**Prayer to the Holy Spirit:**

Come Holy Spirit,

fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit,

and we shall be created.

And, you shall renew the face of the earth.  
O God,

who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful,

grant that by the same Holy Spirit

we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

It was 1983.

For most, everything was usual and routine; but for one family it was Spring Break, and they had traveled to Florida.

One night they went to visit with some friends…of some friends.

Not knowing where they were, or who they were with,

this seemed like a great opportunity to meet new people—to have an adventure.

The day before,

this family had gone to Disney World,

and their only son was still wearing his pirate outfit.

The same pirate outfit that he “had to have”, which was conveniently located, and lovingly purchased, outside the Pirates of the Caribbean ride.

As the adults made small talk… their six year old son was off making new friends himself.

Suddenly there was a loud noise… and a scream.

As the mother went down the hallway toward where he son was playing, he met her halfway.

Hands to his forehead…

blood was gushing down his face…

down his shirt…

onto the floor.

Her six year old son had jumped off of a bunk bed into a ceiling fan.

The boy lay very still on a bed, waiting for the emergency squad.

His mother held his hand.

A mere one inch separated the wound from having been across his eye.

The boy looked at his mother, holding her hand tight, and asked,

“Mommy…am I going to die?”

**[PAUSE]**

My mother held on to me, and said that I would be fine.

She told me that God loved me, and that I was not going to die.

I did not know the Lord then,

but because of his grace…

I lived to know it now.

This talk is Prevenient Grace, and my name is Matthew Van Winkle.

What is grace?

We use this word frequently, but give little regard for what it means,

or more importantly, from where it comes.

You may want to write this down:

The origins of the word come from the Greek word “*charis*”, which means “gift”…

which is the best way to describe just how God gives,

or rather showers us, with His grace.

**[PAUSE]**

It is important to understand that all grace comes from God, and so it is God’s grace;

but it is one grace with different parts…

just as there is one God in three persons.

**[PAUSE]**

The Bible shows how God is continually wooing us, drawing us, pursuing us, freeing us, and empowering us.

At the end of the weekend, you will be given a list of all scripture references given in the talks, so… you do not need to write these down.

Again… the Bible shows how God is continually wooing us, drawing us, pursuing us, freeing us, and empowering us when it says:

***Come. And let the one who hears say, Come. And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.***

Wooing us when it says…

***No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.***

Drawing us when it says…

***But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet still sinners, Christ died for us.***

Pursuing us when it says…

***What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?***

Freeing us when it says…

***He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?***

Empowering us when it says…

***For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angles nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

***For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.***

Again… this shows how God is continually wooing us, drawing us, pursuing us, freeing us, and empowering us through his INFINITE grace.

**[PAUSE]**

The reason for this gift of grace is that we are created for a relationship with God—**ALL OF US**.

When God created the world,

the heaven and the earth,

and all the living creatures that would swim in the ocean,

and walk on and fly over the land…

when God created man and woman, he did so in perfection,

saying when it was finished that it was good.

In this goodness, God made humanity in his own image.

If you don’t believe me… READ YOUR BIBLE!

Genesis 1:27

***So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.***

From the beginning we have been created and considered both unique and beloved by God…

From the beginning we have been created… and considered…

both unique and beloved by God… for God is love.

**[PAUSE]**

As God is love, God is also spirit, for we are spiritual.

John 4:24

***God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.***

In our deepest and most central core, we long for God.

**[PAUSE]**

We were created… and in the beginning dwelled with God,

and existed in fellowship with God…

but before we could completely realize the extent of God’s love for us…

Adam and Eve disobeyed His commandment, and were tainted by their original sin.

The choices they made brought with them a period of loss and disorder.

Genesis 6:3,5,7-8

***Then the Lord said, My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh. The Lord saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. So the Lord said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and the birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.***

However even in God’s despair over the perversion of His creation, he showed his favor to Noah, and extended his grace unto him.

**[PAUSE]**

Each and every day… each and every one of us makes bad choices,

and often these bad choices are displeasing to God,

**YET HE STILL PROVIDES FOR US**.

Despite of that sin, God’s grace and love are greater than all of our sin.

**[PAUSE]**

We are extended a personal invitation by God to continue in a relationship with Him.

It is a perfect example of how forgiving and unconditional his grace is, when we realize that God wants us more than we want him.

God declares in the Book of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:2-3)

***The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, the Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.***

Let me repeat that…

God said:***I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.***

Graciously, God continues to offer us a relationship with Him…

and he does it out of his love for us.

He does it out of his unconditional love for us!

**[PAUSE]**

Did you know that the strongest relationship in the Bible is based on this covenantal love?

A covenant is a solemn agreement,

a formal pact between parties.

It is this type of love based agreement that we see between

God and Noah

God and Abraham  
God and Moses

(and between) God and David.

Throughout the Bible, **AND EVEN TODAY**, God uses His prophets to “rally the troops”,

and call His people back to this special and gracious relationship.

**[PAUSE]**

(But) the greatest way God has invited us back, and shown His love and grace to us,

is through His only Son, Jesus, whom He sent to us.

It is in Jesus that we learn and are given divine love, seeking love, and everlasting love.

Let me repeat that:

It is in Jesus that we learn and are given divine love, seeking love, and everlasting love.

**[PAUSE]**

The Bible says:

***The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out.***

**THEN**, in the Gospel of John (John 13:34-35) Jesus says:

***A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.***

What a powerful example of the Lord’s everlasting love for us.

**[PAUSE]**

Love one another as Jesus himself loves us…

imagine what a world we would live in if everyone would heed this commandment.

**[PAUSE]**

When you have time, look up the story of Zaccheaus as told in Luke 19:2-10 to see yet again how Jesus seeks us out to show his gracious love.

**[PAUSE]**

Even the un-churched know the gift of God’s love in the verse that permeates every sporting event.

John 3:16

***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal live.***

As you enjoy this weekend, this Walk to Emmaus, take a moment and look around you.

Everything you experience is of God.

He is surrounding you…

Embracing you…

Loving you—**EVEN NOW**;

even when you are not seeking Him, he is seeking you.

I said…

Even when you are not seeking Him, he is seeking you.

**[PAUSE]**

The fact that God is constantly looking for you, and looking out for you…

this is His prevenient grace.

**[PAUSE]**

No matter what you have experienced in your life;

regardless of what burdens you carry with you today,

it is God’s prevenient grace that will help you to overcome the brokenness in your life.

**[PAUSE]**

Paul reminds us of this in his letter to the church in Rome.

***For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one wouljd dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us… we will rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.***

Remember the story of the prodigal son found in Luke 15:20-32…

the story of the Father’s child who wandered away.

Through sin we wander from God, and become separated from the Father…

but just as the prodigal son returns and is welcomed by his Father,

so too… by grace,

are we welcomed home to our heavenly Father.

So here is the $1M question:

“**How do you experience God’s prevenient grace?**”

**[PAUSE]**

Well, here is what you look for…

As you go through life, you will experience various events;

some positive, some negative.

At times you will care for and sacrifice for others…

and there will be times when others do the same for you.

As a member of the body of believers,

you will experience God’s prevenient grace through others, and by helping others…

you will experience god’s prevenient grace through

the awaking of the Holy Spirit in your life.

**[PAUSE]**

God’s prevenient grace is that wonderful grace that “comes before”.

God’s prevenient grace is that wonderful grace that “comes before”.

God’s prevenient grace is that wonderful grace that “comes before”.

**[PAUSE]**

It “comes before” because…

it is that grace that blankets and protects you **before** you realize that God is helping you.

Open your heart and receive God’s grace this weekend;

and by doing so embrace a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

**[PAUSE]**

Be ready to receive the loving gift of the grace of God,

brought to you in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

**[PAUSE]**

Will you open your hearts?

**[PAUSE]**

God’s grace is waiting…

and so is He.

De Colores.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Revelation 22:17

John 6:44

Romans 5:8

Romans 8:31

Romans 8:32

Romans 8:38-39

Genesis 1:27

John 4:24

Genesis 6:3, 5, 7-8

Jeremiah 31:2-3

John 1:14-15

John 13:34-35

Luke 19:2-10

John 3:16

Romans 5:6-8

Luke 15:20-32