



FIRST CLERGY TALK

TALK #2 PREVENIENT GRACE

Overview of All Talks

One message is delivered during The Walk to Emmaus 72-hour experience; it is communicated throughout the music, meals, clergy meditations, attitudes and actions of the team members, and the talks. You have been selected to deliver one of the 15 talks. In reality, you will deliver 1/15 of the Emmaus talk—one message, fifteen presenters.

Prepare your talk using the outlines provided. In general, 2/3 of your presentation will come from the outlines; the remaining 1/3 will come from your original insights and personal experience.

The talks are sequenced in a defined order; each builds on the next to provide pilgrims with the complete message of Emmaus. Do not try to cover more than your assigned topic. The expanded outline intends to provide a solid understanding of the material from which your talk will be developed. The abbreviated outline helps you see the progression of the main points. *Neither outline is a script*; you will need to add personal examples to give life to the content and make it real to the hearers. Use visual aids to help convey the main points.

The Holy Spirit, as well as feedback from the team after your talk preview, will provide additional guidance for your unique presentation of this talk. Once you incorporate the suggestions offered after your preview, your presentation no longer belongs just to you but to the team God is forming to deliver the Emmaus message.

This presentation is allotted a maximum of 20 to 25 minutes. Please honor the time limit out of a spirit of cooperation, charity, good stewardship of time, and consideration for the hearers.

Overview for Speaker

The first morning meditation, The Loving Father and the Prodigal Son, established the direction for the day—inviting each pilgrim to enter a new relationship with God, who is full of grace and love. Talk #1, PRIORITY, presented by an Assistant Lay Director, reminded pilgrims that human beings have the ability to choose from many options and set a priority for their lives.

The five clergy talks concern our relationship with God. The purpose of this talk, the first of the grace talks, is to introduce the overarching theme of God's grace and to show how God's love begins to work in our lives even before we are aware of it or respond to it. PREVENIENT GRACE serves as the foundation for all the other grace talks because it defines the nature of God and the relationship God offers.

Pilgrims will be reminded of their need to respond by accepting this offer of a relationship in the JUSTIFYING GRACE talk; they learn to celebrate and nurture this relationship in the MEANS OF GRACE talk. The OBSTACLES TO GRACE talk addresses hindrances to a relationship with God. The final clergy talk, SANCTIFYING GRACE, helps pilgrims understand how Christians grow and mature in their relationship with God.

This talk is scheduled for Friday at 11:15 a.m.

Expanded Outline: PREVENIENT GRACE

Lead the Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Please turn to page 48 in your Worship Booklet and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

Choose a story or experience from your life that is brief, personal, and directly related to the main point of this talk. If you cannot think of an appropriate introduction, consult the Weekend Spiritual Director or Community Spiritual Director. A good introduction will engage the hearts, minds, and attention of pilgrims and move them into the theme of this talk. For example, you might do the following:

Option 1: Share a personal story of prevenient grace at work in your life.

Option 2: Read Psalm 139:13-15, emphasizing verse 14.

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is **PREVENIENT GRACE**.

I. Define prevenient grace. (5 minutes)

- A. The root meaning of the word *grace* (from the Greek *charis*) is “gift.” God, in Christ, offers us the gift of a relationship that includes salvation, reconciliation, and eternal life (Eph. 2:4-9; 2 Cor. 5:18).
- B. God’s grace is one grace with many facets.
 - 1. We describe the experience of grace with different words—*prevenient*, *justifying*, and *sanctifying*—that relate to the various stages of our spiritual journey.
 - 2. The nature of grace (one grace experienced in many ways) is similar to the mystery of the Trinity (one God in three persons). Within God’s grace are both unity and diversity.
- C. Prevenient grace means God is present with us throughout our lives. This grace is most clearly at work from our conception to conversion—from the moment we begin to be until the time when we accept for ourselves the relationship God offers us in Christ.
 - 1. The term *prevenient* comes from the Latin *praevenire*—“to come before.” In Christian theology it means **the grace that comes before** any human decision or endeavor. Prevenient grace is at work before we are even aware of it.
 - 2. It is the love of God **wooing us**—like a bridegroom courting his bride (Rev. 22:17).
 - 3. It is the will of God **drawing us** (John 6:44-47).

4. Prevenient grace is the desire of God **pursuing us** throughout our lives to bring us into friendship with God—a love that will never let us go (Rom. 5:8). The poem “Hound of Heaven” by Francis Thompson powerfully conveys God’s pursuit of us.
5. It is the gift of God **freeing us** so that we might have the opportunity to respond to God’s offer of a relationship and place our trust in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:31-39; 1 John 4:10, 19).
6. It is the activity of God **empowering us**, giving us spiritual strength (Rom. 5:6).

II. The biblical message is clear: Human beings are created in God’s likeness for a relationship with the divine. *(3 minutes)*

- A. In the beginning God created the world, the cosmos, and all things in it—“and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:1-25).
- B. God created humankind, male and female, in God’s own image and likeness—and declared that they were good (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:4-22). The divine-human relationship was deep and meaningful.
 1. Like Adam and Eve, each of us is a unique and beloved child of God.
 2. Because God is love (1 John 4:16), each of us has the capacity to love and be loved.
 3. Because God is Spirit (John 4:24) and we are created in the image and likeness of God, each of us is a spiritual being—one could say that we are “wired for God” from the very beginning.
 4. Because we are created in the image and likeness of God, the deepest and most essential part of us longs for a relationship with God. As Augustine said in his *Confessions*, “Our hearts will not find rest until they find rest in Thee [God].”
- C. The bad news of human sin is preceded by the good news of our origin in God.
 1. Adam and Eve made wrong choices that cost them their place in the Garden and brought disorder to all of creation (Gen. 3; 6:1-11), yet God provided for them.
 2. Each of us has made wrong choices that separate us from God and diminish our spiritual lives, yet God provides for us.
 3. God’s love and grace are greater than all our wrong choices.

III. God continues to offer us a relationship. (4 minutes)

- A. God desires a relationship with us even more than we want a relationship with God (Jer. 31:3).
- B. The nature of this relationship is that of covenant love.
 - 1. A covenant is the strongest form of relationship identified in the Bible. See the covenants with Noah (Gen. 9:8-17), Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21), Moses and the Israelites (Exod. 19:3-6), and David (2 Sam. 7:5-16).
 - 2. The prophets repeatedly called the Hebrew people back to a genuine relationship of love and obedience to God (Ezek. 12:1-6; Hos. 3:1-5). They proclaimed God's promise to make a new covenant with the people (Jer. 31:31-34).
 - 3. Jesus offers us a new covenant and a new relationship with God (Luke 22:14-20; Matt. 28:18-20). It is a relationship of love and grace (John 13:34-35; Eph. 2:4-10).
 - a) Divine love (John 1:14; 3:16)
 - b) Seeking love (Ezek. 34:11-16; Luke 19:2-10)
 - c) Everlasting love (John 13:34-35; Ps. 136)
 - d) A gift of love (John 3:16)
- C. God takes the initiative to seek us; it is not up to us to seek God (Gen. 3:8-9).
 - 1. We experience this divine initiative as grace.
 - 2. Prevenient grace helps us overcome our brokenness and alienation (Rom. 5:6-11; Luke 15:20-32).

IV. How do we experience God's prevenient grace? (5 minutes)

[This is a good place for a personal witness. You may wish to share a time when you became aware of God reaching out to you, drawing you, or pursuing you. Prevenient grace is the courtship period of our relationship with God; God woos us into this relationship of grace. God takes the initiative to reach out to us, get our attention, and help us see that a relationship with the divine is very natural—it is the relationship for which we were created.]

- A. **Through events, both positive and negative.** The Holy Spirit can speak to our minds and hearts through the struggles, frustrations, difficulties, and pain of unemployment, divorce, or the loss of a loved one. The Spirit can also speak to us through music, art, and beauty (John 16:13-15).
- B. **Through the care and sacrifice of others** who embody God's love toward us, for example, parents, relatives, and friends (2 Tim. 1:5).

- C. **Through the body of believers**, the church. The church helps us experience God's grace and presence through corporate worship, prayer, sacraments, and small groups (Eph. 4:11-16).
- D. **Through the Holy Spirit awakening our conscience** and convincing us that we can never reform ourselves or earn a place in God's family (2 Cor. 7:9-11).
- E. **Through the Holy Spirit courting us**, not forcing us.
- F. **Through us to others**. God can work through our words, attitudes, and actions to help others open their hearts and lives to the prevenient grace of God.

V. Closing

The critical question for each of us this weekend is, will we open our hearts to God and accept the relationship God offers us in Jesus Christ?

De Colores!

Abbreviated Outline: PREVENIENT GRACE

Lead the Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Please turn to page 48 in your Worship Booklet and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is **PREVENIENT GRACE**.

I. Define prevenient grace. (5 minutes)

- A. The root meaning of the word *grace* (from the Greek *charis*) is “gift” (Eph. 2:4-9; 2 Cor. 5:18).
- B. God’s grace is one grace with many facets.
- C. Prevenient grace means God is present with us throughout our lives. This grace is most clearly at work from our conception to conversion—from the moment we begin to be until the time when we accept for ourselves the relationship God offers us in Christ. Prevenient grace is
 - 1. **the grace that comes before** any human decision or endeavor; it is at work before we are even aware of it
 - 2. the love of God **wooing us**
 - 3. the will of God **drawing us**
 - 4. the desire of God **pursuing us**
 - 5. the gift of God **freeing us**
 - 6. the activity of God **empowering us**

II. The biblical message is clear: Human beings are created in God’s likeness for a relationship with the divine. (3 minutes)

- A. In the beginning God created the world, the cosmos, and all things in it—“and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:1-25).
- B. God created humankind, male and female. God declared that they were good and enjoyed the relationship with them (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:4-22).
- C. The bad news of human sin is preceded by the good news of our origin in God.

III. God continues to offer us a relationship. (4 minutes)

- A. God desires a relationship with us even more than we want a relationship with God (Jer. 31:3).
- B. The nature of this relationship is that of covenant love.
- C. God takes the initiative to seek us; it is not up to us to seek God (Gen. 3:8-9).

IV. How do we experience God's prevenient grace? (5 minutes)

[This is a good place for a personal witness. You may wish to share a time when you became aware of God reaching out to you, drawing you, or pursuing you. Prevenient grace is the courtship period of our relationship with God; God woos us into this relationship of grace. God takes the initiative to reach out to us, get our attention, and help us see that a relationship with the divine is natural—the relationship for which we were created.]

- A. Through events, both positive and negative.
- B. Through the care and sacrifice of others who embody God's love toward us.
- C. Through the body of believers, the church.
- D. Through the Holy Spirit awakening our conscience and convincing us that we can never reform ourselves or earn a place in God's family.
- E. Through the Holy Spirit courting us, not forcing us.
- F. Through our words, attitudes, and actions toward others.

V. Closing

The critical question for each of us this weekend is, will we open our hearts to God and accept the relationship God offers us in Jesus Christ?

De Colores!