

“Giving Grace To The Sinful”

July 26, 2009 * John 8:2-8

I. From last week’s teaching

A. *What is grace?*

B. *If we misunderstand grace, we might end up in one of two dangerous places:*

1. *Spiritual _____ or*
2. *Spiritual _____*

II. When determining how to treat the sinful people in our lives, here are two places we must not go:

A. *If we misunderstand grace on the apathy side, we may be tempted to accept the sinful behavior as _____.*

1. *What’s America’s #1 virtue today?*

2. *How does grace differ from this?*

3. *How did Jesus feel about the woman’s adultery?*

B. *If we misunderstand grace on the fanatical side, we may be tempted to _____ the sinful person as beyond redemption.*

1. *How do legalists tend to treat sinful people?*

III. Jesus’ Delicate Position

A. *What were the Pharisees hoping to do?*

B. *How did Jesus turn this into a ‘tour de force’?*

C. *Why did the oldest leave first?*

D. *Out of this exchange we are reminded of a powerful truth: that when it comes to our dealing with sinful people, our instinct must be to show _____ first, _____ second.*

1. *James 2:13*

E. *Why should grace be our instinct?*

1. *Because we ourselves are _____ and need _____.* (Gal.3:22)

a. *I wonder how I would have turned out if...*

2. *Because the battle the battle of overcoming sin is not won _____.*

a. *What are some reasons people yield to sin?*

IV. How do we give grace to the sinful in practical terms?

A. *Is there a formula that will help us know what to do?*

B. *What are some ways the Bible tells us to act when ministering to sinful people?*

C. *2 Timothy 4:2 offers three levels of interaction:*

2 Timothy 4:2: “Correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.”

1. *What’s the proper order here?*

D. *How do we know which level to use?*

1. *In general, work your way _____ the ladder.*

2. *Ask: How _____ - _____ is the sin?*

3. *Ask: How close is the person to _____ and coming to Christ?*

Romans 2:4 – “Do you show contempt for the riches of God’s kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance?”

“Giving Grace To The Sinful”

July 26, 2009 * John 8:2-8

I. From last week’s teaching

A. What is grace?

God’s undeserved favor.

B. If we misunderstand grace, we might end up in one of two dangerous places:

- 1. Spiritual **apathy** or*
- 2. Spiritual **fanaticism**.*

II. When determining how to treat the sinful people in our lives, here are two places we must not go:

*A. If we misunderstand grace on the apathy side, we may be tempted to accept the sinful behavior as **harmless**.*

1. What’s America’s #1 virtue today?

Tolerance.

2. How does grace differ from this?

Tolerance says, “I accept you by no longer seeing what you are doing as wrong.” Grace says, “I accept you in spite of the fact that what you are doing is wrong.” Tolerance rewrites morality. Grace upholds morality. Churches which promote themselves as “welcoming and affirming” are churches which have rewritten morality in the name of cultural tolerance. They are taking something God calls “sin” and saying, “No it’s not. It’s harmless. See how tolerant and enlightened we are.” But tolerance ends up dehumanizing people in the end because it lowers the bar for us, by promoting behavior which God says *is* harmful. Grace elevates our humanity by holding us to his higher standard.

3. How did Jesus feel about the woman’s adultery?

In his dealing with this woman, Jesus never suggested that her sinful behavior was harmless. He never lowered the bar for her.

*B. If we misunderstand grace on the fanatical side, we may be tempted to **condemn** the sinful person as beyond redemption.*

1. How do legalists tend to treat sinful people?

Legalists and fanatics completely lose the ability to see the humanity of the sinful and broken people around them. How else could a person possibly convince themselves that blowing up a bus filled with innocent people is justifiable? Or detonating a bomb outside an abortion clinic? Or stoning to death a woman? But those are extreme cases. Christian legalists who fill the earth today are masters at throwing different types of stones at the broken people around them. To be accepted by a modern-day legalist or one of their churches, you must keep their rules, agree with their scruples, be as fanatical as they are, dress like them, talk like them, read only their brand of Bible. The Pharisees are far from dead.

III. Jesus’ Delicate Position

A. What were the Pharisees hoping to do?

They didn’t care about the woman or the moral health of the community. They were out to destroy Jesus. If adultery was their main concern, then I have a question: where’s the man? Adultery requires two adults. In fact, the law of Moses which they were so quick to appeal to, required the death of both parties.

B. How did Jesus turn this into a ‘tour de force’?

He stands, looks *them* in the eyes this time, and says, “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.” Yes, what she’s done is worthy of judgment. Jesus upholds God’s law. But let any of you who hasn’t done anything worthy of judgment be the one to execute her. Jesus upholds God’s mercy.

C. Why did the oldest leave first?

As you get older, your idealism gets tempered by some of the harsh realities of life. Like you cannot have it all. You make one choice, you shut the door on others. You cannot do it all. Some dreams go to seed. Your body will weaken. Disaster will strike without warning. People will fail you. And you will fail. And especially for the seekers and worshippers of God, comes a

growing awareness for those who are honest, that we fall so far short of the life which God calls us to, the life that Jesus invites us to share in, the life that he died for us to enjoy. As we age comes a growing awareness, for those who are honest, of our need for God's grace to carry us home.

D. Out of this exchange we are reminded of a powerful truth: that when it comes to our dealing with sinful people, our instinct must be to show grace first, judgment second.

1. James 2:13

E. Why should grace be our instinct?

1. Because we ourselves are sinful and need grace. (Gal.3:22)

a. I wonder how I would have turned out if...

Did any of you see "Slum Dog Millionaire"? I wonder how you would have turned out if you grew up in those slums. "I am what I am by the grace of God." I wonder how you would have turned out if your parents had split, instead of stayed together. If you hadn't had that Christian grandmother. Never went to that youth group. I wonder how you would have turned out if you were blind. Or poor. Or sexually abused. Or had a mental illness. Maybe the truth of the matter is that you're not nearly as good as you think you are, or as smart as you think you are, maybe the truth is you are a recipient of grace.

2. Because the battle the battle of overcoming sin is not won overnight.

a. What are some reasons people yield to sin?

For some, it's ignorance. They don't know their right hand from their left when it comes to morality. For some, it's their upbringing. Especially growing up in a broken home with an absent, abusive or messed up father just does a number on so many people. For some it's their environment. If you don't find many godly friends growing up, you're going to find it hard to be godly. For some, sin becomes habit-forming, even addictive. Their brain literally is wired with sinful attractions and impulses. There are all kinds of reasons why people are broken by sin.

And each of those reasons requires a different approach if you're going to overcome that sin.

IV. How do we give grace to the sinful in practical terms?

A. Is there a formula that will help us know what to do?

If you're looking for a formula that will tell you what to do in every situation, the Bible doesn't give one. I have to wonder if one reason why Jesus was drawing in the dirt was that he was waiting on God the Father to help him sort things out. In a way, each situation, each person you deal with will require its own particular wisdom.

B. What are some ways the Bible tells us to act when ministering to sinful people?

On some (most) cases, compassion. With others with law (especially those who are wicked.). With others mercy mixed with fear. There is no formula.

C. 2 Timothy 4:2 offers three levels of interaction:

2 Timothy 4:2: "Correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction."

1. What's the proper order here?

Encourage, correct, rebuke.

D. How do we know which level to use?

1. In general, work your way up the ladder.

2. Ask: How full - grown is the sin?

3. Ask: How close is the person to repenting and coming to Christ?

Romans 2:4 – "Do you show contempt for the riches of God's kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?"