

OCTOBER 22, 2017

Graciousness

Grace has been defined in many different ways. When we talk about God's grace we think of His giving us His Son for our salvation. My favorite definition for God's grace is: God giving us what we don't deserve. We deserved the punishment of Hell, but God graciously bestowed on us the gift of His Son. So knowing about God's grace causes us to seek to know just **how to show grace** to others. While we can't offer salvation to another person, we can be kind and gracious to them.

Showing Grace With Words

When speaking with people you should use words that are kind and gentle. Obviously there are times we need to correct other people, but it never has to be done in a hateful or mean-spirited way. Find a way to gently say what needs to be said.

Look for the Needs of Others

Can you help someone in some small way? Holding a door for someone whose arms are full can be a small action that helps in a great way. If you will seek out little actions you can do for others it will help you become a more graceful person. Don't just look for opportunities to fulfill monumental needs. Our ability to change other people's lives with large financial donations or heroic actions are seldom within our grasp, but we can affect people every day with simple kindnesses.

Respond With Grace

Have you been criticized by someone? Even unjustly? You don't have to let others walk over you, but you can respond in a gracious way. Accept what they have to say and thank them for their input. The news they bring you may upset you and hurt you deeply. The way you respond can help the healing begin immediately. A quick response with anger will leave you seething. But the sooner you can respond with a smile and a calm spirit the sooner you will be able to see the truth in their words and make the changes that need to be made.

Graceful Presence

Take opportunities to be with someone in a time of grief. They don't need you to deliver some special speech or do anything grand for them and the family. Your presence may be all that is needed to show you love them.

Funerals and hospital stays are times when you can make a quick visit that will leave an impact in someone's life. You don't have to spend hours with them, but they do want to know you care and that you are thinking of them. Even if it is just a 10 minute visit, stopping by to say hello can mean the world to them in their time of physical or emotional pain.

Forgive With Grace

When someone asks forgiveness, accept their apology graciously. They have come to you humbly asking for your pardon. That is not a time to tell them why they should have done so much sooner. Nor is it an appropriate time to correct them and tell them how they could have handled the situation better. If you are in a teaching or authoritative position over the person and you need to give them advice that will help them in the future, separate your advice from your forgiveness. Allow them to see you have accepted their apology and then later share with them the correction and direction they need.

Learn to say "I'm Sorry."

When you make a mistake, swallow your pride and ask for forgiveness. Maybe they wronged you in some way but you responded inappropriately. You can ask them to forgive you for your response. Remember grace is giving to the other person what they don't deserve. Even if, in your opinion, they don't deserve an apology, you can ask their forgiveness for your wrong response.

Keep Short Accounts

When you need to apologize, do it quickly. Don't keep a running total of how many times they have done wrong towards you.

Forgive, even if they don't ask for it. Grace can go a long way to repairing a relationship if you will respond in a loving way, even when they don't.

Clean Up Your Language

Beyond using gentle words with those around you, be careful how you express yourself. Do you have some words in your vocabulary that shouldn't be there? There may be some words you say that aren't really "bad" words, but the way you say them express the same feelings as your co-worker's curse words. Be careful with substitute curse words. Even if you aren't saying the same thing, you mean exactly the same emotions as others who use the real words.

Say Thank You To Show Grace To Others

Take time to say "thank you." It doesn't cost anything, but it can show other people gratitude and grace. Write a simple card expressing your appreciation for a kind act on your behalf. You can make a difference by putting a "thank you" on your lips and a card in someone's hand.

Take Interest in Others

I was introducing a friend to a local pastor recently and the pastor asked my friend a few questions about himself. Then the pastor took the time and looked my friend in the eyes as he answered. The pastor responded with an attitude of genuine interest towards my friend. The whole conversation lasted less than 5 minutes, but after the pastor left my friend immediately said to me, "What a gracious man!" The pastor did nothing more than ask a few questions and show an interest in my friend's answers. Certainly it is appropriate to respond to questions when people ask you about yourself, but try to ask a few questions of your own and learn about other people. Let people talk about themselves—then be interested in their response.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.) How did God's grace change you?
- 2.) How do you show God's grace to others ?
- 3.) Are you finding it hard to show grace, why?

Pray for each other in your group.