

# Healthy Initiative Study

## Understanding Yourself: Body, Mind & Spirit

### 1.6: Grace

#### Chapter 1 - DESIRE: Addiction and Human Freedom

Offered by Healthy Initiative Ministries - Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. - [medicalmobilizers.org/healthy-initiative-studies](http://medicalmobilizers.org/healthy-initiative-studies)

**Resource:** Addiction and Grace by Dr. Gerald G. May. Published by Harper & Row, 1988. Dr. May was trained as a physician specializing in psychiatry. He wrote this book while doing an exploration of spirituality and the human brain when working for the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington, D.C. His key topics are: Desire, Experience, Mind, Body, Spirit, Grace, Empowerment and Homecoming.

#### Grace

1. **Summary** – Jesus offered us the two greatest commandments (to have no other gods but only loyalty to God of Judaism and Christianity). Even Islam’s basic creed is that there is no god but God. The two greatest commandments are clearly stated – “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:36-40) **May:** *“It is addiction that keeps our love for God and our neighbor incomplete. It is addiction that creates other gods other than the true God. Because of our addictions, we will always be storing up treasures somewhere other than for eternity and these treasures will kidnap our hearts and soul and strength”.*

**Discussion:** How can we recognize when we are storing up treasures other than for eternity? That we are committing idolatry? Doesn’t it seem likely that we will love the Lord our God only when we know how much He loves us unconditionally?

2. **May:** *“Grace is our only hope for dealing with addiction, the only power that can vanquish its destructiveness. Grace is the invincible advocate of freedom and the absolute expression a perfect love”.*

**Question:** Our addictions keep us from our deepest desires – from keeping the two greatest commandments involving loving God and others - and even yourself as we are told to love others as we love ourselves. We fail yet Dr. May affirms that it is in failure and helplessness that we can most honestly and completely turn to Grace. Discuss why this seems to be true.

3. **May:** *“All religions have a counterpart for Grace” and “there could be no liberation of our desires for love, without the Grace of the Divine”. He wrote there are radical differences in the theology of other religions yet, “All major religions deal centrally with the basic themes - that we are created for love and freedom, that addiction hinders us, and that Grace is necessary for salvation”.*

**Discuss:** Since addiction hinders us our greatest desire for love for God and our love for others and freedom and since grace is essential to counter our addictive tendencies, then what is Grace? How do I we get Grace? Is it something that God gives freely or is it something we have to ask or plead from Him?

4. **May:** *“For Christians, Grace is the dynamic outpouring of God’s loving nature that flows into and through creation in an endless self-offering of healing, love, illumination, and reconciliation.”*

**Discussion:** OK...then how can we effectively describe Grace as a gift that we can ask for, ignore, reject, or accept? It is given undeserved (we can’t earn Grace). Then what should be our response to this gift other than gratitude and awe?

5. **May:** *“Grace cannot be possessed; it is eternally free, and like the Spirit that gives it, it blows where it wills. ---We cannot control it. It is not just another thing to be addicted to. Grace seeks us but will not control us.”*

**Discussion:** Saint Augustine once said that God is always trying to give good things to us, but our hands are too full to receive them. If our hands are full, they are full of the things to which we are addicted. And not only our hands, but also our hearts, minds and attention are clogged with addictions. Our addictions fill up the spaces within us, spaces where grace might flow. Dr. May says that it is not the objects of our addictions that are to be blamed, is our clinging to those objects. He affirms that it is our will and desire, this clinging and grasping that is attachment. So how can we let go of the grasp on objects of attachment in order to receive God’s grace? Consider the Monkey Trap? It is a proven fact that the best way to catch annoying monkeys is with a banana in the bottom of a glass jar with a small neck big enough for the monkey to reach in and grab the food. The monkey won’t let go of the food which prevents it from pulling its closed fist out of the jar. Aren’t we like that at times? We will grab onto or attach ourselves to something (or someone) that we like and enjoy and are either afraid or too stubborn to let go preventing us from receiving God’s grace? It is hard but essential that we let go of those attachments to recreate a void for God’s love – for His Grace. We have to trust that He is the Sovereign God over the whole creation and that He has our best interest in mind for eternity. Then is it easy to receive his Love.