



## “Grace for a Purpose Driven Life” – Week 10

### Introduction:

1. We’re at the ½ way point of our series: **“Grace for a Purpose Driven Life”**
  - > I trust this series is making an impact on you and your relationship with Jesus Christ – your marriage – your family – your relationship with others in our church – your relationship with your co-workers/neighbors, etc.
2. That’s exactly what God wants us to do – to be DOERS of the Word and not hearers only!
3. So far, we’ve put two main purposes on the table:
  - Purpose #1: You Were Planned for God’s Pleasure**
  - Purpose #2: You Were Formed for God’s Family**
4. Today, we’re going to focus on another aspect of being a part of the family of God!

### I. Cultivating an Attitude of “Community”

**Input:** When you hear the word ‘community,’ what thoughts/concepts come to your mind?

[various answers]

- By community, we’re talking about a specific aspect of the fellowship
  - > An attitude that we are in this together, the unity of the body, we’re going to help each other and watch out for each other – if a person needs assistance, we’ll be there, etc.
- Here are a few verses that capture the concept of what we’re trying to communicate:
  - [NAS] James 3:18 **And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**
  - James 3:18 **You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results *only* if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.**<sup>1</sup>
  - [NAS] Acts 2:42 **They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**
  - Acts 2:42 **They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers.**<sup>2</sup>
  - Ephesians 4:3 **being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

*“Only the Holy Spirit can create real fellowship between believers, but he cultivates it with the choices and commitments we make.” – p. 145*

<sup>1</sup>Peterson, E. H. (1995). *The Message : New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs* (Jas 3:1). Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid (Acts 2:42)

- You'll need to make some tough choices and take some risks.
- Let's think about what it takes to follow these passages:

### A. Cultivating community takes honesty

*"The tunnel of conflict is the passageway to intimacy in any relationship."* – p. 147

- James 5:16 **Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.**
- Matthew 18:15 –18 is all about loving each other enough to be honest and solve problems.

*"Until you care enough to confront and resolve the underlying barriers, you will never grow close to each other. When conflict is handled correctly, we grow closer to each other by facing and resolving our differences."* – p. 147

Illustration: One of the reasons why Pastor Viars and I have the working relationship we do is because of the honesty that has been practiced between us!

**Input:** What are some barriers to open, honest communication?

[Fear of man + never been in an honest relationship, not aware of the biblical principles requiring this type of behavior/thinking on the part of a believer!!]

### B. Cultivating community takes humility

- 1 Peter 5:5 **You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**

*"Pride blocks God's grace in our lives, which we must have in order to grow, change, heal, and help others. We receive God's grace by humbly admitting that we need it. The Bible says anytime we are prideful, we are living in opposition to God! That is a foolish and dangerous way to live."* – p. 148

**Input:** How can a person work at being humble? [Both in his/her heart, and outwardly]

### C. Cultivating community takes courtesy.

- \* **Courtesy is respecting our differences, being considerate of each other's thinking, and being patient with people who irritate us.**

- Honestly, sometimes God's people don't have a clue about this quality and really need to work at growing
- This is an issue of the heart – and what's on the INSIDE is inevitably going to come out!
  - Romans 12:10 **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.**
  - 1 Timothy 5:21 **I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.**

*"In every church and in every small group, there is always at least one 'difficult' person, usually more than one. These people may have special emotional needs, deep insecurities, irritating mannerisms, or poor social skills. You might call them EGR people – 'Extra Grace Required.'"*  
– p. 149

- > While I don't necessarily agree with Warren's diagnosis of the problem, he's right about the general nature of some people!

**Input:** Why does God bring these kinds of people into our lives?

**1) For our benefit – to help us to GROW!!!**

**2) For their benefit – to love them enough and help them to GROW!!**

*"In a family, acceptance isn't based on how smart or beautiful or talented you are. It's based on the fact that we belong to each other. We defend and protect family. A family member may be a little goofy, but he/she is still one of us."* – p. 149

- That's a nice way of saying, "We all have baggage, and we're going to love each other no matter what – we'll meet you where you are, but then grow together!!"
- A person might not AGREE with everything, but let's love each other enough to communicate – learn from each other's position, and then MOVE AHEAD for the glory of God

#### **D. Cultivating community takes confidentiality.**

- Churches have historically been at two extremes:

- ⇒ #1 = Not dealing with problems at all – pure neglect and recognition that a problem exists
- ⇒ #2 = Knowing about a problem and letting gossip run rampant throughout the church so everybody knows!

**Gossip** = sharing information with those who are not part of the problem or part of the solution!

- Paul did not want the church at Corinth to get into that habit:

- 2 Corinthians 12:20 **For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances.**

*"Gossip always causes hurt and divisions, and it destroys fellowship, and God is very clear that we are to confront those who cause division among Christians. They may get mad and leave your group or church if you confront them about their divisive actions, but the fellowship of the church is more important than any individual."* – p. 150

#### **E. Cultivating community takes frequency.**

- Relationships take *time* – we have to apply the principles of progressive sanctification to our relationships.

- Romans 12:13 **Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.**

- Relationship can't just be built on our time together at church – what about outside our times of corporate worship!

**IMPORTANT:** If you don't understand your *PURPOSE* for being here, you won't be very good at this area!!!!

*“You have to spend time with people – a lot of time – to build deep relationships. This is why fellowship is so shallow in many churches; we don’t spend enough time together, and the time we do spend is usually listening to one person speak.” – p. 150*

- One thing we all know about relationships with people, at some point there will be conflict – it’s not IF but WHEN it occurs, so you need have some principles regarding . . .

## II. Restoring Broken Fellowship

- 2 Corinthians 5:18 **Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation**
- Much of Christianity is about reconciliation – restoring the broken relationship between God and man, or man to man!
- One of the reasons some don’t want to work on this relationship thing is there fear of this very issue and/or their attitude that ‘people are a hassle, and I don’t want to fool with this process.’

### A. Evidence of your spiritual maturity

- Philippians 2:1 **Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.**

- Our ability to get along with others is a mark of spiritual maturity.

**Input:** What does that tell you about many Christians, churches, and Christian organizations?

[We have a lot of growing up to do – and it tells us of the patience of God, and yet reminds us that His heart is grieved when His people don’t get along!]

### B. You need to be a peacemaker

- If you want God’s blessing on your life and you want to be known as a child of God, you must learn to be a peacemaker

- Matthew 5:9 **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.**

*“Because you were formed to be a part of God’s family and the second purpose of your life on earth is to learn how to love and relate to others, peacemaking is one of the most important skills you can develop.” – p. 153*

#### 1. Peacemaking is not avoiding conflict.

#### 2. Peacemaking is not appeasement.

*Peacemaking* = taking biblical principles and applying them to conflict in such a way that God is glorified

- Notice I didn’t say the problem is SOLVED – there are times when some people won’t let you solve problems
- That’s why Paul said:

- Romans 12:18 **If possible**, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
- But God can be honored through the process – maybe even agreeing to disagree, but still treating one another in a civil and/or loving manner

### C. Seven biblical steps to restoring fellowship

#### 1. Talk to God before talking to the person.

**Input:** How does prayer help us to solve conflicts?

#### 2. Take the initiative. [Don't wait on the person to come to you]

- Matthew 5:23 "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.
- 3 John 1:13 I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face.

#### 3. Listen first, talk later!

- Show compassion and understanding to their perspective

- Proverbs 18:13 **He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.**

- But we have to help them think right.

#### 4. Confess your part of the conflict.

- Matthew 7:1-5

*"Confession is a powerful tool for reconciliation."*

*"When you begin by humbly admitting your mistakes, it defuses the other person's anger and disarms their attack because they were probably expecting you to be defensive. Don't make excuses or shift the blame; just honestly own up to any part you have played in the conflict." – p. 156-157*

#### 5. Attack the problem, not the person.

- Ephesians 4:29 **Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.**
- Proverbs 15:1 **A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.**
- Proverbs 16:21 **The wise in heart will be called understanding, And sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.**

#### 6. Cooperate as much as possible.

#### 7. Emphasize reconciliation, not resolution.

*"We can reestablish a relationship even when we are unable to resolve our differences. Christians often have legitimate, honest disagreements and differing opinions, but we can*

*disagree without being disagreeable. The same diamond looks different from different angles. God expect unity, not uniformity, and we can walk arm-in-arm without seeing eye-to-eye on every issue..” – p. 158*

*“Reconciliation focuses on the relationship, while resolution focuses on the problem..” – p. 158*

**B. Seek additional help if reconciliation does not occur.**

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### **Introduction:**

#### **I. Cultivating an Attitude of “\_\_\_\_\_”**

**Input:** When you hear the word ‘community,’ what thoughts/concepts come to your mind?

*“Only the Holy Spirit can create real fellowship between believers, but He cultivates it with the choices and commitments we make.” – p. 145*

##### **A. Cultivating community takes \_\_\_\_\_.**

*“The tunnel of conflict is the passageway to intimacy in any relationship.” – p. 147*

*Quote – p. 147*

**Input:** What are some barriers to open, honest communication?

##### **B. Cultivating community takes \_\_\_\_\_.**

*“Pride blocks God’s grace in our lives, which we must have in order to grow, change, heal, and help others. We receive God’s grace by humbly admitting that we need it. The Bible says anytime we are prideful, we are living in opposition to God! That is a foolish and dangerous way to live.” – p. 148*

**Input:** How can a person work at being humble?

##### **C. Cultivating community takes \_\_\_\_\_.**

**\* Courtesy is \_\_\_\_\_our \_\_\_\_\_, being considerate of each other’s thinking, and being patient with people who irritate us.**

*Quote – “Extra Grace Required” – p. 149*

**Input:** Why does God bring these kinds of people into our lives?

**1) For \_\_\_\_\_ benefit**

**2) For \_\_\_\_\_ benefit**

*Quote – p. 149*

**D. Cultivating community takes \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Gossip** = sharing information with those who are not part of the problem or part of the solution!

Quote – p. 150

**E. Cultivating community takes \_\_\_\_\_.**

- Relationships take time! Quote – p. 150

**II. Restoring Broken Fellowship**

**A. Evidence of your \_\_\_\_\_**

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- Rom. 12:18 \_\_\_\_\_, **so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.**

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**2. Take the \_\_\_\_\_.**

**3. \_\_\_\_\_ first, \_\_\_\_\_ later!**

**4. Confess \_\_\_\_\_ of the conflict.**

*“Confession is a powerful tool for reconciliation.”*

Quote – pp. 156-157

**5. Attack the \_\_\_\_\_, not the \_\_\_\_\_.**

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**. Romans 12:10; 1 Timothy 5:21**

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**- Relationships take time!**

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- Philippians 2:1-2

B. You need to be a peacemaker.

- Matthew 5:9

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. Matthew 5:23-24; 3 John 13

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