Gracestoration
CUPbearers Update
"Restoring People in God's Grace and Making Disciplers"

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DISCIPLESHIP IS DYNAMIC, RELATIONAL and ALL OF GRACE

Discipleship in most Christian circles is treated as a separate part of the Christian experience. However, biblical discipleship is part of the salvation message and refers to the believer's daily walk.

Biblical discipleship begins at the point of faith in Christ's finished work on the cross and continues until He takes us home with Him in glory. This may be expressed as, *"We were saved from the **penalty** of sin, and are now being saved from the **power** of sin and we will eventually be saved from the **presence** of sin."*

Jesus says that His disciples will live according to His Word, *"If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples"* (Jn. 8:31). And, *"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, **for apart from Me you can do nothing**"* (Jn. 15:5).

Disciples are like sheep who are secure and daily follow Jesus as their Shepherd, *"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd"* (Jn. 10:14-.16).

The following acrostic is a simple outline illustrating God's **GRACE** in discipleship.

G - GOSPEL
R - RELATIONSHIP
A - ALIGNMENT
C - CHRIST IS LIFE
E - EXALT CHRIST

G - GOSPEL

The good news is that our salvation is **all of grace** by faith in Christ -- not of any self-effort as expressed by the Apostle Paul, *"For by **grace** you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast"* (Eph. 2:8-9). He continues regarding our daily walk of **grace** (our sanctification), *"For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them"* (Eph. 2:10).

The Apostle Paul reminds us that this **life** is not a do-it-yourself-kit or a self-reformation program, but, *"it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13). The Christian life is **all of God**! It is His **grace** from start to finish!

R - RELATIONSHIP

It is often taught that we believers are "saved to serve." In other words, God saved us because He somehow needed our help. Obviously, in Genesis 2 and 3 we find that God served Adam and Eve rather than they serve Him. He placed them in the Garden of Eden where all their needs were supplied. In fact, God, desiring their fellowship, also walked with them in the cool of the day – relationship!

Jesus demonstrated for us His desire for relationship as He taught and interacted with His disciples and followers. He told of and revealed His intimate relationship with His Father *"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?*

The words that I say to you, I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works" (Jn. 14:10).

We Christians are precious to God in that He has chosen to have a close, intimate relationship with us by dwelling within us, even as God dwelt within Jesus. He promised His disciples, *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you"*. (Jn. 16:13-14). Christ graciously saved us for **relationship** with Himself!

A – ALIGNMENT

Freedom and independence are the hallmarks of Americans. Jesus uses the metaphor of goats and sheep to illustrate independent and dependent people (Matt. 24: 31-35). Goats are very independent and can take care of themselves, but sheep are very dependent and need someone to care for them.

As Christians we are no longer to live as independent goats, but as sheep dependent upon our Good Shepherd, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one"* (Jn. 10:27-30). *"He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing"* (Jn.15:5). God graciously saved us in order to bring us into **alignment** with Himself and His purposes!

C - CHRIST IS LIFE

The emphasis of our American upbringing, education, sports and recreation is focused on our being the very best we can be. Often Christians are challenged that God deserves excellence in everything. So, we try harder and harder to please God by attempting to improve the old Adamic nature. This always proves to be fruitless, as the Apostle Paul cries out, *"Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"* And then with a sigh of relief, *"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 7:24-25)!

Jesus Christ came to redeem us from sin and from the futility of trying to live up to the Law [the standard of life that He designed for mankind]. "The Apostle Paul answers, *"For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly... For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by **His life**"* (Rom. 5: 6, 10).

The focus of the Christian life must always be upon the Lord Jesus Christ – and Him alone. *"Christ is our life"* (Col. 3:4)! The writer of Hebrews refers to the Christian life as a life of resting daily from our creative work as God did on the seventh day from His creative work. But as God continues to actively keep the universe going, we are to rest upon Jesus Christ to keep our lives by His life. *"There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest"* (Heb. 4:9-11).

God graciously dwells within us to live out His perfect life *in, through* and *with* our faithful participation with Him.

E - EXALT CHRIST

Much of the emphasis of the church today is upon preaching and teaching the Scriptures, worship music, evangelism, programs for self development, service, addiction recovery and community outreach. These are all good and commendable, but mostly mankind-centered.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body, the church, both universally, and locally. He should be revered and allowed to lead every aspect of one's life and ministry, whether it be corporate worship, programs, boards, committees, and the like.

Jesus said; *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself"*(Jn. 12:32). Lifting up Jesus wherever we are and whatever we are doing is a privilege -- not a burden.

The Apostle Paul encourages us to preach and teach Christ always, *"we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God"* (1 Cor. 1:23-25).

IN CONCLUSION

Biblical discipleship begins at the point of faith in Christ and continues through life until Christ takes us home with Him to heaven. The **grace of discipleship** is that Jesus Christ is the source and fulfillment of the disciple's daily life –from beginning to end. Truly it is **ALL OF GRACE!**

Taste of Grace

Taste of Grace materials were specially formatted for the outreach ministry of Oak Pointe Church in Novi, Michigan. Five Gracestoration lessons are now available for download by going to www.gracestoration.org and clicking on Taste of Grace. Check us out!
"And the God of all grace...will Himself restore you" (I Peter 5:10, NIV).