

The Discipline of Grace and Truth

by Todd Atkinson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and living the discipline of grace and truth, and challenges listeners to be recipients of God's grace and to follow Jesus' teachings.

Duration: 1:06:26

Scripture: Psalm 95:7

Topics: "Spiritual Disciplines"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of worship and entering God's presence with praise and thanksgiving. He references a Bible passage that talks about the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us, highlighting the significance of Jesus being full of grace and truth. The preacher shares a story told by Billy Graham about a couple who had a fight, but the husband surprises his wife with flowers, demonstrating the importance of showing grace and love. The sermon concludes with a parable about a master inviting people to a feast, emphasizing the need to invite everyone to experience God's love and fill His house.

Transcript

Somebody sent me some little items through the email about typos and things that are put in church bulletins that are sort of put in funny ways. That you share this with you. The fee for the fasting and prayer conference includes meals.

The sermon this morning, Jesus walks on the water. The sermon tonight, searching for Jesus. Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale.

It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands. Don't let worry kill you off.

Let the church help. I had intended on speaking on worship and the discipline of worship. But as I started to study about it and think about it, pray about it, realize that there's more to just saying I'm going to worship.

That effective, transforming, life changing, worship needs at least two other disciplines that I thought of. One was the discipline of grace and the other the discipline of truth. And I'll tell you in a minute why I came to that conclusion.

But just let's ask the Lord to help us. Father, we acknowledge our need of you. Thank you for the freedom that allows us to open our Bibles and just meet so freely.

But we confess we need your help. Holy Spirit, come and touch our minds that we might grasp the truths of your word. And then touch our hearts, Lord, that it will not be an accumulation of knowledge but it will be something that will get into our everyday life, helping us with our responsibilities, helping us to be the persons we want to be that you want us to be.

Help us and we'll give you all the praise and glory. In Jesus' name, amen. Seems to me that there's been a heresy that has come into the church, mainly probably the Western church in Europe and North America.

I don't think it's been sort of a conspiracy or anything like that. I just think it's sort of something that the church has just slid into. It's just crept up and really hasn't been checked.

It's the heresy that a person can be a Christian without ever becoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus. That's a strange thing, isn't it? That you could think that a person can be a Christian and then forever never be a disciple of Jesus. That's not something new.

It's been around for actually a long time. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a pastor, a theologian, who gave his life for Christ in opposing Hitler, warned the church about the dangers of what he called cheap grace. Cheap grace.

He defined it this way in a wonderful book that he wrote called *The Cost of Discipleship*. But this is what he wrote. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship.

Grace without the cross, unquote. It's a mistaken belief that because our salvation is not by works, but by faith, and because our salvation is eternally secure in Christ, then it doesn't matter what we say or do. We'll get to heaven anyway.

It's really a strange kind of thing. But that's been accepted, in fact, a great deal of controversy in recent years in evangelicalism about that whole matter. It's mistaken.

It's just couldn't be further from the truth. A complete misreading of what is taught in the Bible. Is our salvation by faith? Yes, it is.

Is our salvation eternally secure in Jesus? Yes, it is. But, but only if we are disciples or followers of the Lord Jesus. The Bible gives no comfort to anyone who doesn't believe in the Lord Jesus and in some degree lives like Him.

That's the evidence that he or she is a new creation in Christ. That's what 2 Corinthians 5, 17 says very clearly. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old is gone. The new has come. Just a simple statement of what it is to become a Christian.

It's from night to day. The change happens. Well, look at this passage in Luke 14.

Luke 14, verses 15 to 24. I think it's spelled out in this. Lord Jesus, in the previous verses, has been in the house of a Pharisee and they're closely watching him because they're gonna see if he would dare heal somebody on the Sabbath day.

You know, awful, eh? They're watching to see if he had healed somebody on the Sabbath day and break the law. And somebody does come in and needs healing and Jesus just heals them. But he knows the hypocrisy that there is there.

And so, verse 15 opens with this. When one of those at the table in this Pharisee's house heard this, he said to Jesus, blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God. Because Jesus had just reminded them about resurrection and about entering God's presence.

And so one of them then makes that statement. Yeah, all of us here, master, are going to be going to heaven and gonna enter the kingdom of God. If Jesus were here today, I think it would be something like this, he'd say.

He'd say, this man would say, blessed is the person who calls himself a Christian and is going to heaven. And Jesus replied, a certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, come for everything is now ready.

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, I've just bought a field and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.

Ridiculous excuse, buying a field before you saw it. Then another said, I've just bought five yoke of oxen and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.

Another ridiculous excuse, still another. I just got married, so I can't come. And everybody knew that.

But the servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, go out quickly into the streets and alleys of this town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame, all those who would love a feast. Sir, the servant said, what you ordered has been done, but there's still room.

Then the master told his servant, go out into the roads and the country lanes and make them come in so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my kingdom. I think it's easy to see in that parable that those who are not disciples are those who don't want to be at the feast that's being prepared in the kingdom of God.

And so they continually make excuses. It's like someone who has a Bible, but continually makes excuses why it is not read and who continually makes excuses for not coming to worship, joining others in worship, and who doesn't make any time in his life for prayer. These are all the marks of non-Christians, right? Those would fit a non-Christian's life.

So though we think we have given our lives to the Lord Jesus and think we are Christians, yet there is no evidence in our lives that we have become Christians. And so we need to think it again and rethink it. And I'm not saying these things to browbeat someone or to make somebody feel bad.

I'm mentioning these things because they happen. People in churches, and I know it, people in churches think they're Christians, but they're not. And so this is an encouraging word to say, hey, if that fits you, then know that that can change this morning.

That can change immediately. Because then by thinking it over and saying, well, I gave my life to Christ, but I'm not doing any of those spiritual things. So I'm gonna change that.

I'm gonna give my life to Jesus today. And so that's why we throw it out to you. We need to think it again.

If our life hasn't been accompanied, the giving of our life to Christ hasn't been accompanied by some change. But notice that those who made excuses in the parable got their wish. So C.S. Lewis is the writer that points that out, talking about heaven and hell.

And he said, if someone who wants to go, doesn't want anything to do with Christ and doesn't want anything to do with God, if they ended up in heaven and had to listen to all the praise and the worship about Jesus, they would feel it's like hell. And so that he mentions that God gives us what we want. God gives us what we decide.

So if we decide we want nothing to do with Jesus, we decide we want nothing to do with God, well, God grants that. We'll go into eternity, never being in the fellowship of Jesus. Go into eternity, never having God's presence.

He grants the wish. So that these people who made excuse, the parable ends up saying, they never did get a taste of the heavenly banquet. God granted their wish.

And so the Lord Jesus then turned from that to go and say, well, what is demanded of a disciple? And so in Luke 14, 26 to 27, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yet even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And if anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. So in very plain words here, Jesus is saying that if you want to be my disciple, here's what you need to know.

Now, who's disciple? Jesus' disciple. So he's got every right to set the conditions. If you want to be my disciple, here's what you have to do.

Now, of course, it doesn't mean here that we hate our families, because all you have to do is read a few more verses or books in the Bible, and you'll find that that is not the point at all. What he's saying is that if you can't, and I can't, put Jesus before everybody and everything else, then we can't be his disciple. That's the condition.

And so he said, you have to put me even before your family. Now, you have to remember, it's Jesus doing this, so he knows what he's talking about. And so what he's saying is, if you don't put Jesus before everybody else, then your relationships will lack because of that.

Because the secret of human life is, when you put Jesus first, then all the other relationships fall into place. He enables you to be a better husband. He enables you to be a better wife, or a better mother, better father, brother, or sister.

He made us. So he's well able to do that. And so by putting him first, then we're his disciple, and we work it out from there.

The other scriptures make it absolutely clear that we are to love our families. In fact, we're not only to love our families, we are to love our enemies. So love is the core of Jesus' teaching.

So it doesn't mean hate your family. Otherwise, again, it would be condoning suicide, wouldn't it? Because it says, even your own life. Can't love your own life.

So we know he's not doing that. And so he's simply saying, to be his disciple, he must take the priority. Now, the Bible teaches this, that sometimes we miss, that the true church of Christ is only made up of disciples.

In the true church of Christ, there are only disciples. And I say that not because I want to make this up for a good point in a sermon. That's what the Bible says, and it says it so clearly.

So I don't know how we sort of slipped into this whole thing about thinking that the grace of God means that we don't have to have any kind of a Christian spiritual life. Listen to this from Matthew 28, verses 18 to 20. Jesus said, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Now, this is the command that the church is built on. This is the command that's called the great commission.

It's the command that underlies and authorize people to take the gospel out throughout the world because that's what Jesus said, take this gospel out because it's by the gospel that the church is built and the kingdom of God is advanced. Now notice, it only speaks of disciples. And it defines them very clearly.

Those who obey all that I have taught you. And there's nothing else said. This taking the gospel out, taking Jesus' message, taking his, it only says make disciples.

Doesn't say make Christians, make disciples and teach them to obey me. Do you know, and I think it's significant, that in the New Testament, the word disciple occurs 269 times. Know how many times a Christian is mentioned.

Christian is mentioned three times. So the early church were known mainly as disciples. Christians was what Antioch attached to them.

This author, it's Dallas Willard, great, great author on discipleship. He said, the New Testament is about, is a book about disciples, by disciples and for disciples of Jesus Christ. So then what does it mean then to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus then? Simple, it's to be a learner.

It's to be a student or probably more enlightening, more helpful to us, to be an apprentice. That's what a disciple of Jesus is, an apprentice of Jesus. And again, that's what Matthew tells us.

Matthew 10, verses 10, 24 to 25. A student, disciple, apprentice is not above his teacher nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher and the servant like his master.

I love that. You see, a disciple of Jesus is just someone who wants to be like Jesus. Says here, it is enough.

It is, don't need to know all the doctrines. Don't need to know the Bible inside out. Don't need to have all the statements of faith of the church and other churches.

Don't need to know all the creeds to be a disciple of Jesus. It is enough, it is enough for the disciple to be like his master. One author said this.

He said, discipleship is a life of learning from Jesus Christ how to live in the kingdom of God now as he himself did. Paul echoes that, doesn't he, in Ephesians 5, 1 to 2. Be imitators of God as dearly loved

children and live a life of love just as Christ loved us, gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. That's a simple statement too, isn't it? The imitators of God love like he loved.

Imitators of Jesus live like he lived. But that means that Jesus is not only our savior, he's our great teacher. And have you ever thought about that? When was the last time that you read an article about Jesus and it said, Jesus was a smart man or Jesus was an intelligent man? Don't often find those, do you? And yet that's what the Bible teaches.

Jesus is your teacher. What do you do in life? You're an electrician, you're a plumber, an engineer, a teacher. Jesus knows more about your subject and your job than anybody else.

So it's good for you to pray, Lord, I've got this engineering project. You made everything, you made all the rules. Help me, come and help me.

That's what the Bible means. When we're a disciple of Jesus, whatever it is we're doing, we look upon him to give us the wisdom and whatever we need to do it. He's the great, the great teacher.

He made all the brains that are in everybody's head. He knows all that needs to be known. Great to know that, great to know.

Jesus knows more about what I need to do in life to make a living than I do and he wants to help me with it. He wants to walk with me in it. So put simply then, put simply, that's what a disciple of Jesus is.

Someone in training under the guidance of Jesus to be like him. But what then are spiritual disciplines? Well, first of all, they are disciplines. But disciplines that don't flow out of gritting your teeth and making you do something you don't want to do, they're disciplines that flow out of commitment to the Lord Jesus and therefore, they flow out of joy and life that we have in him.

It's like an athlete preparing to compete in the Olympics and therefore disciplines herself or himself with that in mind, I'm going to the Olympics, I'm gonna make sure I make the most of that. I remember living in Regina while I was studying at the university there and I was playing soccer in the Western Canada Soccer League. And you know this winter in Saskatchewan, it's a long, cold winter and I'd get out of shape, every winter out of shape, by the time spring came, I knew I had to do something.

So I'd get up early and I would run, I would try to build up my stamina so I could play in the games in June when the games of the league started. And so I can tell you that was painful, getting up early, going out in the cold to run. But do you know, it was no big deal.

But because of the excitement and joy of playing soccer and being in shape so that I could use and enjoy the skills I had, it never entered my head not to be in training. And then I'm sure if someone had come to me and said, you're crazy, you don't need to get out there and run, you don't need to worry about whether you're gonna be in shape or not. You know, I'd have thought they were from Mars or something because I know what would have happened.

I would have been sitting on the bench. But why do we think of Christian discipleship somehow as being cumbersome and just heavy loads when we want to do a spiritual discipline? When we speak of spiritual disciplines, that's what is meant. Ways and means of training, ways and means of learning, ways and means of practicing to be the best disciple of the Lord Jesus that we can possibly be.

That's what spiritual discipline is speaking about. I want to talk to you more than about worship. I thought I was gonna speak to you about worship, but the more I thought about it, you really can't enter worship without knowing what grace is.

And you can't really know what grace is before knowing what truth is. What's true. And then when those two come together, worship just evolves, develops out of that.

So let me talk to you about that. If we want to reach our potential of disciples of Jesus, reach our potential, then those three disciplines are crucial. We're told in John 1 and 14, this is what got me started on this, but the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only, of the one and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. Full of grace, that caught my heart some years ago. And I had to print it on a little piece of cardboard and stick it to my bulletin.

Today, Lord Jesus, help me to be more like you, full of grace and truth. Full of grace and truth. If we have those, then inescapably we will worship.

What about the discipline? The discipline of grace then. Some people might think that's a contradiction because we've talked about law and grace and somehow we think grace is opposed to law and one will have nothing to do with the other. But grace, grace has no problem with effort or work.

Grace only has a problem if we put out the effort or work to earn salvation, to earn our way into heaven. That's what grace is opposed to. It's just opposed to thinking that we can work our way to heaven.

Other than that, grace is full of works. The Greek word for grace in the New Testament, of course, is charis. And it means a gracious favor or benefit bestowed.

And at the same time, it means the gratitude appropriate to the grace received. And as a verb, it means to show kindness. It means to show favor.

And so after some time, it came to mean gracious actions. And so we talk about somebody doing something that was gracious of you to do that. Or we speak of someone to be a gracious person that's agreeable human characteristics that later came to mean that.

But I like this definition by F.F. Bruce. He said, God's free action based on Jesus' death and motivated by love to redeem all who believe and to make them righteous. So that means, that definition means that the challenge all of us have is to be recipients.

Recipients of as much of God's grace as possible. Recipients, thinking of ways and means that we can receive grace from God. You've heard the term communion, the communion in the older denominations.

They'll look upon them as sacraments and they call those the means of grace. Taking communion, you get God's grace. Being baptized, you get God's grace.

Now we believe that there's a whole array of things that are the means of grace. And so we would find what is a means of grace to me. Is it going with a friend who loved Jesus? Is it meeting in a prayer group? Is it going to a Bible study? Is it reading Christian literature? I find means to receive God's grace and to be a recipient of God's grace in order for us all to be channels of God's grace.

Channels of His grace to whomever we meet, to all those around us. And of course, grace begins by saying that it's unmerited favor and love. It's unmerited, it's a gift from God.

It comes to us from God. And so the challenge for us is to give out unmerited love. To give out unmerited compassion.

To give out unmerited kindness. To give all those things to people we find it hard to live with and find it hard to work with. That's what it is.

It's just as God's unmerited grace comes to us, the challenge is for you and for me become a channel of my unmerited love to somebody else. Or rather to somebody else who doesn't merit my love. That's the channel we have.

And so that then is the discipline of grace that we're talking about. But of course we know we're recipients of God's grace in more than one way. We receive it as soon as we give our lives to Jesus.

That's 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Paul spoke of the gospel of grace in Acts 20 and 24. He uses the word grace in Acts, or rather in Acts the word grace is used to indicate the visible expression of God's power in action. So Acts 4.33, with great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and much grace was upon them all.

You see, that's the secret. Grace is the power there. Grace is the transforming element that goes on in our lives.

The leaders in Jerusalem in Acts chapter 11.23 sent Barnabas to Antioch to check out the Christians there. And it says when he came, he said, it says he saw the evidence of the grace of God and was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. You see what he saw? What was the evidence of the grace? They were true to the Lord.

They were all true to the Lord. Barnabas identified it as God's grace. God's grace was working on these folks so well that they were true to the Lord.

Paul also in chapter 20.32 talks about the Bible and says it's the word of his grace. And so we get more grace into us as we receive more grace, the more the Bible becomes part of us, memorizing it, knowing it, studying it. The more we know, the more grace we have to dispense to those around us.

And so Paul says, now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace. Why? Because it can build you up and give you an inheritance among those who are holy and sanctified. But there's one passage of scripture that's the passage.

Nothing else has persuaded you or you find no other scripture that persuades you of the truth that I'm trying to preach, that grace always produces Christian acts and Christian life. That's what I'm trying to say, that God's grace comes in, that you can't earn God's grace. God's grace is given to you.

But you know when you receive it, you know when you got it, because it will change your life and you'll know your life has been changed. So that's what I'm trying to emphasize too, because I've preached in numbers of churches, I've been years in other churches, where I know people in the pew would say they were Christians, but I knew or I had great doubts. How could you be a Christian and not want to pray? Or how could you be a Christian and not want to, go to a study, a Bible study? How could you be a Christian

and not want to follow and love Jesus? And so if those are not there, then I throw it out to you lovingly this morning.

See that it happens before you leave. See that you call on Jesus and say, Lord, I want your grace and I'm gonna look at my life to see if I got it after I leave here. And so here's Titus 2, 11 to 14, for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

It teaches or it could easily be interpreted or rather translated, it disciplines. It disciplines us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. Eager, eager to do what is good.

Notice that grace disciplines us to say no, no to ungodliness, no to worldly passions. And then so what is ungodliness? Well, that which is dishonest, that which is cruel, that which is evil, that which is debate based, but in even a broader term, that which has no time for God, that which has no time for Jesus, that we ignore him or we pay him no mind. God just doesn't enter our, that's ungodliness.

And so grace tells us, I know that's not the way I'm going to live. And worldly passions, what are worldly passions? Well, that's to be obsessed with the things of this life, such as possessions, prestige, pleasure, or power. That's worldly passions.

And grace teaches us to say no, possessions are not gonna give direction to my life. Prestige is not gonna give direction. Pleasure is not gonna give direction to my life.

Power is not gonna give direction to my life. Grace teaches me to say no, that's not the way I'm going to live, even though the whole community lives the other way. But notice that grace disciplines us to say yes.

It disciplines us to say yes to self-control. Notice that, very practical, clear. Disciplines us so we can, yes, I want self-control in my life.

I'm gonna take my life in hand and I'm gonna direct it in the ways of the Lord. I'm gonna take control of my life and I'm gonna follow Jesus and nothing is gonna take me from no other control. I'm gonna get a grip on my temper.

I'm gonna get a grip on those other things in life that I let get out of my control. Grace helps me to say yes, that's the way. That's the way I'm going to live.

Uprightness, it says that, the yes to uprighteness. Uprightness is doing what is right. Being scrupulously honest.

Being saying, I'm gonna be a person of integrity. That's what uprighteness means. Grace helps us to say yes to that.

Godly living, say yes to godly living. Loving God and my neighbor, that's what's gonna direct my life. Gonna love God, I'm gonna seek after the Lord.

That's what godly living is. Godly living is the opposite of all those that we mentioned in ungodliness. We do pay mind to what Jesus says and to what God wants.

We do give him our attention. And then it says grace enables us to wait for the return of the Lord and it's a blessed hope. That's what grace does.

It gives us that. And I think it's one of the things we don't pay a lot of attention to. That the coming of Jesus is blessed.

Return of the Lord Jesus. That is not happening in my life. That it means I haven't got enough grace for it to happen.

Whatever I've been using to receive, I haven't done it enough so that the return of Jesus is blessed to me and I'm looking forward to being in his presence. It talks about redemption in this. Grace gives us a yes.

Yes to being a redeemed child of God. Oh I know I'm a child of God by his creation. And Adam my father and physically I'm created by God and he's my father.

But God wants us to be a redeemed child of his. And so grace comes along and says I'm gonna take that seriously. I'm gonna live as a child of God redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

Then it goes on to say purity. That's what it says isn't it? That is to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself. Did you catch that? Jesus redeems us and he purifies us for himself.

Jesus is doing this for himself. He's making and creating a beautiful bride for himself. That's the work of grace that goes on in your life and in my life.

It allows Jesus to make me what he wants me to be. And then it ends up as being eager to do what is good. Grace enables us to want and to eagerly desire to do what is right and good.

You know all of us, all of us go through times when we don't get to prayer meeting or have enough prayer in our own lives and get to the point where we don't study as much as we'd like to study and don't read the Bible. And you know God understands all of that. God understands.

But you know what's a crucial thing? The crucial thing is to want to do it. Grace makes us eager to do what is right. That is, we know it's there and we want, we'd love to be able to do it, we're gonna do our best.

That's what God understands. What I think must puzzle the Lord Jesus, for people whom he died for, whom he cleansed, that it doesn't bother them when they don't read the Bible. Or it doesn't bother them when they don't come to prayer.

Or it doesn't bother them when they don't come to worship, don't come for fellowship. That's what I'm sure must grieve him. And so what grace does, grace makes us eager.

And so let's apply the principle again. If I'm not that eager, I haven't received enough grace yet. And so I need to find different recipient ways so that I can get more grace, so that I will eagerly want to do what is good.

Again, it's not earned. You're not earning anything. It's simply to use what you and I have been given.

Well, let us then just remember. Remember that not only does grace teach us to say yes to those things, but we need to be disciplined by grace so that we can be gracious, that we can live graciously, so that we can learn to turn the other cheek. Remember, Jesus commanded us to do that.

Don't try to get evil for evil. You do me a bad turn, I'm gonna do you a bad turn. He hurt me, I'm gonna hurt him.

Turn the other cheek, that's grace. That's being gracious. We were studying Romans this week, and in Romans chapter three or four, or wherever it was we're at, he was on the list about throat, and about lips, and about eyes, and whatnot.

So that got me thinking that to be gracious, we need to bite our tongues. Turn the other cheek, bite our tongues, even when we might be in the right, even when we know we're in the right, sometimes the gracious thing to do is to bite your tongue and say nothing, just to respond graciously when someone is not being very gracious to you. We bite our tongues, turn a deaf ear.

Grace teaches us to turn a deaf ear to gossip, to rumors, to speak discouraging talk. Grace says, don't do that. Turn a deaf ear to it, don't pass it on.

That's what grace teaches us to do. It teaches us to tighten loose lips. We're determined to speak only what we know to be true, only what we know to be encouraging and uplifting.

Keep a watchful eye on our own behavior, on how we are living out the Christian faith, and then keep an eye on the needs of others that we can reach out and help. That's what grace teaches us to do. Lend helping hands to the sick and the infirm, to the young, to the old.

Be like Jesus. Grace teaches us to do that. Grace teaches us to make our feet swift, to follow in the steps of Jesus.

That's what grace does. Grace comes and helps us in all kinds of situations. Turn the other cheek.

Think the best. I was thinking about that. I always think of a story that Billy Graham told years ago when he was talking to young married couples, I think.

And he told the story of the young couple married just a few years, and they had a fight the night before, just quarreled, and then the husband left and went off to work all day. And he felt bad, and it was a terrible day for his wife. The washing machine broke down, the coffee urn wouldn't work, coffee pot wouldn't work, and the kids were awful.

And she was tearing her hair out, crying from time to time. And as day wore on and came to supper time, and the husband was late for work and things hadn't got better. And so just in the middle of that, the doorbell rings.

And so she just marches out there and opens the door, and here's her husband with a beautiful bouquet of flowers. And so she starts to wail and say, it's been an awful day, the kids have been terrible, I haven't got supper made, and the machines have broken down, and now you come home drunk. You see, we need grace, grace to move us through the trials of life.

2 Peter 3, 18 says, be on your guard. Be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless, lawless men. Don't believe in the law, antinomianism it's called, against any kind of regulations or requirements, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So again, it's double-edged, isn't it? It says, listen, watch out, watch out. The enemy knows how to work and how to trick us, and how to get us to not think in terms of grace at all. And so there are people about, I

think maybe use terms who have fake graciousness.

They're charming, but we may use the terms, they're slick, slick as a greasy pole. Or people who are so charming, they're as smooth as, I read once, a silkworm's belly. Or they're so charming, they could sell a refrigerator to the Eskimo.

And so this verse in Peter says, watch, be on your guard. Be on your guard, because what they wanna do is to rob you of your liberty and your freedom and your joy in Christ. And it says, the antidote to that, the protection from that, is to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

Let me say then that all of that moves us into the discipline of truthfulness. You see, what else was there in that scripture in John 1? Jesus was full of grace and truth. He was full of truth.

Full of truth, so being full of truth then was the context out of which all of Jesus' words and deeds came. And as his disciple, I must submit to the discipline of truthfulness. Begins with my acceptance of truth about myself.

I've been born with a nature that disobeys the laws of God. I gotta be truthful about that and own up to that. It's me, you know that old Negro spiritual, it's me, it's me, oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer.

It's me, to own up to the truth of my weaknesses and my sins, I need God in my life to experience and experience his love for me. That's true, that's a basic truth in beginning the Christian life. I need God, I need God and I need to experience his love.

Oh, how I need to experience his love for me because we'll never love anybody else the way we can love them unless we receive the gift of his love. And know how much he loves us. It's as we know that, we can then be a channel of it to the people around us.

I need to trust in the Lord Jesus, surrender my life to him because that's another truth. That's in the midst of my neediness, in the midst of my weakness, the truth is Jesus is the answer. Jesus is the answer to all the deep questions that there are in human life.

And I need to give him my life and surrender to him. I need him as the center of my life because he is the way, the truth. Truth has more to do with the person than it has with formulas and words.

Jesus is the truth and it's my firm conviction that no matter what the discipline you are and whether you're a geologist or a biologist or a psychologist, you will never reach the potential of your knowledge and experience in your discipline until you find Jesus because he's the one that made it all. He's the one that is the creator. And so having him in the center of my life, he becomes the truth, the truth in what I need.

So John 8, 32, you will know the truth. The truth will set you free. Who is the truth? John 14 and six, Jesus answered, I am the way, the truth and the life.

No one comes to the father except through me. And so we need then to be truthful about my relationships with God, about my relationships with my family, with all of the members of our families. Does your family know and your close friends, do they know that you love them? Do they know that you love them and your faith or whatever else is not ever gonna diminish that? That I love you, you're my family and I love you.

God will enable us to do that. I know I think it slips us by that we don't think there's any need to say that they ought to know that I love them. But the truth is we need to enunciate that.

We need to speak that out. The truth about my job, what I'm doing in my job, how meaningful is my job in serving Jesus or about my business. I need to be truthful about my business.

How am I using it for Jesus? How am I advancing the kingdom of God? Because you can bet on it. That's why you have it. You have it because Jesus is entrusting you with it to advance his kingdom.

What a wonderful privilege and honor. I need to be truthful about my worship. Do I really care about worship? Here's the words of Jesus to the woman at the well, John four, a time is coming and now has come when the true worshipers will worship the father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the father seeks.

Just to repeat that again. If you knew that God wanted something or you knew that Jesus wanted something, I'm sure you're like me and you'd wanted to give him that. Well, listen, here's what I'm saying.

Here's what God wants. The kind of worshipers the father seeks, those that worship him in spirit and in truth. So therefore, it would seem to me for a loving response to that would be, how can I be a worshiper in spirit and truth? Well, what does it mean? Because if the father wants that, I'm sure gonna do my best to please him and to be that.

And so that brought me into this whole discipline of worship because I believe that the most important thing that we can learn and do is to worship the Lord. If worship doesn't bring us into greater obedience to the Lord Jesus, then it hasn't been worship. In worship, bitterness, resentment dissolves.

In worship, love and compassion increase. Worship always leaves me a better person. You can count on that.

Genuine worship, worship that is effective. I believe it is the best possible use of our time. Worship is the best possible way that a human being can spend time.

I don't mean attending worship services. I don't mean attending worship gatherings. I mean heartfelt, genuine, sincere, meaningful worship.

Whether it's done alone or in the company of others. It is so important, worship is so important that is mentioned at least 180 times in the Bible. One of the most eloquent invitations to worship, worship the Lord is Psalm 95.

Let me read it. I think we have it up there. Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord.

Let us, I think you'll need magnifying glasses from back there, but let me read it then. Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord. Let us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation.

Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth and the mountain peaks belong to him.

The sea is his, for he made it and his hands formed the dry land. Come, let us bow down and worship. Let us kneel before the Lord, our maker.

For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts as they did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massa in the desert where

your fathers tested and tried me. Though they had seen what I did, for 40 years I was angry with that generation.

I said, they are a people whose hearts go astray and they have not known my ways. So I declared on oath in my anger, they'll never enter my rest. Notice the directions given, because that's Bible, like what we've just read is the holy word of God, God's inspiration.

So it's got profitable information in there, profitable information in that, the importance of worship. And so it gives us some directions about how you come into worship. Notice that we're to enter his presence with praise and thanksgiving.

Do you know that there's no less than 41 Psalms that command us to sing unto the Lord. And so we come into God's presence with praise. In praise, we acknowledge the greatness, goodness of the Lord.

Thanksgiving, we express our gratitude for all he's done for us. So in praise, we praise God for who he is, our wonderful, great and mighty God. In thanksgiving, we thank him for what he's done for us, how he's healed us, how he's led us.

And so in worship, we lift our hearts in adoration for who he is before his majesty and glory. And we offer our lives in adoration. Those are the verses.

Psalms are filled, you don't need to go very far in the song, you'll find all kinds like that. And so you notice in verses eight to 11, we come with adoring hearts, ready for the embrace of his love. Did you notice how Psalm 95 ended? Harden not your hearts.

Harden, you make a choice. There's a choice to be made. Make your heart soft, don't make it hard.

Don't harden your hearts. That parable we began with Matthew 14. Remember the invitation that went out to come to the heavenly banquet.

Come into the kingdom of God and sit down. But those who had hard hearts made excuses and said, no, we've got other things to do. What choices are you making? What choices am I making? Let me tell you about another banquet.

Another banquet that's in Revelation 19. Let me read it to you. Another invitation sent out, or rather the banquet that those who made excuses to avoid would have enjoyed.

Verse six, and I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting hallelujah for our God, the Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory for the wedding of the lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean was given her to wear.

Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints. Then the angel said to me, right, blessed are those who are invited to the wedding banquet, the wedding supper of the lamb. And he added, these are the true words of God.

That's the banquet. That's the banquet we've been invited to. Have you chosen to say yes to the invitation? That one day you will be at the marriage supper of the lamb.

You will be part of the bride of Christ, enjoying his love and his grace and his joy and his peace. These are the true words of God. The choice is ours.

Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, for these words of the Bible, these wonderful scriptures that tell us, tell us about your grace. How would we ever have known anything about this wonderful gift of your grace that the God out there who created everything wants me, wants to come into my life, wants to talk with me, wants to walk with me, wants to help me in my job and in my marriage and in my family? Where would we have ever heard that, our Father, if you hadn't given it to us in your word, black and white, that we can read? And so we pray, come Holy Spirit, may this time not have been wasted, but may you give us faith to believe and may we open our hearts to receive faith from you, to believe your word and so therefore to walk in truth and to walk with adoring hearts, worshipful hearts to our Lord Jesus Christ, help us.

I'll give you a moment just in the silence to make your own response to those challenges we've read about, just a moment. And then I'd like you to look at this prayer response, prayer response, would you just read that? And then I'll ask you to stand and we'll conclude with saying of this together. We'll ask the prayer stations if they would just, oh, well, I guess we have an annual meeting.

I didn't, I had forgotten about the annual meeting, but the topic of grace is very appropriate for an annual meeting, isn't it? My experience of meetings. But let's stand and say this together. Today, loving Lord Jesus, make me more like you, full of grace and truth.

I want to be the kind of worshiper the Father seeks and I long to worship him with my whole heart. Help me to worship you every day in spirit and in truth. I pray in the strong name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen, and so, Father, we offer you these prayers. Offer them to you like a bouquet of flowers. I pray, Lord Jesus, that quickly these prayers that we have offered would just be confirmed, that your spirit or your still small voice would just say to us, I feel more than a few people that the Lord will just say, I'm pleased with that prayer.

You did the right thing. I'll honor that. I'll bring it about.

You can be assured of my intervention. Thank you, Lord Jesus. We pray this in your name, amen.

So go into all the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill your high calling as servants and soldiers of Jesus Christ. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you his peace. Amen.

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