 - What was God's response to Paul's request (v. 9)? How did Paul react to God's response? Do you think you would have reacted like this? Explain.
2. Read Philippians 4:6–7.
 - What should be our attitude toward anxiety, according to verse 6? How are we to respond to it? Is this usually your attitude? Explain.
 - What is the result of complying with the apostle's instruction of verse 6 (v. 7)? Have you experienced this result? Explain.

THE CIVIL WAR OF THE SOUL

LOOKING BACK

1. You'd think that I would have no desire to use the alley, but I do! Part of me still wants the shortcut. Part of me wants to break the law.
 - Have you ever felt the way Max said he does about the alley? If so, explain.
 - Why do you think our struggle often intensifies when we hear that a desirable course of action is not allowed?
2. Those who have been amazed by grace have been equally amazed by their sin. Why do I say yes to God one day and yes to Satan the next?
 - What amazes you about grace? What amazes you about your own sin?
 - How would you answer Max's question above?
3. Are there weaknesses within you that stun you? Your words? Your thoughts? Your temper? Your greed? Your grudge? Your gossip? Things were better before you knew the law existed. But now you do. And now you have a war to wage.
 - How would you answer Max's questions above?
 - What internal war do you most often have to wage? Describe it.

4. Your temptation isn't late-breaking news in heaven. Your sin doesn't surprise God. He saw it coming. Is there any reason to think that the One who received you the first time won't receive you every time?
 - Do you find it ironic that your sin surprises you, but not God? Explain.
 - How would you answer Max's question above?
5. What we consider shortcuts, God sees as disasters. He doesn't give laws for our pleasure. He gives them for our protection. In seasons of struggle we must trust his wisdom, not ours.
 - In what ways are God's laws for our protection? Do they exist for any other reason? Explain.
 - How can we practically learn to trust God's wisdom? How do you practice this habit? What tempts you away from it?
6. There is never a point in which you are any less saved than you were the first moment he saved you. Just because you were grumpy at breakfast doesn't mean you were condemned at breakfast. Your name doesn't disappear and reappear in the book of life according to your moods and actions. Such is the message of grace.
 - What do you think about Max's statements above? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
 - If you *could* be condemned at breakfast because you were grumpy, what would that do to grace? What would "grace" mean in a world like that?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 7:7–25.
 - Is the law good or bad (vv. 7–12)? Yet what effect does the law have on us?
 - What is it that kills us (v. 13)?
 - What is Paul's struggle as described in verses 14–19? Do you see a similar struggle in yourself? If so, describe it.
 - What conclusion does Paul make in verse 20? What is the significance of this conclusion?

- What general principle does Paul develop in verses 21–23? Is this principle at work in you? Explain.
- How does Paul respond to this general principle in verse 24? Can you identify with this reaction? Explain.
- Describe Paul's final reaction in verse 25. What is the reason for this joyful outburst?

2. Read Romans 8:1.

- What does it mean to be in Christ Jesus?
- How does the truth of this verse change everything for us? Explain.

THE HEAVINESS OF HATRED

LOOKING BACK

1. No one, I repeat *no one*, makes it through life free of injury. Someone, somewhere has hurt you. Part of you has died because someone spoke too much, demanded too much, or neglected too much.
 - What have been the biggest “hurts” you’ve received through the years? How did you respond?
 - What are the biggest hurts you’ve caused someone else? How did they respond?
2. Everyone gets wounded; hence, everyone must decide: How many payments will I demand? We may not require that the offender write checks, but we have other ways of settling the score.
 - What are some of the ways you’ve seen that people use to even the score?
 - What are some of the ways you’ve used to try to even the score? How did these ways work out?
3. Keeping tabs on your mercy is not being merciful. If you’re calibrating your grace, you’re not being gracious. There should never be a point when our grace is exhausted.
 - Why is it a contradiction to keep tabs on your mercy or calibrate your grace?

- What kinds of situations are most likely to exhaust your grace?
How do you deal with these situations?
4. To believe we are totally and eternally debt free is seldom easy. Even if we've stood before the throne and heard it from the king himself, we still doubt. As a result, many are forgiven only a little, not because the grace of the king is limited, but because the faith of the sinner is small.
 - Why isn't it easy to believe we are "totally and eternally debt free"?
 - Have you been forgiven a little or a lot? Explain.
 5. The longer we walk in the garden, the more likely we are to smell like flowers. The more we immerse ourselves in grace, the more likely we are to give grace.
 - Who is the most gracious person you know? Describe him or her. What makes the person so gracious?
 - How can we immerse ourselves in grace? What does that mean?
 6. The key to forgiving others is to quit focusing on what they did to you and start focusing on what God did for you.
 - What can you do to make it easier to quit focusing on what someone did to you?
 - Take some time to make a list of the good things God did for you just this week. How many items are on your list?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 8:5–17.
 - What two classes of people do verses 5–8 describe? Which one most describes you? Explain.
 - How does Paul define a Christian in verse 9?
 - What conclusion does Paul make in verses 10–11?
 - Based on the conclusion he makes in verses 10–11, what kind of lifestyle does Paul say we should be living in verses 12–16?
 - What kind of future does Paul lay out for believers in verse 17? Should this make any difference in the way we live today? Explain.
2. Read Matthew 18:21–34.

- How does the parable of verses 23–34 answer Peter’s question in verse 21?
- Have you ever failed to extend grace to another—one who owes you less than you owe Jesus?

3. Read Hebrews 12:15.

- How is it possible to miss the grace of God, according to this verse?
- What power does bitterness have, according to this verse? Why is it to be avoided? Are you avoiding it? Explain.

LIFE ABOARD THE FELLOW-SHIP

LOOKING BACK

1. God has enlisted us in his navy and placed us on his ship. The boat has one purpose—to carry us safely to the other shore.
 - Are you in God’s navy? Are you aboard ship? How do you know?
 - What part of the ship do you stay in?
2. We aren’t called to a life of leisure, we are called to a life of service. Each of us has a different task.
 - What is the specific task to which God has called you?
 - How are you serving God on the “ship”?
3. Unity matters to God. The Father does not want his kids to squabble. Disunity disturbs him.
 - As you honestly look at your own life, would you say you have more often helped to keep unity or to create disunity?
 - Give an example of what you mean.
4. Nowhere, by the way, are we told to *build* unity. We are told simply to *keep* unity.
 - What is the difference between “building” unity and “keeping” unity?
 - How is this difference significant?
5. Unity doesn’t begin in examining others, but in examining self.

Unity begins, not in demanding that others change, but in admitting that we aren't so perfect ourselves.

- What kind of self-examination do you think Max is calling for here?
 - Reflect on personal examples and results of engaging in this kind of self-examination.
6. The answer to arguments? Acceptance. The first step to unity? Acceptance. Not agreement, acceptance. Not unanimity, acceptance.
- What is the difference between acceptance and agreement?
 - What is the difference between acceptance and unanimity?
7. Just because a group is distributing toys at Christmas doesn't mean they are Christians. Just because they are feeding the hungry does not mean they are the honored ones of God. Jesus doesn't issue a call for blind tolerance.
- Why is discernment an important part of unity?
 - What is the difference between acceptance and blind tolerance?
8. First, look at the fruit. Is it good? Is it healthy? Is he or she helping or hurting people? Production is more important than pedigree. The fruit is more important than the name of the orchard.
- What does Max mean by "fruit" here?
 - What kind of "fruit" are you producing? Would others agree? Explain.
9. Also look at the faith. In whose name is the work done? Jesus was accepting of this man's work because it was done in the name of Christ.
- Should we judge someone's faith? If so, what does this mean and how can it be done?
 - Just because someone uses the name "Jesus," does that mean they believe in the Jesus of the Bible?
10. Where there is faith, repentance, and a new birth, there is a Christian. When I meet a man whose faith is in the cross and eyes are on the Savior, I meet a brother.
- Does Max's statement above make you pleased or uncomfortable?
 - Explain your answer.

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 14:1–13.

- What is the main topic of this passage? Give evidence to support your belief.
- What examples does Paul give to illustrate his main point? List them.
- Consider Paul's questions in verses 4 and 10. How do these questions relate to Paul's main point?
- How do verses 11–12 add strength to Paul's instruction?
- What conclusion does Paul make in verse 13? Why do you think the apostle spends so much time on this topic?

2. Read Ephesians 4:3–7.

- What command is given in verse 3? How is this to be accomplished?
- What reason for this command is given in verses 4–6?
- How does verse 7 explain the power to fulfill this command?

WHAT WE REALLY WANT TO KNOW

LOOKING BACK

1. There is no way our little minds can comprehend the love of God. But that didn't keep him from coming.
 - Do you understand God's love better today than you did five years ago? Explain.
 - Why is it good news that God's love is beyond our full comprehension?
2. God is with you. Knowing that, who is against you? Can death harm you now? Can disease rob your life? Can your purpose be taken or your value diminished? No. Though hell itself may set itself against you, no one can defeat you. You are protected. God is with you.
 - When are you most likely to fear that God is *not* with you? How do you respond to these instances?
 - Answer Max's questions above. Why do you give these answers?
3. Did God save you so you would fret? Would he teach you to walk just to watch you fall? Would he be nailed to the cross for your sins and then disregard your prayers?
 - Answer Max's questions above.
 - What is the point of asking the questions above?

4. Satan cannot accuse you. No one can accuse you! Fingers may point and voices may demand, but the charges glance off like arrows hitting a shield. No more dirty dishwater. No more penance. No more nagging sisters. You have stood before the judge and heard him declare, “Not guilty.”
- Why is Satan unable to make accusations against you that stick?
 - How could we have been declared “not guilty” by the judge?
5. “You wonder how long my love will last? Find your answer on a splintered cross, on a craggy hill. That’s me you see up there, your maker, your God, nail-stabbed and bleeding. Covered in spit and sin-soaked. That’s your sin I’m feeling. That’s your death I’m dying. That’s your resurrection I’m living. That’s how much I love you.”
- Why is the cross God’s final answer to how much he loves us?
 - How does the cross guarantee that God will always see to our welfare despite whatever hardships we may face?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 8:31–39.
- What is Paul’s question in verse 31? What does he intend to suggest by asking this question?
 - Explain the apostle’s logic behind his statement in verse 32. Why is this statement so crucial to daily living?
 - In what way are the questions of verses 33–35 related? What is their function?
 - How can the quotation found in verse 36 actually be an encouragement? How is it intended to function in this way?
 - What is the connection of verse 37 to verse 36? What is the apostle’s point?
 - Does Paul leave anything out of verses 38–39? What does he intend for us to understand? How does he want these truths to encourage us?
2. Read Isaiah 49:15–16.
- What question is asked in verse 15? What answer is expected? What comparison is intended with the subsequent statement?

- What metaphor does God use in verse 16? What is his point? What does he want us to believe? Why?

3. Read Isaiah 50:7–10.

- What attitude does the writer adopt in verse 10? Why?
- How do verses 8–9 foreshadow Paul's words in Romans 8:31–39?
- Who is addressed in verse 10? What instruction is given? Do you follow this instruction? Explain.

“DON’T FORGET TO LOOK AFTER ME”

LOOKING BACK

1. Unashamed of his needs, Billy Jack didn’t let a flight attendant pass without a reminder: “Don’t forget to look after me.” I honestly can’t think of one time Billy Jack didn’t remind the crew that he needed attention. The rest of us didn’t. We never asked for help. We were grown-up. Sophisticated. Self-reliant.
 - In what way can Billy Jack be a good example for us?
 - Why didn’t the rest of the people on this flight ask the crew for extra attention? In what way is this similar to those who refuse to ask God for help?
2. Midway through the writing of this book I remembered Billy Jack. He would have understood the idea of grace. He knew what it was like to place himself totally in the care of someone else.
 - Why does Max think Billy Jack would have understood the idea of grace?
 - How do you think Billy Jack might define grace?
3. It occurred to me that Billy Jack was the safest person on the flight. Had the plane encountered trouble, he would have received primary assistance. The flight attendants would have bypassed

me and gone to him. Why? He had placed himself in the care of someone stronger.

- Why would Billy Jack have been the safest person on the flight?
- Have you placed yourself in the care of someone stronger? Explain.

4. One thing's for sure: you cannot save yourself. The river is too strong, the distance is too great. God has sent his firstborn Son to carry you home. Are you firmly in the grip of his grace?

- Why can't we save ourselves?
- Answer Max's question above: Are you firmly in the grip of God's grace? How do you know?

LOOKING DEEP

1. Read Romans 10:1–13.

- What error did Paul say his countrymen made in verses 1–3?
- How is verse 4 the answer to this error?
- What two methods of justification are contrasted in verses 5–8? How does each work? Have you opted for either one? If so, which? Why?
- According to verses 9–10, how is one saved? Have you done this? Explain.
- What promise is given in verse 11? Why is this important?
- What summary statement is made in verses 12–13? In what way does this sum up the message of *In the Grip of Grace*? How?

2. Read Romans 11:33–36.

- What prompted these verses of glowing praise? What got Paul so excited?
- Does this excite you as well? Explain.