

# KINGDOM CURRENCY

## THE KINGDOM ECONOMY 4



T. M. Moore

## **The Fellowship of Ailbe**

A REVISION STUDY

Kingdom Currency  
The Kingdom Economy Part 4  
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Susie Moore, Editor and Finisher

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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## Welcome to *Kingdom Currency*

In the Kingdom economy, God gives us abundant opportunities to further His rule of righteousness, peace, and joy on earth as it is in heaven. In all the time of our lives, and all the work we've been given to do, God is at work to bring a new economy into being.

That economy increases and advances on the back of a rock-solid currency – grace.

Christians talk about grace, sing with thanksgiving for the grace they've received, and look forward to knowing more of God's grace in their all-too-sin-prone lives. But we're not very good at *living* in the grace of God.

*Kingdom Currency* is Part 4 in the series, *The Kingdom Economy*. In this study we'll consider the nature, importance, and role of grace in the unfolding economy of God, and we'll see that, in every moment of our lives, and in all the work we've been given to do, we can know, show, and receive more of God's grace than we've ever thought possible before.

These studies are designed for individual or group use. While you may derive much benefit from studying on your own, that benefit can be greatly enhanced by joining with a friend or a group to read, discuss, share, challenge, and pray for one another.

If you're in a group, make sure you prepare for each study by reading through the lesson in advance and answering the questions in writing. Take turns leading your group. Let every member share in the privilege and responsibility of facilitating discussions. Group leaders should not feel like they have to "have all the answers." Their task is simply to lead the group through the readings and questions, and to help everyone participate.

Visit our website, [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org), to subscribe to our free instructional newsletters, including *ReVision*, *Scriptorium*, *The Week*, and *Crosfigell*, which features insights from Scripture and our Celtic Christian forebears.

T. M. Moore  
Principal

## 1 A Rightside-up World

*“Consider now from this day forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day that the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid—consider it: Is the seed still in the barn? As yet the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yielded fruit. But from this day I will bless you.”* Haggai 2.18, 19

*Once more, for emphasis*

The people of Israel had returned to the land of their forebears, the land promised to them of old by God. For seventy years they had endured an economy of oppression and uncertainty, under the tyranny of pagan kings. Now, under the watchful eye of Cyrus, they had the opportunity of starting over, of righting themselves as a people before the Lord.

This return to the land was an act of the great grace and forbearance of the Lord. Now God was restoring His nation and offering them the opportunity of discovering their true calling within the framework of His divine economy. They were His people, His redeemed and holy people, and they were to be a new nation, a nation apart, pursuing an economy different from all other nations, one that modeled the way God intended all human beings to live.

This would be Israel’s second opportunity to “get it right” as the people of God. But, as with the first go-round, following their deliverance from Egypt, this one did not start well.

Immediately upon returning to the land the people began to reconstruct the altar and house of God. This was as they had been directed to do by the Lord, in order to declare to themselves and all who observed them that their hope, trust, confidence, security, and blessing were concentrated in the Lord and His glory.

But they had not gotten very far into this project until other concerns began to distract them. The people completed the altar but then set about building their own homes and cultivating their own fields, leaving the project of building God’s temple to languish. The people busied themselves with much planting, and with adorning their homes with all the finery and accoutrements they needed for their own comfort.

Yet no matter how much they built or sowed, it was never enough. Their crops were meager, their homes never quite satisfied, and they never seemed to have enough money in their accounts for all they thought they should have.

*Enter Haggai*

At this point God stepped in to remind His people of their purpose and calling. He sent the prophet Haggai, who upbraided the people because they had missed the point entirely. Instead of following the Lord’s instructions and becoming a people holy unto Him, they had begun to live like all the nations around them, seeking their pleasure, fulfillment, and security in temporal conditions and material things. They had abandoned the economy God intended for them and embraced that of the surrounding world.

Because of this, God had sent leanness into their souls, so that no matter how much they lavished themselves with material things, they were never satisfied and never had enough. They had missed the point of being a redeemed people, and Haggai was sent to get them back on course with the Lord.

Through the prophet, God called His people back to the work of the temple. This, He insisted, would bring Him honor and glory in the sight of all the people and the nations. For by setting aside their own temporal and material desires, and doing that which declared God’s presence and glorified Him in their midst, the

people of Israel would show the world what it means to live upright before the Lord. They would be at last a rightside-up people in an upside-down world. And when they did this, God assured them, He would pour out upon them more blessings and bounty than they could ever secure by their own efforts.

*The divine economy*

This is how the divine economy works. God shows His people grace, then calls on them to live by faith, acting according to His gracious instructions and priorities so that, in whatever they are doing, His pleasure and glory might be in everybody's focus as the greatest and highest good.

In the divine economy the currency of blessing is neither goods and services nor coin of the realm. The currency of God's Kingdom is grace. Only by *knowing* grace, *desiring* grace, and *living in the grace* of the Lord can those who know the Lord realize their full potential as a rightside-up nation.

As believers we're pretty good about *receiving* the grace of the Lord – just like those people who returned to the land of promise from captivity in Babylon. But, like them, we need a little help learning how to *live* in God's grace. We are too easily distracted from our unique Kingdom-and-glory calling (1 Thess. 2.12) – lives of overflowing grace (Jn. 7.37-39) – to the pursuit of materialism, leisure, and fleshly pleasure, so that we become captive to a pagan economy. We need to rediscover not only the *gift* of God's grace, but the *life* of grace to which we are called within the Kingdom economy.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What do you understand by the word *grace*? What is the place of grace in the life of faith?
2. What do we mean by saying that God intended His people Israel to be a “rightside-up” nation?
3. In what ways do you think the Church today is like ancient Israel, returning from her captivity in Babylon and Persia?

*Next steps – Preparation: What is grace? How do we receive it? What is it like to receive grace? What does it mean to live in grace? Talk with some Christian fiends about these questions. Challenge them to read all the installments in this series, then meet together to discuss how each of you might make better use of the currency of the Kingdom.*

## 2 Made for Pleasure

*You will show me the path of life;  
In Your presence is fullness of joy;  
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* Psalm 16.11

*Not a bad thing*

Psychologists, since the beginning of the discipline, have argued about the essence of what it means to be human.

Some, like Freud, insist that we are motivated by *physical* pleasure, while others, like Victor Frankl or Abraham Maslow, believe that some higher purpose or “peak experience” defines us – a more *inward* sense of pleasure that takes the form of fulfillment or ecstasy. Humanistic psychologists argue that something like “self-actualization” is our reason for being, that human pleasure is maximized by each of us discovering and living the life which is uniquely our own.

When we consider what the Bible teaches about humankind, we find that each of these psychologies has hit upon the truth, if only in part.

According to the Bible, human beings are made for pleasure. But not just any old pleasure. Certainly not merely the pleasures of the flesh or of material bounty. Not even the pleasure of “being somebody” or achieving some higher purpose in life. None of these gets at the essence of the kind of pleasure that makes human beings what they are.

Human beings, made in the image and likeness of God, only realize their fullest potential and pleasure as they *participate* in the very being of God and know and experience *the pleasure He takes in Himself and His glory*. As Augustine put it on the opening page of His *Confessions*, “You have made us for Yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.” *In God*, that is – our lives hidden in God and bathed in His pleasure.

Pleasure, in other words, is not a bad thing. Indeed, we’re made for pleasure, but for the pleasure of *God* above all.

*Made for eternal pleasures*

God wants us to know fullness of joy and pleasures without end. But He does not want us to be satisfied with merely *fleeting* pleasures – the kind that moth and rust can corrupt or thieves can break through and steal. God has made us for *eternal* pleasures, pleasures that are, first of all, spiritual – and therefore cannot be affected by any material dearth or deprivation. Such pleasures are bound up in God Himself, and in order to know them, we must abide in Him.

We are made for pleasure, and every human being’s highest pleasure is to participate in the very being of God.

God promises that we can know such pleasure, and that, knowing pleasure in Him, we will want for nothing else. In Jesus Christ, God has brought all His precious and very great promises to fullness and fruition, so that, as we rest in Christ and reach out for God’s promises in Him, we may actually partake of the divine essence – we may know and enjoy and dwell in God Himself, and thus know fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore (2 Pet. 1.4; 2 Cor. 1.20).

*Seeking pleasure in the wrong places*

This is what God was promising the people of Israel as they returned to the land of promise from exile in Babylon and Persia. Having *received* grace from Him, He would give them *more grace* if they would believe in Him and, trusting in His promises, build the temple as *His* dwelling in their midst, *before* they concentrated on building dwellings for themselves. With God firmly established in their midst, the people would know all the fullness, bounty, security, joy, and pleasure they could possibly enjoy, and they would want for nothing.

But the people of Israel did not believe the promises of God. They sought pleasure in things, possessions, and money in the bank, rather than in the presence of God. And too many Christians live most of their lives just like that. They read the precious and very great promises of God. They know that Jesus calls them to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and that He promises everything they need or want will be supplied as they do. Yet, rather than abide and grow in His *grace*, they become distracted by the ways of the world, thinking these to be the source of true pleasure. They profess to live in the Kingdom of God and His grace, yet they default to the economy of getting-and-spending to acquire and possess the pleasure and happiness they seek.

We need to understand the ways of the divine economy and how to manage the currency of the Kingdom, the currency of grace. How we praise and thank God for His marvelous grace!

But *living* in grace, and *spending it* lavishly on others? Well, let's just say we've got some work to do.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Do you think it's right to say that human beings were made for pleasure? Why or why not?
2. How do people misconstrue this notion, and what does it lead them to do?
3. What do we mean by *eternal* pleasures? Why is it important that we should seek these?

*Next steps – Demonstration: What do you think it means to “spend grace lavishly on others”? Ask a pastor or church leader about this idea. How would you counsel a new believer to make this his “currency” in the Kingdom of God?*



### 3 The Desire of Our Hearts

*Trust in the LORD, and do good;  
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.  
Delight yourself also in the LORD,  
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.* Psalm 37.3, 4

#### *Don't deny desire*

It can sound a little “iffy” to some Christians to think that we are motivated above all else by the desire for pleasure. We tend to think of pleasure and desire primarily in sensual and material ways, and consider these to be somehow inherently evil or wrong. Thus, desiring pleasure doesn't quite sound “right” to those who have chosen to follow Jesus.

But God promises to give us the *desires* of our heart. That being so, having a heart *filled with desires* must not be a bad thing, or else God would not encourage us to enjoy whatever it is we desire.

Of course, God's promise to give us the desires of our hearts comes with qualifications. If we delight ourselves in Him, *then* He will give us the desires of our heart. Our desires are likely to go awry and to reflect the sensual and self-centered desires of the world unless our *first* and *overarching* delight is the presence of God, His grace, and His pleasure.

In other words, we must not deny the role of desire in our souls, in helping us to realize our full potential as beings made in the image of God. At the same time, we need to make sure our *desires* are *rightly focused* before we begin to seek them. If the *pleasure* we seek – the *object* of all our desires – is the pleasure of *God Himself*, then of course, God will give us as much of that as we desire.

#### *The pleasure of His company*

To be in the company of God, and to participate in Him, is to be completely immersed in grace. God, John reminds us, is love (1 Jn. 4.8). We have received the gift of eternal life, which is to know God and, thus, to know grace (Jn. 17.3). The promises God makes to us, which He has fulfilled in Jesus Christ and which He calls us to lay hold on, will enable us to “partake” of God (2 Pet. 1.4) – to abide in Him, know His presence, share in His being and attributes, enter into His pleasure, and experience His glory. In God's presence, David explained, are fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

When you delight in *this*, God will fill your bank account with all the grace you'll ever need for abundant and fruitful living in His Kingdom economy.

But what is that like? What's it like to *partake* of God? To know His pleasure and glory? We can only barely begin to describe this experience, because knowing the presence of God and the joy and pleasure that come with that is an experience more wonderful, mysterious, amazing, uplifting, hopeful, transforming, and secure than any words can describe.

In the presence of God, as His Word illuminates us and His Spirit enlivens us, we experience a heightening of our souls. Our thoughts, affections, and values – everything that makes us truly spiritual people – are intensified, clarified, focused, and stimulated in thrilling, even ecstatic ways, that cause all other desires and pleasures to pale into insignificance. In God's presence we experience terrifying fear, yet wondrous warmth and safety and holy acceptance. We are overwhelmed and almost crushed by the reality of God's being, and, at the same time, we are lifted up and seated with Him in heavenly places of beauty, wonder, majesty, and

power. We feel humble but exalted; out of place but perfectly at home; strangely lifted out of temporal reality into an eternal and unchanging realm and life. Our minds sparkle as spiritual insights collide, conjoin, expand, and swell; our hearts light up with excitement, joy, wonder, fear, and love; and all our priorities collapse into one continuous recitation, “Lord, it is good for me to be here!” We know we do not deserve to be here, basking in all this, but here we are, only by grace, and all in grace.

*More of the same!*

When we delight in God like this, when it is our highest pleasure to enter fully into His grace and enjoy the pleasure of His company and the mystery of His transforming glory – when we *delight* in God like this, all the *desires of our heart* will be for more of the same, more of His grace, more of His presence with and in and through us, more of His pleasure and glory, more of the time in every area and all the work of our lives.

If the people of Israel, as they returned to the land of promise, had understood this, if they’d really known that God’s glorious presence in their midst would bring them joy and pleasure they could otherwise never have known, they wouldn’t have wasted their strength and time indulging the pleasures of the flesh. And when they finally did return to God’s purpose for them, and began to seek His pleasure, then God provided for them all that they needed and more, just as He had promised.

Yet even then, the people were only beginning to learn what it meant to live within the divine economy, where grace is the currency by which they could become rich in the pleasure of the Lord.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What do we mean by desire? How does desire work in a person’s life?
2. Why is desire a good thing? What can make desire not such a good thing?
3. Do you think it’s important that people should understand where their desires are focused? How would you suggest they do that? Why?

*Next steps – Transformation: Meditate on the phrase, “rich in the pleasure of the Lord.” When have you experienced this? Talk with some Christian friends about this idea? Is this real to you and to your friends? Should it be more real? More consistent?*

## 4 The Double Delight of Grace

*“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” Luke 6.35*

*Motivated by grace*

The context in which this word of instruction occurs finds Jesus encouraging His listeners to seek some *reward* – as the NKJV has it – from the way they conduct their relationships with others. Jesus says that there is no *reward* to be gained from merely loving those who love us, or doing good to those who do good to us, or even in lending to those who might be able to repay. There is no *reward*, that is, in merely living like everybody else, according to the natural inclinations of our flesh, according to the economy of our narcissistic, materialistic, getting-and-spending age.

But what *reward* - what *pleasure* – is there in loving those who hate us? Or in doing good to those who are indifferent to our kindness, or even mean to us? Or in giving away our possessions to those who will never pay us back? In the upside-down world of material pleasure, pleasure in life comes from *getting*, not, in the first instance, from *giving*.

But Jesus explains that life in the Kingdom that He has brought near is not like life in the natural world. By the grace of God, we who were so long exiled in sin and captivity have been delivered into a Kingdom of precious and very great promises, the goal of which is that we might partake of God Himself, and know fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore that come from dwelling in Him. Thus suffused with and sated by His grace, we are ready to invest and spend grace in all the time of our lives and all the work we’ve been given to do.

But we will never realize that way of life as long as we continue living like people in the world, seeking pleasure and satisfaction in things and circumstances and advantages over others, rather than in the presence of God.

*What’s credit?*

It might seem strange that Jesus counsels His followers to seek some *reward* from their interactions with others. Strange, until we look a little more closely at that word.

“What credit is that to you?” Jesus asked those who seek their pleasure in fleshly circumstances and advantages (Lk. 6.33, 34). The Greek word here, which the NKJV translates, “credit,” is *charis* – grace, or graciousness. “What *grace* or *graciousness* is it to you to act like everyone else does?” The *reward* (Greek: *misthos*) of those who live this way is ultimately only *self-serving*, and can never completely satisfy.

In the Kingdom of God, relationships are transacted not by *self-seeking* but by *Kingdom-seeking*, by following whatever course of action will result in the expression and increase of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18). And the *currency* of such transactions, that which passes from us to others, and which we anticipate receiving in exchange, is *grace*. When what we seek in relationships is grace – the presence of God in fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore – what we will *give* to others will be grace as well. Then the *reward* we receive as a *credit* in our “account” will be more grace, grace abounding.

In our every gesture or word to others – no matter who they are or what they’ve done to us – if we will proffer them the grace of the Lord, we will gain the grace of the Lord, *from* the Lord, as the true and lasting reward and credit of living according to the divine economy.

*A double dividend*

And Jesus explains that living this way, *extending* grace in order to *gain* grace, brings a double benefit. First, as we show grace to others, as we extend to them the very essence of the divine being, of God's love and presence and forbearance, we gain the *experience* of grace, of knowing God with and in and through us, because only *by* the grace of God, and only *in* the grace of God, can we ever live like this toward others. Thus, that sense of God's presence, joy, and pleasure overtakes and enfolds us as we live in grace toward others, because it is actually *God at work within us*, willing and doing of His good pleasure (Phil. 2.13).

But second, doing so brings the reassurance that we are sons and daughters of the Most High God. Because we know we can't live this way in our own strength. We know we'd rather pummel those who don't love us, trample on those who have done us ill, and not be troubled with those from whom we can expect nothing in return. That's who we are *by nature*. But we have a *new* nature, a rightside-up nature, in the Kingdom economy of God, and every time we proffer grace to someone, because we know we have no power to do this on our own, we are reminded again of just who we have become in Jesus – sons and daughters of the King of Glory and our heavenly Father!

Don't just be a grace-receiver! Since we are heirs of the eternal Kingdom, let us *have grace* and live in the joy and pleasure of the Lord (Heb. 12.28). Live in grace, for grace, by grace, and you'll know the double delight of *more* grace that Jesus promised to all who truly follow Him.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Does it matter whether, as followers of Christ, we are seeking *rewards* of *grace* and *graciousness* in our relationships with others? Explain:
2. How does grace relate to the Kingdom of God? What do we mean by saying that grace is the currency of the Kingdom of God?
3. What's the difference between *receiving* grace and *living in* grace?

*Next steps – Preparation: What opportunities for showing grace await you today? How can you prepare for these, beginning right now? What will you need to do in order to extend grace in each of these situations? Live for grace today, then review your day before the Lord before you retire, thanking and praising Him for the grace He has shown in and to you.*

## 5 Sweating the Small Stuff

*“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” Luke 6.35*

### *Heralds of the Kingdom*

The Church of Jesus Christ is the herald and harbinger, the sign and outpost, of a new reality – the Kingdom of God. Jesus brought the Kingdom near, and the Spirit of God has brought it into all who believe in Him. The Kingdom of God is within the followers of Jesus Christ, a new reality and power for making all things new and for causing the knowledge of the glory and pleasure of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2.14; 1 Cor. 10.31).

As we might expect, such a powerful new reality brings with it a new way of “doing business” – a new *economy*. And the currency of that economy, the way Kingdom citizens “do business” in the world, is *grace*.

In the Kingdom of God, Jesus explained, we relate to one another and the world by the tenets of a new and different economy. Whereas in the unbelieving world people get by in life in an economy of getting and spending, in the Kingdom of God, where the currency and treasury are grace, God’s people thrive by giving, sacrificing, loving, and denying themselves. As we empty ourselves of all worldly and fleshly ambitions, we are filled with the Spirit and grace of God. Thus we know His presence in us, and we are able to show Him to the world by gracious acts and edifying words. And, as we do, we enjoy the double delight of knowing God at work within and through us, confirming that we are indeed something more than merely humans – we are the children of the Most High God, brothers and sisters to the King, and destined for eternal joy and pleasure with the Lord.

Each grace transaction reifies the Kingdom, broadens its beachhead in the world, and sets the stage for its further advance.

### *The Kingdom in the small stuff*

Now when we start talking about Kingdom matters, we tend to think in fairly exalted and extravagant terms. This, however, is just the leftover thinking of our old earthly and fleshly existence. We tend to associate power and glory with grandeur and spectacular achievement. That, after all, is the way things work in the world, no?

We even see this reflected within the community of believers. The big churches, the highly visible works – these are the ones that really matter.

This may be how the world works, but it’s not the way of the Kingdom. In the Kingdom of God, for the grace and pleasure and glory of God, we don’t fritter away our time dreaming up grandiose schemes, expansive projects, and ambitious undertakings to save the world. The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. In the Kingdom, as we pay attention to the everyday details of living in the world, that seed takes root, begins to grow, and will ultimately bloom and bear fruit. All the work we’ve been given to do in all the time of our lives matters, for all of it represents an opportunity to spend the grace and receive the grace of God.

In the Kingdom, that is, we “sweat the small stuff” of life, because we understand that in all the small stuff, every moment of time, every word that passes between us and someone else, every opportunity to do good or share or give to another person – all the small stuff and everyday details of our lives – this is where we can spend the currency of the Kingdom and gain the treasury of the Kingdom at one and the same time. For it is

in all the everyday, small stuff details of our lives that we *live in grace*, know the pleasure and glory of God, and make His pleasure and glory known to others.

*Attention to details*

The apostle Paul instructs us to live for the Kingdom in every mundane, small stuff detail of our lives. Even if we're just sharing a meal with someone, opportunities for extending grace to others abound (1 Cor. 10.31). The key is to prepare well, to think ahead about the moments and hours of the day so that you might get ready to live in the wisdom of God before the opportunities to do so actually arrive (Ps. 90.12). Then, by paying careful attention to the goings-on around you, you can make the most of each moment and every opportunity to show the grace of God to others (Eph. 5.15-17). By denying ourselves and taking on whatever inconvenience or hardship or sacrifice or suffering may be required, we can empty ourselves of worldly ways and fleshly ambitions so that, filled with the Spirit of Christ, we can know the power and grace of God at work in and through us.

And thus we turn our world rightside-up for Jesus Christ.

Now this is hard work. Paul says we have to *work* at being agents of grace; it doesn't just happen because we claim to have some kind of relationship with Jesus (Phil. 2.12). We have been redeemed by grace, and by grace we have been established in a new Kingdom of precious and very great promises. But we must work hard each day, in all the work we've been given to do, to make room for the presence of God in and through us, and to deny every selfish inclination, if we would know the true joy and pleasure of God Himself, working in and through all the small stuff of every day of our lives.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What do we mean by saying that the Kingdom of God is "in the small stuff"?
2. Do you really believe that grace can make a difference in and through the "small stuff" of your life? Why or why not?
3. Why is growing in grace such "hard work" (Phil. 2.12)? What would you recommend to anyone who wanted to take on this hard work and know more of the grace of the Lord?

*Next steps – Conversation: Meditate on 1 Corinthians 10.31. Make a list of all the "small stuff" opportunities you missed yesterday for showing the grace of God to others. Rewrite the list, infusing it with God's grace. Share your list with a Christian friend, and ask him or her to pray for you, so that you will live more consistently within the framework of the Kingdom economy, the economy of grace.*

## 6 The Grace Exchange

*Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?"* Luke 9.23-25

### *A new currency*

There was a time when I did a good deal of international travel. Always, whenever you enter a new country, the first thing you do is head for the currency exchange. That old money you brought with you from whatever country you've recently visited won't do you much good in this new one. You need to exchange the old currency for the new. Only thus will you be able to realize the benefits and make your way in this new country.

The same is true with the Kingdom of God.

In the old country of our sinful lives, the currency by which we made our way was that of self-preservation and self-advancement. Whatever we had to spend, in the way of time, energy, or resources, to advance our own wellbeing and ensure our future advantages, that's what we did. Most of the time, perhaps, we tried to live within the parameters of right and wrong dictated by our conscience. We may even have done some good and kind things for others – albeit, never without some self-interest in mind. And if ever it seemed to compromise our moral convictions, and if we thought we could get away with it, well, that was just the thing you had to do.

In the "old country" our transactions with others were determined by self-interest, which is just a polite way of saying, "sin." We loved ourselves more than anyone else, so whatever was necessary to satisfy our delights and help us to gain our pleasure – money, relationships, things, lies – was the "currency" we spent to make our way in the world.

### *The currency of the Kingdom*

In the Kingdom of God, however, that self-centered, sinful currency will get you no place fast. Day by day we need to queue up at the currency exchange of God's Word and prayer in order to hand over our old sinful ways and receive from the divine Treasurer that which we will need for a day of seeking and advancing the Kingdom of God.

Gaining the treasury of grace from the currency exchange of the Lord typically involves four steps.

First, you must consciously, sincerely, and completely *deny yourself and any personal ambition or advantage*. Before the Lord in prayer, acknowledge that you have no rights, deserve no privileges, have nothing with which to commend yourself, and exist only to know and further the pleasure and honor of God and Christ. You are not your own. You were bought with a price; therefore, prepare to glorify God and not yourself in everything the day brings to you.

Second, *take up your cross*. The cross was for Jesus the engine of self-denial, sacrifice, and service to God and others. The cross comes to us in the form of whatever God calls us to on any given day. In taking up your cross, you confess to the Lord that no pain will be too great for you to bear if only you can know and express His grace in the midst of it. You may have to go out of your way. You might struggle to suppress some self-serving attitude or emotion. Your effort to spend the grace of God may be risky, and you might be scorned,

ridiculed, or even abused; but you will bear it with thanksgiving and rejoicing if only you can, by so doing, show the grace of God to others and enter more fully into that grace yourself.

Third, *follow Jesus*. Jesus walked the path of God's Law (1 Jn. 2.1-6), the path of holiness and righteousness and goodness (Rom. 7.12), the path of love for God and neighbor (Matt. 22.34-40). Set your mind on the day ahead – the time God gives you, the people you will meet, the work you must do, the likely opportunities for showing grace that might crop up around you. Envision yourself as Jesus in those situations, and resolve to follow Him in the way He would go, showing love for God and neighbors in everything you do.

Finally, *be ready to explain yourself*. Some people, when they observe you living this way, showing by all your words and deeds the hope of grace and glory in which you live, will want an explanation (1 Pet. 3.15). Be ready to tell them. Be ready, with a smile and an outstretched hand, to lead them to Jesus and to invite them into the nation of grace and glory where you live your life each day.

You'll need to visit the grace exchange every day, and perhaps many times during the day. Whenever you feel yourself, in any situation, reaching into your pocket for some old currency of mere self-interest and self-advancement, then look up to the Lord and line up for some grace, grace sufficient for whatever might be your need at the moment.

He Who has called you to His Kingdom and glory will hear, and if you delight in Him, He will give you the desires of your heart.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Why is grace the *currency* and the *treasury* of the Kingdom of God?
2. Explain the *grace exchange* in your own words. Is this process at work in your own life?
3. Are you ready to answer someone who asks a reason for the hope they see in you? What would you say?

*Next steps – Conversation: Meet with a Christian friend and explain the concept of the grace exchange. Make a covenant with one another to practice this each day and all day long for a week. Then meet to discuss your experience of living in the grace of God.*



## 7 Waves of Grace

*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.* John 1.16

*A world turned rightside-up*

The early Christians were described by their unbelieving neighbors as having turned the existing world order upside-down (Acts 17.1-9). They stood the world of Roman military power, political corruption, economic oppression, spiritual darkness, and moral depravity right on its ear. They ushered in a new order of the ages, a new Kingdom with a new and altogether sovereign King, advancing a new economy, and they overwhelmed all those who opposed them to establish the known world on a new foundation of grace and truth.

Within a few generations after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, He was acknowledged and worshiped everywhere throughout the Roman world as Savior and Lord and King.

How in the world did such an amazing thing come to be?

*A tsunami of grace*

The coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh was but the first tremor of a spiritual earthquake that, following the first Christian Pentecost, unleashed a tsunami of grace across the Roman world.

Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's grace. He lived it, preached it, showed it in His miracles and His teaching, demonstrated it in His power over devils, diseases, and death, and promised His followers that they could know such grace for themselves. The works He did, Jesus promised those who believed in Him, they would do even more (Jn. 14.12). Jesus came to give men eternal life, and eternal life is nothing other than a relationship with God and Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 17.3). They who have eternal life are grafted into Him Who is the very fullness of grace, and He supplies them with wave after unrelenting wave of grace, as they look to Him and trust in Him day by day.

Grace in our lives is like the waves that lap a rocky shore. Relentlessly, persistently, little by little they wear down all resistance and carve a coastline that resembles the rhythm of their constant flow and motion. This is the way grace works in our hearts, through our words and deeds, on the people and places of our Personal Mission Fields, and on the course of human history and culture.

Grace is like the dew of the morning that refreshes a parched and worn-out day. Grace is like spring rain, a summer breeze, the lightest falling of a gentle winter snow. Grace flows through the followers of Jesus Christ in good works and edifying words, in deeds small and great, steadily, unfailingly, in all directions and to all people. Grace can be like a hammer on an anvil when it wells up in those who know it to quench raging fires of injustice, slake the desperate thirst of the oppressed and needy, and refashion broken structures and bent forms.

Grace changes everything, just like the grace of the first Christians turned their broken and corrupt world rightside-up for the grace and glory of God.

*Waves upon waves of grace*

The grace that flows from Jesus Christ, the *fullness* of God's grace, is without bottom and without end. It is always there to renew and transform us, whenever we line up to exchange our old ways for His new ones. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ inhabits a Personal Mission Field. Believers are like a point in the middle of a pool of water, with potential for impact in all directions. The larger the drop of water which falls

upon them, and the more consistently it falls, the stronger and more far-reaching will be the ripples and waves that issue from the center in all directions.

And so it is with the grace of the Lord. You are the center of a network of people, places, and things, all of which God loves so much that He gave His Son in order to make His grace known there. The more you receive of the grace of Christ, the greater the draughts of Christ's grace you imbibe, and the more consistent you are in so doing, the stronger, more constant, and more effective will be the ripples and waves of grace that flow from you, bringing the reality of the Kingdom into every area of your life, all the time of your life, all the work you've been given to do.

What do you want to see happen in your life? Are you content merely to *receive* the grace of God, but not to *live* in it? Do you want to know real joy and fullness of pleasure?

Come to the Fount of Every Blessing and let Him slake your thirst by His grace. Then go forth to allow that river of living water to ripple and wave out through you, day by day, moment by moment, to every person in every situation, until, together, we turn our sad and weary world into a pool of grace and glory for the Lord.

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Meditate on Acts 17.1-9. In what ways did the first Christians turn their world rightside-up?
2. Can we really expect grace to become a river of living water through our everyday lives? Why or why not?
3. What do we mean by a Personal Mission Field? Who are the people in yours? Are you a channel of grace to them?

*Next steps – Demonstration: Find a soul friend who will join you in praying about living as a means of grace upon grace in your Personal Mission Field. Meet regularly to share and encourage one another in this effort.*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What is the grace of God? What's the difference between *receiving* God's grace and *living* in it?
2. Do you sincerely believe that the pleasure you can know in the presence of God and His grace is the greatest pleasure of all? Explain.
3. In what sense is grace like currency?
4. What is the "grace exchange"? How well is that working in your life?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you planning to implement that lesson in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the contribute button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.