



**THE SECRET OF GRACE  
(Sermon)**

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“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 ... For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:14, 17,NIV).

Studies done by the Southern Baptist Council regarding family life discovered these disturbing statistics:

- Eighty-eight percent of children raised in evangelical homes leave church by the age of 18 and never return.
- The divorce rate among evangelical people is almost the same as that of persons not associated with any church.
- Every day, one million children in the United States watch their parents divorce.
- The majority of children in the United States have barely ten minutes of profound conversation with their parents a week. And if we remove the mother, this statistic can be measured in seconds.

These statistics are alarming and they reveal a great problem – the need to find balance between truth and grace within the family. In our society, it is better to have families that obey the truth and practice grace in the home.

It is also about consistency. There must be consistency in what someone says and what they do. I will never forget what I heard from a minister in a church where he used the pulpit regularly to preach. On one occasion, while he was preaching, his wife

was on a bench praying quietly, and she was saying, “Oh, Lord, keep him on the pulpit, Lord.” This occurred for several minutes. When she finished praying, another sister who had been observing her asked, “Sister, why do you ask God to keep your husband on the pulpit?” The wife of the pastor answered, “Oh sister, you don’t know. When my husband is on the pulpit, he is an angel but at home he is a demon.”

This reflects inconsistency. People are sick of seeing others call themselves Christians but then lead one life in their homes and another at church. There must be consistency between what is said and what is lived. According to the latest news on the FOX TV channel, based on surveys, 92 percent of North Americans say they believe in Christ. Apparently, people don’t have a problem with God or with spirituality. However, the majority of North Americans believe that religion plays a small part in peoples’ lives (69 percent), and only 15 percent declare that it plays a very important role. Maybe because of this reason, many echo the exclamation of a lady that said, “I am sick of listening to sermons, I want to see sermons.”

People today want to “see” sermons. That is, they want to see Christians that are real and practice what they preach. In His relations with human beings, Jesus always demonstrated love, compassion, and grace. The Bible says that Jesus was full of grace and truth (see John 1:14).

How comforting it is to know that the Bible is a well-balanced book! How exciting it is to know that Jesus is a model of balance in regard to these important concepts! He is the truth personified but he is also grace personified. The world in which we live is full of lies, deceit, hate, violence, divorce, and abuse. People are confused. They don’t know who or what to trust. They are hungry for the Word of truth, but they are also hungry for healing grace.

The Bible is a book that exalts the truth. It says, “Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth” (John 17:17). Jesus told His disciples, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). The Holy Spirit is the truth that Jesus promised. “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). Then you will know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:32).

Jesus always spoke the truth. He confronted people with the truth, but He did it with love. As Christians many times we put great emphasis on the truth. We want to make sure that we are not following human doctrine but the revelation and the will of God. We teach the truth, we preach the truth, we live the truth, and we are full of the truth.

Today people search for truth. They want honesty. They come to church searching for the truth and many times they do find truth. And so, they begin to practice the truth, obeying it with all their strength. The church is full of truth. If someone is looking for truth, all they have to do is go to church, and I assure you that they will find truth. However, the key question is will they find anything else?

The Bible describes two aspects of Jesus’ character: truth and grace. You cannot choose truth and leave grace aside or vice versa. The devil wants to push us one way or the other. He wants to push us toward the truth in a way that we leave grace aside, or he wants to push us toward grace so that we will abandon the truth. But we must have both. We need the truth but we also need grace.

How did Jesus exemplify these two principles? Let’s look at an example in the gospels. One day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and the scribes and Pharisees entered abruptly and threw a woman at His feet. They said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. And Moses told us in the law to stone

women like these. So then you, what do you say,” the implication being that Jesus must not disagree with the teachings of Moses. The Bible says, “Jesus, squatting on the floor, was writing with His finger on the dirt and He ignored them.” The English Bible King James says that He acted as if this had never happened. He acted “as if he had not even heard them” (John 8:1-11).

What a tremendous lesson for us! When we are critical and when we are negative and we act as judges to condemn others, God ignores us the same way. God will not pay any attention to us when we act like this.

This story has very valuable lessons. The first truth is that the woman had been caught in adultery. The second truth is that she violated the law. The third truth is that she was a sinner. And the fourth truth is that she deserved to die. All of this is true. Sadly, that is all she obtained from the people that accused her. She obtained the truth and nothing but the truth. “You violated the law, you are a sinner, and, therefore, you deserve to die.” It is important to note that these were religious people, leaders of the church. They thought that they had the truth and that they must defend the truth.

Let’s see, then, how Jesus acted. Notice that He recognized that the woman was sinner. It was the truth. She violated the law, which was the truth. She deserved to die, which was also the truth. But Jesus not only reconciled the facts as they were, He did something else. He told her, “Neither do I condemn you.” That is grace.

Many books have been written regarding grace. Some people have written their doctoral thesis about grace. Through the years, theologians have studied the meaning of grace. People talk about grace, write about grace, and sing “Amazing Grace,” but where is grace?

We should have grace in the Christian church, but if we do not find it in church, we should at least find it in the homes of those that call themselves Christians. In

reality the only way to understand God's grace is by extending it to others. In the movie *Pay It Forward*, a teacher assigned a project to his class. "Find an idea that can change the world and then put it into action." One student took the project very seriously, and he decided to do something good for three people. Then, those three people would do something good for three other people each, and those nine people each in their opportunity would extend an act of kindness to some other 27 people. Successively, they could change the world.

Could there be a biblical concept that could change people's lives in a similar way? The biblical concept of grace means to love those that do not deserve to be loved or who cannot reciprocate in the same way. What would happen if we would choose to be kind to at least one person today? Find a person who needs grace. Be kind to that person and ask that person to be kind to another.

What would happen if we would choose to practice grace in the family? If you say to yourself, "Today I am going to be kind to my wife, or to my husband, or to my children," what would happen? How would our families be transformed if we practice grace? The family is a small group of people—two or three, four or ten—in need of grace. The Bible says that we are the fragrance of Christ. I would say we are the fragrant grace of Christ, and this fragrance should permeate our families.

Pastor Joel Osteen tells a story of a pastor that had a teenage daughter who was very rebellious. She lived a very disorganized and crazy life. She loved parties. She would spend nights away from home. Her father would constantly preach at her. He would cite scriptures that would show her just how wrong she was. Sometimes he would threaten her. In fact he tried to scare her so that she would straighten her ways. But none of that worked.

One day he prayed and said, “My God, why don’t you help me? When are you going to save my daughter?” And God responded, “Son, I am going to save your daughter as soon as you begin loving her.” The pastor felt insulted and asked, “What do you mean God? You know that I love her more than the world.” Then God told him, “Son, if you love her, stop scolding her, stop insisting, and begin demonstrating that you love her.”

From that moment on, he never said anything negative to his daughter again. When she would come home at all hours of the night, he was there with open arms to hug her and greet her before going to bed. He gave her courage and treated her like a queen. Not a lot of time passed before she changed completely, and she gave her life to Christ. Love never fails.

How can we practice grace in our family? It is not easy to respond correctly when our mate treats us badly. But God calls us to give an appropriate response that is motivated and strengthened by His love and grace.

Someone wrote:

1. A person that lives by grace is loving and compassionate.
2. A person that lives by grace likes to distinguish the good side of each person and their ideas.
3. People that live by grace are in favor of a balance between faith and obedience to God through the Holy Spirit.
4. People that live by grace follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ who balanced truth and grace.
5. People that live by grace tolerate others.
6. People that live by grace forgive.
7. People that live by grace see other people, not how they are but as what they

could potentially be by the grace of God.

In his small book, *Truth and Grace*, Randy Alcorn says:

“Truth without grace crushes people and stops being truth.

Grace without truth deceives people and stops being grace.

Truth without grace degenerates itself to critical legalism.

Grace without truth degenerates itself to a deceiving tolerance.”

Christ’s heart is equally anguished by the suppression of grace, as well as by the suppression of truth, when either one is twisted.

Both grace and truth are necessary, and neither one is sufficient by itself. We need to examine and correct what is lacking in ourselves.

Those of us who are oriented towards the truth, we must separate ourselves from our favorite focus in order to affirm grace.

Those of us that are oriented towards grace, we must separate ourselves from our favorite focus and affirm the truth.

“Hate the sin, but love the sinner.” The truth hates sin. Grace loves the sinners. Those that are full of grace and truth do both things. If you feel that God’s grace has reached you, wouldn’t you want to extend that grace to your mate? Your children? Your neighbors? The members of your church?

Dear reader, I challenge you to let your life overflow with the love and grace of God. Life is too short to get tangled in insignificant differences. Let us speak and live the truth of God but also let us enjoy Jesus Christ’s grace.

“So frail, so ignorant, so liable to misconception is human nature, that each person should be careful in the estimate he places upon another. We little know the bearing of our acts upon the experience of others. What we do or say may seem to us of little moment, when, could our eyes be opened, we should see that upon it depended the

most important results for good or for evil” (Ellen G. White, *the Ministry of Healing*, p. 483).

### **To Meditate**

**Question:** Why is the concept of grace in the twenty-first century so important?

*Answer:* Because we live in a society of people that are burdened with problems and the need for hope.

**Question:** Where can we find God’s truth?

*Answer:* “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17).

**Question:** What two virtues did Jesus exemplify in a balanced way?

*Answer:* “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*” (John 1:14, *italics are ours*).

**DECISION:** With the help of God, I purpose to live according to the principles of grace and truth in my home and in my relationships with all of whom I find on my way.