

THE GRACE OF GOD AND MINISTRY

Purpose statement: Explain what grace is and how it affects evangelism.

Learning objectives: This session will help you to:

1. Understand the meaning of grace
2. Respond to God's grace in doing evangelism

Key Verse: I Corinthians 15:10

I. Introduction

What are some of the things that we do to motivate another person to do something? (*Some possible answers are the following: fear, shame, punishment, money, things or gifts, the desire to please, encouragement, love and the desire to do what is right.*)

All of these are motivations that people use to get people to do things. God uses many of them. As we can see, some are positive and some are negative.

God does use many ways to motivate people, but He uses one way to motivate people to action more than any other way and that is through grace. Today we will look at the definition of grace and see grace in action in the life of the believer.

II. Grace Defined

Grace is undeserved or unmerited favor. It is giving somebody something that they don't deserve. Grace is something that cannot be earned, only bestowed at the choice of the giver. The word has at its root the realization of the complete unworthiness of the receiver. Grace is easier for us to define than it is for us to comprehend or to believe in. Grace, more often than not, is contrary to everything we feel about life. At the core of our beings we generally don't want things that we cannot earn or somehow pay for.

There is a story that illustrates grace. A number of years ago there was a man who was an attendant of a drawbridge over a large river. One day his son came to be with the man and play there. Later in the day, a train approached. The man was about to begin putting down the drawbridge. To his horror he looked down at the gears and saw that his son had fallen into the gears. He had a choice. He could let down the drawbridge and watch his son be killed by the giant gears and save the hundreds of people on the train or he could watch the hundreds of people go to their death in a watery grave. Through tears and great agony of spirit he watched as his son was mangled by the gears. The people on the train never knew the father's agony as they passed over safely. That's grace. Think about that. Grace is not only a one-time act of God giving His Son, but it continues on today. Every good and perfect gift comes down from above from the Father of Lights.

III. Paul's response to grace

Paul was a man who appreciated what God had done for him. I Corinthians 15:10 reads: "But by

the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” You see, Paul understood from what he had been saved. He also understood the future reward and as a result he worked night and day for the Gospel. No one or nothing could deter him from his goal of knowing Christ and making him known. Grace was at the center of all his thoughts and actions.

IV. Responses to Grace

How will we respond to God’s grace? As Christians we can respond in various ways to God’s grace.

A. First response

We feel that we must please others. We try really hard to please. We think that we will not be accepted unless we perform very well. What is the remedy? What are some verses that tell us that we do not need to perform in order to be under God’s grace? *(If not mentioned by the class, instructor could say, “The remedy is knowing that God accepts us unconditionally and that nothing can separate us from God’s perfect love. Some verses are Romans 8:1; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:17.”)*

B. Second response

Demas was a faithful disciple and a companion of Paul for many years. But in the end he left Paul. It is a sad statement the we read in 2 Timothy 4:10. It reads: “For Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonika.” How does understanding grace help us guard against the actions of Demas taking place in our lives. *(If not mentioned by the class, instructor could say, “Understanding grace helps us know that real joy and peace come from Jesus Christ. Things do not bring real satisfaction. We need to let God develop in us the realization that this is true. Understanding His grace is essential.”)*

C. Third response

The Apostle Paul centered his life around the grace of God. All that he did was in response to that grace. We need to really understand grace in order to have Paul’s drive and tenacity in ministry.

V. Conclusion

What will be your response? How is the grace of God influencing your life and ministry? What are the areas of strength regarding God’s grace in your life? What are areas of weakness? What changes need to be made? For example, are you excited about ministry because of God’s grace in your life? Do you work hard because of God’s grace? Are you loving towards others because of God’s gracious attitude toward you? Are you trying to gain God’s favor by your good works and always feeling like you are falling short? At times when you’re letting the cares of the world block your view of God’s grace like Demas, what is the solution? Talk about this with someone else in the training group. *(Have the group spend some time thinking through these issues. If there is time, have them pray about areas of weakness.)*