

FLOW OF GRACE

The Christian Teachings of Virtue (Series 3, Part 7, Teaching #23)

Leader Guide...

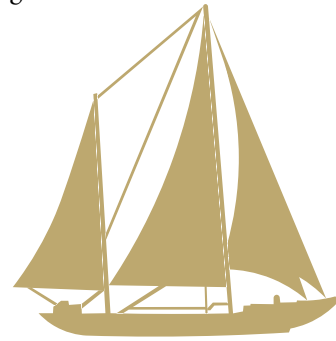
See the back page for detailed facilitator instructions.

Instructions: Watch video, read aloud, underline what stands out to you most, discuss

Faith, the first of the chief virtues, is the door through which all the other virtues flow into one's life. It opens the soul to the divine life of grace, making possible what would otherwise be impossible. Pride, by contrast—the first of the chief vices—is the door through which sin floods in. It is the precursor to all other vices, for it places the will of self above the will of God, and in doing so, it turns the soul away from the flow of grace.

Picture your soul as a vessel with sails raised high. The wind of the Spirit longs to fill it and carry you forward on the narrow path of virtue. But pride drops the sails. It turns the vessel inward. It cuts the cords of trust and severs the channels of grace.

Faith, on the other hand, lifts the sails. It opens the heart. It says to God, “Not my will, but Yours.” And in that moment, the sails of your soul are filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, moving you in the way of virtue—in the character of Christ.



The virtuous life, then, is not something manufactured by human effort. It is something grown by divine grace—cooperated with, but never controlled. The moment you believe you can live virtuously on your own is the moment you fall into the trap of pride. And pride, subtle and deceiving, does not always look like arrogance. Sometimes it looks like self-reliance. Sometimes it looks like quiet despair—the feeling that you must do it all yourself.

But you cannot. “The pursuit of holiness must be anchored in the grace of God; otherwise it is doomed to failure” (Jerry Bridges). You cannot be wise without the light of the Spirit. You cannot be just without the strength of grace. You cannot be courageous, temperate, faithful, hopeful, or loving in the truest sense—apart from the power of God working in you.

It is written, “For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it” (Ephesians 2:8–9). A virtuous life alone will not save you. But you are still called to pursue it—not to earn salvation, but to reflect it. Not to glorify yourself, but to glorify the One who saved you. As Scripture commands, “Live a holy life... [and] guard against turning back from the grace of God” (Hebrews 12:14–15).

So then, do not strive for virtue by your own power—it will only lead to frustration, guilt, and spiritual fatigue. Strive by grace. Walk by the Spirit. Set your mind on Christ and say, “Lord, I cannot do this without You. Fill me. Move through me. Be strong in me.” And then cooperate with that grace—through prayer, obedience, study, sacrifice, and love.

Let go of self-confidence. Put your confidence in God. For when you walk by faith and not by sight—when you open your soul and live in step with the Spirit—grace will flow like a river through your life. And that river will bear fruit, not just for you, but for the world around you.

(continues on next page...)



Watch Video: Scan the QR code to access the video for this teaching as well as additional resources such as related Scripture, quotes, and more.
Or, visit horseandchariot.com/flow-of-grace

Just as a tree bears more fruit when rooted in healthy soil, the fruits of the Holy Spirit flourish in a well-tended soul. You can't force spiritual growth any more than a farmer can force a seed to sprout. But you can create the conditions for it. The farmer prepares the soil, sows the seed, and faithfully waters it—yet the mystery of growth belongs to God. In the same way, learning and living the virtues is how you till the ground of your heart. They place you in a posture of readiness—where grace can take root and transformation can begin. The virtues themselves don't produce holiness; they simply clear the way for the Spirit to do what only grace can do.



So when you begin to see virtue grow in your life, remember: “Don’t ever be pleased with yourself because of some goodness that you might discover in yourself, because it all comes to you from God, and to Him must you give the honor and glory” (St. Padre Pio).

Truly, all goodness is a reflection of God’s work in you. “Every divine action begins from the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is completed in the Holy Spirit” (St. Basil). But this divine work requires humility, surrender, and cooperation.

“Few souls understand what God would accomplish in them if they were to abandon themselves unreservedly to Him and allow His grace to mold them accordingly” (St. Ignatius of Loyola). Yet this is the secret of the saints. This is the path of the virtuous. This is the flow of grace.

Faith raises the sails of your soul, allowing the Spirit to move you in virtue. Pride drops the sails, cutting you off from grace. Virtue cannot be forced by effort—it is cultivated by cooperation with God’s Spirit. The call is not to strive in self-reliance, but to surrender in faith so grace may flow freely through your life.

1. Faith lifts the sails. It opens the heart to grace. → Am I daily trusting God’s will, or clinging to my own?

2. Pride blocks the flow. Self-reliance or despair both turn me inward. → Where is pride quietly keeping me from grace?

3. Virtue is grace-grown. Effort tills the soil; God gives the growth. → Am I creating conditions for grace, or trying to force growth myself?

4. Humility receives. All goodness comes from God, not from me. → Do I give Him the glory when virtue shows in my life?

5. The Spirit empowers. I cannot pursue holiness without His strength. → Am I actively inviting the Spirit to guide, strengthen, and transform me?

CHARACTERISTICS OF LIVING IN THE FLOW OF GRACE

Those who persevere in faith and embrace grace exhibit these traits:

1. Dependence. Leans wholly on God, not self.

4. Peace. Trusts grace instead of striving anxiously.

2. Receptivity. Stays open to the Spirit’s movement.

5. Fruitfulness. Bears the Spirit’s fruit in daily life.

3. Humility. Gives God glory for all virtue.

6. Surrender. Abandons self-will to God’s will.

Signs of Pride Blocking Grace...

- You depend on self-discipline alone to live virtuously.
- You feel guilty or burnt out when your efforts fall short.
- You subtly take credit for growth rather than giving God glory.
- You neglect prayer, thinking you can manage without it.
- You despair, believing change is impossible.
- You feel spiritually stagnant because your sails remain lowered.

Think: Grace is not earned—it is received. My role is not to manufacture holiness but to raise the sails of faith, till the soil of my heart, and cooperate with God. Virtue grows when I live in the flow of grace, not when I strive in self-reliance. All fruit in my life is God’s doing, not mine.

Pray: Lord, lift the sails of my soul. Protect me from the pride of self-reliance and the despair of self-doubt. Teach me to live by faith, to walk by the Spirit, and to rest in Your grace. May every virtue in me be Your work, every fruit be to Your glory, and every step be carried by Your Spirit. Amen.

SELF-EVALUATION & ACTION STEP

Of the areas you underlined throughout this teaching, which stood out to you most and why?
(Reflect, write down, discuss)

Rate yourself from 1-10

1 = I often strive in self-reliance

10 = I consistently walk in humble dependence on grace

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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← (avoid 5) →

Why did you give yourself this rating?

(Where is pride—whether arrogance, self-reliance, or quiet despair—keeping you from grace?)

What daily practice (prayer, Scripture, sacrament, obedience) can help you “raise the sails” of your soul?

How will you give God the glory for the virtues and growth you see in your life?

What step of surrender is God calling you to take this week so His grace can flow more freely through you?

Daily Affirmation: Today, I will raise the sails of my soul in faith. I will not strive in pride or despair, but will trust God’s Spirit to move me. All virtue and all goodness in me is His work—flowing by grace, to His glory.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

Courageous Facilitator,

Your willingness to step forward and lead is a gift of grace to your community and a brave act of faith. God bless you for answering the call to inspire others to grow in virtue and pursue the character of Christ.

The Holy Spirit thrives in fellowship and community, working powerfully through the connections and shared experiences of small groups. That's why these lesson plans are designed to cultivate genuine relationships, inspire meaningful conversations, and foster a spirit of transformation through shared wisdom and grace.

Facilitating these lessons is both simple and impactful. While many forms of teaching rely on one-way communication, where one person speaks and others listen, true transformation happens through two-way communication. In this format, ideas aren't merely taught—they're explored together. You'll guide, but everyone will share and learn from one another, creating a rich environment where the Holy Spirit can move and grow each mind, heart, and soul.

These lesson plans succeed because they:

- **Encourage connection** in a collaborative small group setting that fosters action and accountability
- **Empower every voice** with opportunities for each participant to share and contribute
- **Inspire growth** through educational, inspirational, and transformational teachings

Your role as a facilitator is to:

- **Follow the instructions and trust the process**—the wheel is already built, you're here to guide it.
- **Honor the schedule** by being punctual and respecting the time of your group.
- **Lead with love** and rely on God's grace to inspire, guide, and uplift everyone in the group.

Your courage to create a space for growth and fellowship will not only bless others but will deepen your own journey of faith and virtue. Together, with God's help, lives will be transformed.

To God be the glory!

FACILITATOR CHECKLIST

1. Getting Started (5-10 mins)

- ☐ Give everyone a few minutes to join before getting started. Be friendly and greet people as they arrive. Get them talking! Come prepared with some good ice-breaker questions you can ask during this time.
- ☐ 3-5 minutes in, do quick introductions for anyone new to the group. What brought them to the group? Spend a moment getting to know them.
- ☐ Open with a short prayer (facilitator or volunteer).

2. Watch & Read the Teaching (5-10 mins)

- ☐ Watch the video of the teaching as a group.
- ☐ Have a volunteer read all of page 1. Have others follow along and underline what stands out to them most.

3. How it Applies (5-10 mins)

- ☐ Have a volunteer read all of page 2. Have others follow along and underline what stands out to them most.

4. Reflection & Discussion (20-30 mins)

- ☐ Have everyone quietly take 5 minutes to complete the "Self-Evaluation & Action Step" on page 3.
- ☐ Then, going around the group, have each person take a minute to share what stood out to them most about the teaching and why.
- ☐ If time allows, continue the discussion using the remaining self-evaluation questions as a guide.

5. Wrap Up (5 mins)

- ☐ Remind everyone to do the daily affirmation until you meet again next time.
- ☐ Ask for any prayer requests from the group.
- ☐ Close with a short prayer (facilitator or volunteer).