

EXTENDING GRACE

Leader pages on pp. 122-125

THE POINT:
WE SHOULD BE
CONDUITS OF GOD'S
GRACE TO OTHERS.

LUKE 19:1-10

¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through.

² There was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich.

³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was not able because of the crowd, since he was a short man.

⁴ So running ahead, he climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus, since he was about to pass that way.

⁵ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house."

⁶ So he quickly came down and welcomed him joyfully.

⁷ All who saw it began to complain, "He's gone to stay with a sinful man."

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, I'll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I'll pay back four times as much."

⁹ "Today salvation has come to this house," Jesus told him, "because he too is a son of Abraham."

¹⁰ **For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."**

MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Zacchaeus, Chief Tax Collector (v. 2)– The name means "innocent" or "righteous one." As the chief tax collector, he would have several tax collectors under his supervision and reaped substantial profit.

Running ahead... Sycamore Tree (v. 4)– It was unusual and dishonorable for adult Jewish

men, especially representatives of the Roman government, to run in public and climb trees.

Son of Man (v. 10)– Jesus used this title to speak of Himself as the coming Messiah. Derived from Daniel 7:13-14, it embodies the Christological (meaning "doctrine of Christ") truth that Jesus was both fully God and fully man.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO EXTEND GRACE TO OTHERS?

Many of us have portable phone chargers and don't leave home without them! We charge the chargers at home so that they can be used to charge our phones while we're out and about and unable to access a wall outlet. The chargers, having been charged up themselves, have power to pass on to our phones when they need it. In other words, the chargers, along with the cords become conduits of the power needed by devices lacking it.

As helpful as phone chargers are, they are not the only examples of conduits of a powerful force. As believers, we are meant to be conduits as well. Rather than channels for electricity to flow

through, we are conduits of the grace of God. We are meant to have God's grace flow through us to other people who desperately need it. When we do this, we are following the example set by Jesus. In this session, Jesus demonstrates His care and concern for a person who is different, a social outcast, and is deemed unacceptable and inferior. His willingness to extend grace to this man, Zacchaeus, and so many others should compel us as believers to do the same.

Be Sensitive to Those Seeking Grace // Luke 19:1-4

Prior to Luke 19, we see Jesus healing a blind man while on His way to Jericho. Earlier in His ministry, Jesus sometimes told people not to speak of His miracles—but not now. It was time for Jesus to reveal His divine identity and mission. His interaction with Zacchaeus in Jericho demonstrates both His divine identity and mission.

Luke tells us that Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and he was rich. The term “chief” likely means he gave oversight to other tax collectors who worked for him and took a cut of their collections. In addition, tax collectors were allowed to assess some taxes at their discretion. This could not only make a tax collector rich but give them the reputation of being dishonest and a thief.

However, Zacchaeus's reputation suffered even more because he was a Jew. The Jewish population deeply resented the occupation and rule of Rome in Israel. Tax collectors basically worked for the Roman government, which meant a Jewish tax collector was colluding with the enemy. There's no doubt Zacchaeus was viewed as a traitor, betraying the Jewish people and their culture because of his profession.

But it gets worse. Zacchaeus's continual contact with Gentiles made him an outsider. He was socially stigmatized for dealing with Gentiles. Because of the strict nature of the laws and customs in Judaism, this certainly caused Zacchaeus to be



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treated as an outcast, a person to be avoided at all costs. This was the pain Zacchaeus carried with him daily, but that was about to change.

Zacchaeus heard Jesus was in town, and Zacchaeus wanted to see Him. There was just one problem: Zacchaeus was a short man. His stature and the size of the crowd would keep him from seeing Jesus, but this did not deter Zacchaeus. He calculated Jesus's potential path and then climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Him pass.

Throughout these verses, we see Zacchaeus acting on his own. It might be considered a weak argument, but there's no record of anyone helping Zacchaeus to see Jesus. No one took the time to consider Zacchaeus's limitations or inability to get close to Jesus. No one showed any sensitivity to Zacchaeus's plight.

Every day we're surrounded by people who are seeking Jesus yet may not even realize it. Jesus wants us to be sensitive toward those He has placed in our path so we can help them see their need for Jesus and turn to Him in faith.

WHY DO YOU THINK ZACCHAEUS WENT TO SUCH GREAT LENGTHS TO GET A GLIMPSE OF JESUS?

Be Willing to Extend Grace

// Luke 19:5-6

Throughout the four gospels, the writers record phrases like in verse 1, "He entered Jericho and was passing through." Jesus traveled not just to places but to people—like Zacchaeus.

Notice the contrast presented in these two verses. Jesus was undoubtedly surrounded by a large crowd of people, many of whom had most likely witnessed the miraculous healing of the blind man just outside of Jericho. Let's not call them "groupies," but these people were showing obvious support for Jesus. They liked Jesus and wanted to be near Him. Any one of them would have been an appropriate choice for Jesus to spend the day at their home. But Jesus's arrival in Jericho wasn't for the purpose of simply spending time with His supporters. He was there to connect with someone who was far from God.

And so, when Jesus saw Zacchaeus in the sycamore tree, He said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house" (v. 5). When Zacchaeus heard this, "he quickly came down and welcomed [Jesus] joyfully" (v. 6). This passage is a vivid picture of God's grace. Let's take note of some of the specific aspects of God's grace.



DIGGING DEEPER TAX COLLECTORS

Jewish people in Jesus's day despised tax collectors. The Jews were reacting to the tax collectors' role in upholding a corrupt system. Taxes were collected to support the oppressive Roman Empire and so tax collectors were seen as betraying their own people. They also often took more money on top of the taxes they collected, thereby enriching themselves. Associating with tax collectors would be surprising and scandalous, yet that's what Jesus did. Jesus told a parable featuring a Pharisee and a tax collector praying at the temple, likely stunning His listeners by revealing the tax collector, not the Pharisee, had right standing with God (Luke 18:9-14). Jesus clearly did not feel that tax collectors were out of reach for God's grace. In fact, He was fine with being known, and criticized, for embracing them. This fit with Jesus's pattern of embracing those in society whom other people ignored or despised. Jesus didn't excuse the exploitation of tax collectors but He refused to dehumanize the exploiter.

Who are the "tax collectors" of today that God might be calling you to embrace?



Grace shows God's commitment to sinners.

Since Jesus omnisciently knew Zacchaeus, He also knew he was a tax collector, a sinner, and someone who had lived his life apart from God. Yet it was this man Jesus chose to spend the day with. In a different setting, when the religious leaders criticized Jesus for His association with "sinners," Jesus replied, "It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). In His grace, Jesus demonstrates His commitment to sinners and seeks fellowship with us.

Grace accepts sinners. Grace will risk being uncomfortable with sinful behavior in order to have the opportunity to invite others to receive God's gift of salvation. As someone has rightly said, "Lost people act like lost people." Grace accepts that they are sinners but then points to the new life they can receive through Jesus Christ.

Grace is necessary. Can you imagine how Zacchaeus must have felt when he heard Jesus say, "hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house" (v. 5)? Those words not only told Zacchaeus Jesus wanted to spend time with him on a personal level, but also that there was a sense of urgency and purpose for His visit. For someone reviled and spit on by his own people, those words had to be a balm for his soul. However, it wasn't out of compassion alone that Jesus stated the necessity of His visit. Zacchaeus was a sinner who needed saving, and only grace could accomplish that.

Grace is powerful. Grace is often defined as "God's unmerited favor" or "receiving something good that we don't deserve." Jesus demonstrated grace to Zacchaeus when He said, "it is necessary for me to stay at your house." This meant sharing a meal together. In Judaism, sharing a meal was an intimate act of fellowship. By sharing this meal together, Jesus was inviting Zacchaeus into intimate fellowship with Him, something Zacchaeus knew he didn't deserve. As we will see, it had a powerful impact on Zacchaeus.

WHAT DO YOU FIND ENCOURAGING ABOUT JESUS'S RESPONSE TO ZACCHAEUS?

Be Not Dismayed by Those Who Don't Understand Grace

// Luke 19:7-10

Jesus wasn't swayed by the crowd's opinion. Luke explained, "All who saw it began to complain, 'He's gone to stay with a sinful man'" (v. 7).

In one sense, the crowd was right. Zacchaeus was a sinful man. They based their view on his vocation as a tax collector, yet they unknowingly stated the truth of Romans 3:23 that says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Zacchaeus was, in fact, a sinful man.

But they were wrong in a big way about Jesus's decision to spend the day with Zacchaeus. In the same way that a Pharisee had previously condemned the woman who anointed Jesus's feet with perfume and washed His feet with her tears, they too had written Zacchaeus off as hopeless, beyond the reach of God's grace. Aren't you glad they were wrong?

In response to receiving God's grace, Zacchaeus said, "Look, I'll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I'll pay back four times as much" (v. 8). Because of this transformation that had put him in a right relationship with God, Zacchaeus declared he was going to be a new man, and he would prove it by doing two things. First, he would demonstrate generosity to the poor. During his day, it was considered generous to give twenty percent of your belongings to the poor, but Zacchaeus was determined to exceed that. Second, he would

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repay those from whom he had extorted money or possessions, but again Zacchaeus was determined to go above expectations. The law demanded the return of the money or property plus one fifth of the value. To restore four times as much reflects the gratitude Zacchaeus felt for God's grace toward himself.

Notice how Jesus responded to all this. He affirmed Zacchaeus's repentance and proclaimed that "Today salvation has come to this house" (v. 9). Jesus's acceptance of Zacchaeus was not rooted in who he had been but who he had become.

Because we have received favor from God that we do not deserve, we in turn extend favor to others in the way we treat them. To do anything less puts us in the dangerous territory of thinking that the blessing of our salvation was due to our own "goodness" instead of the undeserved favor of God toward a wretched sinner.

God wants you and me to be conduits of His grace to others. That grace will show in our willingness to build relationships with lost people, in our patience with sinful behavior, and in our words of truth spoken in love.

WHAT MOTIVATES BELIEVERS TO HELP OTHERS EXPERIENCE GOD'S GRACE?

DID YOU KNOW?

Christians believe that Jesus is the only way for humanity to reach God and heaven. Jesus identifies Himself as being "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Jesus is also the way that God reaches out to us. God, in Jesus, seeks out His creatures who are lost. Rather than waiting for lost people to seek Him out, He initiated the search and came after us. In Luke 15, Jesus highlighted God's heart for those who are lost by telling stories about a shepherd searching for a lost sheep, a woman searching for a lost coin, and a father's concern for his two lost sons. Culminating with His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus secured atonement for lost humanity with God. Once we believe this, it becomes the job of Christians to reach to those who are lost to share the good news that Jesus is seeking them out and wants to save them.

Biblical Truth: "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, 'Be reconciled to God'" (2 Cor. 5:20).

Who in your community needs you to extend the grace of Christ?

LIVE IT

How well are you doing with allowing God's grace to flow through you to others?

Reflecting on and showing appreciation for God's grace should be regular practices in our lives as believers. However, we can't just hold onto grace for ourselves. People around us are in need of grace as well. We should position ourselves so that God can use us to get His grace to other people. Consider choosing an activity below that will help you become a conduit of God's grace.

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- **Walk.** Avoiding sin is good, but we shouldn't isolate ourselves from unbelievers. No one is beyond God's grace. If there are people you view that way, pray and ask God to forgive you.
- **Run.** Do you have any friends who are unbelievers? Try to build a new relationship with an unbeliever. Be ready to be God's conduit for His grace.
- **Soar.** The North American Mission Board (NAMB) has short-term opportunities that can connect you with unbelievers. Commit to an opportunity that will allow you to share God's grace with others.

DAILY READINGS

1. GODLY PERSPECTIVE// EPHESIANS 1:18

Countless people in the world have become jaded by past hurts, trials and the issues of life. They often view life out of the lens of conspiracies, hidden agenda, and ulterior motives. Pervasive images of dysfunction and unproductive, detrimental relationships can have an adverse effect on a person's perspective of people. As believers, we must not allow ourselves to be influenced by issues of our past, marketing and efforts to influence our decision-making. Ungodly influences can taint our vision and lead us to set unrealistic expectations for others. God sees the hurting and the lost who are in need of a Savior. We must challenge ourselves to do the same.

Through the saving grace of God, we must have a God's eye view of others.

2. MERCY RECEIVED, MERCY SHOWN // MATTHEW 5:7

It does not cost anything to show compassion and acceptance to others. Compassion opens doors to build bridges and develop positive relationships. Jesus accepts all who believe in Him and gives them the pathway to everlasting life. It is not His desire that any should perish and spend an eternity apart from Him. He cares for each of us. We must display the model of kingdom living exemplified through Christ. When we provide a welcome environment for imperfect people to connect with a perfect Savior, we extend God's grace. Just as we have received grace through salvation, we must be led by a heart of mercy that connects others to Christ.

The love of Christ invites each of us in to receive His grace and mercy freely.

3. RANDOM KINDNESS// EPHESIANS 4:32

Random acts of kindness have become a popular concept by many. This concept encourages people to reach out and help others without a request or any expectation of receiving anything in return. In other words, people are graced with

actions that bring them happiness. We should be kind to each other and offer forgiveness. Jesus taught that we must continually extend grace and forgiveness. Some not understand God's grace and kindness, but that should not deter us to share His love.

It is important that others see that the grace of God is the ultimate act of kindness.

4. THE PERFECT INGREDIENTS // ROMANS 8:28

God has called all of those who love Him for a unique purpose. He loves us so much that He meets our needs and sets us on a righteous path to be effective disciples and ambassadors. When we realize our value to Him, we can become effective witnesses to the world. Our life story and journey to Christ can serve as a novel of inspiration to those hindered by sin, hurt and pain. We lay down our partialities, thoughts and opinions for a friend. When we show others compassion and mercy, the love of Christ is activated and impacts lives. God has given us everything we need to reach others.

These are the ingredients that work together to guide others into the kingdom of God.

5. MOVING ON MISSION// MATTHEW 28:20

We are commissioned to reach others. Knowing this, let us walk in the assurance that "He who has started a good work in you, will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"(Phil. 1:6) God works in our favor to help us to be true reflections of the workings of His grace. He equips us to confidently lead others to a victorious life in Christ. Through His Holy Spirit, we can speak the truth with boldness that guides others away from the vestiges of sin. God's love and amazing grace are essential to reaching out and helping others to move forward from the stagnancy of sinful behavior. Jesus's life was not sacrificed for condemnation but to create a door of opportunity for all to enter.

How will you share the gospel so that others can move forward in Christ today!