Obstacles of Grace

Introduction ~ share a personal story or experience of Obstacles to Grace in your life.

1. **The Christian life takes place in a real world affected by the consequences of sin.**
2. Obstacles to grace are common
3. We all experience obstacles to grace.
4. An obstacle to grace is anything that keeps us from enjoying the loving relationship God offers us in Christ.
5. Sin is self-centeredness rather than God centeredness.

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Some have described sin as the “big I” – making myself the center of the universe and the standard for supreme goodness instead of acknowledging God as the rightful center of all creation.

1. Sin is alienation.
2. The essential nature of every obstacle to grace is experienced as alienation from God, from others, and even from ourselves at times.
3. The Greek word for sin is *hamartia,* an archery term meaning “to miss the mark or target.”

a. We can miss the mark in any direction, by aiming too high as well as too low, or too far to the right as well as too far to the left.

b. Sin is anything that causes us to miss the target of God’s will for our lives. It is anything that separates us from the love of God and the love of our neighbor (**Matt 22:36-40**).

36“Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?”

37Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matt%2022:36-40&version=NLT#fen-NLT-23884a)] 38This is the first and greatest commandment. 39A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[[b](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matt%2022:36-40&version=NLT#fen-NLT-23886b)] 40The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

1. In a broader sense, sin is anything that diminishes life.
2. Sin can be an abuse of any part of God’s creation – the land, water, or air, as well as plants, animals, and people (**Gen 1:1-31**). 28Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”
3. For Christians, anything less than the new creation in Jesus Christ falls short of the biblical vision (**2 Cor 5:17**17This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!; **Rev 21:1-4** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. 2And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.3I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=rev%2021:1-4&version=NLT" \l "fen-NLT-31019a" \o "See footnote a)] 4He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”).
4. There are two primary types of obstacles to grace: those that hinder our relationship with God and those that hinder our relationship with other people.
5. Obstacles to our relationship with God.

Idolatry

Blasphemy

Resisting

Ignoring

Disobedience

Unbelief

Ignorance

Price

Unforgiveness

1. Idolatry – worshipping and serving false gods (**Deut 5:7-8**).
2. Blasphemy – speaking irreverently or profanely of God; using God’s name to curse or revile anyone or anything (**Deut 5:11**).
3. Resisting God – refusing to obey the will of God; quenching the Spirit of God (**1 Thess 5:19**).
4. Ignoring God – not making time for God in our lieves, thereby breaking the sabbath for ourselves, our families, and our employees (**Deut 5:12-15**).
5. Disobedience – sin is intentionally rejecting the relationship that God offers and failing to develop the talents and abilities God has given us (**Luke 19:11-27**).
6. Unbelief – refusing to believe and obey the truth.
7. Ignorance – unknowingly alienating ourselves from God and others. Our lack of understanding can defeat us.
8. Pride – focusing attention on ourselves rather than giving honor and glory to God (**Matt 6:5-8**).
9. Unforgiveness toward God or others – if we do not forgive, we cannot be forgiven (**Matt 6:9-15**).
10. Forgiveness is not the same as forgetting, nor does it mean one has to remain in an abusive or hurtful relationship.
11. Obstacles to our relationship with others

Idolatry

Blasphemy

Resisting

Murder Addiction and Abuse Lying Gossip Stealing Coveting Laziness Dishonor

Ignoring

Disobedience

Unbelief

Ignorance

Pride

Unforgiveness

1. Murder
2. The Ten Commandments say clearly, “You shall not murder” (**Deut 5:17**).
3. Murder is more than a physical act. The abuse of power can wound or kill others psychologically, emotionally, and even spiritually.
4. Addiction and abuse can take many forms.
5. Any physical abuse, substance abuse, or abusive relationship diminishes life and becomes an obstacle to grace.
6. Any form of sexual abuse – adultery, promiscuity, pornography, and all forms of sexual exploitation of children, youth, and adults – creates an obstacle to grace (**Deut 5:18**; **Matt 5:27-30** You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=MAtt%205:27-30&version=NLT#fen-NLT-23238a)] 28But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29So if your eye—even your good eye[[b](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=MAtt%205:27-30&version=NLT#fen-NLT-23240b)]—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30And if your hand—even your stronger hand[[c](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=MAtt%205:27-30&version=NLT#fen-NLT-23241c)]—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.).
7. Lying – saying things that we know are untrue (**Deut. 5:20**)
8. Gossip or slander – saying things with the intent of hurting others.
9. Stealing – taking things away from those who own or deserve them (**Deut 5:19**)
10. Coveting – refusing to be satisfied with what we have (**Deut 5:21**). This can be manifested in an unhealthy desire for position, power, property or relationship that others have.
11. Laziness – refusing to be a good steward of the life, gifts, graces, property, and power God has entrusted to you.
12. Dishonor
13. When we dishonor our parents, spouses, children, and other primary relationships in our family, we create an obstacle to grace in our prayer life, and our dishonor has consequences for generations to come (**Deut 5:16**).
14. When we dishonor our spiritual leaders, pastors, and others in positions of authority established by God, we create obstacles to grace.
15. Obstacles to our relationship with ourselves
16. Lack of love – refusing to love ourselves in a healthy manner so that we can love our neighbor (**Mark 12:29-34**).29Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. 30And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark%2012:29-34&version=NLT#fen-NLT-24673a)] 31The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[[b](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark%2012:29-34&version=NLT#fen-NLT-24674b)] No other commandment is greater than these.”
17. Bitterness is like a dangerous virus of the spirit that can quickly spread to others (**Heb 12:14-15**). 14Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. 15Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.
18. Spiritual blindness (**Luke 6:37-42**). 37“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. 38Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%206:37-42&version=NLT" \l "fen-NLT-25153a" \o "See footnote a)]” 39Then Jesus gave the following illustration: “Can one blind person lead another? Won’t they both fall into a ditch? 40Students[[b](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%206:37-42&version=NLT#fen-NLT-25155b)] are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher. 41“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye[[c](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%206:37-42&version=NLT#fen-NLT-25156c)] when you have a log in your own? 42How can you think of saying, ‘Friend,[[d](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%206:37-42&version=NLT" \l "fen-NLT-25157d" \o "See footnote d)] let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.
19. Through Jesus Christ we can overcome the obstacles to grace.
20. The vertical line in the cross reminds us that Jesus Christ restores our relationship with God. In Christ we:
21. Remember our reconciliation – Jesus’ ministry began with the call to repentance, the offer of forgiveness, and the promise of eternal life (Mark 1:14-15). 14Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God’s Good News.[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark%201:14-15&version=NLT" \l "fen-NLT-24203a" \o "See footnote a)] 15“The time promised by God has come at last!” he announced. “The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!”
22. Remember our baptism.
23. Recover our identity as children of God – we center our faith in the cross of Jesus Christ because it stands as the most powerful witness to the central message of the Bible; God created us, God loves us, and God gave His only Son that we might have eternal life (John 3:16).
24. Receive the power to walk in the Spirit.
25. The Christian life is possible if we accept the life of Jesus as our model and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us in our relationship with God.
26. A life in grace involves the daily practices of piety, study, and action that we have learned about this weekend.
27. Resist evil and renounce the forces of the evil one (James 4:7-8). 7So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.
28. The horizontal line in the cross reminds us that Jesus Christ restores our relationship with ourselves and with others. In Christ we:
29. Come to know and love our true selves; therefore, we are reconciled to ourselves.
30. Become reconciled to our neighbors; therefore, we can love one another, live in peace, and seek justice together.
31. Seek spiritual guidance from others in the body of Christ. A Spiritual friend is someone who knows the pathways in a relationship with God and the obstacles to grace; he or she walks along with us on our spiritual journey and helps us discern the will of God.
32. Participate in all the means of grace, including a small group where there is commitment to accountable discipleship.
33. Pray for leaders and those in authority over us (I Tim. 2.1-4) 2 I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. 2Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. 3This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.
34. Love our enemies (Luke 6.27-30) 27“But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. 28Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. 29If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. 30Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back., feed the hungry, clothe the naked, etc. (Matt 25.34-40). 40“And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters,[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt%2025.34-40&version=NLT" \l "fen-NLT-24022a" \o "See footnote a)] you were doing it to me!’
35. Conclusion

The Christian life is a daily decision to take up our cross and follow Jesus Christ (Matt. 16.24-26) 24Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. 25If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. 26And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.%2016.24-26&version=NLT" \l "fen-NLT-23675a" \o "See footnote a)] Is anything worth more than your soul?

It is a life lived in the shape of the cross, with appropriate attention given to our relationship with God and our relationship with others. There is always more grace in God than there is sin in us (Romans 5.20-21) 20God’s law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God’s wonderful grace became more abundant. 21So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God’s wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom.8.31,38-39) 31What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? 38And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.8.31,38-39&version=NLT#fen-NLT-28116a)] neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. 39No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Christ, we can overcome every obstacle to grace.

De Colores!