



Teaching God's Word to Train Disciples

Fellowship BIBLE CHURCH

Audio of Pastor Don Griffin's sermons is available at
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We have been talking about building a church that God can use. What kind of church does God use? We could ask the question this way: "what makes a church great?" some would say at church is great because of its great size. When I was growing up, I attended one of the largest churches in my city. In fact, it was so large that it actually had two worship centers, one across the street from the other. One of those buildings was the newer building, and it was used for Sunday mornings and Sunday nights. The other building was in itself very large and was used for Wednesday night services. The church was

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see quit with very large educational buildings, a very large kitchen and even a youth center with a skating rink and other activities. The choir was very large, and different age groups were different color robes. The ceiling was very high and the building was equipped with beautiful stained glass windows. I could go on and on. The truth of the matter is, however, that all of those things did not make the church and a great church. In fact, the church has had many problems through the Years. If it is not size that makes a church great, what is it?

A church is great and can be greatly used of God when get it reflects the nature of God. That being the case, if we want to build a church that God can use, we must make sure that our church resemblance God in the way that it does things.

So what is God like? There many things that could be said about what God is like and how he deals with us. As much in or more than anything else, we can say God is a God of grace. There have been many definitions created to explain grace.

WHAT THE GRACE OF GOD WILL DO

1. God's grace enables you to receive what you can never earn

Every time the thought of grace appears, there is the idea of it being undeserved. What God does for us is by grace.

Romans 5:8, "God demonstrates His own love for us--His absolutely unmerited favor -- in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

When God created people, he did so with the intent of a love relationship. He, as the creator, would love

the created, and the created would love him. Then a terrible thing took place--the people God created rebelled against him, and that rebellion destroyed the love relationship God wanted. The big question throughout the ages has been

how to reconnect with God. Do we offer him sacrifices? Do we somehow atone for our sin by climbing up stairs with glass on them? Do we reconnect by reciting memorized prayers? How do we reconnect with God?

George Whitefield was a great British preacher in the mid-1700's. However in his early days, he was mixed up on salvation by grace. Whitefield years later told about his confusion. He said, "I began to fast twice a week for thirty-six hours together, prayed many times a day and received the sacrament every Lord's Day. I fasted myself almost to death all the forty days of Lent, during which I made it a point of duty never to go less than three times a day to public worship, besides seven times a day to my private prayers. Yet, I knew no more that I was born a new creature in Christ Jesus than if had never been born at all." The Scripture is clear in telling us that we can't make it to heaven by our good works.

Romans 3:20, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."

God's law for us can be summed up in one statement, "Perfect righteousness. Perfect righteousness not only means you have never done or thought anything wrong, it also means you have never failed to do anything good that you could have done. Most of us are a tad bit short of that perfection.

Martin Luther, said: "The most damnable and pernicious heresy that has ever plagued the mind of man was the idea that somehow he could make himself good enough to deserve to live with an all-holy God."

That is where grace comes in. The bible says that it is by grace you're saved, through faith and that none of yourselves. It is the gift of God.

2. GOD'S GRACE GIVES US MORE THAN WE COULD IMAGINE

Let's say you wake up one morning and, as is your custom, you go outside to get the morning paper. As you do, you hear the screech of rubber and look up to see the teen who lives down the street from you driving his father's car. You know he is only 14...not old enough to have a driver's license. He is barely tall enough to see over the steering wheel and he is driving the car literally all over the street until he finally crashes into your yard...barely missing you...and totally destroying your mail box, part of the hedge you put in last year, and your brand new picket fence. You run to the car, discover that the boy is okay and his car undamaged, and at this point you have three choices.

a) Your first choice is to treat this teen with **JUSTICE**.

This means you give him exactly what he deserves. You call the police knowing that he will be given a ticket for driving without a license. You call his parents to tell them what happened-knowing he will be grounded until he is 39 years old. And you force the boy to get a job to pay for your mailbox, fence, and hedge. exercising this option does not make you a bad person. You are simply giving the boy exactly

what he deserves, no more, no less. You are being fair or just.

b) Your second option would be to treat the teen with **MERCY**

Mercy is giving someone a little bit LESS than he or she deserves. If you choose this option you might say, I'm not going to call the police, but I am going to call your parents, and we are going to sit down and agree on the cost of the mailbox, hedge, and fence, and you will have to work out some way to re-pay me.

This should make the teen very happy and thankful because he is getting LESS than he deserves. You are being **MERCIFUL** to him.

c) You choose to treat him with **GRACE**.

You help the boy out of the car and say something like, You destroyed my mailbox and flattened my fence. I saved **TWO YEARS** for this fence and it was installed just a week ago. You also took out my hedge. I just trimmed that hedge, and I don't know if I'll ever be able to get it to match up again. You also nearly killed me but I'm not going to call the police. I'm not even sure I want to get you in a whole lot of trouble with your family. I can fix the mailbox and the fence and even the hedge-and I will. Why don't you and I get in my car and go find a place where we can get a burger and sit down and talk. Then I can find out a little bit more about who you are and what's going on in your life. There's only one condition....I'll drive!

If you choose that option, it could be that the boy will take another joyride tomorrow and plow into someone else's mailbox. But it is also possible that your graceful choice will touch that boy at the deepest part of his soul. Your interest in his welfare and future might be the turning point for this young man.

That is the way grace functions. Mercy doesn't give us what we do deserve, which is punishment. Grace goes farther than that. Not only does it not punish us, it actually does good things for us.

Luke 6:27, "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who

curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Luke 6:32-35, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. 33And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 34And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. 35But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked".

3. GOD'S GRACE ENABLES YOU TO HAVE HOPE WHEN YOU HAVE FAILED

There are numbers of places where God's grace can be seen. But one of the strongest displays of God's grace is seen when we fail him over and over again, and he continues to forgive us and to receive us back.

Romans 5:20, "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more..."

God's grace is greater than all our sin. It is like the waves of a mighty ocean that just keep coming in hour after hour, week after week for the rest of our lives. It was grace that brought the apostle Peter back after he had denied Christ three times, and it is grace that God offers to us when we fail him. You have never failed the Lord so much that he can't pick you back up and start using you again.

HOW DO WE LIVE OUT GOD'S GRACE AS A CHURCH?

1. Initiate a grace relationship with people

Don't wait for people to be nice to you. It is the nature of grace to seek out someone to be gracious to. You may remember the story of David and Mephibosheth found in 2 Samuel 9. It was the custom in those days that if someone overthrew the king and became king himself that he would put to death the descendants of the former king. That way you would never have to worry that those descendants would one day tried to recapture the throne.

When David became king, however, he showed the heart of God by extending grace.

2 Samuel 9:1, "David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

He found that there was a grandson of Saul named Mephibosheth. He brought this before, crippled man into his palace and had him they eat his food at the king's table as if he were one of the king's sons. In addition, he restored all the land that belonged to Saul to Mephibosheth. There was no reason for him to do something like that except for one thing-grace. If you are a grace filled person, you will initiate grace giving relationships with other people.

2. Continue the grace relationship when it is not reciprocated

If you show grace toward to other people with the thought of them responding back to you in grace, you may have a long time to wait. God is continually extending his grace to warn people who do not respond, but that's what grace is all about. Grace is not about what is fair. Grace is about kindness being shown toward those who do not deserve it.

3. Display grace when people are different than you

Romans 15:7, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

If we're to have the kind of unity and fellowship that God wants us to have, we must be willing to accept one another, not as we wish we would be, but as we're really are. That does not mean that we condone sin. It means that we forgive sin.

We may not like someone's personality, but we love them by God's grace in spite of their personality.

We may not have much in common with someone, but we accept them anyway.

We may not have agree with every interpretation someone has on Biblical passage, but we accept them.

We may not choose to raise our children in exactly the same way that we someone else does, but we accept them. Why? Because the scripture says we're to accept one another in the same way that Christ accepted us. How does Christ accept us? Christ ac-

cepted us unconditionally. The bottom line is if God accepts someone, who are we to have a higher standard than him?

Romans 15:1-7, "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his book, *The Broken Heart*, Dr. James Lynch cites statistics that show that adults without deep relationships have an early death rate that's twice as high as those who enjoy regular, caring interaction with others. And there is tons of scientific research to confirm this. Studies tell us that our relational life has just as much impact on our physical health as obesity, smoking, high blood pressure, and lack of exercise. All this goes to show that in order for us to stay emotionally and physically healthy we all require relationships. We each have a "minimum daily relational requirement, and God wants that need to be met through his church."

The people who sit all around us this morning are a very important part of our lives. We share the fun times as well as the sad times. When we grieve over the death of parents or spouses or children, our church family members come along side us and help us. When the doctor tells us we have a disease that just may take our lives, it is usually not a neighbor or some coworker at the office who enters into that crisis and says, "I understand." No, it is most often someone from our church family.

There is only one way that kind of fellowship in unity can exist. We must all be people who operate on the principle of the grace toward one another.