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Justifying Grace

Just as in my relationship with others, the relationship with God is unconditional love and grace. That statement reminds me of a relationship I almost had, well, had for a while. I had to make a choice of accepting or rejecting my relationship with God and "Joe" (name has been changed to protect the innocent or guilty. God was not a part of "Joe's" life and he was not willing to share me with God and God's church. I had to accept or reject Joe's relationship which in turn meant accepting or rejection my relationship with God.

Hi! My is Gerri Lampton. This ~~clergy~~ talk is on Justifying Grace. ~~My walk was #31, in Greater Cincinnati, and I sat at the table of Ruth.~~

I. What does God offer you when you accept Him?

A. Forgiveness

Romans 3:23ff - "For 'all' have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified 'freely' by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith, in His blood."

Our acceptance is an act of faith, not something we do by works to merit the relationship. That faith is a free gift of God's grace given to you.

B. A love relationship

Without God there is no love. God defines love. Love does not define God. As we know it in God, love is selfless, self-giving, and undeserved. Regardless of what others may say about love, as God defines it, it is not a passive response but rather takes the initiative.

I John 4:7 & 8 says - "Beloved let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." So beloved let us love one another I John 4:7 & 8.

C. Fulfillment and happiness

Your life will seem to take shape. There will be guidance and direction for your life. Peace of mind will help happiness and fulfillment. (Share call to ministry)

Are you interested in any of these? Forgiveness, A love relationship, Fulfillment and happiness. You say, well, maybe I am or maybe I'm not.

II. A person can accept or deny these relationships. Because we have a free will. We are not puppets with God up there, or over here or over there, pulling the strings. While we can accept or reject we need to realize there are consequences and benefits.

A. Consequences:

1. We cut ourselves off from the greatest source of love.
2. When things go wrong (and sooner or later they will) we have no ultimate source of love.
3. We also cut ourselves off from others because we develop an "I-can-do-it-by-myself attitude."

B. Benefits:

1. There is a God-shaped hunger inside all of us that only God can satisfy. That is how we were created.
2. This relationship completes our creation – body, mind, and spirit.
3. This relationship puts us in touch with ourselves, others, and the love and forgiveness of God. Accepting God means a rising with Christ.
4. A relationship means a reunion with God through Jesus Christ; thus, we are no longer separated or lonely.

In our accepting or rejecting, we also need to be able to recognize the subtle partial ways in which we accept or reject this love relationship.

III. God offers us a relationship of unconditional love and grace

- A. Think about creation - Do you think God would have created us if it were not that He loved us? If you have children, would you have chosen to bring children into this world if you did not have love that you wanted to share?
- B. Relationship - God calls us into relationship with him. Wrong choices can separate us but God's gifts of love and grace are there to bring us back to Him when we realize our choices were wrong.
- C. God gives us rules (commandments) to follow but He knew we would fall and in falling He is there to love us "unconditionally" and He gives his grace that will keep us. Jesus calls us to accept this relationship with God. Story of Zacchaeus -
- D. God offers us love, love that comes from Him. I John 4:7 & 8

IV. Our acceptance of the relationship

- A. Justifying grace is at work the moment we say yes to our relationship with God.
- B. When we say yes everything changes
 1. Story of the prodigal son and his father's gracious welcome – when he said yes to what his father was offering his life changed.
 2. God offers us the same kind of love and care, but the choice is ours.
 3. Just as in courtship, our acceptance or rejection changes everything (refer to opening story).
 4. My response was an act of faith. I could not have done it on my own. Ephesians 2:8 says, we cannot do it of ourselves, it is a gift of God.
 5. Saving grace is instantaneous and continuous
 - a. Was
 - b. Am
 - c. Will be
- C. Think of Justifying Grace as a cross – Jesus gave His life to show God's love for us.
 1. The vertical – Our relationship with God is restored by Jesus' sacrifice.
 2. The horizontal – Our relationship with others is restored by Jesus' sacrifice.

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D. Thus, our conversion continues as we continue to say yes to Jesus every day.

1. We do this in our understanding of ourselves better -and,
2. Acknowledging our need for Christ - and,
3. Understanding God better through reading His word - and,
4. Seeking God's will for our lives - and finally,
5. By practicing essential spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible-reading, meditation, obedience to the conversion of our will to His will.

V.

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Agape

1. ^ One aspect of prevenient grace moving us to justifying grace is ^ other Christian's loving acts - Known as "agape", a ^ Greek word for unconditional love, which is ^ always a gift, not merited. ^ You have been experiencing agape as you sit here this weekend
2. An example of the Emmaus community giving agape love are these letters.