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John 7–10

“The Case for Grace”

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For pastors who teach the Bible, it’s likely that some find it easier, and sometimes more necessary, to teach on the subject of sin than to teach on the subject of grace. First, if the teaching centers on the evils of sin and the consequences of sin, then perhaps people will be spared the pain of sin that comes from disobeying God, which *is* painful. You might say there’s a desire to provide an ounce of prevention that would spare people from suffering the damaging effects of sin. Second, the possibility exists that if the teaching has too much grace, people may become delinquent Christians. Some may get the wrong idea and say to themselves, “Well, as long as I’ve got grace in my back pocket, I might as well live it up!” Because of these two reasons, the tendency can be that we talk so much about how bad sin is, that we don’t offer as much in the way of recovery for people who have already fallen into sin.

One way to illustrate this would be to think about the way people treat those who come down with the flu. If all you did was talk about prevention and how bad the flu is, but then when someone actually got it, they would find that no offer was made to help them recover from it, how cruel that would be. What if the emphasis was always on the rules of preventing the flu and how nasty the flu is? Then, when someone still ended up getting the flu, the only response was, “You should have washed your hands more!” “Please help me,” is the quick reply. “No, you’ll have to deal with the consequences of staying up late and wearing down your immune system. You should have known better...” Now shift to this incident and think about the people who’re already convicted of sin, who’re embarrassed, ashamed and feeling the sting of sin. Where’s the help with recovery? Where’s the care for the hurting? Where’s the grace? What does the Bible say to them, and what does the Bible say about our responsibility to them? Because churches are filled with people who need to experience God’s grace, the focus of this teaching in [John 8:1–11](#) is about grace, and it’s one of the most tender and vivid illustrations on the subject of grace in the Bible.

The entire scene was a set-up staged for the purpose of “*trying to trap Jesus in order to have a basis for accusing him.*” ([John 8:6](#)) The religious leaders who did not believe in Jesus as Messiah were always trying to discredit him. This time, however, they stoop to a new low: they are going to try to work out their evil scheme even if it means humiliating another person in the process.

Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. His custom was to teach in the Temple Courts during the day and return to the Mount of Olives in the evening. **John 8:2-3** says, “At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.” All of a sudden, “[t]he teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery,” and “[t]hey made her stand before the group...” The humiliation, embarrassment and shame must have been crushing.

It’s interesting to note that there is someone missing: the man! Adultery was a capital offense under the Jewish Law. In **Leviticus 20:10** and **Deuteronomy 22:22**, the Law called for the man and the woman to be held accountable. So, where was he? Most Bible scholars believe the absence of the man proves he was in collusion with the religious leaders. They most likely trapped this woman for the sole purpose of parading her in front of Jesus in order to see what he’d say about someone caught red-handed in a sinful act. (**John 8:5**) They thought they had him in a quandary! If he said, “Let her go,” he’d be violating the letter of the Law. If he said, “Kill her,” he would alienate himself from the very people who knew him as a friend of sinners. (**Matthew 11:19** and **Luke 7:34**)

Jesus’ response to the best they had to offer was to stoop down and write in the dirt with his finger. (**John 8:6b**) The teachers of the law and the religious leaders must have wondered what he was up to; but they would soon find out in an extremely personal way.

The age-old question is, “What did Jesus write?” **Exodus 31:18** and **Deuteronomy 9:10** are the only other occasions in the Bible that show the Lord writing with his finger. One of the most plausible answers is that Jesus stooped down to write the Ten Commandments. There are two things Jesus would accomplish if that were the case. First, he would assert his own deity, i.e. the finger of God writing the Ten Commandments again, as he had done for Moses. Second, it would be an indication of their own guilt because the Law would testify against them; that they’d broken one or more of the Ten Commandments themselves.

Jesus stood up and offered the wisdom of heaven when he said, “*If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.*” (**John 8:7**) Their response was to leave, one at a time. Notice that the older men left first. The indication is that the older men had a longer history and knew their lives had not been as godly as they so boldly and publicly proclaimed. Finally, when they had all left, Jesus and the woman were standing alone. Jesus asked her, “*Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?*” “*No one, sir,*” she said. “*Then neither do I condemn you,*” Jesus declared. “*Go now and leave your life of sin.*”

The tendency would be to think Jesus was soft on sin that is until you connect his comment about leaving her life of sin. Jesus was not soft on sin; he was strong on grace. Her public humiliation was punishment enough. Jesus didn’t need to heap condemnation on her. She already felt the weight of guilt. What she needed was grace, and that’s just what the Lord gave her. To deprive someone of grace is to disgrace that person. The religious leaders were intent on disgracing this woman, but the Lord overruled their wicked plan and imparted grace in a life-changing way.

We learn from this teaching that the Bible instructs us concerning three things about grace: Grace is not liberty to sin, it is liberty from sin; grace is not only redemptive, it is operative; and grace is free, but not cheap.

Grace Is Not Liberty To Sin, It Is Liberty From Sin

1. God's grace teaches us to say, "No!"
2. **Titus 2:11–13** says, *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say, 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."*

Grace Is Not Only Redemptive, It Is Operative

3. To think that grace is a one-time thing a person receives when they're saved misses the full impact of God's grace in the life of the believer.
4. **Ephesians 2:8–9** says, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."*
5. **Romans 5:20** says, *"...where sin increased, grace increased all the more."*
6. **2 Corinthians 9:8** says, *"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."*

Grace Is Free, But Not Cheap

7. Grace is distributed freely to all who need it, but it came at a great price. Jesus Christ died on a cross so that grace might be imputed to all who look to the Savior.
8. **Ephesians 1:7** says, *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace..."*

God's Grace Is The Final Word

9. Grace is *the* theme of God's message, from 1 Corinthians all the way through the book of Hebrews!
 - a. **1 Corinthians 16:23–24, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Galatians 6:18, Ephesians 6:24, Philippians 4:23, Colossians 4:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:28, 2 Thessalonians 3:18, 1 Timothy 6:23, 2 Timothy 4:22, Titus 3:15, Philemon 22, and Hebrews 13:25.**
10. God's final Word on the subject is **Revelation 22:21** – *"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen."*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **John 8:1–11** to provide an overview of today's study.
3. Allow the people in your group to spend time talking about times they've disgraced someone by the words or actions.
 - a. In what ways do we disgrace ourselves?
 - b. How do we disgrace our spouse?
 - c. How do we disgrace our children?
 - d. How do we disgrace total strangers?
 - e. Read and discuss **Romans 8:1**.
4. Spend time talking about examples of grace that goes beyond the commonplace.
 - a. Is it possible for unbelievers to demonstrate a God-like grace?
5. Read and discuss **Titus 2:11–13**.
 - a. What does it look like to live a *“self-controlled, upright and godly [life] in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”*
6. Read and discuss **Ephesians 2:8–9**.
 - a. Spend time talking about the redemptive work of God's grace versus the man-made religious views some espouse that indicate people can *do* something to earn God's favor and be made righteous in his sight.
7. Read and discuss **2 Corinthians 9:8**, which describes the operative work of God's grace.
 - a. If God's grace teaches Christians to say “No” to sin, how are people empowered to live in victory over a life of sin?
8. Allow the people in your group to talk about their experiences concerning times in their life, either when they were saved or some other time, when they really sensed God's grace in all its fullness.
 - a. Read and discuss **Ephesians 1:7**.
9. God has the final word on the subject of Grace. It may be important for the people in your group to go through the reading of the ending verse(s) in every New Testament book beginning with **1 Corinthians** and ending with **Hebrews**. (See list above)
11. Close your time by allowing everyone in your group to: search their heart to see if there is any sin that needs to be brought to the Lord, and ask the Lord to forgive their sin and help them to leave that sin so they can live a godly life; rejoice over the wonder of the blessing of knowing God's grace personally; (select someone to read this Scripture) reflect on **Titus 2:11–13**; ask the Holy Spirit to empower each person to be a vessel of grace; close with the prayer leader reading **Revelation 22:21** – *“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.”*