

What we're learning in Holy Homes

Holy Homes is a group of believers who meet on the 2nd & 4th Mondays of each month at 6:30 pm to sharpen one another by discussing topics relevant to having a holy home. These notes are a summary of what the Holy Homes group discussed in the last meeting. If you're interested in joining this group call Josh Norris at 884-4762.

Grace

What is a good working definition for the word 'Grace'? The simplest definition for grace is "unmerited favor". However, much more goes into grace than this. Grace from God involves all the gifts He gives us which help us live our lives for God's purposes. Ultimately though grace is showing favor or love to someone even when they don't necessarily deserve it.

How does God give us opportunities to show grace to others. How does showing others grace affect them? How does it affect the one giving grace? Whenever someone sins against us there is a prime opportunity to show grace to them. Forgiveness and kindness are superb examples of grace. By not avoiding the unlovable, but instead, by simply speaking kind words, we can really put grace into action. (Eph 4:29, Col 4:6) Those of us who are parents have even more opportunities through our children to exercise grace. In addition to blessing others and glorifying God, showing grace to others builds our own character. Never are we more like Christ than when we are showing kindness to someone who doesn't deserve it. Showing grace is truly our opportunity to live the gospel message.

What impedes our showing of grace to others? When is it ok not to show grace?

Selfishness, pride, preference, prejudice, vengeance, and even worldly logic can cause us to not show grace by favoring a stance of justice. While grace can, and sometimes should, be withheld in order to teach someone and to help them grow, most people tend to lean too heavily to this side. Instead of truly caring about the other person, we tend to justify our actions by convincing ourselves and others that "it's in their best interest" for us not to show them grace. Ultimately, we need to not become Jonah-like by refusing to show grace in favor of judgment. Even withholding grace to teach a needed lesson is still the loving and gracious thing to do.

Will our grace look different than God's? In a perfect world our grace will look very much like God's grace. In our world though, we fall short. God's grace will be different due to His sovereignty which allows Him to show grace in ways we cannot. What we need to be constantly examining is whether we are more effective at showing grace than non-believers are! How often do we see non-believers being more gracious and loving than believers! It's a sad thing to see someone in rebellion to God who better exemplifies His attributes than most of His supposed children do. God desires to use believers to distribute His grace on earth. We are to be His hands reaching out to the world, not pushing them away because they aren't good enough. We too were once in rebellion and we should never forget that. (Titus 3:3)

How does grace bring God glory? When we show grace we display God's character and we show the world that He is worthy to be served. Since we are His ambassadors, our actions matter very much. Grace demonstrates the huge difference between God and man's natural character, and yet exercising grace is an opportunity to be very much like God. While grace exalts God above creation and shows that He is truly set apart from the world, the same should be true of His children. We are set apart and our gracious living should demonstrate it. Another way God receives glory is through common grace. Common grace includes things like rain, air, sunlight and life which God gives to believers AND unbelievers.