


First Things First: Applying Grace

Grace is undeserved or unearned favor. Our example: *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* (Rom. 5:8) Man inherits Adam's nature and status, an ungodly sinner and God's enemy. (Romans 5) Yet, in great love and grace, it pleased God to offer His only Son to die in our place to pay for sin.

This Grace is a **response** of kindness toward others, considering their needs and point of view. In contrast, a **reaction** to a situation is emotional, often about you and your flesh; typically it is not grace.



You have the great privilege to labor together with God the Father, deciding to manifest Christ's love. (I Cor. 3:9)

When Christ is formed in the inner man, He powerfully resides inside of you: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..."* (Gal. 2:20)


It's a moment by moment choice to apply grace, yet the flesh is self-centered. It can feel so good to exalt and serve yourself. However, when interactions are self-focused, others can be hurt. The Spirit teaches saints to put aside selfish ways and, rather, prefer others. This is grace.

Yielding gives God the reins; the urge to 'react in the flesh' can be redirected. You may feel dissatisfied, but Christ is gloriously manifest in your mortal body: *"...and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* (Gal. 2:20) **To God be the glory!**

Just A Minute! With Scripture

The King James Bible is used for all references. Verses may be underlined or made bold for emphasis.

How Do You Respond When Others Think Differently?



At times, do saints, even grace believers, react with a legalistic attitude? (Put self/others under a works system: Approval for well doing, grief for offenses.) Unfortunately, fleshly thinking & living in a sin-cursed world makes it common. As we learn to yield to Christ, we can change. Articles in this newsletter may challenge your ideas, but purpose to be open to grow. We may not all agree; is that ok? Yes, in grace it is. *"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."* (Rom. 14:5)

Assessing remarks toward a saint: "Where did you learn that?" "You're twisting the Scriptures." or "That's wrong; here's the Truth..." This believer may be mistaken, but the approach in each case seems to be a bit harsh, even condescending, implying, "I'm right, you're wrong." Is the attitude gracious, and would the believer sense godly love?

How can you be respectful, teaching to where he's functioning? One option: Set aside your flesh to minister to his needs. *"Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand."* (II Cor. 1:24)

Take care that your convictions don't become his standard. Gently help him to renew his mind and rethink conclusions using Scripture as the authority, being accountable to God. *"But why dost thou judge thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."* (Romans 14:10)

Paul teaches loving respect toward a weak brother who has drawn different conclusions. *"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."* (Rom. 14:1) Maybe he is a young believer or confused, so, in love, slowly teach him, holding forth the Truth. This saint may choose to walk by faith, but maturity usually takes time.



Imagine You Were All Alone...



Suppose you moved to a dangerous, non-Christian land. After months alone, finally you meet a saint, but he has a different Church background. Would you avoid him or rejoice in Christian fellowship?

This saint is not the enemy. All believers are our spiritual family: *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..."* (I Cor. 12:13) Gloriously, we are individuals; our maturity is tailored to our choices, making our faith walk unique. This world and the flesh will affect us differently. **Christ the Word can renew anyone's mind as he yields.**



Applying Grace: Self-Evaluation Is So Important

Saints can be unaware of their legalistic tendencies. Some of our approaches can overwhelm, or create defensiveness, fear, and anger. Examples: 1) Shooting verses at a babe-in-Christ to prove a point, 2) Overpowering someone with deep discussions/multiple topics, or 3) Sharing all you know on a topic. A careful, simple response like 'asking a question' can provoke thought. An illustration may help: A woman starts to attend your Church, but has contrary views. How do you respond?

Reactions that seem legalistic: "That's false; this verse says..." or "You're not rightly dividing; look at this Scripture..." Is the goal to swiftly correct error and convert her to your Biblical view? While this is a stand for the Truth, even using verses, do the comments cause her to reflect and be open to further discussion or provoke wrath and debates? *"Because the law worketh wrath..." (Rom. 4:15)*

A gracious approach: "Have you ever thought about...?" or "Why do you think Paul said...?" The objective is to inspire thinking and faith using the Word. You can observe her comments and use the information to understand her better, then discuss issues in love, 'slowly' helping her forward in thinking. *"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering..." (Ephesians 5:2)* A nurturing relationship would teach her how to study: the importance of context, the timeline, and value of regular reading. All this takes time, sometimes a lot of time. Truly, it is a sacrifice. How is nurturing different than 'preaching at others?' *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)*

The goal is presenting the Truth in a way that motivates others to look at verses and search out the issue for themselves in Scripture; this avoids the tendency of 'telling them what to believe,' thus, becoming their authority. Learning to assess where someone is generally functioning in their spiritual maturity can assist in effective teaching and mentoring. (Refer to Romans Timeline: May, 2017)

The first approaches above were fast and proclaimed facts, promoting a good feeling that you presented the Truth. You may have thought: "I did my job, now it's up to them." The second is 'walking in love,' considering their needs so they can understand and be renewed. *"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (I Cor. 9:22)* Self-evaluation reveals our need to grow in grace and patience to love others to the Truth. As God loves us unconditionally, so we can learn to love others in grace.

Consider Individuality And One's Personal Journey To Help Them Learn

It's ideal to attend a Church that encourages you to come to your own convictions by the Word. Even in this situation, given varied backgrounds, maturity levels, and strongholds, would any assembly find that **every** saint thinks exactly the same? We all have developed some ideas or practices that contain holes/gaps in understanding, which need adjustment. Processing Truth to revise faulty convictions is a lifetime faith walk. *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ...And be renewed in the spirit of your mind." (Eph. 4:15,23)*

One objective in teaching is to help others think for themselves to be transformed and apply the Truth. It takes awhile to digest new information or change one's thinking. Love with patience can help others to be led 'by the Spirit' in the Word, not 'by another's convictions.' (Romans 8:14)

Maturing from a spiritual child to an adult is vastly different for each. Some progress quickly, others do not; many factors inhibit or assist believers to progress. **Be a helper of their joy and be a mentor!**

Why Is Grace So Hard To Apply?



The answer is simple really. It is contrary to our flesh. *“Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24)* Our feelings and tendencies will be to exalt self and our views, making it challenging. An incomplete understanding of grace, who we are in Christ, and how to access the power of God also play key roles. (Romans doctrine)

As we mature in Christ we will *“...be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom. 8:29)* This empowers us to prefer others and live grace. Most need to be nurtured and retaught the basics to be established: *“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.” (1 Thess. 2:7)* and *“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.” (Gal. 4:19)* This is a parent’s love and patience.

We can be gracious servants to help others think in a new way—God’s way: *“...even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” (Rom. 6:19)* Gaining the perspective of someone can help us minister grace. Sometimes saints are ill, discouraged, or under great personal difficulty, like grieving a loss or a financial crisis. Giving someone grace and showing care, even when we don’t know the specifics, can have a great impact. **It displays the Lord Jesus Christ in us!**

Who Is Really Worthy?



Is every saint, even all unbelievers, valued in **your** mind and worthy of time and grace, or are certain groups or types excluded? Maybe we are unknowingly putting some under the law, an unrealistic performance system. Can we love the saint who views Scripture in a different way, is unfaithful to his wife, or may act as an enemy? Do we offer grace to unsaved sinners: thieves, homosexuals, prostitutes...everyone?

God loves them all! *“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4)* The Lord desires us to hold forth the Word in love so they can see the Truth. How can we do this? It is not natural! **Only by God’s grace!**

Thinking It Out!

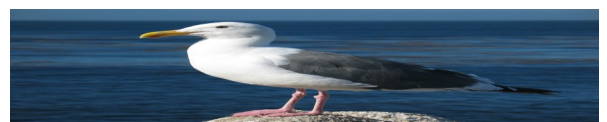
These are situations you may encounter. Which are examples of speaking the Truth in love? (Eph. 4:15)

1. A person begins to attend your assembly and uses a non-preferred Bible. a) Encourage him to study the issue, providing verses for comparison. b) Ask him to use a King James Bible or he is not welcome. c) Carefully, but purposefully, point out differences in translations during Bible studies over time. d) Take him aside to answer questions, offering him resources to think out the issue. e) Inform him in front of all that he is using a corrupt Bible.

2. You share your study insights on a topic and another belittles your ideas at Bible study. a) You ignore it, assuming he is having a bad day. b) You make it visibly clear you are angry. c) When given an opportunity, you convince him about your position. d) After study, you provide verses that helped you think out the topic. You then, encourage further discussion once he has time to study them. e) You pull him out of the study to confront him: he disrespected and insulted you by what he said.

3. On Sunday, the pastor refers to a new local church group: a) They are referred to as ‘this persuasion,’ and he warns you to avoid them. b) Using verses, he shows they are brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, though they may be deceived or weak in the faith. c) He labels them such as ‘Water dunkers,’ Pope followers,’ or ‘Charismaniacs.’ d) He suggests an elder meet the new pastor to share grace.

A few insights to respond graciously:
 -See saints as God sees them.
 -Think about your impact on them or others who are listening: Is the interaction edifying or does it have potential to injure their weak conscience, putting up walls? (Rom. 14)
 -Is your response truthful, but in love; one that will help him grow?



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Stamp

To:

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 3:24)

Personal Corner

Being Humbled Can Be Good

It was sobering to be told twice in a week that some saints could feel pressure (under law) by ‘the way’ I encouraged them to read Scripture. (The feedback came as I was writing this newsletter, the very topic of ministering in grace.) My heart apology for any teaching that leaned toward legalism. God’s desire for saints is a heart to read the Word in thankfulness, responding by faith. *“For the love of Christ constraineth us...” (II Cor. 5:14)*

Each of us is prone to be lifted up in pride, not truly functioning in God’s grace when we teach. I didn't think I tended toward legalism, but looking back, I can now see how it subtly permeates thinking & behavior; I ever need to be transformed. Even mature grace believers can be self-exalted, putting themselves or others under the law. Regular reflection can help.

Having a heart for others to mature or understand the Word is good. In teaching, we can purpose to be nurturing, not pressuring others to accept ‘our views.’ Growth happens when one applies faith to the Word, as he is ready. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. 10:17)* Each person has a journey of choices. Can we be longsuffering? Maturity happens slowly and is a life-long process with obstacles.

I am confident that we all have tendencies toward legalism, even when we don’t think we do. As far as writing and coaching, I’ll still hold forth the Truth, but will purpose to relay it more graciously, as ‘a great and glorious opportunity.’ It’s good to be humbled. Thank you for the feedback, dear friends. This was the love of Christ in you inspiring me on!



‘On A Personal Side’
We welcome feedback & questions.

From Our Readers

“Once again we say thank you and may the Lord give you strength and resources to continue to publish the newsletters.” (Ghana)

“I just finished I Samuel...trying to keep up on our goal of reading the entire Bible!” (Virginia)

“I love your books! Easy to follow and the big lettering is great.” (Wisconsin)

Ideas For Sharing Truth

How can you minister to someone if you only have a minute or so? Ask a question to provoke thought: “Do you know how much God loves you?” (He died in your place. Rom. 3) Or, “Do you know which book in the Bible establishes you in the faith?” (It’s Romans: “...to the end ye may be established.” Rom. 1:11) Let the person think and respond before you share the answer.

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