



Segment Two:

Experiencing God's Love and Grace

With Pastors Fred Miller, Jeremy Tyrell, Brian Lofthouse, Jim Spurrier, and Cedra Washington
Book chapter by Luke L. Keefer, Jr.

We value the free gift of salvation in Christ Jesus and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Exodus 3:1-15 and John 20:19-31

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- God is active (pp. 16-17).
- God is relational (pp. 17-18).
- God's greatest act of love is the free gift of salvation in Christ Jesus (pp. 18-19).
- Free gifts might very well have conditions attached (p. 19).
- Experiencing God's love and grace is not a once-and-done thing (p. 20).
- Experiencing God's love and grace should be transformational (p. 22).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Q.** Fred Miller stresses that accepting what God has already done is all we need to do to experience God's love and grace, while Jeremy Tyrell and Brian Lofthouse put greater emphasis on human action. Where do you come down in the faith/works debate?
- Q.** How do you respond to Jim Spurrier's hypothesis that many people find it hard to accept the unconditional nature of God's love because they have only ever experienced conditional love? What do Jesus' words to Thomas as recorded in John 20 add to the discussion?
- Q.** Brian Lofthouse describes the amazing life transformation of a young man in the Port Colborne congregation as a result of experiencing God's love and grace. But what about people for whom the transformation is less dramatic? How might an "average" person's life reflect the experience of God's love and grace?
- Q.** What's your response to Cedra Washington's assertion that "the Holy Spirit has the right and is sovereign to do whatever He wants to do whenever He wants to do it"? Give an example of how you have seen the Holy Spirit work in your own life and in the life of this congregation.



Living focused and faithful

How has experiencing God's love and grace transformed your life? During the coming week, be attentive to the ways in which that transforming process continues in your life.

SURVEY RESPONSES

	CMP 2006	Us
Was there ever a time in your life when you accepted Christ as Savior and Lord? (A.11)		
◦ <i>Yes, it was a specific moment.</i>	68.7%	
◦ <i>Yes, but it happened gradually.</i>	29.6%	
◦ <i>No, I don't think of myself as having "accepted Christ."</i>	1.6%	
Which statement best expresses your view of why Jesus died on the cross? (B.6)		
◦ <i>Jesus had to die to complete God's plan of salvation.</i>	92.0%	
◦ <i>Jesus died as a sacrifice to satisfy God's anger against sin.</i>	5.4%	
◦ <i>Jesus willingly died to show the power of nonviolent love.</i>	2.7%	
◦ <i>Jesus died because He condemned social and economic injustice.</i>	0.1%	
In your view, does salvation depend more on what a person believes or on how a person lives? (B.10)		
◦ <i>Salvation depends more on what a person believes.</i>	34.3%*	
◦ <i>Salvation depends more on how a person lives.</i>	2.9%*	
◦ <i>Salvation depends equally on one's beliefs and how one lives.</i>	62.7%*	
What statement best describes your view of how the Holy Spirit works? (B.12)		
◦ <i>The Spirit speaks directly to individuals in a personal way.</i>	47.6%	
◦ <i>The Spirit speaks to individuals directly, and also through the faith community.</i>	49.9%	
◦ <i>The Spirit speaks primarily through the faith community.</i>	1.0%	
◦ <i>The Spirit is another name for human insight.</i>	1.0%	
How often do you seek the Holy Spirit's guidance? (B.23.a)		
◦ <i>Daily</i>	55.9%*	
◦ <i>Several times a week</i>	26.0%*	
◦ <i>Once a week</i>	3.6%*	
◦ <i>2-3 times a month</i>	6.0%*	
◦ <i>Once a month</i>	2.3%*	
◦ <i>Several times a year</i>	4.9%*	
◦ <i>Never</i>	1.4%*	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Q.** Does anything surprise you about the way participants from the wider church responded to the statements from the Church Member Profile (CMP)? What about the responses from our class?
- Q.** Today's core value states that we believe salvation is a free gift from Christ Jesus. Yet 62.7 percent of BIC respondents to the CMP said they believe their salvation depends upon what they believe and how they live. Discuss the seeming contradiction. Does this mean we do not believe Christ's gift is free but rather depends upon us (our actions and/or beliefs)?
- Q.** What do you make of the high percentage of people who say they seek the Holy Spirit's guidance daily, or at least weekly? Do you feel our church encourages people in this direction?

* Only include figures from the US Church Member Profile.
 Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.