

Christian Leaders Respond to Books by Jerry Bridges

“I believe [*The Pursuit of Holiness*] is a modern classic. Few books have had the influence on me that this one has.”

— CHARLES COLSON, Founder, Prison Fellowship Ministries

“For the believer seriously considering the lordship of Christ in his life, *Respectable Sins* is must reading!”

— JONI EARECKSON TADA, Founder and CEO,
Joni and Friends International Disability Center

“The price Jerry Bridges has had to pay in the pursuit of holiness has not been small. His pain has been our gain.”

— JOHN PIPER, Pastor for Preaching,
Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

“[*The Pursuit of Holiness*] is surely one of the most important books produced in the past fifty years.”

— JOHN MacARTHUR, Pastor-Teacher,
Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California

“[*Growing Your Faith* is] solid. Practical. Needed. Shows readers why and how to come under the influence of God’s Word. I’m so thankful we have another book by this man of God.”

— KAY ARTHUR, Cofounder, Precept Ministries International

“Biblical, informed, accessible, and rooted in Jerry’s own deep experience as a disciple of Jesus and as a teacher. If you are seeking the way forward in Christlikeness, or wish to show that way to others, *Growing Your Faith* is a book you can count on for substantial help.”

— DALLAS WILLARD, Professor, School of Philosophy,
University of Southern California

“Jerry Bridges continues to be a leading communicator of the truths of God’s Word to believers — young and mature. In his clear, concise writing style, he makes spiritual truth easily accessible to everyone.”

— STEVE DOUGLASS, President, Campus Crusade for Christ

“Jerry Bridges charts the path for the development of a dynamic faith that produces rock-solid, dynamic lives.”

— JOSEPH STOWELL, President, Cornerstone University

“[*Transforming Grace* is] practical, biblical, and powerful — a refreshing release from guilt and legalism.”

— JERRY WHITE, Former President, The Navigators

“Sanity, realism, authenticity, and personal integrity are the hallmarks of Jerry Bridges’s writing.”

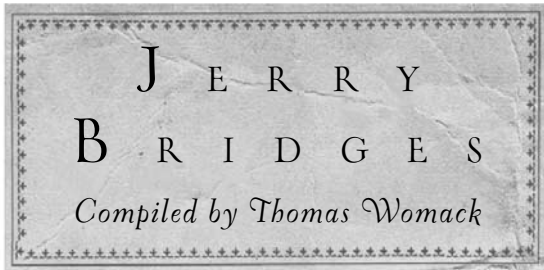
— SINCLAIR FERGUSON, Senior Pastor,
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“Few modern writers are able to make biblical truth more understandable than Jerry Bridges.”

— C. J. MAHANEY, President, Sovereign Grace Ministries

Transformational Thoughts
for Your Spiritual Journey

HOLINESS
DAY BY DAY





NavPress is the publishing ministry of The Navigators, an international Christian organization and leader in personal spiritual development. NavPress is committed to helping people grow spiritually and enjoy lives of meaning and hope through personal and group resources that are biblically rooted, culturally relevant, and highly practical.

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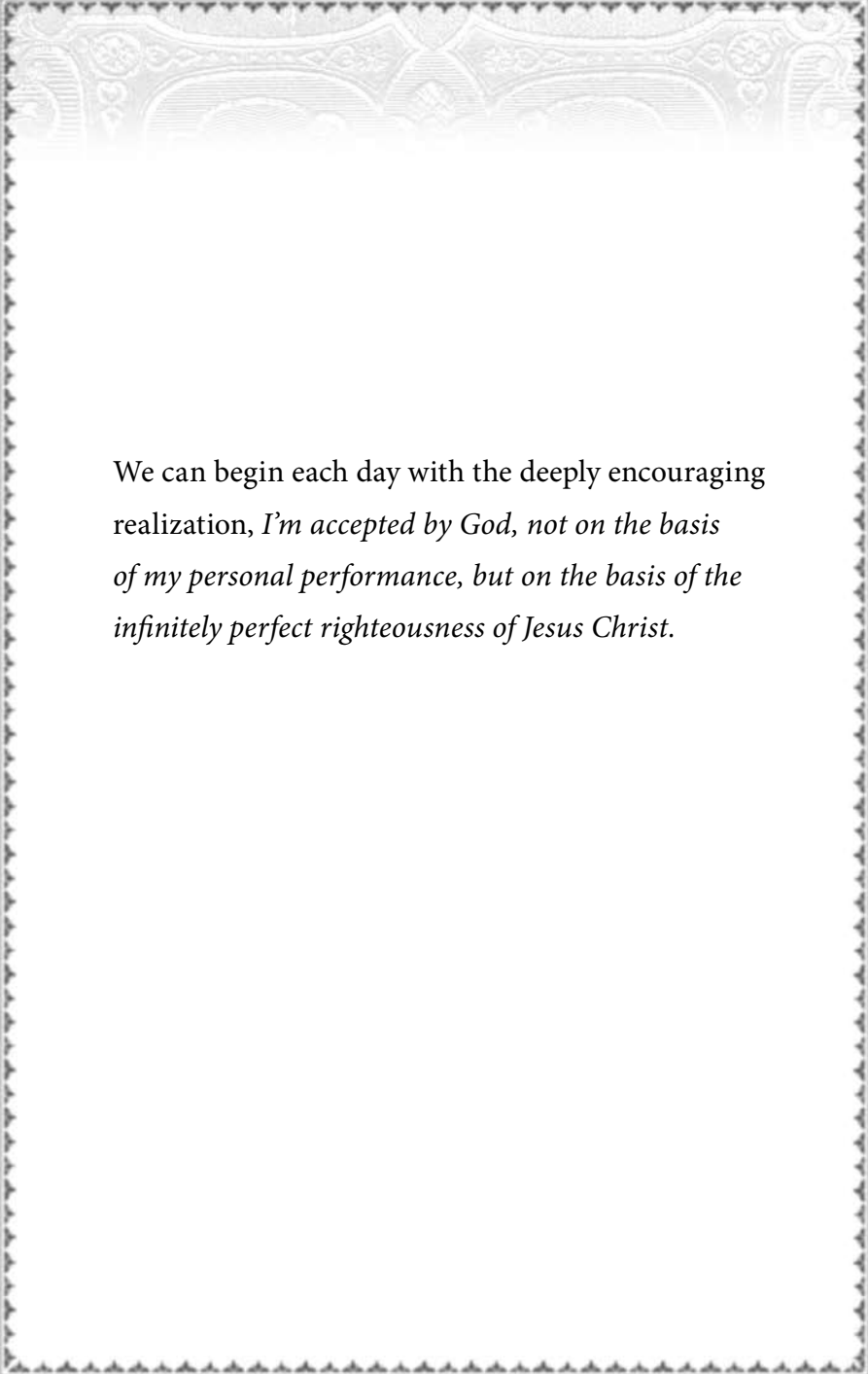
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We can begin each day with the deeply encouraging realization, *I'm accepted by God, not on the basis of my personal performance, but on the basis of the infinitely perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.*

Week 1 / MONDAY

INCREDIBLE INHERITANCE

To me . . . this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

(EPHESIANS 3:8)

Years ago our pastor told about a southern plantation owner who left a \$50,000 inheritance (perhaps equivalent to half a million dollars today) to a former slave who'd served him faithfully all his life. The estate's lawyer duly notified the old man and told him the money was deposited at a local bank.

Weeks went by, and the former slave never called for any of his inheritance. Finally, the banker called him in and told him again he had \$50,000 available to draw on at any time. "Sir," the old man replied, "do you think I can have fifty cents to buy a sack of cornmeal?"

That story illustrates the plight of many Christians today. Paul wrote of preaching "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8) — referring not to financial wealth but to the glorious truths of the gospel. It's as if each of us has \$50,000 available in the gospel, yet most of us are hoping we can squeeze out fifty cents' worth. We don't understand the riches of the gospel any more than the former slave understood his inheritance.

Suppose also that the slave was not only poverty-stricken but also deep in debt for back rent. With his inheritance, he could not only pay off the debt but also buy his house. His inheritance far surpasses his debt. This is the truth of the gospel. We owe an enormous spiritual debt to God; there's no way we can repay it. The gospel tells us Jesus Christ paid our debt, but it also tells us far more: We're no longer enemies and objects of God's wrath. We're now His sons and daughters, heirs with Christ to all His unsearchable riches. This is the good news of the gospel.

The Gospel for Real Life

HOLINESS AND GRACE

Strive for . . . the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

(HEBREWS 12:14)

The Holy Spirit’s work in transforming us more and more into the likeness of Christ is called sanctification. Our involvement and cooperation with Him in His work is what I call the pursuit of holiness. That expression is taken from Hebrews 12:14: “Strive for [literally: *pursue*] . . . the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

This pursuit requires sustained, vigorous effort. It allows for no indolence, no lethargy, no halfhearted commitment, and no *laissez-faire* attitude toward even the smallest sins. In short, it demands the highest priority in a Christian’s life because to be holy is to be like Christ — God’s goal for every Christian.

The word *pursue* in this context means to strive to gain or accomplish. In Philippians 3:12-14, this word is translated “press on.” In the New Testament it is most commonly translated “persecute,” carrying the word’s common meaning — to track down in order to harm or destroy.

At the same time, however, the pursuit of holiness must be anchored in the grace of God; otherwise it is doomed to failure. That statement probably strikes many people as strange. A lot of Christians seem to think the grace of God and the vigorous pursuit of holiness are antithetical — in direct and unequivocal opposition.

To some, the pursuit of holiness sounds like legalism and man-made rules. To others, an emphasis on grace seems to open the door to irresponsible behavior based on the notion that God’s unconditional love means we’re free to sin as we please.

Grace and the personal discipline required to pursue holiness, however, go hand in hand. An understanding of how grace and personal, vigorous effort work together is essential for a lifelong pursuit of holiness.

The Discipline of Grace

Week 1 / WEDNESDAY

BANKRUPT

No one does good, not even one.

(ROMANS 3:12)

Bankrupt! The word has a dreadful ring to it. Even in our lax and permissive society, being bankrupt still conveys some degree of disgrace and shame.

In the moral realm, the word *bankrupt* has an even more disparaging connotation. To say a person is morally bankrupt is to say he or she is completely devoid of any decent moral qualities. It's like comparing that person to Adolf Hitler.

You may never have thought of it this way, but *you* are bankrupt. You and I and every person in the world are *spiritually* bankrupt. Except for Jesus Christ, every person who has ever lived has been spiritually bankrupt. In Romans 3:10-12, Paul declared our spiritual bankruptcy in its most absolute state. We were spiritually destitute, owing God a debt we couldn't pay. Then we learned salvation is a gift from God, entirely by grace through faith (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9). We renounced confidence in any supposed righteousness of our own and turned in faith to Jesus Christ alone for our salvation. In that act, we essentially declared spiritual bankruptcy.

But what kind of bankruptcy did we declare? In the business world, financially troubled companies can declare bankruptcy according to "chapter 7" — if it has no future as a viable business — or "chapter 11," for companies that, given time, can work through their financial problems.

So what kind of bankruptcy did we declare — permanent or temporary? I think most of us actually declared temporary bankruptcy. Having trusted in Christ alone for our salvation, we have subtly and unconsciously reverted to a works relationship with God in our Christian lives. We recognize that even our best efforts cannot get us to heaven, but we do think they earn God's blessings in our daily lives.

Transforming Grace

Week 1 / THURSDAY

DUST TO GLORY

*You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. . . .
But God . . . made us alive together with Christ.*

(EPHESIANS 2:1,4-5)

The word *gospel* essentially means “good news,” specifically about our relationship with God. We all like good news, especially if it addresses bad news we’ve just received. If you’ve just been told you have cancer, it’s good news when the doctor tells you it’s a type that readily responds to treatment.

The gospel is like that. It’s good news that directly addresses our ultimate bad news. The Bible tells us we were in deep trouble with God; we were unrighteous and ungodly, and God’s wrath is revealed “against all the godlessness and wickedness of men”; in fact, we were “by nature objects of [God’s] wrath” (Romans 1:18, NIV; Ephesians 2:3, NIV). Coming into the world as a baby, before you’d ever done anything bad, you were an object of God’s wrath. That’s the bad news.

Then the Bible tells us that God has provided a solution far surpassing our problem. The Good News always outweighs the bad — as in Ephesians 2:1-9. After telling us we were objects of God’s wrath, Paul added: “But . . . God, who is rich in mercy . . . raised us up with Christ, and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (NIV). That is surely a dust-to-glory story. What greater contrast could there be than an object of God’s wrath seated with His Son in glory?

This good news doesn’t begin when we die. It’s for now. We don’t have to feel guilt-ridden and insecure before God. We don’t have to wonder if He likes us. We can begin each day with the deeply encouraging realization, *I’m accepted by God, not on the basis of my personal performance, but on the basis of the infinitely perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.*

The Gospel for Real Life

Week 1 / FRIDAY

WARMTH AND DESIRE

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

(PSALM 42:1)

In the life of the godly person, this desire for God produces an aura of warmth. Godliness is never austere and cold. Such an idea comes from a false sense of legalistic morality erroneously called godliness. The person who spends time with God radiates His glory in a manner that is always warm and inviting, never cold and forbidding.

This longing for God also produces a desire to glorify God and to please Him. In the same breath, Paul expressed the desire to know Christ as well as to be like Him (Philippians 3:10). This is God's ultimate objective for us and is the object of the Spirit's work in us. In Isaiah 26:9, the prophet proclaimed his desire for the Lord: "My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you." Immediately before this expression of desire for the Lord, he expresses a desire for His glory: "Your name and renown are the desire of our hearts" (verse 8, NIV). *Renown* has to do with one's reputation, fame, and eminence — or in God's case, with His glory. The prophet could not separate in his heart his desire for God's glory and his desire for God Himself. These two yearnings go hand in hand.

This is devotion to God — the fear of God, which is an attitude of reverence and awe, veneration, and honor toward Him, coupled with an apprehension deep within our souls of the love of God for us, demonstrated preeminently in Christ's atoning death. These two attitudes complement and reinforce each other, producing within our souls an intense desire for this One who is so awesome in His glory and majesty, yet so condescending in His love and mercy.

The Practice of Godliness

Week 1 / WEEKEND

ON A BAD DAY

*How much more will the blood of Christ . . .
purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

(HEBREWS 9:14)

What should we do when we've had a "bad" day spiritually, when it seems we've done everything wrong and are feeling very guilty? We must go back to the cross and see Jesus there bearing our sins in His own body (1 Peter 2:24). We must by faith appropriate for ourselves the blood of Christ that will cleanse our guilty consciences (Hebrews 9:14).

In a bad-day scenario, we might pray something like this: "Father, I've sinned against You. I've been negligent in the spiritual disciplines that I know are necessary and helpful for my spiritual growth. I've been irritable and impatient toward those around me. I've allowed resentful and unkind thoughts to lodge in my mind. I repent of these sins and claim Your forgiveness.

"You have said You justify the wicked (Romans 4:5). Father, in view of my sins today, I acknowledge that in myself I am wicked. In fact, my problem is not merely the sins I've committed, some of which I may not even be aware of, but the fact that my heart is sinful. These sins I'm now so painfully conscious of are merely expressions of my sinful heart.

"But despite my sinfulness, You have said, 'There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:1). Given my acute awareness of my sin, that's an incredible statement. How can I be without condemnation when I've so flagrantly and willfully sinned against You today?

"O Father, I know it's because Jesus bore those sins in His body on the cross. He suffered the punishment I deserve, so I might experience the blessings He deserved. So I come to You, dear Father, in Jesus' name."

The Discipline of Grace