

Self-Grace

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Day One

This notion of giving oneself grace spans well beyond any biblical consideration of what grace truly means. Our society tells us repeatedly to excuse our failings by resting in self-grace when we fail to meet our own expectations or the expectations of others.

The truth is true grace is only experienced and extended by God. By grace we have been saved by faith alone. Grace is unmerited favor from God, and we cannot give that to ourselves. The only way we can apply grace to ourselves is to walk in the grace of God. In 2 Peter 3:18, we are exhorted to *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*.

Jesus says, *my grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul remarks he can boast more gladly about his weakness so that Christ's power can rest on him.

Jesus covers us in grace. He alone is sufficient. By acknowledging we are sinners and saved by grace alone, we can focus on the example we have in Jesus. We cannot grow in our faith by looking at ourselves. It is in the fullness of this realization—grace comes through faith and Jesus is all sufficient—that we can show grace both to ourselves and others.

When we truly stop and think about the need for grace, it is rooted in our sin. And we cannot ever forgive ourselves. Only Jesus can cover our sins. Sin has no dominion over us since we are not under the law but under grace. Romans 6:14 reminds us we are under grace—free favor—and that is what we experience through Jesus Christ alone.

We have just started a new year. Oftentimes, we consider this time of renewal where we have set new expectations on ourselves, on our relationships, or even our work. A new fresh calendar. Maybe you are off to a great start, but maybe like Paul, you need to reflect and boast gladly in your weakness and inability to do it all alone.

We cannot overcome our sin nature alone. We need Jesus. In every expectation set for ourselves or every moment we fail—which for me feels like daily. We must remember we must bring all of this to Jesus to experience grace.

Not only do we experience grace but in acknowledging our weakness, Christ's power rests on us. Grace=free favor=Jesus Christ=the power of Christ over my life.

Day Two

Well, it is one month into the new year, and like me, I am sure you have resolved to accomplish something in this new year. Surprisingly, only 38% of the population commits to a resolution. The most popular resolutions are in the areas of physical and mental health, followed by finances and social relationships. All these resolutions can be God-honoring, but the truth is sometimes our plans are not

God's plans. Proverbs 16:9 reminds me *in their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps*. There are New and Old Testament examples of God impacting man's plans.

If we look at Paul's journeys, we find while he often resolved to take his mission to a certain location, his efforts were frustrated. Whether house arrest or an unexpected shipwreck on Malta, Paul was forced to rely on God's will for his missions.

In the Old Testament, we saw both Moses and David never reaching their desired achievements. Moses was offered a glimpse of the promised land but never reached it. And David set forth to build a temple for the Lord, but God had other plans to use someone else in both stories to fulfill his plans.

These are examples of huge goals. Maybe yours are just as big, or they are smaller, more incremental improvements you want to make.

Resolutions can bring forth the temptation to rely on myself, rather than rely on God's grace. Yesterday, we reflected on how God's power is made perfect in our weakness.

I want to challenge you to look to God to find grace in your time of need. Hebrews 4:16 exhorts us to *approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need*.

How can you seek the Lord in your resolutions? Knowing that you can't do it alone, I would encourage you to pray about your resolutions and seek scripture that can encourage you when you feel like your resolutions are falling by the wayside. Ask God to show you his will for what you have resolved. Is this his plan for you?

God will supply every need of yours to his riches and glory of Christ Jesus. His plans for you are for your good.

Is it health you are seeking? Restored relationships? Better stewardship with your finances? Ask God for his grace as you approach his word with confidence.

Lord, help our listeners today to be encouraged by your promises for their good, and give them mercy and grace in their time of need.

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7).

Day Three

The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit (Proverbs 15:4).

How should we have grace with our words? I find there are two ways we use our words negatively, especially when it comes to work. The first is self-talk, and the second is gossip. Neither extends grace, and both are rooted in sin apart from Christ.

There are leading movements that promise to help us with positive self-talk. The words we use for ourselves can often be as harmful as the words we speak to and about others. I have found the words working women often use for themselves are borne of discouragement or on the opposite end of the spectrum, pride. Discouragement says "I am not enough, I will never get the promotion, or I won't find a job." Pride says, "I am better than, or she can't."

Gossip and slander are pervasive in the workplace. More often than not, we find it is easier to remark about what isn't going right or what someone isn't doing than it is to celebrate someone's success.

Research shows 75-95% of gossip contains a morsel of truth. 96% of employees admit to engaging in gossip at work. A study about gossip shows more than 40 minutes per week are spent solely in gossip, and, yes, women are worse than men with close to 80% of women admitting to engaging in gossip. Noted consequences of gossip at work are lack of trust, jealousy, alienation, hurt feelings, and low morale.

Being Christian doesn't exclude us from this 96%. Remember, grace covers a multitude of sins, and maybe like me, you want to be better with your words both to yourself and about others.

Ephesians 4:29 tells us to have *no corrupting talk come from our mouths, but only such is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. Grace.*

What if we spent those 40 minutes building others up? If you work a typical week, that is eight minutes a day. Focused energy on speaking those morsels of truth to a person rather than about a person.

Maybe you don't gossip but spend time in negative self-talk. Spend those eight minutes with life giving affirmations about what Christ says of you.

The tongue has the power of life and death. Repeatedly, the bible highlights how powerful our tongue is. In fact, in James 3:6, the tongue is described as a fire, and a world of evil among the parts of the body setting the whole course of one's life on fire. No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil.

Words can give grace. Heavenly father, *set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips* (Psalm 141:3).

Day Four

Do you get overwhelmed by worry? With the busyness many of us experience balancing work, family, and other commitments we can be prone to worry and anxiety. One definition of worry is an incessant goading or attacking that drives one to desperation. Learning more about what God says about our anxiety, can help us rely more on his grace when we are feeling that overwhelming sense of worry. Common worries at work include:

1. Missing a deadline.
2. Worrying about being unliked by a colleague.
3. Feeling imposter syndrome: you don't really know what you are doing.
4. Sounding "stupid" in a meeting for speaking up.
5. Making a mistake.

25% of people say work is the number one stressor in their life. These worries can be compounded by issues outside of work like parenting children, health, your marriage, or financial problems.

While God calls us to work with excellence, working with *all our hearts as for the Lord and not for human masters* (Colossians 3:23), he also cautions us about worrying. And he calls us to look to him.

Unemployment was running out and Sue still had not found a new job. Her husband was out of work as well. The bills weren't stopping and anxiety was mounting.

A surprising performance review: All the goals Amy had set with her boss were met and exceeded. Her mid-year pulse check was meeting expectations. Now, at year end she was suddenly rating needs improvement. Confusion and worry grew.

What do these women have in common? Work created worry, which was compounded by other issues. They also had something else in common: a belief in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. While this didn't take the worry away, their faith provided a means of grace during their trials.

In Matthew 6, Jesus tells us *to not be anxious about our life*, reminding us that being anxious *will not add a single hour to our span of life*. Further, he calls us to look at how God provides in nature to remind us God loves and lavishes us much more than the birds or the grass of the field. We must first seek his kingdom and all of these things (food, clothing, our body) will be added to us.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

These women were in prayer and in community with other women who were encouraging them. They were experiencing the grace of God through others who cared for their concerns and provided them comfort.

Do you need to experience the grace of God in your anxiety? I would encourage you to seek the Lord in prayer and find a community to pray for you and encourage you.

Day Five

What relationship allows you to experience biblical grace? How do you give grace in relationships you have? How we show up and extend grace to others, especially at work, reflects how we experience grace from God. Remember, his power is made perfect in our weakness, so as we look at our relationships today, I am reminded of how weak I can be when it comes to showing others grace. I experience grace through the perfect relationship I have through my salvation in Jesus!

If you lead people and even if you work on a team, every day can be an opportunity to reflect grace. If you missed our talk about anxiety, you may have missed the statistic that 25% of people report work as their number one stressor, and many of those stresses include their performance at work and even their relationships.

Time and time again in Scripture we see Jesus model grace through serving others, love, and forgiveness. God's number one goal is relationship with him, and he uses you and me and our reflection of Christ's love to be fishers of men. He calls us to go forth and make disciples of all nations. We cannot do this if we are full of pride, judgement, and focused on ourselves.

How do you serve, show love, and humility at work? Jesus served his disciples and showed great humility by washing their feet. He showed love by continually teaching them patiently. Jesus was others focused.

One of my favorite examples of grace and love is between Peter and Jesus. Jesus knew Peter would deny him three times before his death. We see this in Luke 22. Peter denied his relationship with Jesus. We get a glimpse of how Peter felt when he "wept bitterly" when he realized he had denied Christ. Fast forward to Jesus and Peter walking along the shore after the resurrection, and Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him. A reflection of the denial but asking for his love. His rebuke was gentle and grace filled, leading to the command for Peter to feed his sheep.

Now, how can you show grace in your relationships at work?

Is it by extending grace-filled words? Perhaps a compliment for something as simple as a well-written email or a comment made in a meeting.

Is it by showing someone support for an idea they have? As a manager, you can truly show grace by highlighting the work of the people who report to you.

Can you extend grace by giving someone honest feedback instead of choosing to gossip? Sometimes, it is best to say something to a person rather than about them.

Maybe it is bringing a colleague a cup of coffee or inviting them to lunch.

Is someone down? Are they facing a trial? Offer to pray.

Relationships are of the utmost importance to God. He relies on us and our relationships to bring people into relationship with him.