

Grace in the Workplace

Presented by Lisa Bishop

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Day One

I am examining an important characteristic of God we can often find difficult to emulate. Grace. And specifically, we'll be unpacking ways to be grace in the workplace.

Notice how I said "be" grace. Grace ultimately flows from your identity, and when you are truly living from your identity in Jesus, grace will inform how you act, speak, and live. Just as an aspect of God's character is grace, you and I are called to imitate Jesus and be grace to others.

We see grace as a constant theme in the Bible. In the Old Testament we hear the very words of God as he declares his character:

The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin (Exodus 34:6-7).

The word translated gracious means merciful in Hebrew. In the New Testament, grace translated from the Greek word charis, means favor, blessing, or kindness. The most powerful demonstration of grace is God choosing to bless us in Jesus rather than penalize us when we sin and fall short of his glory. You have probably heard of grace defined as unmerited favor. Meaning, regardless of your behavior, God chooses to love you. I am so grateful for God's grace, aren't you?

Who is someone in your workplace you find hard to extend grace to? A coworker you find it difficult to love and show kindness toward? We often find it most challenging to act in a gracious manner with people who have different opinions than us or act in ways we find off-putting. But as an ambassador of Christ, you are called to love and be good-natured toward everyone, to live from grace because you have been given grace.

When you live from a place of grace, fully known and fully loved, even with all your flaws, you will be more inclined to have a posture of grace with others.

The next time a coworker does something that gets on your nerves or says something that gets under your skin, rather than reacting in the flesh, ask yourself, "How will I be grace in the workplace?"

Day Two

Are you a fool?

Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult (Proverbs 12:16).

If you have ever found yourself in a situation where your reputation was on the line or your competence was called into question based on something a coworker said about you, Proverbs provides solid wisdom on how to respond. It's easy to react with retaliation or revenge when you are wronged, but

Proverbs reminds us to respond to others with grace. Rather than being hot-headed and reactive, or maybe even silently vindictive, take a deep breath and hold back any rash words. Instead of responding harshly, or in a manner you may regret, keep a calm spirit.

When you are prudent, you are careful and wise, exercising good judgment in handling the injury done to you. When you act prudently, you create less trouble for yourself and in turn gain more credit and a good reputation from others.

Now, I am not saying you need to roll over and be walked on as false information is spoken about you, but when you exert wisdom and respond gracefully, you are a witness to the grace of Jesus.

It reminds me of Paul's instructions:

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (Colossians 4:5-6).

When you are insulted, your response is a witness to Jesus Christ. And when you don't react in a way people typically behave when maligned and instead you act with kindness and courtesy, you create an opening for conversation that can lead to sharing your faith. You are able to give an answer, a reason for your spirit-led response.

The next time you are bad-mouthed, ground yourself in the Holy Spirit and ask him to cover your comeback with grace. Respond in the Spirit and ask, "What would grace do?"

Day Three

I am examining ways to be grace in the workplace and learning about an aspect of grace—humility.

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).

Have you ever uttered the words of the Pharisee, "God, I thank you I am not like other people. I thank you I am not like my coworker! She's so loud. He's so lazy. She is so incompetent."

I have, and if you're honest, you have too, even if you have whispered them silently to yourself. Because of our sin nature, we are prone to fall into the temptation of a self-elevating view that looks down on other people. We boast of the reasons we are better than others and we neglect our own shortcomings. Or worse, we put insufficiencies on a spectrum, and it just so happens our own faults are minimized while others' faults are often put on blast.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

When you humble yourself, first before God, you get oodles of grace.

When it comes to being justified before God, we see the Pharisee listing the reasons he deserved God's favor, but no amount of self-effort will earn you the grace of God. God cannot be bought or manipulated. That is good news because you and I will fall short, and Jesus fills the gap! The next time you are tempted to think more highly of yourself and less of others, remember you are loved. Thank God for his grace and humble yourself.

Day Four

If you were to take inventory of your words over the past 48 hours, would you describe them as grace-filled?

We are given instructions to:

Never let ugly or hateful words come from your mouth, but instead let your words become beautiful gifts that encourage others; do this by speaking words of grace to help them (Ephesians 4:29).

Other versions say, let no unwholesome words come from your mouth, which means words that are rotten, corrupted, of poor quality are worthless. That is a strong warning, and one we can be prone to bypass, especially when we get caught up in office dynamics.

One of the most impactful ways to show God's grace in your workplace is by filtering your words through the Holy Spirit before they fly out of your mouth. When people around you are grumbling and complaining about their work or their boss, talking poorly behind a coworker's back, or speaking in a crude or insensitive way, you've got a secret weapon, and that weapon is grace.

And when I say weapon, I do not mean it in the harmful sense but in the powerful godly sense. The words should flow from your mouth and cultivate a healthy workplace culture. You may think you do not have much influence to impact a culture, but you do. Your words will either sow beauty that builds up and encourages, or they will be careless and tear down, discourage, and disparage others. Words that lack any sense of grace destroy harmony and collaboration.

Are your words beautiful gifts or atomic bombs? Do they bolster connection or are they like a termite slowly eating away at the structure of your relationships?

You've heard the phrase, "Think before you speak." Before words roll off your tongue, put them through the THINK filter.

Are your words:

T—Tested? (meaning put through the test of grace)

H—Helpful?

I—Inspiring?

N—Necessary?

K—Kind?

If someone were to hear your words or eavesdrop on your conversation, would they get a proper representation of Jesus? Would they hear words of grace falling from your lips? Let's commit together to THINK before we speak and let our words be a gift of grace to those who hear them.

Day Five

When was the last time you received a letter in the mail? I'm not talking about a letter from the city outlining your parking violation or a dreaded collection notice. I'm talking about a heart-felt, handwritten letter from a friend or loved one. It's so rare these days to get anything but junk mail, isn't it?

Over the past month I've been reading the New Testament. As I was reading the Apostle Paul's letters, I noticed he opens each letter with some form of the following greeting. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you ever stopped to think about what Paul means when he addresses the recipients of his letters with those words? It must be important since Paul used grace and peace as common greetings. He is reminding all who are in Christ Jesus we are recipients of free, undeserved, and unearned mercy from God through Jesus. Along with God's kindness and compassion, peace is also ours in Christ and is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Paul is reminding us of who God is, and as we receive grace and peace, we are to release grace and peace to everyone around us.

We can often blow past Paul's poignantly penned greeting and miss its meaning. David Guzik, an author and Bible commentator, says this about Paul's words. "...Grace means, among other things, that God's attitude towards us is gracious, it's filled with favor. You see, when God sees us, ...he sees beauty in us because we're in Jesus. To put it plainly, standing in grace means that God doesn't only love us, He likes us. It can be difficult for us to understand that God likes us, that he's well pleased with us in Jesus. We often suffer under the thought that God barely tolerates us because we're unworthy, or that, most of the time, God is irritated with us. You see, we're so familiar with our own sins and shortcomings we are easily convinced that God is always half-angry with us, and he's always disappointed in us because we're unworthy.

"Brothers and sisters,...your position before God is a standing of favor,...not one of unworthiness or irritation or mere toleration...Your standing in grace is only because of God's freely given favor in Jesus Christ."¹

Don't you just love that reminder?

As we wrap up our week together, receive this blessing.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And as you have received God's grace, go and be grace in the workplace.

¹ Guzik, D. (2018, January 12). *Part 3 - What Does Living in Grace Look Like?* by David Guzik. Blue Letter Bible. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/GettingGrace/GettingGrace/Part-3-What-Does-Living-in-Grace-Look-Like.cfm