

The world is so messed up. Even Christians are confused. We mix up so many things that we’ve believed something to be the absolute truth without basing it on what is written in the Bible. And so we live our lives passing on to others what we know is the correct version of truth.

“**What is TRUTH?**”, Pontius Pilate asked. This was the conversation between Jesus and Pontius Pilate. Remember: Jesus was arrested and was accused of calling himself the King of the Jews. John 18:37-38 - “37 “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” 38 “What is truth?” retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.” (NIV) Each person has his own version of truth. When you don't want the truth, you force it down, hold it down, deny it, reject it, limit it, compromise it because that's not what you want.

**WORD**

John 1:14 - “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (NIV)

Most of us understand the truth. And most of us also understand grace. But how do the two terms, which at times appear contradictory, come together? When it comes to grace, I am so amazed at how gentle and patient Jesus was with people. Despite His intense hatred for sin, He had compassion for the multitudes, showed forgiveness, and attracted people to Himself. That’s grace!

Yet at the same time, He never compromised His standards and never budged nor changed His direction from His divine mission. He was the gentle Lamb of God and yet He was also the Lion of Judah not ashamed to display righteous anger and speak judgment to the world. That is TRUTH! Jesus loves and He is still both grace and truth. When we offend everybody, we’ve declared truth without grace. When we offend nobody, we’ve watered down truth in the name of grace.

Maybe, the best way to understand these two concepts is to study each of them individually and bring them together and see how they blend with each other.

**WHAT IS GRACE?**

Romans 5:6-8 - “6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (NIV)

If you want to see what grace looks like, the greatest place to look is in the face of Jesus, specifically His work on the cross. The ultimate reason Jesus died on the cross is because His primary mission is to take away the sins of the world. 1 Peter 2:24 - “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.” (NIV)

With absolutely no hope of saving ourselves, Jesus gave us the most unbelievable display of grace that the world has ever seen. And when I face reality and see my own sin contrasted with the beauty of His holiness, I only deserve His punishment in hell. And yet, He has given me AMAZING GRACE.

Receiving and fully understanding God's amazing grace gives us the motivation to fulfill the command to treat each other with grace. When I deserved hell, but God-Almighty in perfect holiness was willing to take my sin upon Himself and give me undeserved mercy and forgiveness, how can I not treat others in the same way?

Let’s talk about the “GRACE” people. Grace people are pleasant to be around.  They don’t ruffle any feathers.  They forgive minor mistakes. They’re easygoing.  They accept us for who we are.  They don’t make demands.  They are always welcoming.  But without truth, grace isn’t really grace, it’s just being accepting and nice.  Affirmation and being grace-filled are not the same thing.

“**GRACE**” people without truth are pleasant to be around, but we wonder if they really like us or if they are just trying to be liked.  They are tolerant, but they often do not know the difference between right and wrong.  “GRACE” people can be cowardly.  They often refuse to make tough decisions in life.  They demand nothing from others and get nothing in return. They accept us for who we are, but they never help us become who we should be.

**WHAT IS TRUTH?**

We must again start with Jesus. He said in John 14:6, "Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (NIV)  Jesus is not "A” Truth, but He is "THE" Truth. God is the standard of truth. In John 17:17, He said His "Word is truth." What He communicates to us is our definition of truth. Romans 2:15 says truth is written on all of our hearts. That's why all people experience guilt and shame and a bad conscience because deep down inside they know when they violate God's standards.like Jesus, we as His followers must never compromise truth. The Scripture must be our guide and we must be willing to live according to it without compromise. Like the church at times failing to display grace, the church at times also fails to display truth. Do we dare to be ashamed to speak about Jesus in fear that it might offend someone and defend it in the name of grace? Are we so liberal and overly tolerant with our children, avoiding discipline while thinking we are acting in grace? Should we eliminate certain biblical principles like repentance, hell, church discipline, marriage roles, sin, God's sovereignty, and Christ's lordship because we wish to offer grace? Should we not confront sin and hold each other accountable because we think that is a display of grace?

The Christian life is based on hearing and submitting to the truth. The most loving thing we can do is speak the truth both to unbelievers and believers. Our primary goal is not to help each other feel good, but to help each other be good. Without truth, there can be no grace. Randy Alcorn said, "A home full of grace is also full of truth, because grace doesn't make people less holy - it makes them more holy.” Grace doesn't make people hate or neglect truth - it makes them love and follow truth.

**WHAT ARE GRACE AND TRUTH?**

We often gravitate to one or the other according to our temperament, what we feel, background, church, or family. But, we need both. If you are a “GRACE” person, you are most concerned about being loved.  If you are a “TRUTH” person, you are most concerned about being right even if it means being unloved.  Both have their dangers.  Something is wrong if everyone hates you, and something is probably just as wrong if everyone loves you. Jesus was 100% grace and 100% truth. He wasn’t half and half. Jesus wants us to demonstrate grace and truth. But how? How do we demonstrate grace and truth without compromising the other?

Jesus was all grace. He welcomed sinners and tax collectors and ate with them.  He had compassion for the crowds when they were hungry and far from home.  He welcomed the little children to come and sit on his lap - gentler and kinder than any department store Santa.  He healed the lepers, the crippled, and the blind.  He saved the criminal on the cross, who, in his dying breath, confessed that the dying man next to him was truly the Son of God.

But Jesus was also all truth.  He condemned many of the religious leaders of His day for being liars and hypocrites.  He talked about hell more than He talked about heaven.  He called all those who would be His disciples to take up their cross daily and follow Him.  He prophesied judgment on Jerusalem for their unrepentant hearts.  He obeyed the law, set standards, and demanded everything from his followers, even their very lives.

Jesus came to save us in grace and truth.  It’s only after we’ve been saved and made right with God that God says, “Alright, now that I have saved you through Jesus, you need to know that I have saved you to look like Jesus.”  The motivation to be full of grace and truth is not because we need to earn God’s favor, but because being a follower of Jesus Christ means we look like the one we follow.

Without truth, we lack the courage to speak and the conviction to speak. Without grace, we lack compassion to meet people's deepest needs. We don't have the luxury of choosing either grace or truth. Yet many believers embrace one instead of the other. We must learn to say yes to both grace and truth, and say no to whatever keeps us away from them.

 LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

1) Are you honest in your relationships or do you hide what you really feel about things? What is the root of that fear?

2) How do you feel when someone lovingly tells you the truth about something? Do you appreciate it or do you resent it? Explain.

3) When was the last time you really expressed truthfully what you felt about something, and what was the response to your truthfulness? Did you tell it in love or did you attack the listener with your words?