

**LEGALISM**  
**A Small Group Study**  
Developed by disciplingonline.org

**LEADER'S NOTES:**

It is so easy for us to get caught up in the trap of legalism. We feel we have to perform or do a number of good works to be saved or to maintain our salvation status.

If we elevate Christian traditions to a level of the Word of God, another trap of becoming a legalist.

If we push our personal convictions off onto others or try to prescribe a certain form of behavior on others, we again set a trap for legalism. This is not the same as God's Word giving standards for our conduct.

Legalism is simply a universal tendency of man.

**Opening Your Group Time**

Go around your group and have them fill in the blank for this statement:

"You might be a legalist if \_\_\_\_\_"

**Prayer**

A prayer for God's Spirit of wisdom and understanding.

For the Lord to give us discernment of where we may have become legalistic in our lives.

**Introduction:**

The word legalism does not occur anywhere in the Bible.

It is a term we have used to describe a system of rules and regulations.

However, we see prime examples of this in the Bible: the Pharisees

Jesus had much to say concerning them (you can give examples).

The dictionary defines legalism as: according to the law of works, as distinguished from free grace; or resting on works for salvation.

**Small Group Discussion:**

Develop your discussion time with the following questions:

1. What is legalism to you?
2. What does legalism indicate?
3. In what ways can we be legalistic in other areas of our lives other than our spiritual life?

4. Have you or are you caught in legalism in some area of your life?

**Hand-Out...Diagram Picture**

Legalism is a tendency for all of us because of our nature or self-sufficiency. We want to do everything on our own. We see this tendency in 2 year old's: "I do it myself." That can continue to be our tendency as we grow up.

(Have your group fill in the chart as you talk about it). A filled in chart is included for the leader as well as charts for your group to fill in.

**The following are Scripture references for the leader's chart and group fill in**

1. His forgiving mercy: Romans 11:6; Romans 4:5; Ephesians 4:7-9; Romans 5:15-21
2. God's favor: Genesis 6:8 (Noah); Prov. 8:35; Prov. 12:2; Luke 1:30 (Mary)
3. God's gifts: Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:10; God's gifts in various forms
4. God's blessings: John 1:16; Psalm 84:11
5. God's enabling power: grace gives enabling power to overcome sin;  
Hebrews 4:16; Romans 6:14-18; 2 Cor. 9:8 (excel in every good work)  
2 Timothy 2:1: not living in our strength – be strong means be invested with power
6. Eternal life: 1 Peter 1:13

**Grace as a gift Scriptures:**

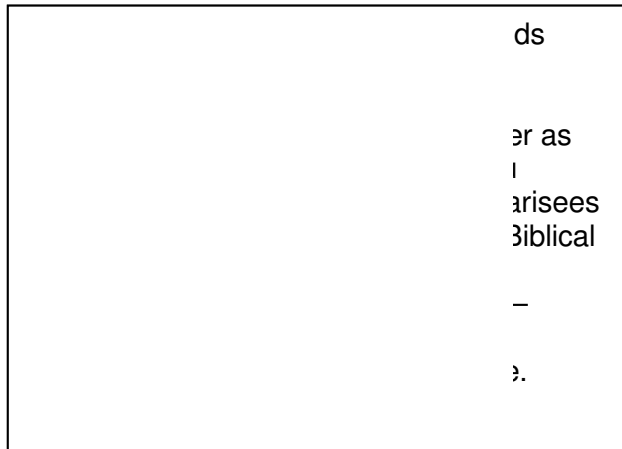
- Ephesians 3:7
- Ephesians 4:7
- Ephesians 2:8

**Closing:** Break into smaller groups for prayer needs

**LEGALISM IS A TENDENCY FOR ALL OF US BECAUSE OF OUR NATURE OF SELF SUFFICIENCY  
WE WANT TO DO EVERYTHING ON OUR OWN.**

(Leader's Chart)

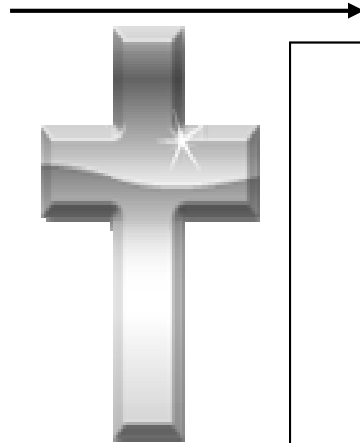
**LEGALISM AND ITS TENDENCY**



Romans 4:4 – one who works (laborer)  
wages something owed- not a gift

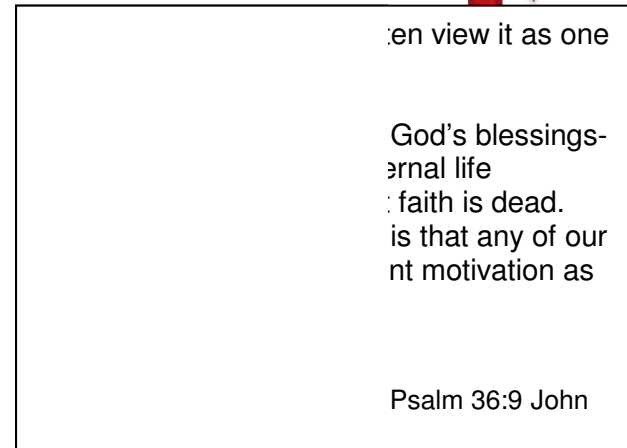
Characteristics of a gift: (Make a list)

**THE BRIDGE**



Matthew 16:24

**GRACE**



What we find as we open this package:  
Based upon His Word

1. His forgiving mercy
2. God's favor
3. God's gifts
4. God's blessings
5. God's enabling power
6. Eternal life

When view it as one

God's blessings-  
eternal life  
: faith is dead.  
is that any of our  
nt motivation as

Psalm 36:9 John

## SATAN: A DECEIVER AND A LIAR

(Leader's Chart)

### SATAN'S STRATEGY:

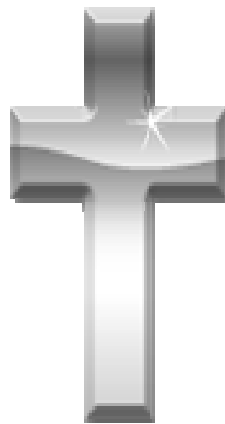
To present a different picture.

He endeavors to have you see it as the picture below. He attempts to pervert God's character. If we can think of God as a taker rather than a giver, he knows we're in trouble.

### LEGALISM

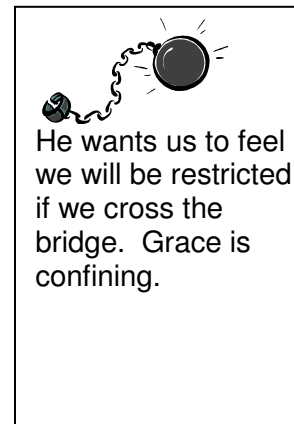


### THE BRIDGE



Matthew 16:24

### GRACE



**By staying here:** Jeremiah 2:13 – “For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and they have hewn for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns which cannot hold water.”

### **What Grace is Not:**

1. Works: Romans 11:6; Romans 3:28
2. Righteousness through the Law: Galatians 2:21; Galatians 5:4

### HOW DO WE GET OUT?

1. Romans 12:1,2: Realizing we need renewing of our minds – seeing things differently
2. Matthew 16:24: Cross the bridge: Deny self: the “I do it” attitude
3. Open and accept ALL that is in grace: 2 Timothy 2:1
4. Grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ: 2 Peter 3:18

**LEGALISM IS A TENDENCY FOR ALL OF US BECAUSE OF OUR NATURE OF SELF SUFFICIENCY  
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**LEGALISM AND ITS TENDENCY**



**Romans 4:4: one who works (laborer) – wages something owed not a gift**

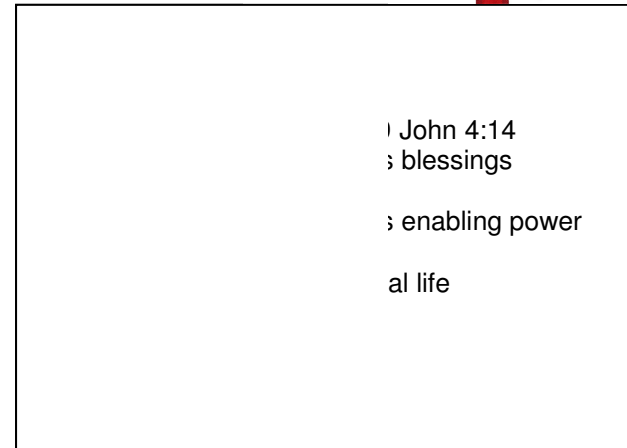
**CHARACTERISTICS OF A GIFT (List)**

**THE BRIDGE**



**Matthew 16:24**

**GRACE**



| John 4:14  
; blessings  
  
; enabling power  
  
al life

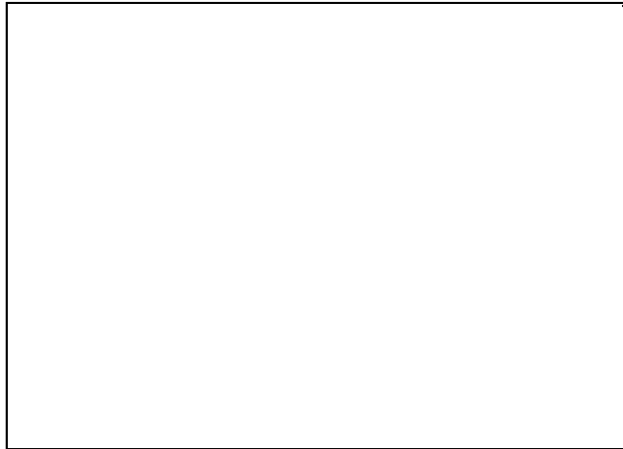
**What we find as we open the package of grace  
Based upon God's Word**

- 1. His forgiving mercy:**
- 2. God's favor:**
- 3. God's gifts:**
- 4. God's blessings**
- 5. God's enabling power**
- 6. Eternal life**

## SATAN: A DECEIVER AND A LIAR

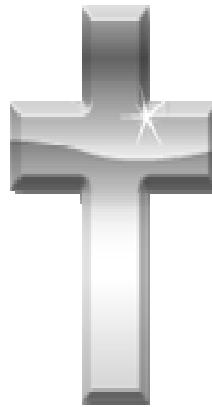
**SATAN'S STRATEGY:** To paint a different picture  
His strategy from the beginning of time is to pervert God's character. If he can get us to think of God as a taker instead of a giver, he knows we are in trouble.

LEGALISM



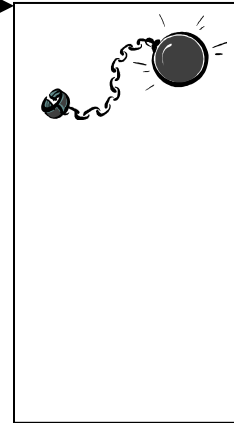
By staying here: Jeremiah 2:13: "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and they have hewn for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns which cannot hold water."

THE BRIDGE



Matthew 16:24

GRACE



**What grace is not:**

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**HOW DO WE GET OUT?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.