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Grace, Legalism, and Life Outlook in LDS Students

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
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Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Grace, Legalism, and Life Outlook in LDS College Students

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Intrinsic Spirituality has been linked to lower rates of depression and anxiety and higher positive mental functioning (Pargament, Exline & Jones, 2013. This may be due in part to beliefs which foster values that are important to positive outlook, such as faith, forgiveness, humility, love and community. It is also possible for strongly religious individuals to have maladaptive beliefs that may be problematic for their happiness and adjustment. Understanding how beliefs influence mental health can be helpful to therapists; particularly to those who deal with religious clients who are heavily influenced by their spiritual beliefs. This study looks at the important religious concepts of grace and legalism to identify how they interact with intrinsic spirituality to influence five different positive psychology measures: gratitude, self-esteem, meaning in life, satisfaction with life and optimism. Roughly 560 students from a religious university participated in a self-report survey looking at various spirituality and mental health measurements. Structural Equation Modeling was used to determine if experiencing grace or legalistic beliefs mediated the relationship between spirituality and each of five "life outlook" measures. Moderator analysis was used to identify any interaction effects of grace and legalism on the life outlook variables. Intrinsic spirituality was predictive of belief in grace and negatively predictive of belief in legalism. Belief in grace was also predictive of all five positive mental health measures, and legalism was negatively predictive of gratitude. Interestingly, grace-legalism interaction effects were found for self-esteem, gratitude and satisfaction. Gender differences were significant. Implications for therapy and directions for future research are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DESCRIPTION OF DISSERTATION STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

This dissertation is written in a hybrid journal-ready format which combines traditional dissertation requirements with the requirements of professional journal publications. The preliminary pages of this dissertation establish a more thorough foundation of information than would be required in a journal ready publication and meet the requirements for submission to the university. The remainder of the document meets requirements for professional journal submissions. This journal-ready format contains sections for references, with the first included at the end of the journal-ready article. The second includes the citations used in the full review of literature found in Appendix A.

The appendices include a literature review and its accompanying references (Appendix A) and a list of instruments used in this study (Appendix B).

Introduction

Recent polls suggest that somewhere between 74% and 89% of Americans believe in God, and roughly six in ten American adults consider themselves at least moderately religious and report that religion is an important part of their lives (Newport, 2016; Shannon-Missal, 2013). Worldwide those numbers are even higher (Koenig, 2009). Despite the fact that those percentages are slightly lower than previous years, those who claim spiritual or religious beliefs still represent the vast majority of Americans. Additionally, a majority of Americans report that they turn to religion/spirituality to help them cope with difficult times. Koenig (2009) reviewed various studies that looked at how people turn to religion in difficult times. For example, one study reported that after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, 90% of Americans reported turning to religious/spiritual sources for support. Other studies Koenig reviewed demonstrated that in a variety of settings, including hospitals and psychiatric settings, a significant majority of patients value religion/spirituality for comfort and support. Koenig further explains why so many people turn to spirituality to cope.

> Why is religious coping so common among patients with medical and psychiatric illness? Religious beliefs provide a sense of meaning and purpose during difficult life circumstances that assist with psychological integration; they usually promote a positive world view that is optimistic and hopeful; they provide role models in sacred writings that facilitate acceptance of suffering; they give people a sense of indirect control over circumstances, reducing the need for personal control; and they offer a community of support, both human and divine, to help reduce isolation and loneliness.
> Unlike many other coping resources, religion is available to anyone at any time, regardless of financial, social, physical, or mental circumstances. (p. 285)

With so many people who rely on religious and/or spiritual influence in the daily decisions and behaviors of their lives, there is a great need within the field of psychology to understand the role spiritual and religious practices and beliefs play in individual mental health. Further, research suggests that many clients want spirituality/religion to be part of therapy (Koenig, 2009; Richards & Bergin, 2005; Stanley et al., 2011;). Despite these facts, as a whole, the field of counseling and psychology initially was reluctant to provide training and skills for therapists to more professionally navigate spiritual/religious issue in therapy (Russell & Yarhouse, 2006).

Historically, many in the field of psychology have tended to look upon religion with skepticism, with many of the leading figures and scholars asserting that religious faith has a negative influence on mental health (Richards & Bergin, 2005). One of the founding fathers of the psychology movement, Sigmund Freud, compared religion to a psychotic illusion (Freud, 1928/2012; Turner et al., 2004), and later, the creator of Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy, Albert Ellis, compared religiosity to "irrational thinking and emotional disturbance" (Ellis, 1980, p. 637), arguing for years that devout religiosity was harmful to mental health (Ellis, 1983; Ellis, 1992). For decades many therapists felt that religion and spirituality had no place within therapy, despite the central role that many clients felt that their faith played in their lives.

Around the turn of the millennium there was also a change in the tide of popular opinion about the role of spirituality and religion in therapy. In 1980, Allen Bergin published a landmark article about the role of spirituality and religion in psychotherapy in which he argued that values and bias are inherent in psychotherapy, therefore, rather than try to pretend the therapist is value-free, it is more helpful to accept and acknowledge their role in therapy. Furthermore, he argued that since the majority of Americans have significant spiritual beliefs and find strength in those

values, it is appropriate to welcome spiritual and religious values in therapy (Bergin, 1980, Bergin,1991; Bergin et al., 1996; Richards, 2016). This led to increased discussion on the topic, and eventually resulted in a highly publicized series of debates between Allen Bergin and Albert Ellis (Ellis, 1980; Walls, 1980). The result of the article and ensuing debate was the growth of a new movement to welcome religious and spiritual topics into therapy (Richards, 2016). In the decades that followed, research has shown again and again that many clients value spiritual and religious approaches and interventions, and that such interventions can be effective; sometimes even more effective than traditional therapy (Richards & Worthington, 2010). Due in large part to the efforts of Bergin and others who challenged early attitudes toward religion/spirituality, a new movement began to change perceptions and the field has become more open to addressing spiritual issues in therapy and research (Richards & Bergin, 2005; Pargament, Exline & Jones, 2013). In 2002, the American Psychological Association (APA) officially identified religion and spirituality as a multicultural issue, encouraging therapists to become competent and comfortable in understanding and navigating spiritual and religious issues in psychotherapy (Richards & Bergin, 2005). Today, Division 36 of the APA is the Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality and is devoted to examining spirituality and its role in psychotherapy (http://www.apadivisions.org/division-36/about/index.aspx). In addition, numerous journals and newsletters are dedicated to publishing research and discussion of issues related to religion and spirituality in psychotherapy, including APA's journal's *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* and *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*. APA has also published several important books on the subject, including the two volume *APA Handbook of Religion and Psychology* (Pargament, Exline & Jones, 2013; Pargament, Mahoney & Shafranske, 2013), *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Richards & Bergin, 2005), and *Spiritually Oriented*

Interventions for Psychotherapy (Aten et al., 2011). This change in attitude toward spirituality has promoted a new push to research, understand and apply spiritual techniques to improve growth and insight in clients.

As research continues to identify the relationships between religion/spirituality and mental health, it is becoming clear that for many Americans, religion and spirituality is directly linked to behavior and cognition. Famous researcher Gallup Jr. (1999) suggested, based on his research, that depth of religious commitment was more influential on the identity and behavior of Americans than any other factor. Religion and spirituality may have such a strong influence on mental health because of the meaning and values they can generate. For many people, faith and spirituality create a framework of meaning that helps them navigate through challenges and provides them strength and support (Koenig, 2009). Understanding the relationships between various spiritual and religious concepts and mental health is important because such concepts can be powerful resources in helping individuals overcome mental and emotional challenges and move toward personal healing and growth. Research continues to examine various spiritual values and how they interact with mental health. Some examples of such values that can be related to spirituality and have been shown to be beneficial to mental health include compassion (Rashedi et al., 2015), humility (Krause & Hayward, 2015), forgiveness (Sandage & Worthington, 2010), and gratitude (McCullough et al., 2002).

Grace

Another value that may promote mental health, especially among those of Christian faith, is grace. Grace is considered a central tenet in Christianity, the faith claimed by nearly three quarters of the US population but is also present in some form in nearly every world religion

(Bufford et al., 2017). Surprisingly, however, until recently there has been very little research into the role this important tenet of many faiths plays in mental health. Bassett (2013) explained,

> At a time when there is a growing interest in spirituality among psychologists, it seems perplexing that this construct [grace], which is so central to the Christian faith (one of the major faith systems in the world), has largely been ignored by psychologists. (p. 43)

Modern researchers have acknowledged the magnitude of this important spiritual concept, even identifying individual manifestations or "perfections" of grace that should not be neglected (Emmons et al., 2017).

One reason grace has not been studied extensively may be due to the difficulty in clearly defining and measuring it. Grace is a complex concept that has received attention from Christian theologians and philosophers for two millennia (McMinn, 2008; Ryrie, 1975). As such there are many different facets of grace that may be studied. Further, the concept of grace is not without controversy even within Christianity. Although the Oxford Dictionary defines grace rather simply as "the free and unmerited favour of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings" (Oxford Dictionary Online, 2016), the specific details of how grace is bestowed has been a source of debate among Christian scholars for centuries, prompting one author to call it "the watershed that divides Catholicism from Protestantism, Calvanism from Arminianism, modern liberalism from conservatism" (Ryrie, 1975). Grace has been the central subject in several theological controversies, beginning with Pelagianism and the debate about human depravity and regeneration, resulting in the Council of Carthage in 418 AD, and culminating in the Council of Trent in 1547, which addressed the role of sacraments as means of grace as well as the relationship between grace and free will (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2020). Modern theologians continue these historical debates to a large degree, promoting

different approaches to grace, giving birth to the debate over such opposing concepts of *cheap grace* and *costly grace* (Bonhoeffer, 1937/2012).

Additionally, Christian theologians have identified various types of grace, each fulfilling a different purpose and accessed in a slightly different way. For example, in reformed theology, "common grace" refers to grace which is universally given to all creatures, while "special grace" is bestowed only on those whom are chosen by God through faith in Jesus Christ. Catholic catechism teaches of two types of grace. "Sanctifying grace" is what sustains and transforms individuals into holy creatures while "actual grace" compels individuals to take actions that put God first in their lives. Catholics and other liturgical Christians also teach of "sacramental grace" which is bestowed through participation in the holy sacraments. Theologians throughout history have categorized and defined various aspects of grace. However, in general, these different types of grace can be grouped into three different categories: Common Grace (universal light and goodness found in all creation), Saving Grace (Christ's saving power) and Empowering Grace (God working within individuals to fulfil God's purpose).

Despite differences, it is generally agreed among Christian groups that grace is more than just forgiveness of sin. Rather, grace invokes a change of attitude and behavior within the recipient (MacAurthur, 1993). Christian author C. S. Lewis described,

> The Christian thinks any good he does comes from the Christ-life inside him. He does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us; just as the roof of a greenhouse does not attract the sun because it is bright, but becomes bright because the sun shines on it. (1952/2001, p. 63)

These complexities in understanding the full nature of grace naturally lead to another challenge for researching grace: measuring grace. Researchers have focused on how grace is

experienced by individuals or on how grace within an individual may manifest itself through graciousness to others. Within the last few years, several scales have been developed attempting to measure the role grace and/or legalism play in the lives and belief systems of respondents. These include the Grace Scale (Payton et al., 2000), the Amazing Grace Scale (Bassett, 2013), and the Richmont Grace Scale (Sisemore et al., 2011; Watson et al., 2011). Each of these grace scales, though similar in concept, has its own unique definition and focus. Recently a new scale was created with the intention of combining the strengths of all three scales into one measurement tool (Bufford et al., 2015).

The Dimensions of Grace Scale (Bufford et al., 2017) included measures of costly grace (legalism), empowerment grace and graciousness to self and others. The first factor measures an individual's belief in and experience of grace in life. It includes the idea of God's unconditional love and acceptance but also that God's grace is working in an individual to empower them to be better. The second factor looks at what the authors call "costly grace" and attempts to identify the belief that God's favor is dependent on personal righteousness and obedience. The remaining factors attempt to measure graciousness, which may be external manifestations of grace working in someone. Measures of graciousness to self and to others are included as well as a measure of graciousness from others, which may give insight into how individuals understand the way grace functions in life.

Research using these various grace scales has found correlations between grace and spiritual well-being, gratitude, and positive religious well-being (Bufford et al., 2015), as well as between grace and intrinsic spirituality and a healthy view of sin (Sisemore et al., 2011). Grace was also negatively correlated with shame (Spradlin, 2002), depression, and anxiety (Sisemore et al., 2011). These early measurement tools have established important momentum in the study of

a previously unmeasured value that is central to the religious beliefs of many and may lead to valuable insight about the relationship between religious values such as grace and mental health.

Legalism

If grace is the belief that God's favor is given freely, then its theological opposite may be legalism. Legalism is defined as "excessive adherence to law or formula," or in a theological context, "dependence on moral law rather than on personal religious faith" (Lexico, n.d.). In other words, legalism is the belief that God's favor is earned ONLY through righteous works and avoidance of sinful acts (Bassett, 2013). Some have labeled this "costly grace" (Bufford et al., 2017) because it states that grace must be purchased through good works and obedience. In addition to believing such obedience is necessary to gain divine favor, those who view religion in a legalistic way may believe that engaging in sinful acts will bring God's displeasure and result in some form of punishment. In Protestant Christian theology, legalism is considered heresy.

How such beliefs impact mental health is certainly debatable, but the minimal research that has been done indicated that legalism is associated with poor mental health. Legalistic views and scrupulosity have been linked to higher levels of depression, anxiety, shame and maladaptive perfectionism (Allen & Wang, 2014; Allen et al., 2015). A recent study at Brigham Young University looked at the relationship between grace and legalism and various mental illness indicators (Judd et al., 2018). This study indicated that the belief in legalism (that one must earn God's favor through doing good works) is correlated with various mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, scrupulosity and shame. However, the same study also found that belief in grace mediates the effects of legalism on mental illness. Further, the study indicated that there is significant evidence that among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, men and women appear to experience grace differently (Judd et al., 2018).

In the limited research on grace and legalism, legalism doesn't always appear to be the statistical opposite of grace. Bassett (2013) found that the two constructs were surprisingly not related. Perhaps this is because the line between legalism and discipleship or obedience that results from grace (as described by C.S. Lewis above) may not always be clear, even to devout Christians. Obedience is a core value of many religions, which often provide a detailed path for how one should live life. Though there are variations in teachings among denominations, in general, religious teachings and texts outline "righteous" deeds that should be followed and warn of "sinful" behaviors to avoid. Thus, the ideal spiritual life for many involves following a religious law as closely as possible. This is certainly true of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), who value grace, but who also place an emphasis on obedience to religious law.

The theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints seems to give room for some belief in both of these seemingly opposing concepts. The official LDS Bible dictionary explains that grace is given as an unmerited gift, and as a result of personal obedience and righteousness ("grace") (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, n.d.). Like the New Testament, LDS scripture can seem somewhat varied and contradictory on the relationship between works and grace. In a well-known verse about grace in LDS scripture, Nephi, a Book of Mormon author, wrote that "it is by grace that we are saved, after all that we can do" (Book of Mormon, 1981, 2 Nephi 23:25). Many Latter-day Saints interpret this to mean that they must do their very best to keep the commandments, and only after they have done all they possibly can will Christ's grace then make up the difference and grant them forgiveness and eternal life. As Draper et al. (2017) pointed out, there is often misunderstanding about grace and works.

Some members of the LDS faith develop a misunderstanding of grace because of its

seemingly paradoxical nature. In addition, Latter-day Saints may receive seemingly

contradictory messages about grace from their church leaders and theologians. Some

LDS church leaders and theologians, when teaching about Christ's grace, emphasize the

necessity of good works and a person's best effort in order to receive divine grace. . . . In

contrast, some church leaders and theologians emphasize the unconditional nature of

grace; they teach that God's children never earn grace because he always already gives

grace to all. (p. 66)

Beliefs about earning grace may promote perfectionistic tendencies, which may result in greater

levels of depression, anxiety and shame (Allen et al., 2015).

Despite the differences in definitions and doctrine or dogma, nearly all faiths fall

somewhere on the grace-legalism spectrum between the belief that grace (God's favor) must be

earned through specific deeds or obedience (sometimes referred to as legalism or "costly grace")

and the belief that grace is not dependent on works but is entirely a gift from God (sometimes

known in its extreme as "cheap grace"). Furthermore, each individual may have his or her own

unique personal perception of grace, separate from the teachings of their chosen faith. It is, in

fact, possible that individuals have developed unhealthy understanding of religious concepts (to

include the role of grace and legalism) in their lives (Richards et al., 1989). Maladaptive

perfectionism is an example of a negative belief that may grow out of such distorted beliefs

about legalism (Allen et al., 2015). Understanding how beliefs about grace and legalism impact

the mental health of clients may be of benefit for clinicians who seek to help clients (especially

those of strong personal faith).

Rationale for This Study

For many Latter-day Saint clients, as with individuals of many other faiths, spiritual issues are an important part of their identity and are deeply intertwined with their mental health (Bergin, 1991; Richards et al., 1999). Indeed, it can be very difficult and often unwise to separate religious beliefs and behaviors from other psychological processes when counseling LDS clients. Latter-day Saint culture has a strong legalistic influence that can lead to perfectionism, which may be adaptive or maladaptive (Allen et al., 2015). When highly religious individuals such as many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints adopt legalistic beliefs, it is possible for those beliefs to become maladaptive and create mental health challenges (Draper et al., 2017). In addition, many others struggle with sexual issues, eating disorders, depression and other psychological issues that may cause them to feel "unworthy" or alienated from God.

Recent research has shown a connection between legalistic beliefs and mental illness. Allen et al. (2015) showed that LDS students who scored high on belief in legalism were more likely to have elevated levels of scrupulosity (performing religious acts because of a fear that "sinful activity" will lead to God's disapproval). Scrupulosity in turn was associated with higher levels of guilt and shame (Allen & Wang, 2014; Allen et al., 2015). Thus, while perfectionism can encourage an individual to seek personal excellence and report higher levels of life satisfaction (Bieling et al., 2004), it can also become maladaptive and associated with higher reported levels of depression, shame and guilt (Allen & Wang, 2014). Therapists may benefit greatly by being able to recognize where on the legalism/grace spectrum religious clients who struggle with perfectionism fall, and may then be able to identify spiritual values, such as grace, that might create a healthier spiritual relationship with God and self.

Research on the influence a person's experience of grace has on mental health is relatively new. However, the results thus far on the influence of grace on mental health seem to indicate a positive influence (Bassett, 2013; Bufford et al., 2015; Payton et al., 2000; Spradlin, 2002;). If experiencing grace acts as a mediator, buffering against depression, anxiety and other types of mental illness (Judd et al., 2018), the next logical questions are: Does the experience of grace encourage positive mental health? Is a healthy view of grace beneficial to emotional development, including self-esteem, optimism and other positive mental health indicators?

The man who is considered by some to be the father of the Positive Psychology movement, Seligman (2002), wrote,

> We have discovered that there are human strengths that act as buffers against mental illness: courage, future-mindedness, optimism, interpersonal skill, faith, work ethic, hope, honesty, perseverance, the capacity for flow and insight, to name several. Much of the task of prevention in this new century will be to create a science of human strength whose mission will be to understand and learn how to foster these virtues in young people. (p. 5)

This study seeks to identify such a virtue in grace. If indeed the experience of grace can act as a buffer against mental illness, then it is also likely that that belief can be a "human strength" which will foster positive mental development. Such a virtue should be identified and cultivated in therapy where appropriate.

Statement of Problem

Research continues to shed light on the relationship between spirituality and mental health, creating a clearer picture of the benefits as well as challenges created by religious beliefs and practices. Such insights have proven helpful to therapists who deal with religious clients or clients who embrace spiritual values (Richards & Bergin, 2005). As new research begins to look

at various religious concepts and beliefs and how those beliefs impact mental health, there is benefit in finding ways to measure and identify how individuals understand and apply such religious principles and spiritual values. While each religious denomination may interpret and teach such religious concepts in their own unique way, individuals within that faith tradition may also interpret such religious principles in their own unique way, sometimes in ways that differ significantly from what the religion intends. It is even possible that individuals cling to beliefs that may be emotionally or spiritually harmful (Richards et al., 1989). Understanding the relationship between various religious beliefs and mental illness may provide important insights that may help therapists and clients better identify harmful thought patterns. One specific religious tenet that many (especially Christians) uphold is that of grace. Early research on perceptions of grace has already indicated that experiencing grace can mediate the relationship between legalism and a variety of mental health issues (Judd et al., 2018). There is, however, little research on the relationship between the belief in God's grace and positive mental health indicators.

Statement of Purpose

This study seeks to increase understanding of how a person's personal religious beliefs impact their mental health. It will focus specifically on how the experience of the concepts of grace and legalism are related to various positive psychology measures. The study looks at five different positive psychology outcome measurements: life optimism, life satisfaction, meaning in life, self-esteem, and gratitude. The goal is to identify how religious concepts such as grace and legalism may impact mental health among religious college students.

Research Questions

1. Do intrinsic spirituality, legalism and/or grace predict positive mental health as measured by optimism, life-satisfaction, meaning, self-esteem, or gratitude?

2. Is the relationship between spirituality and optimism, life-satisfaction, meaning, self-esteem, or gratitude mediated by grace and/or legalism?

3. Is there an interaction effect between grace and legalism on optimism, life-satisfaction, meaning, self-esteem, or gratitude?

4. Do the above results differ between males and females?

Hypothesis

Based on results of previous research, intrinsic spirituality will likely predict all five positive mental health outcomes, as will grace. Intrinsic spirituality will likely be indirectly related to the five outcomes through grace. Legalism will most likely be negatively predictive of many or all of the outcomes. Additionally, based on previous research on grace and legalism (Judd et al., 2018) which suggested that men and women experience grace differently, it seems reasonable that gender will influence the relationships between grace, legalism, and positive mental health measures.

<center>**Method**</center>

Data for this study were collected as part of a larger multi-measure survey conducted through Brigham Young University, and appropriate approvals were received from the inter-disciplinary review board prior to proceeding. The "Understand Thyself Survey" (UTS) included a wide variety of measurements designed to assess various aspects of spirituality, religiosity, positive psychology and mental health along with demographics and other factors that previous literature has shown related to the constructs of interest. The UTS was uploaded to BYU's online

research participation system which utilizes Qualtrics and is designed to administer research surveys in a professional, secure and confidential way. Participants, after receiving a link to the survey, were able to log into the account, give consent, and take the survey online.

Participants

A convenience sample of undergraduate and graduate students attending Brigham Young University was taken for this research. Students in various classes (mostly Counseling Psychology and Religion classes) at BYU were offered extra credit as a motivation for participating in the study. Students were sent a link by their instructors which directed them to the SONA website. The survey took approximately 50 minutes to complete.

In response to the invitation to participate in the study, 682 students took the survey. After discarding incomplete surveys, we were left with $n = 560$ complete surveys. Of those completing the survey, 356 were female and 204 were male. As might be expected at a university, the average age was 20.8 and the mode age at 18. Because Brigham Young University is a religious school in an area that doesn't have wide racial or cultural diversity, that lack of religious and racial diversity is reflected in the study participants. 87.2% of participants reported being white/Caucasian, with another 3.5% Asian, 2.5% Latino, and 0.6% of African descent. In addition, 4.6% said they were of mixed race and another 1.6% chose "other" on the survey. Unsurprisingly, the far majority of participants (99.1%) were Latter-day Saints (Mormon). The other responses (Roman Catholic: .3%, None: .5%, and Other: .2%) did not represent a significant portion of the study and were, therefore, dropped from the study.

Instruments

The "Understand Thyself Survey" (UTS) study utilized multiple instruments to measure various aspects of religion, spirituality and mental health. The survey was divided into three

parts: 1) religious and spiritual life, 2) clinical and positive psychological functioning, and 3) other related measures. In addition to a variety of demographic questions, the survey included measurements of intrinsic spirituality, attachment to God, forgiveness, scrupulosity, perfectionism, guilt and shame, depression, anxiety, and religious discrimination. For this study, measurements of intrinsic spirituality, grace, legalism, life optimism, life satisfaction, self-esteem, meaning in life and gratitude were utilized.

Intrinsic Spirituality

The Intrinsic Spirituality Scale (ISS; Hodge, 2003) is a six-item self-report scale which uses an 11-point Likert scale (0–10). Though the scale on each item uses slightly different wording, each item measures how important that item is in their life. For example, one item states, "When I am faced with an important decision, spirituality plays . . . " Participants choose a number on a scale between 0 (Plays absolutely no role) and 10 (Is always the overriding consideration). Internal consistency of the ISS is high, with a Cronbach's alpha of .938.

Experiencing Grace (Peace and Empowerment)

The Dimensions of Grace scale identifies an individual's experience and understanding of various concepts associated with grace (Bufford et al., 2017). It is comprised 36 questions on a 7-point Likert scale, both positively and negatively worded, that factor into 5 subscales, each measuring different dimensions of Grace. The diversity of these five factors reflects the complexity of defining and measuring grace and represent a collaboration of the creators to combine several different grace measurement tools. Though the entire measurement was given to participants, this particular study seeks to understand the experience of grace as an empowering force and legalism (as an opposite of grace). The other factors measuring graciousness are not a focus of this particular study. The following subscales were used:

The first factor of the *Dimensions of Grace Scale* is Peace and Empowerment, which attempts to measure how an individual experiences grace that empowers positive action or peace. Example items are "I strive to do good because of God's acceptance of me, not in order to earn His love," and "Because of God's work in my life I feel I have more self-control. My actions are more likely to be appropriate."

Legalism

The second factor in the scale measures "costly grace." Because the term "costly grace" carries historical theological meaning that appears to differ slightly from the intent of the scale, we have chosen to call this scale "legalism." This is the belief that grace must be earned through good works or obedience. Items include "The harder I work, the more I earn God's favor," and "The more obedient I am, the more God loves me." Some of the wording on these items may have been problematic for Latter-day Saint beliefs, as indicated by a slightly lower internal consistency. One item which loaded poorly ("My behavior does not matter since I've been forgiven") was dropped.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This 10-item assessment uses a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) and has reverse coded items. Questions include, "I feel I have a number of good qualities," and "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself." Since its creation this scale has been widely used and has proven its usefulness.

Optimism

General life optimism was measured using the Life Orientation Test (LOT), a 12-item scale developed by Scheier and Carver (1985). The scale is comprised of 8 questions (4 reverse

coded), with four filler questions designed to disguise the purpose of the test. It uses a 5-point scale (0–4). Participants indicate whether they agree or disagree with statements such as, "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best," and "If something can go wrong for me, it will." The four "filler" items were eliminated from the analysis.

Meaning in Life

The level of life-meaning participants felt in their lives was measured by the popular *Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)*. This 10-item self-report measurement is designed to assess an individual's perception of meaning and their drive toward meaning in their life. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("absolutely untrue") to 7 ("absolutely true") and include two factors: Presence and Search. Validity was shown to be good when compared to other measurements of meaning and purpose (Steger et al., 2006). In this study, only the first factor (Presence) was utilized. It measures the presence of perceived meaning in a person's life and includes items such as "I understand my meaning in life," and "I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful."

Satisfaction With Life

The *Satisfaction with Life Survey (SwLS)* is a popular 5-item self-report measurement that looks at a participant's level of life fulfillment and perceived global satisfaction. Respondents rate themselves on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) on questions designed to identify how satisfying they feel their life to be. Questions include, "In most ways my life is close to ideal," and "If I could live my life over I would change nothing." (Diener et al., 1985).

Gratitude

  The Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) is a 6-item self-reported assessment which looks at the way individuals experience gratitude in their daily lives. The items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 7 being "strongly agree," and includes reverse scored items. Items include "I have so much in life to be thankful for" and "I am grateful to a wide variety of people." (McCullough et al., 2002).

  In addition to controlling for age, race, and parental income, this study also added a control measure for depression and anxiety. To control for depression and anxiety a bifactor model using the *Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9)* and the *Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7)* questionnaire.

Bifactor of Depression and Anxiety

  Given the substantial correlation between the scales of depression and anxiety (.77), as well as previous research describing their comorbidity (Merikangas et al., 2003; Moscati et al., 2016), it was determined to combine these measures using a bifactor model (Chen et al., 2012); a model used to capture the underlying construct of two or more scales (indeed, analyses were fit with anxiety and depression separate and evidence of multicollinearity was found along with a reduction in statistical power power). In this bifactor model, all PHQ-9 and GAD-7 items were indicators of a latent "anxiety/depression" variable with two other latent variables representing the uniqueness of both anxiety and depression (for details of the bifactor model see Chen et al., 2012). This model fit the data well (CFI = .954; RMSEA = .058) with all items loading on the combined factor above .45. This combined factor correlated highly with individual scales for anxiety (.92) and depression (.94) indicating it summarized the information of both scales. Given the bifactor model's complexity, rather than estimate it simultaneously with the structural model,

scores were saved and exported for use in further analyses. Below I refer to this combined anxiety and depression score as "anxiety/depression."

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). Each scale was specified as a latent variable and was analyzed for model fit and internal consistency. Problematic items were identified through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and were eliminated when necessary. Model fit results are listed in Table 1.

All variables were correlated in the model to determine if the model fit was acceptable. For greater parsimony, rather than using one model with all of the variables and controls, the model was simplified into five separate models, with each model focusing on a different positive mental health measure (gratitude, optimism, life satisfaction, meaning in life, and self-esteem). Figure 1 shows the general model used for each of the five life outlook measures. Each individual model was examined for model fit.

Table 1

Model Fit for the Study

Scale	RMSEA	CFI/ TLI	SRMR	Cronbach's
Intrinsic Spirituality Scale (ISS)	.07	.99/.98	.02	.94
Dimensions of Grace-Empowerment	.05	.98/.96	.03	.83
Dimensions of Grace- Legalism	.07	.95/.90	.04	.70
Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (R_EST)	.08	.95/.92	.03	.92
Meaning in Life Questionnaire	.02	.99/.99	.02	.88
(MiLQ) Satisfaction with Life Scale	.00	1.00/1.00	.01	.82
(SwLS) Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6)	.03	.98/.96	.03	.72
Life Orientation Test (LOT-R)	.07	.92/.90	.05	.85

Figure 1

Structural Equation Model for the Study
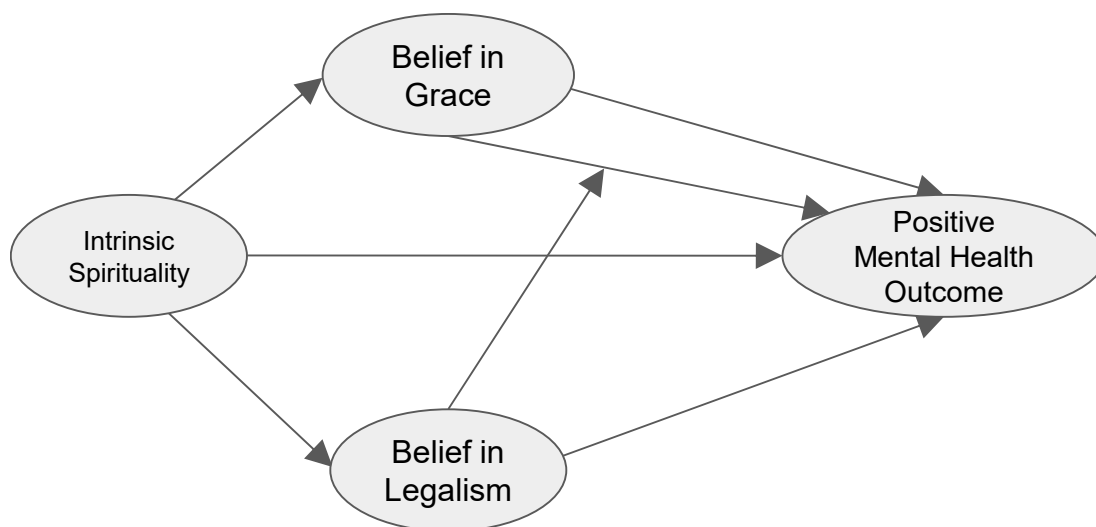
Based on previous research which shows a correlation between intrinsic spirituality and various positive mental health outcomes (Sanders et al., 2015), in each of the five models, intrinsic spirituality was specified to have a direct effect on the mental health outcome. In addition, experience of grace and belief in legalism were modeled as mediators between intrinsic spirituality and the positive mental health outcome. Mplus's "Model Indirect" command was used to calculate indirect effect, with 5000 bootstraps to obtain appropriate standard errors. The models were then analyzed using moderator analysis to identify any interaction effects between experience of grace and belief in legalism on the outcome variables. Where a significant interaction effect was identified, the interaction was graphed to plus and minus one standard deviation in order to illustrate the effect. Finally, multiple group models were fit by gender in order to examine possible gender differences in the above analyses.

Results

Table 2 shows the correlations, means and standard deviations for the variables. There were significant correlations between almost all of the variables.

Table 2

Correlation, Means, and Standard Deviations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Intrinsic Spirituality	1											
2. Belief in Grace	.73***	1										
3. Belief in Legalism	-.54***	-.65***	1									
4. Self-Esteem	.30***	.42***	-.25***	1								
5. Satisfaction with Life	.40***	.45***	.-.21**	.68***	1							
6. Meaning in Life	.53***	.60***	-.43***	.62***	.60***	1						
7. Gratitude	.58***	.70***	-.51***	.46***	.50***	.53***	1					
8. Optimism	.39***	.53***	-.32**	.78***	.60***	.67***	.52***	1				
9. Depression/anxiety	-.22***	-.26***	.13*	-.67***	-.52***	-.48***	-.27***	-.57***	1			
10. Age	0.07	0.07	-.05	.15***	.07	.13**	.-02	.13*	-.13*	1		
11. Race	0.09	.09	-.13**	.05	.10*	.05	.07	-.10*	-.06	.01	1	
12. Parent's Income	0.03*	0.02	.00	.09*	.11*	.00	.02	-.03	-.09	.38	-.03	1
Mean	0	0	0	0	2.23	0	0	0.03	2.09	2.25	0	
Standard Deviation	0.93	0.97	0.99	0.39	1.26	0.64	1.14	0.6	0.84	1.72	1.12	

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001

Each model had acceptable level of model fit (CFI > 0.90 and RMSEA < 0.08), showed an acceptable fit, with optimism showing the weakest fit (CFI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.05) and satisfaction as the strongest (CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.04)

Self-Esteem

Figure 1 shows the results of the model analysis with self-esteem as the positive mental health outcome measure. This model showed an acceptable level of fit (CFI = 0.935, RMSEA = 0.04). When the model was grouped by gender, important differences between males and females emerged. For males, there were no significant relationships between any of the variables other than between intrinsic spirituality and both experience of grace (0.735***) and legalism (−0.602***). For females, intrinsic spirituality was significantly predictive of experience of grace (0.689***) and was negatively predictive of legalism (−0.513***). However, in other areas the model was different for females. Experience of grace was also predictive of self-esteem (0.267*), but legalism was not. Mediator analysis with a bootstrap of 5000 revealed that experience of grace fully mediated the relationship between intrinsic spirituality and self-esteem (0.199**). Moderator analysis also revealed a significant interaction effect between experience of grace and legalism on self-esteem (-0.129**) for females. Figure 2 graphs the interaction effect between legalism and experience of grace for females on self-esteem out to plus or minus one standard deviation. Females with a low belief in a legalism and a high experience of grace reported the highest levels of self-esteem, while those low on beliefs in both legalism and grace reported the lowest levels of self-esteem. Females who were high in legalism and high in grace belief, two beliefs that seem to be at odds with each other, however, still saw a positive impact. The combination of high legalism and low grace was also associated with somewhat lower self-esteem.

Figure 2

Structural Equation Model Predicting Self-Esteem
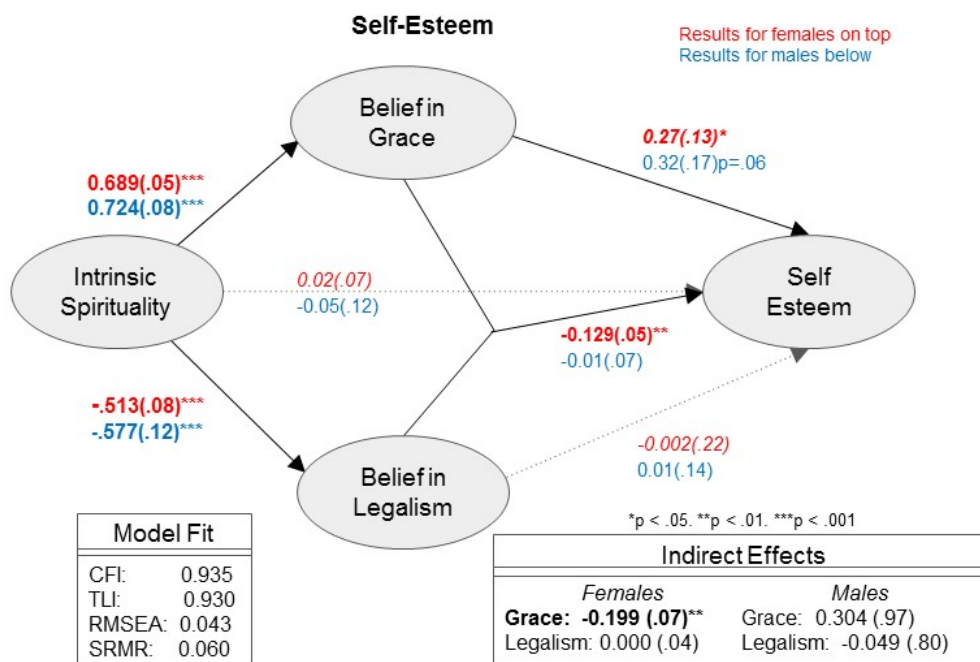
Figure 3

Grace—Legalism Interaction Effect on Self-Esteem (Females)
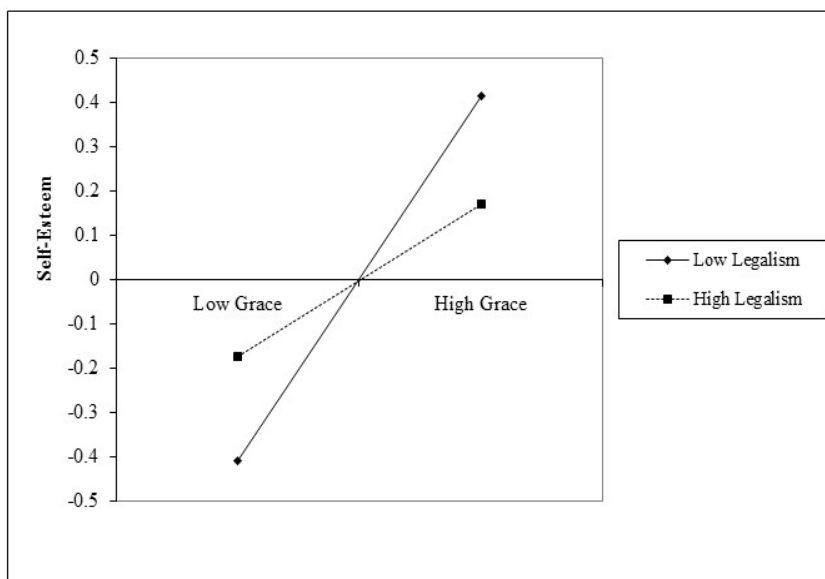
Meaning in Life

Figure 4 shows the results of the model analysis with Meaning in Life as the positive mental health outcome. This model showed an acceptable level of fit (CFI = 0.931, RMSEA = 0.044). In addition to retaining the significant relationships between intrinsic spirituality and both experience of grace and belief in legalism, experience of grace was also predictive of a sense of meaning in life for both males and females (Males = 0.374*, Females = 0.262*). For women, intrinsic spirituality was directly predictive of sense of meaning in life (0.216*). However, no significant indirect effect or grace-legalism interaction effects were found.

Figure 4

Structural Equation Model Predicting Meaning in Life
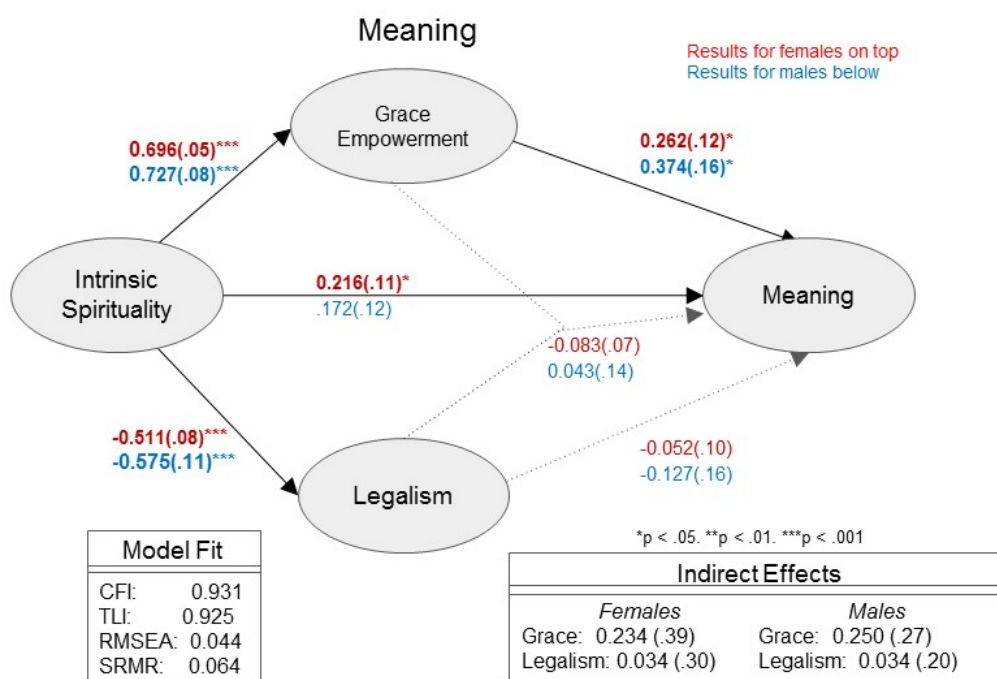
Satisfaction With Life

Figure 5 shows the results of the structural equation model with satisfaction with life as the life outlook outcome variable. This model had an acceptable level of fit (CFI = 0.935,

RMSEA = 0.043). Apart from the significant relationships between intrinsic spirituality and both grace and legalism, males and females scored quite differently in this model. Males had no other significant relationships among variables in the model. However, females had significant relationships between several variables. Satisfaction was positively predicted by experience of grace (0.382*). In the initial analysis (before controlling for anxiety and depression) belief in legalism was positively predictive of satisfaction (0.186*). However, after the control was included, it dropped just below significance (0.202, p = .07). Intrinsic Spirituality was not related to life satisfaction directly but it was related indirectly through grace (.273*). In addition, moderator analysis found a significant interaction effect between grace and legalism on life satisfaction (-0.097**), which was graphed in Figure 6. Similar to the interaction effect found for females in the self- esteem model, women with low belief in legalism and low experience of grace fared the worst in life satisfaction. Those with low experience of grace, but a high belief in legalism fared better in terms of satisfaction, while a high experience of grace produced the most positive outcomes, with high grace/high legalism producing higher satisfaction than high grace/low legalism.

Figure 5

Structural Equation Model Predicting Satisfaction With Life
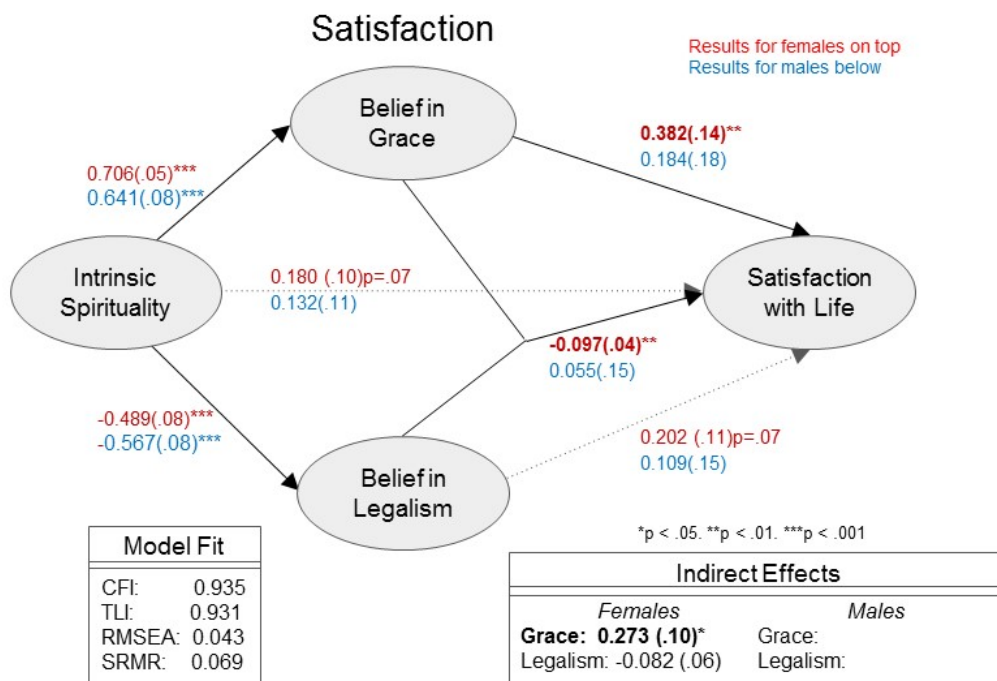
Figure 6

Grace—Legalism Interaction Effect on Satisfaction for Females
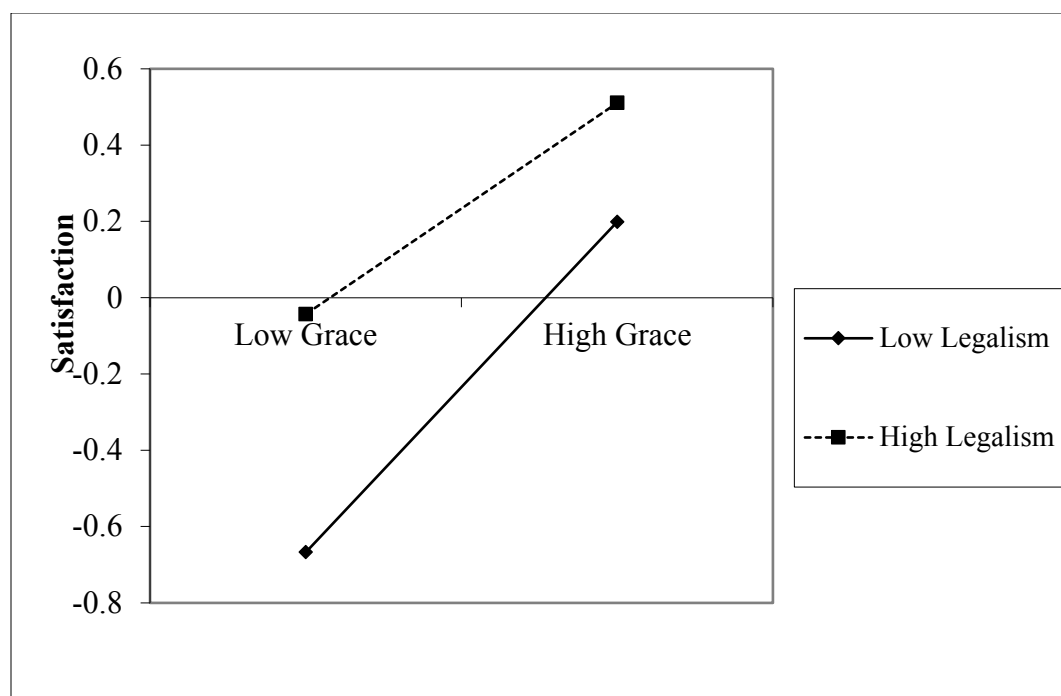
Gratitude

Figure 7 shows the results of the model analysis with gratitude as the positive mental health outcome. This model had good fit (CFI = 0.924, RMSEA = 0.045). For both males and females, significant direct effects were found between intrinsic spirituality and both grace and legalism. Both also had significant grace/legalism interaction effects (females = .269*, males = .391***). Figure 8 shows the interaction effects for both genders. For males, low legalistic beliefs resulted in higher gratitude regardless of belief in grace, but those with high belief in legalism did significantly better if they also had a high experience of grace. The interaction effect for females was similar, but the experience of grace had an even greater positive effect when combined with legalism. For females, grace was a predictor of gratitude (.581***), while for males, legalism was a negative predictor of gratitude (−.360**). Indirect effects were not significant.

Figure 7

Structural Equation Model Predicting Gratitude
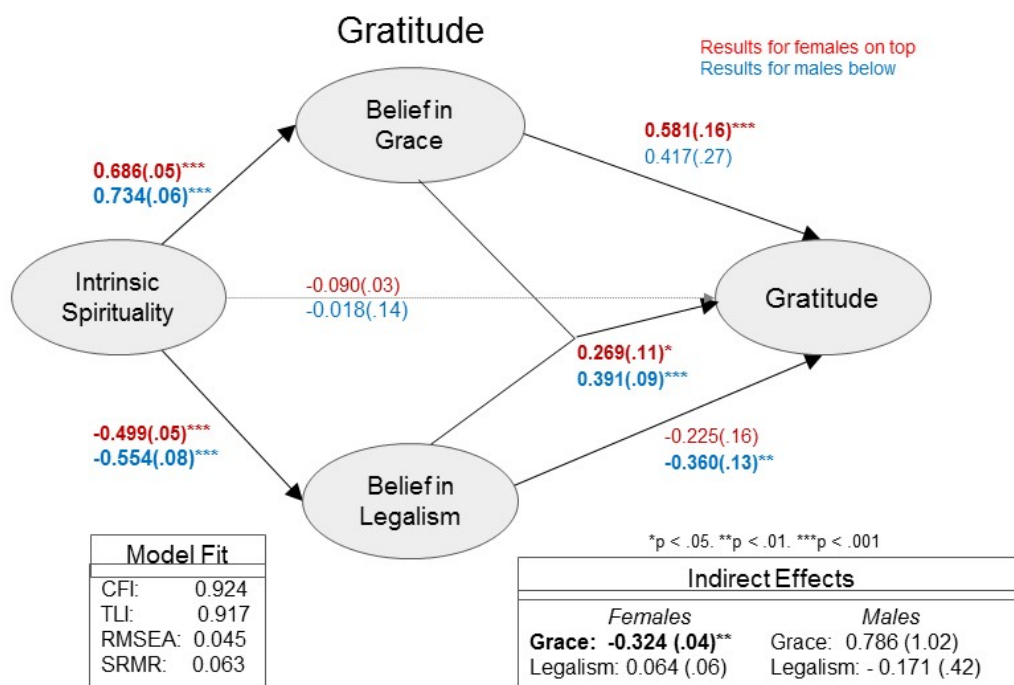
Figure 8

Grace–Legalism Interaction Effect on Gratitude
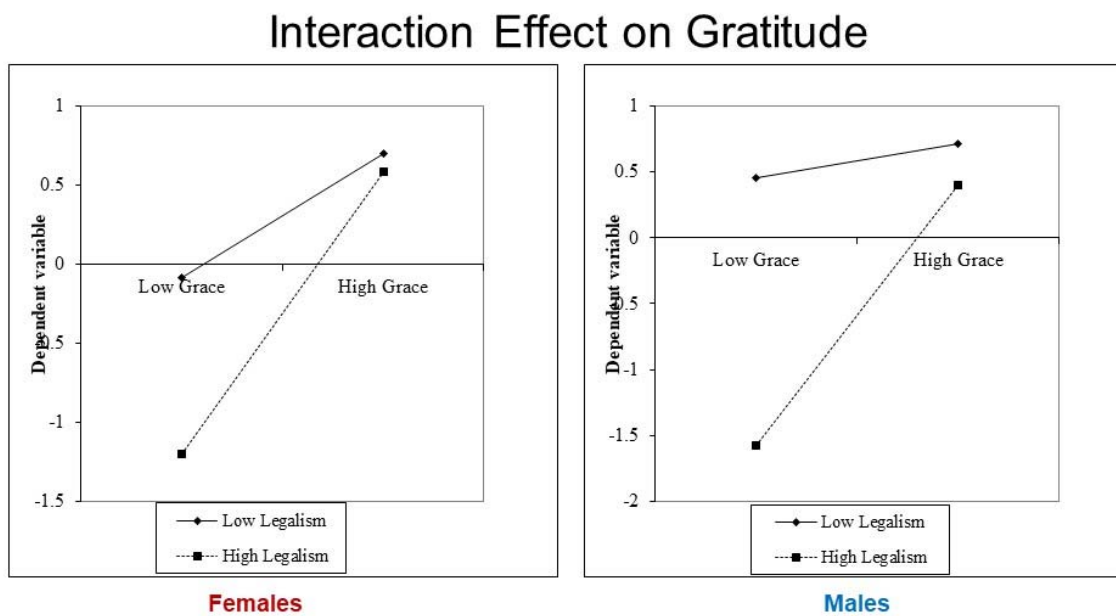
Optimism

Figure 9 shows the results of the structural equation model with optimism as the life outlook outcome variable. This model was very close to an acceptable level of fit (CFI = 0.891, RMSEA = 0.053). Intrinsic spirituality was predictive of experience of grace and was negatively predictive of belief in legalism for both males (.689***) and females (−.503). Grace also predicted optimism for both males (.217*) and females (.271***). Intrinsic spirituality had an indirect effect on optimism through experiencing grace for females (0.190***).

Figure 9

Structural Equation Model Predicting Optimism
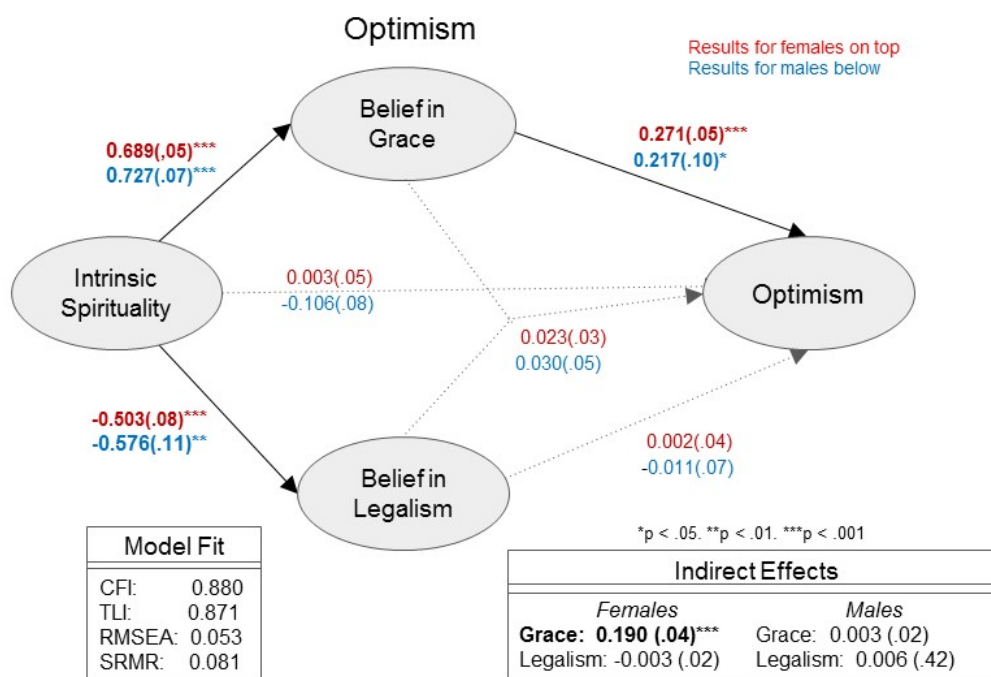
Discussion

As discussed above, previous research has shown that intrinsic spirituality can have a positive relationship with mental health (Donahue, 1985; Pargament et al., 2013, Richards & Bergin, 2005) and that an individual's belief in or experience of grace can promote positive

mental health outcomes and decrease mental illness (Bassett, 2013; Bufford et al., 2015). Further, legalism has been shown to be linked to various undesirable mental health outcomes (Bassett, 2013; Bufford et al., 2017). The results of this study support previous findings about the positive impact of intrinsic spirituality and experiencing grace on mental health, specifically on positive mental health outcomes. They also add additional insight and clarity on how experiencing grace can interact with a belief in legalism.

Intrinsic spirituality was significantly predictive of experiencing grace throughout this study, for both men and women. Likewise, it was also negatively predictive of more legalistic beliefs in every model. In other words, it appears that the more an individual experiences internal spiritual connection to God or a higher power, the more they tend to gravitate toward the belief that grace can empower them, and the more they tend to move away from the legalistic beliefs that their relationship with God or a higher power is dependent on how well they follow certain divine expectations. This seems to support the theory that internal spiritual experience promotes the experience of grace and unconditional acceptance, while extrinsic religiousness tends to be related to legalism and the belief that outward behaviors are necessary to achieve divine approval. Further, it seems to challenge the idea (at least with this sample) that grace and legalism are theological opposites.

Of the five different models, intrinsic spirituality did not have a significant direct effect on any of the positive mental health outcome measures in the presence of these variables except for on life meaning for females. While it is likely, based on previous research that intrinsic spirituality is related to positive mental health, these data suggest that the relationship is more indirect, through other important spirituality factors such as grace. Meaning may have been more significant for women in this sample because of that deep connection with spirituality. For the

women in this sample spirituality seems to combine the divine connection (grace) with the belief in the need to live life in a way pleasing to God (legalism) to create greater meaning in their lives.

Data also suggest that experiencing grace has a positive relationship with each of the positive mental health measures in the study. This is especially true among females. Experiencing grace was mildly predictive of all five outcome variables for females and indirect effects for intrinsic spirituality through experiencing grace were found on all female models except for meaning. Further, experiencing grace was a significant predictor for meaning and optimism for males as well. Gratitude had the strongest relationship with grace in (.581***). This is not surprising because grace in generally is traditionally understood as an unearned gift. The experience of grace appears to be a significant positive component for positive mental health, especially in women. Further research should be done to better identify how experience of grace can be harnessed as a means to improve mental health.

Surprisingly, legalistic beliefs alone had minimal positive or negative impact on the mental health factors in this model. Gratitude experienced by males was the one exception and was negatively predicted by belief in legalism. It seems understandable that an individual who feels that favor must be earned would be less inclined to report feeling grateful, either because they feel they deserve any achievement they have earned in their life, or, on the flip side, because they feel they do not deserve anything. Gratitude is more likely to come as a result of an unearned gift. In all other cases, however, legalism did not have a significant direct or indirect effect on the positive mental health outcome variables. However, legalism did have significant interaction effects in several of the models (discussed below). In other words, the belief in

legalism is not, for the most part, of itself a significant positive or negative predictor of positive life outlook, unless it is combined with a experiencing grace.

Analysis of this data also shows that the men and women in this sample view the role of grace in their life differently. In general, the experience of grace had a stronger relationship with other variables in the study for women than it did for men. Overall, grace was less important for men than it was for women. Interestingly, for women, the interaction between grace and works (legalism) was also important. Women were more satisfied when they felt that there were certain divine expectations about the way they lived their lives, but also that God's grace would be present to empower them. However, for self-esteem, lower expectations (low legalism) combined with higher grace led to the strongest self-esteem.

Gratitude

Grace showed the strongest influence of any of the models on gratitude, especially in women. While grace wasn't a significant predictor of gratitude for males, a grace/legalism interaction effect was present for both men and women, indicating that high levels of experiencing grace were associated with the highest levels of gratitude. This may be because many view grace as an underserved gift which would naturally illicit a state of gratitude in these individuals. It is interesting that that feeling of gratitude is not merely directed toward God, the focus of the experience of grace, but seems to spill over into other aspects of life measured by the scale.

Self-Esteem

A healthy experience of grace is clearly important for a woman's self-esteem. The highest levels of self-esteem were found among women who had high experience of grace and lower belief in legalism. These women may view their self-worth as being dependent on God

rather than on their own religious behavior. Those who had low experience of grace and low belief in legalism had the lowest self-esteem, possibly suggesting that a lack of any intrinsic spiritual connection with God may result in lower self-esteem. Belief in legalism seemed to diminish self-esteem somewhat for those high in their experience of grace. However, a high belief in legalism does not seem to completely contradict the experience of grace for these women, as those who have low experience of grace seem to have their self-esteem buoyed up somewhat by a belief in legalism. Certainly, more research should be done to better understand this relationship.

Satisfaction

One of the most surprising discoveries of this study is the interaction effect that belief in legalism and experiencing grace have on satisfaction. At first glance, it is easy to assume that legalism and grace are opposing beliefs and that a belief in legalism is unhealthy because it makes a person feel "unworthy" of God's love. However, for this group of participants (especially the women), it appears to be a little more complicated. As expected, grace had a positive effect on satisfaction, while those who were low in grace and legalism had the lowest satisfaction. But this interaction effect differs from the others. Surprisingly, belief in legalism seems to have positive influence on satisfaction, especially when coupled with high experience of grace. It is important to add that, before controlling for depression and anxiety, legalism actually had a significant positive relationship with satisfaction, but once the control was added, it dropped out of significance (.202, $p = .07$). In other words, while grace is important for life satisfaction in females, legalism is also important when combined with experiencing grace. This may indicate that for LDS young women, spiritual achievement is important to feeling satisfied in life. Striving to live life in accordance with God's will, along with a belief that God can

support and enable them in that endeavor and that His love is not conditional on their behavior seems to lead to the most satisfaction in life for these women.

Clinical Applications

So, what does it all mean? For Latter-day Saints, experiencing grace and belief in legalism appear to be somewhat intertwined, with both impacting mental health. It appears that, in general, experiencing grace can be beneficial to clients, especially clients who tend to be more perfectionistic. Experiencing grace seems to help transform legalistic beliefs in a way that appears to keep them healthy rather than becoming obsessive or perfectionistic and mentally unhealthy. Counselors who are dealing with clients who are negatively influenced by legalistic beliefs may find benefit in exploring the client's beliefs and experiences with grace.

Limitations

Because of the very narrow nature of this sample, it is difficult to generalize these findings to the general population. There was very little variety in age, race, religion and even parental income in the group of participants. Future research should seek out greater diversity in an attempt to identify the role experiences of spirituality, grace and legalism have on mental health.

Another challenge associated with this study relates to the difficulty in measuring the concepts of grace and legalism. Because each faith tradition has different language and meaning associated with these concepts, more faith specific language could produce more accurate results within that faith group. However, such faith specific language limits the ability to use the measurement across faith traditions and, therefore, limits generalizability. In addition, while the main idea of legalism, as stated above, is the belief that God's favor is achieved ONLY through obedience to divine law, it is possible that some of the items intended to measure "costly grace"

are more a reflection of a belief in the importance of such obedience. Latter-day Saint teaching, for example, suggests that obedience and good works are a manifestation of one's faith.

Finally, another major limitation of this is study is that it is not longitudinal, and therefore cannot establish causality. Though the data suggests a relationship between the constructs, it is impossible to understand with certainty exactly how the variables are influencing each other.

Future Directions

It is exciting to see the study of grace emerge within the field of spirituality and psychology. Future studies could build upon those that have already been published by seeking to identify and measure the complex aspects of grace. Further, longitudinal studies could provide valuable insight into how experiencing grace evolves as individuals progress through life. In addition, most research that has been done on this topic to this point has been conducted using college-age students, many of whom are practicing Christians. Researching how grace, legalism and mental health are related for other faith groups could also be instructive. Finally, researching these beliefs in a clinical sample could provide additional insight that may pave the way for grace-based spiritual interventions in therapy.

Grace is a challenging construct to measure, especially since it is commonly understood by its own believers. In Christian theology belief in "cheap grace" is considered by many to be misguided as is "costly grace" (McMinn, 2008). However, among many individuals, there is often misunderstanding about how faith, works and grace interact. Refining measurement tools to more clearly identify individual's personal beliefs and how those beliefs measure behavior could be helpful. Further, developing interventions that can help individuals better understand the implications of their beliefs in grace and legalism may prove useful to clinicians.

Longitudinal studies would be useful to identify more clearly the causal relationships between the variables. In addition, they might help to clarify how the experiences and beliefs of grace and legalism evolve over time, and how that evolution may impact mental health. As shown in this study, the experience of grace by religious individuals may provide greater protection against depression, anxiety and other challenges to mental wellness, and may encourage positive emotional development. A greater depth and breadth of research may help therapists leverage the concept of grace to promote positive growth to a greater degree with their clients.

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APPENDIX A

Literature Review

Recent polls suggest that somewhere between 74% and 89% of Americans believe in God, and roughly 6 in 10 American adults consider themselves at least moderately religious and report that religion is an important part of their lives (Newport, 2016; Shannon-Missal, 2013). Worldwide those numbers are even higher (Koenig, 2009). Despite the fact that those percentages are slightly lower than previous years, those who claim spiritual or religious beliefs still represent the vast majority of Americans. Additionally, a majority of Americans report that they turn to religion/spirituality to help them cope with difficult times. Koenig (2009) reviewed various studies that looked at how people turn to religion in difficult times. For example, one study reported that after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, 90% of Americans reported turning to religious/spiritual sources for support. Other studies Koenig reviewed demonstrated that in a variety of settings, including hospitals and psychiatric settings, a significant majority of patients value religion/spirituality for comfort and support. Koenig further explains why so many people turn to spirituality to cope.

> Why is religious coping so common among patients with medical and psychiatric illness? Religious beliefs provide a sense of meaning and purpose during difficult life circumstances that assist with psychological integration; they usually promote a positive world view that is optimistic and hopeful; they provide role models in sacred writings that facilitate acceptance of suffering; they give people a sense of indirect control over circumstances, reducing the need for personal control; and they offer a community of support, both human and divine, to help reduce isolation and loneliness.

Unlike many other coping resources, religion is available to anyone at any time,

regardless of financial, social, physical, or mental circumstances. (p. 285)

With so many people who rely on religious and/or spiritual influence in the daily

decisions and behaviors of their lives, there is a great need within the field of psychology to

understand the role spiritual and religious practices and beliefs play in individual mental health.

Further, research suggests that many clients want spirituality/religion to be part of therapy

(Koenig, 2009; Richards & Bergin, 2005; Stanley et al., 2011). Despite these facts, as a whole

the field of counseling and psychology has been largely reluctant to provide training and skills

for therapists to more professionally navigate spiritual/religious issue in therapy (Russell &

Yarhouse, 2006).

Historically, the field of psychology as a whole has looked upon religion with skepticism,

with many of the leading figures and scholars asserting that religious faith was a negative

influence on mental health (Richards & Bergin, 2005). One of the founding fathers of the

Psychology movement, Sigmund Freud compared religion to a psychotic illusion (Freud,

1929/2012; Turner et al., 2004), and later, the creator of Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy,

Albert Ellis, compared religiosity to "irrational thinking and emotional disturbance" (Ellis, 1980,

p. 637) arguing for years that devout religiosity was harmful to mental health (Ellis, 1983; Ellis,

1992). For decades many therapists felt that religion and spirituality had no place within therapy,

despite the central role that many of the clients felt that their faith played in their lives.

Around the turn of the millennium there was also a change in the tide of popular opinion

about the role of spirituality and religion in therapy. In 1980, Allen Bergin published a landmark

article about the role of spirituality and religion in psychotherapy in which he argued that values

and bias are inherent in psychotherapy, therefore, rather than try to pretend the therapist is not

pushing values, it is more helpful to accept and acknowledge their role in therapy. Furthermore,

he argued that since the majority of Americans have significant spiritual beliefs and find strength

in those values, it is appropriate to welcome spiritual and religious values in therapy (Bergin,

1980, Bergin, 1991; Bergin et al., 1996; Richards, 2016). This led to increased discussion on the

topic, and eventually resulted in a highly publicized series of debates between Allen Bergin and

Albert Ellis (Ellis, 1980; Walls, 1980). The result of the article and ensuing debate was the

growth of a new push among many to welcome religious and spiritual topics into therapy

(Richards, 2016). In the decades that followed research showed again and again that many

clients valued spiritual and religious approaches and interventions, and that they were, in fact,

effective; sometimes even more effective than traditional therapy (Richards & Worthington,

2010). Due in large part to the efforts of Bergin and others who challenged early attitudes toward

religion, a new movement began to change perceptions and the field has become more open to

addressing spiritual issues in therapy and research (Richards & Bergin, 2005; Pargament Exline

& Jones, 2013. In 2002, the American Psychological Association (APA) officially identified

religion and spirituality as a multicultural issue, encouraging therapists to become competent and

comfortable in understanding and navigating spiritual and religious issues in psychotherapy

(Richards & Bergin, 2005). Today Division 36 of the APA is the Society for the Psychology of

Religion and Spirituality and devoted to examining spirituality and its role in psychotherapy

(http://www.apadivisions.org/division-36/about/index.aspx). In addition, numerous journals and

newsletters are devoted to publishing research and discussion of issues related to religion and

spirituality in psychotherapy, including APA's journal's *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*

and *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*. APA has also published several important books on the

subject, including the two volume APA Handbook of Religion and Psychology (Pargament

Exline & Jones, 2013; Pargament, Mahoney & Shafranske, 2013), *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling and* Psychotherapy (Richards & Bergin, 2005), and *Spiritually Oriented Interventions for Psychotherapy* (Aten et al., 2011). This change in attitude toward spirituality has promoted a new push to research, understand and apply spiritual techniques to improve growth and insight in clients.

In the years since Bergin and others pushed for a change in attitudes toward religion and spirituality in psychotherapy significant research has demonstrated that spirituality can be a powerful insulator against mental illness. While outcomes vary somewhat based on the constructs and definitions used (Batson & Ventis, 1982; Bergin, 1983), research generally shows that religion and spirituality is related to lower levels of depression and anxiety and is even associated positively in multiple ways with greater physical health (Allen & Wang, 2014; Barton et al., 2013; Desrosiers & Miller, 2007; Koenig et al., 2001; Miller et al.,1997; Miller & Thoresen, 2003; Payne et al., 1991; Sanders et al., 2015). Some research also shows that individuals with higher levels of religious involvement tend to have lower drug and alcohol use, lower levels of pre-marital sex and lower levels of overall delinquency (Koenig et al., 2001; Batson et al., 1993; Richards & Bergin, 2005). In addition, many clients have reported that spirituality can be a source of strength and comfort to help them cope in times of stress or adversity (Pargament, Exline & Jones, 2013).

In 2007 Smith et al. conducted a meta-analysis, looking at 31 studies conducted between 1984 and 2005 that had been conducted to identify the effectiveness of using spiritual and religious interventions in psychotherapy. The authors reported that the random-effects weighted average effect size was 0.56. Thus, the study supported previous research and seemed to confirm

the belief that spiritually oriented interventions in psychotherapy can be helpful and effective in dealing with psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders.

Intrinsic Spirituality

Here it is important to more clearly define the terms *religion* and *spirituality.* While there is much overlap between the two concepts, and for many people they are inseparable, researchers have begun to distinguish the two for the sake of clarity. Traditionally, the two terms were synonymous, as spirituality was encompassed within the practice of religion. Not surprisingly, early research focused mostly on the relationship between religious beliefs and behaviors such as religious worship attendance (Hodge, 2003; Richards & Bergin, 2005). Over time, however with the renewal of interest in spirituality in psychological research near the turn of the century, however, a push was made to make a clearer distinction between religious behavior and internal spiritual experience. Thus, religiousness (or extrinsic spirituality) is now commonly measured as separate from spirituality (or intrinsic spirituality). Hodge (2003 defines the two terms as follows: "spirituality refers to an individual's relationship with God (or perceived Transcendence), while religion is defined as a particular set of beliefs, practices, and rituals that have been developed in community by people who share similar existential experiences of transcendent reality" (p. 36).

This internal/external categorization for spirituality has both advantages and disadvantages. When measuring spirituality based on religious behavior as was previously done, researchers make assumptions about motivation that may not always be true. For example, religious observance may, for some individuals, may be based on social pressure more than a closeness to God. Separate constructs for extrinsic religious behavior and intrinsic spiritual experience allows researchers to understand with more clarity which aspects of

religion/spirituality are influencing mental health. Intrinsic spirituality has been found to be beneficial to mental health in a variety of ways. However, as Hill and Pargament (2008) pointed out, religion and spirituality are often very intertwined, and many people experience spirituality and the social connection and transcendence that goes with it within the context of religion. Thus, many researchers use the terms together as needed in their research (often using the acronym R/S), unless it is specifically focusing on excluding one of the two categories.

Spirituality and Positive Psychology

Religion and spirituality (R/S) have proven to be important in the field of positive psychology as well. In contrast to the traditional focus of psychology on mental illness and psychopathology, the newer movement of positive psychology emphasizes the pursuit of an emotionally healthy and satisfying life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Research has shown that spirituality is linked to greater sense of well-being and life satisfaction, and those who are religiously active show a stronger sense of hope and feelings of control in their lives than individuals who are not (Batson et al., 1993; Koenig et al., 2001; Richards & Bergin, 2005). Barton and Miller (2015), for example, looked at the relationship of spirituality (measured as "relationship to a higher power," and "sense of the sacred world") to positive psychology measures of forgiveness, gratitude, optimism, grit, and meaning in a sample of 5980 adults and young adults. The study found that high levels of spirituality coincided with positive psychology at a high rate. Another study looked at the role of spirituality and religion in the lives of adolescents and emerging adults. In this meta-analysis, Yonker et al. (2012) found that spirituality and religiosity (S/R) had main effect sizes with depression ($-.11$), risk taking behavior ($-.11$) in addition to measures of positive mental health including well-being (.16), self-esteem (.11), conscientiousness (.19) agreeableness (.18) and openness (.14).

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between religiosity and self-esteem with mixed results (Gartner et al., 1991). Sanders et al. (2015) looked at the relationship between intrinsic religiosity and self-esteem among 310 students from Brigham Young University. They used the *Religious Status Inventory (RSI)* as a measurement for intrinsic spirituality. The RSI has 8 subscales: (1) awareness of God; (2) acceptance of God's grace and steadfast love; (3) knowing God's leadership and direction; (4) being ethical; (5) being repentant and responsible; (6) involvement in organized religion; (7) experiencing fellowship; and (8) affirming openness in faith (Maloney, 1988, 1994). To measure self-esteem, the *Multidimensional Self-Esteem Inventory (MSEI)* was used. The MSEI is a 116-item inventory that measures 9 subscales: competence, lovability, likeability, personal power, self-control, moral self-approval, body appearance, identity integration, and body functioning (Epstein, 1980; Epstein & O'Brien, 1983).

Spiritual Interventions

The Alcoholics Anonymous program (and the various other addiction recovery programs based off the same principles), which is the most widespread addiction treatment programs has been hailed by some as an effective approach to treating addiction. The program is full of spiritual approaches to recovery, which many participants feel is integral to their recovery (Allen, Nieuwsma, Pollitt & Blazer, 2014). Prayer of one form or another (often the Serenity Prayer) is usually recited along with the use of scripture or revered quotes. The 12 steps, upon which the program is based, are full of spiritual references:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs (Wilson, 2015, pp. 59-60).

The twelve steps are loaded with spiritual values, including faith, hope, humility, honesty, integrity, community support and, perhaps most importantly, grace. Spirituality has been shown to be integral to the effectiveness of the program (Kelly et al., 2012). However, though it may not regularly be discussed or identified as such, grace is a key element of the twelve steps. Addicts are asked to surrender their "will and our lives over to the care of God as

we understood Him" (Wilson, 2015, p. 59). This results in relying on the goodness of God to see change and healing.

Similarly, research has examined the use of a spiritual approach in group therapy for patients struggling with eating disorders. Richards et al. (2006) conducted a randomized control group design study on 122 women receiving inpatient treatment for eating disorders and used a spirituality group and a control group using a Cognitive and Emotional approach. The authors reported that "Patients in the Spirituality group tended to score significantly lower on psychological disturbance and eating disorder symptoms at the conclusion of treatment compared to patients in the other groups, and higher on spiritual well-being (Richards et al., 2006, p. 401)." Further, based on weekly outcome measures, the women in the spirituality group improved significantly more quickly than those in the control group. This study seems to indicate that spirituality can be a helpful tool in group therapy for promoting healing and emotional health.

Grace

Another important pillar of faith for many people, especially those of Christian faith, is the concept of grace. Even the great Christian theologian C. S. Lewis is reported to have asserted that grace was the concept that uniquely defined Christianity most (Yancey, 1997). Surprisingly, however, there has been very little research into the role this important tenet of faith plays in mental health. Bassett (2013) explained, "At a time when there is a growing interest in spirituality among psychologists, it seems perplexing that this construct [grace], which is so central to the Christian faith (one of the major faith systems in the world), has largely been ignored by psychologists. (p. 43).

Perhaps one of the reasons that grace has not been studied extensively is because of the difficulty in clearly identifying what grace means. The definition of grace is not mutually agreed upon among all faiths, and even among Christian denominations there is some disparity about the implications and applications of this important theological precept. Though it has many different definitions and dimensions, grace deals with how God's favor is achieved. The Oxford Dictionary (Lexico, n.d.) defines grace as "the free and unmerited favour of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings." Modern Christian writer John McArthur (n.d.) attempted to explain the concept of grace.

> *Grace* is a terribly misunderstood word. Defining it succinctly is notoriously difficult. Some of the most detailed theology textbooks do not offer any concise definition of the term. Someone has proposed an acronym: GRACE is *G*od's *R*iches *A*t *C*hrist's *E*xpense. That's not a bad way to characterize grace, but it is not a sufficient theological definition. One of the best-known definitions of grace is only three words: God's unmerited favor. A. W. Tozer expanded on that: 'Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines him to bestow benefits on the undeserving.' Berkhof is more to the point: grace is 'the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy.

He then explains that "unmerited favor" is an insufficient definition of grace because grace is not a dormant concept, but a dynamic, on-going, working principle that supersedes the law because it becomes a law unto itself.

> McMinn (2008) also explained the challenge with defining grace.
>
> The word grace is slippery. It means many different things in different contexts. In the thirteenth-century Summa Theologica, Thomas Aquinas described three meanings: being held in someone's favor, a gift that is freely given or a response to a gift freely given.

These are, of course, highly related. If person A gives a gift to person B, it is because

person A holds person B in a position of favor, and it is likely that person B will respond

grate-fully to the gift that is given. In the New Testament, we see these same meanings:

grace (*cháris* in the original language) as an attitude of favor (e.g., Luke 2:52), as a gift

freely given (e.g., 1 Corinthians 16:3) and as a response of gratitude to that gift (e.g.,

Romans 6:17). But the New Testament reveals even more diversity with *cháris*. The

same Greek root is also used to describe kind and lovely speech (e.g., Luke 4:22), a

spiritual gift to serve the church (e.g., Romans 12:3) and future heavenly blessings (e.g.,

1 Peter 1:13). And our contemporary English has introduced more diversity yet; grace is

used to describe delicate movements of the human body (e.g., "the ballerina has such

grace"), kindness (e.g., "you are a gracious host"), leniency (e.g., "I will grant you some

grace on when the assignment is due") and so on" (p. 53).

McMinn (2008) also pointed out the important difference between common grace and

special grace. Common grace is available to all.

Only when we understand how profoundly God loves and pursues us are we able to rest

in a deep, abiding sense of peace and acceptance. Christians believe that this human form

of grace—which exists in relationship among people who may not acknowledge God at

all—is made possible because of God's grace to humanity. Many theologians since the

Reformation have distinguished between the common grace available to all people and

the special grace that draws people to abundant life in Christ. All the various blessings of

life, including the capacity to be gracious with one another, are made possible because of

God's common grace, though it often functions beneath the threshold of human

awareness" (p. 52). Special grace, however, is reserved for those who allow Christ to live

within them. "Special grace is bestowed by God on undeserving individuals, leading

them to an abundant life in Christ both now and through eternity. Special grace justifies

us before God and sanctifies us as we grow in wisdom and character." (p. 54)

Though the term grace is used in many different ways (such as "saying grace" or behaving gracefully or graciously), the theological concept of grace is unique in that it carries a sort of divine power behind it. While the concept of grace is found in the Old Testament (see, for example, King James Bible, Gen. 6:8, Ps. 84:11), it is in the New Testament and in Christianity that divine grace really was defined as a central tenet of faith. New Testament writer Paul was a champion of the concept of grace, teaching its importance in contrast to a very legalist Jewish society that emphasized the Law of Moses (King James Bible, Rom. 10:2–3). Volumes have been written by theologians and religious philosophers (Luther, St. Augustine and Calvin to name a few of the most famous), expounding on the relationship between grace, faith and works in Christian life. However, grace is more than just a divine gift or the reassurance of forgiveness. It also provides "divine energy for following Christ" (Sisemore et al., 2011, p. 58). The Oxford Dictionary (n.d.) adds another relevant definition to the one above: "A divinely given talent or blessing." Thus, some faiths may include in the concept of grace the belief that God grants enabling power, or empowering blessings that naturally result from one being filled with grace.

In more modern times, C.S. Lewis explained how the Christian view of grace is unique.

The Christian is in a different position from other people who are trying to be good. They

hope, by being good, to please God if there is one; or . . . at least they hope to deserve the

approval from good men. But the Christian thinks any good he does comes from the

Christ-life inside him. He does not think God will love us because we are good, but that

God will make us good because He loves us; just as the roof of a greenhouse does not

attract the sun because it is bright, but becomes bright because the sun shines on it.

(Lewis, 1952/2001, p. 43)

Special grace is full of complex characteristics and implications in Christian theology as well. Emmons et al. (2017) examined the research done on grace and proposed that research seek to further elaborate the nature of grace. They suggest that grace should be understood through six perfecting graces proposed by Barclay (2015): Superabundance, Singularity, Priority, Incongruity, Efficacy and Non-Circularity.

> *Superabundance* asserts that the gift of grace is of such a lavish extravagance and incomprehensible scope that could only come from deity. *Singularity* highlights the singular focus of the Giver of grace as being benevolence and goodness. *Priority* emphasizes the fact that the timing of God giving grace is not in any way related to actions taken by the receiver, but whole based on the timing of God. *Incongruity* states that the grand gift is not based in any way on the "worthiness" of the recipient. *Efficacy* promises that the gift of grace will accomplish what it promises to do . . . that is effect a change on the nature of the recipient. *Non-circularity* states that nothing is required in return for the gift of grace (Emmons et al., 2017, p. 278)

While these principles are not comprehensively understood by all Christians, nor uniformly accepted by all denominations, they illuminate the depth of theological thought and tradition associated with the concept of grace.

"Cheap Grace"

While many Christians would argue that true grace inherently includes a recognition of works and behaviors that are not good or in line with God's will along with a need to improve (Bassett, 2013), some denominations do not teach a need for any repentance or good works for

those who have received grace. "Cheap grace" as it has been called, is a somewhat controversial concept within Christianity. It asserts that saving grace (God granting salvation in heaven) will be given without any expectation of good works on the part of the recipient. Many Christian theologians argue that cheap grace ignores the way true grace works within its recipients (McArthur, 2000). German Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote,

> Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession. . . . Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him" (1963, p. 45–46).

Variations in Grace

Cheap grace (the belief that salvation and God's favor is not dependent on our works but upon God's love and wisdom) stands in opposition to legalism (the belief that obedience to law and good works make individuals worthy of salvation and divine favor). Though an extreme oversimplification, the two concepts may be understood as being the opposite ends of a spectrum with many variations in between. Though nearly every Christian denomination accepts grace as a central tenet of their faith, each emphasizes it in their unique way that, theoretically, would fall somewhere along the grace/legalism spectrum.

Though they may not define grace in the same way as traditional Christianity, nearly every world religion has beliefs that put them some somewhere along the spectrum of grace and legalism (Emmons et al., 2017). Most faiths outline some sort of path to achieving divine favor or blessings. In some faiths, individual effort is emphasized, while in others divine mercy or grace is essential. Judaism teaches the concept of grace as "chain" (God's favor) or "chesed" or divine love (Shapiro, 2012). In Judaism, God's grace is manifest in His giving to his people the law, which provides the path to God's love. In Islam faith and good works together lead to grace. "And He (God) answers those who believe and do good works, and gives them more out of His Grace." (Holy Qur'an, 42:26). Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, though quite different than the monotheistic faiths each have their own variations on how divine help or favor is achieved. However, it is important to note the slight differences in the use of grace in other faiths, especially those who use the word to denote blessings that come as a result of righteous behaviors. Many Christians may argue that if it is a gift given in response to good works, it isn't the same thing as grace, which is unmerited.

In other words, there is certainly room for misunderstanding and varying interpretations of the concept of grace. The teachings of each individual faith may place them at a certain point on that spectrum. Furthermore, each individual may have his or her own unique personal perception of grace, separate from the teachings of their chosen faith. Measuring where on this grace scale an individual's beliefs fall may allow for better identification of a spiritual value in the lives of an individual, as well as the trends of that value among the followers of various faiths.

Legalism

Obedience is a core value of many religions, which often provide a detailed path for life. Though there are, of course, variations in teachings among denominations, in general, religious teachings and texts outline "righteous" deeds that should be followed and warn of "sinful" behaviors to avoid. Thus, the ideal spiritual life for many involves following a religious law as closely as possible. Legalism is the belief that God's favor is earned through such righteous works and avoidance of sinful acts. In addition, those who view religion in a legalistic way may believe that engaging in sinful acts will bring God's displeasure and result in some form of punishment. It is important to note that Bonhoeffer's (1937/2012) version of "Costly Grace" is not the same thing as legalism. The legalist obeys laws in order to appease God because he or she believes that righteous behavior and attitudes are the *only* way to achieve God's approval and blessings. Bonhoeffer's emphasis of "costly grace" was not on the cost to the individual, but the cost to Christ. As a result, obedience happens not in order to obtain grace, but because it is already working inside a person.

Despite the scripture's emphasis on grace, many religious individuals still may adopt a somewhat legalistic view of their faith. Bassett (2013) pointed out that legalism is pervasive in all religions. This may be because of the divine directions to live life according to a higher law. Jesus, in the New Testament commanded, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect" (King James Bible, Matthew 5:48). While there are other scriptures that emphasize the need to live a righteous life, perhaps none embodies the goal of legalism better. Indeed, religious legalism seems to often be related to perfectionistic beliefs and can therefore become maladaptive to mental health.

Latter-day Saints, Legalism, and Grace

Of specific interest to this study is the Latter-day Saint understanding of the role of grace and works (legalism). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded during the Second Great Awakening, in which protestant Christianity and the teachings of Luther, Calvin and Wesley were extremely popular. Much of the early LDS teachings about grace and works were in response to the Calvinist view of "irresistible grace" (the belief that grace is not earned, nor can it be avoided or lost through sin) that were gaining popularity. Many LDS teachings were a response to the popular "cheap grace" movement that seemed to require no significant effort to attain salvation. Like the New Testament, LDS scripture can seem somewhat varied and contradictory on the relationship between works and grace. In what is possibly the most quoted and well-known verse about grace in LDS scripture, Nephi, a Book of Mormon author wrote that "it is by grace that we are saved, after all that we can do" (Book of Mormon, 1981, 2 Nephi 23:25). Though it is not necessarily what is intended by the author, many Latter-day Saints interpret this to mean that they must do their very best to keep the commandments, and only after they have done all they possibly can will Christ's grace then make up the difference and grant them forgiveness and eternal life. While such a view of grace may motivate some to put more effort into changing their life in a positive way, for others the focus on legalism can result in anxiety over whether one is actually doing one's "best" or enough to merit God's favor. Such fear and anxiety over not being "worthy" often leads to maladaptive perfectionism or scrupulosity and which are linked to depression and anxiety.

In reality the LDS view of the relationship between grace and the law fits fairly closely with Bonhoeffer's "costly grace," there are plenty of scriptures and quotes by LDS church leaders that promote a different view of the concepts of grace and legalism. 2 Nephi 10:23–24

states: "Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved." (Book of Mormon, 1981)

Above, C. S. Lewis described Grace as an empowering virtue, God's love planted within a person which enables them to do good works naturally. This empowering grace is an important form of grace that is emphasized by many Christians as well as Mormons. The LDS Bible Dictionary defines grace as follows:

> The main idea of the word is divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ. . . . It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals, through faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts. (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, n.d.)

Latter-day Saints emphasize the redeeming power of the Atonement of Christ, but they also teach about the importance of the "enabling power" of His grace. LDS Apostle Elder David A. Bednar wrote of the LDS view of grace,

> It is one thing to know that Jesus Christ came to earth to *die* for us. That is fundamental and foundational to the doctrine of Christ. But we also need to appreciate that the Lord desires, through His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to *live* in us—not only to direct us but also to empower us. . . . That is, grace represents that divine

assistance or heavenly help each of us will desperately need to qualify for the celestial

kingdom. Thus, the enabling power of the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good

and serve beyond our own individual desire and natural capacity (Bednar, 2001).

The problem is that these concepts are somewhat unclear to Latter-day Saints, as they are

to Christians as well. There are scriptures and quotes that seem to support each view. As Draper

et al. (2017) pointed out, there is often misunderstanding about grace and works. "Some

members of the LDS faith develop a misunderstanding of grace because of its seemingly

paradoxical nature. In addition, Latter-day Saints may receive contradictory messages about

grace from their church leaders and theologians. Some LDS church leaders and theologians,

when teaching about Christ's grace, emphasize the necessity of good works and a person's best

effort in order to receive divine grace. . . . In contrast, some church leaders and theologians

emphasize the unconditional nature of grace; they teach that God's children never earn grace

because he always already gives grace to all." (p. 66) Thus, members of the Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints may vary in their individual understandings of grace as do members

of any faith. Personal experience and temperament can have a direct effect on how a person

views God, religion and spirituality. For example, research has shown that many individuals

view of God is strongly influenced by their relationship with their father (Dickie et al., 1997;

McDonald et al., 2005). In addition, Mormon religious culture can often have a unique

fingerprint in different geographical areas and among different groups and may influence the

way various religious teachings are understood or emphasized. The result can sometimes be that

individuals adopt beliefs about God and specific religious teachings that are more a reflection of

their own cognitive constructs than they are of the actual teachings of their faith. Occasionally

these beliefs become unhelpful or even destructive to a client's emotional well-being. Thus,

helping a client develop a healthier understanding of spiritual concepts may be beneficial in spiritually oriented therapy.

Legalism and Grace in Research

The study of grace is relatively new to the field of psychology despite the fact that it is a core religious teaching to many Christian faiths and has influence in other faiths as well. Significant research has been done on similar religious concepts such as forgiveness (Enright et al., 1992), gratitude (Nelson, 2009), humility (Krause & Hayward, 2015), and compassion (Gilbert, 2014). Each of these values were found to have significant positive impacts on some aspect of mental health and may be useful in therapy. However, until recently grace was only mentioned in passing, with no significant attempt to measure it.

Because of the difficulty in defining grace even within mainstream Christianity, but certainly across faiths, developing an adequate measure of grace is even more challenging. The first significant attempts to deal with grace were made in 1988 by Watson, Morris, and Hood, who wrote a series of articles about the role of sin in self-functioning. In their study, they found that beliefs about grace tended to predict a greater state of awareness and consciousness of style and predicted a lower level of depression.

Since the new millennium, various instruments have been created to measure grace with varying levels of reliability. Each of these measurements are slightly different in their scope. The Grace Scale (Payton et al., 2000) was among the first of these. It is a 40-item measurement that uses a 7-point Likert scale and has questions both positively and negatively worded. It focuses on how individuals experience grace and how they express it. It attempts to measure the experience of Divine grace and also the human expression of grace. This scale was found to have adequate internal consistency and its reliability was $\alpha = .79–.83$. In a subsequent study using the Grace

Scale, Spradlin (2002) measured shame, grace and spiritual well-being among 115 college aged students. The study found a moderate negative correlation between shame and grace. Additionally, the same study revealed a moderate correlation between grace and spiritual well-being. The Grace Scale also showed positive correlations between grace and spiritual well-being, gratitude, and positive religious well-being (Bufford et al., 2015).

The Richmont Grace Scale (Sisemore et al., 2011) is a 27-item instrument that measures enacted grace and the human response to grace. It was found to have a strong internal consistency and a reliability of α = .94 and was related to intrinsic spirituality and a healthier perspective of sin. Subsequent research showed an inverse relationship between grace and depression and anxiety. Further, Blackburn et al. (2012) found hope and forgiveness to be related to grace as mediators.

The Amazing Grace Scale (Bassett, 2013) is another scale that seeks to measure grace. This particular instrument focuses on the identification and awareness of Divine grace and is more concerned with awareness of God's gracious deeds than. It consists of 16 items, all positively worded and was found to have a reliability of α = .94. In research it found identified faith, intrinsic faith and Christian identity to be predictors of grace.

Bassett (2013) also looked at legalism and developed a 17-item Religious Legalism Scale. Bassett theorized that the belief in legalism grows out of a need for control and safety, as it provides a clear measurable path to earning God's favor. This study looked at various different constructs that may overlap with legalism, including need for control, just-world phenomenon, and the belief in "chosenness." The scale was designed to capture various constructs, including (a) Earning God's Love, (b) Moral Superiority, (c) Moral Clarity, (d) Perceived Self-control, (e) Imposing Personal Views, (f) Protecting Boundaries and (g) Impression Management. After

exploratory factor analysis, the items were grouped into three factors: Religious Legalism, Shining Light (standing firm and sharing with others) and God's chosen (having a special relationship with God). Those items in the first factor, religious legalism, most closely address the issue of legalism that this work explores. Legalism was associated with higher levels of extrinsic personal faith.

More recently, some of the researchers behind these various grace measures decided to use elements from all three previous grace measurements in order to come up with an even stronger instrument (Bufford et al., 2015). The three grace measures were shown to have moderately strong correlations to each other (r = .55–.65), but they didn't all relate to other spirituality and mental health measures in the same way. This was likely the result of the different aspects of grace they each sought to measure. The result of this collaboration is the creation of another grace measurement instrument: Dimensions of Grace. The Dimensions of Grace Scale seeks to identify an individual's experience and understanding of various concepts associated with grace (Bufford et al., 2017). It is comprised 36 questions on a 7 step Likert scale, both positively and negatively worded, that factor into 5 subscales, each measuring different dimensions of Grace. The diversity of these five factors reflects the complexity of defining and measuring grace and represent a collaboration of the creators to combine several different grace measurement tools. Though the entire measurement was given to participants, this particular study seeks to understand the belief grace as an empowering force and legalism (as an opposite of grace).

The first factor of the *Dimensions of Grace Scale* is Peace and Empowerment, which attempts to measure how an individual experiences grace that empowers positive action or peace. An example item is "I strive to do good because of God's acceptance of me not in order to earn

His love." The second factor in the scale is intended to measure "costly grace." Because the term "costly grace" carries historical theological meaning that appears to differ slightly from the intent of the scale, we have chosen to call this scale "legalism." This is the belief that grace must be earned through good works or obedience. An example item is "The harder I work, the more I earn God's favor."

Research among Latter-day Saints using the Dimensions of Grace scale is very new. In study at Brigham Young University, Judd et al. (2018) looked at LDS college student to see how their perceptions of grace in their lives were related to negative mental health indicators such as depression, anxiety, shame, and perfectionism. This study indicated that the belief in legalism is predictive of various mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, scrupulosity and shame. However, the same study also found that grace (empowerment by God) mediates the effects of legalism on mental illness (Judd et al., 2018).

Grace as an Intervention

For clients who experience mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety and shame that are related to maladaptive perfectionistic beliefs and legalism, grace education may provide appropriate intervention. Draper et al. (2017) shared a case study about a woman whose legalistic understanding of her LDS faith was contributing to her depression. They outlined four simultaneous endeavors to help her: (a) Feeling and expression of grace by the therapist. (b) Leaning into perfectionism (challenging problematic beliefs). (c) Use of bibliotherapy (especially related to understanding grace). (d) Mindful experience of gratitude and compassion. Though the process was slow, the client eventually began to surrender here rigid legalistic beliefs and accept grace in her life. After about a year and a half, she experienced relief from many of her symptoms.

The study of grace and mental health has opened a new interesting branch of study in spiritual values. For faiths that value both faith and works, such as Latter-day Saints, therapists may find value in a greater understanding of how an individual's understanding of grace and works may influence their mental health.

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APPENDIX B

Measurements Used in This Study

Intrinsic Spirituality Scale (ISS)
SS_1 (Intrinsic Spirituality-In terms of the questions I have about life, my spirituality answers
ISS_2-Growing spiritually is
ISS_3-When I am faced with an important decision, my spirituality
ISS_4-Spirituality is
ISS_5-When I think of things that help me to grow and mature as a person, my spirituality
ISS_6-My spiritual beliefs affect

Dimensions of Grace Scale
*1. I don't get mad at people, I get even.
*2. One of my parents could stay mad at me for days sometimes.
3. Because of God's work in my life I feel I have more self-control. My emotions are more likely to be appropriate.
*4. I need to see remorse before I offer forgiveness.
*5. The more obedient I am, the more God loves me.
*6. Others must earn my forgiveness.
7. When I do something wrong I just can easily forget it.
8. Because of grace bestowed to me, I am able to forgive others.
*9. If someone wrongs me, they need to make it right.
10. People who do bad things deserve what they get.
11. Because of God's work in my life I feel I have more self-control. My actions are more likely to be appropriate
*12. I find it hard to accept help or gifts from others.
*13. If I work harder, I need less grace.
*14. I must work hard to experience God's grace and forgiveness.
15. I seldom feel shame.
16. I am able to forgive others when they hurt me.
*17. I tend to be hard on myself.
18. I strive to do good because of God's acceptance of me not in order to earn His love.
*19. As a child one parent tended to withhold love when I misbehaved.
20. I accept my shortcomings.
*21. I seldom get very upset with myself when others are angry with me.
*22. As a child, one of my parents often used the "silent treatment" with me when upset with me.
*23. The harder I work, the more I earn God's favor.
*24. My Dad seldom said thank you.
*25. God cares more about what I do than who I am.
*26. My behavior does not matter since I've been forgiven.
*27. My mother or father keeps bringing up my past failures
28. Sometimes when I pray for something I really want, I find that I end up with something even better.
*29. I tend to dwell on my faults.

30. My beliefs about grace encourage me to be forgiving of others.
31. As a child I was confident that at least one of my parents loved me no matter what.
32. God is in the process of making me more like Jesus.
*33. My parents always remember my mistakes.
*34. Those who sin less than others require less grace.
*35. I generally give people what I get from them.
36. When offended or harmed by others I generally find it easy to forgive them.
*Items are reverse scored.

Item Response Alternatives:
Strongly Agree, Moderately Agree, Mildly Agree, Neutral, Mildly Disagree, Moderately
Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Response Scoring:
Peace and Empowerment (Factor 1): Questions 3, 8, 11, 16, 18, 28, 30, 32
Libertinism/Cheap Grace (Factor 2): Questions 5, 13, 14, 23, 25, 26, 34
Shame and Guilt/Self Unforgiveness (Factor 3): Questions 7, 12, 15, 17, 20, 21, 29
Gracelessness of Others (Factor 4): Questions 2, 19, 22, 24, 27, 31, 33
Gracelessness of Self (Factor 5): Questions 1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 35, 36

Items Randomized: Factor Loadings as Noted Note: Factors 25 tap opposites of grace
(gracelessness); 22 of 36 items are reverse scored so that higher scores consistently reflect grace.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (R-EST)

R_EST_1-I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
R_EST_2-I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
R_EST_3-All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
R_EST_4-I am able to do things as well as most other people.
R_EST_5-I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
R_EST_6-I take a positive attitude toward myself.
R_EST_7-On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
R_EST_8-I wish I could have more respect for myself.
R_EST_9-I certainly feel useless at times.
R_EST_10-At times I think I am no good at all.

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MILQ)
I understand my life's meaning.
I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.
I am always looking to find my life's purpose.
My life has a clear sense of purpose.
I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.
I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.
I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.
I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.

My life has no clear purpose.
I am searching for meaning in my life.
Satisfaction with Life Scale (SwLS)
SwLS_1-In most ways, my life is close to ideal.
SwLS_2-The conditions of my life are excellent.
SwLS_3-I am completely satisfied with my life.
SwLS_4-So far, I have gotten the most important things I want in life.
SwLS_5-If I could live my life over, I would change nothing.

Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6)
1. I have so much in life to be thankful for
2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list
3. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for
4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people
5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have...
6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone

Life Orientation Test (LOT)
1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.
2. It's easy for me to relax.
3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.
4. I always look on the bright side of things.
5. I'm always optimistic about my future.
6. I enjoy my friends a lot.
7. It's important for me to keep busy.
8. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.
9. Things never work out the way I want them to.
10. I don't get upset too easily.
11. I'm a believer in the idea that "every cloud has a silver lining".
12. I rarely count on good things happening to me.