

Discipleship by Grace

Knowing, growing in and sharing the gospel is arguably one of God's greatest gifts to us, but often we can turn it into a duty, program, or job description. We can turn discipleship into what we can manage and measure. Why do we do that and how can we avoid it? To answer that question, this session will trace the Apostle Peter's call, growth, failure, reinstatement, bountiful ministry and severe suffering with special attention focused on God's grace throughout. Illustrations and explanations of these truths will echo through three German examples: Martin Luther, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and a current church planting work in Berlin. Discipleship is seen to stem from the realization that we are blessed by the God who outgives our limited understanding, faith, and desires. God's amazing generosity and love cause us to grow in knowing and following Him and, in turn, lead others to do the same.

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1. Introduction

a. Grace as waves in the ocean

b. Jerry Bridges' two principles of grace

1. forgiveness of all our sins and unconditional acceptance in Christ

2. deliverance from dominion of sin and enabling power in Christ/HS

2. Peter's calling – Grace by invitation *Mt. 4.18-20; Lk. 5.3-11; Jn. 1.42*

a. *Mk. 1.17* – "Follow me." Peter drops his nets and goes.

b. Luther's story of conversion

3. Peter's growth by asking questions and verbal interaction with Jesus – Grace by learning/being taught and caught

a. *Lk. 12.40-43* = Is this for us all?

b. Bonhoeffer's early ministry was a confirmation class in Wedding

c. *Jn. 13.36-37* = where are you going/I'll die for you

d. *Mt. 15.10-18* = what comes out of the mouth/explain this to us

e. *Mt. 18.21-22; Jn. 6.68; Mk. 10.23-31* = how many times to forgive, seven?

f. SE Berlin –listening to, learning from and loving those who hurt you

g. *Mt. 19.23-30* = we have left everything/what will we have?

h. *Jn. 13.6-9* = do you wash my feet

i. Luther's table talks

j. Connection: Acts 4.13: people saw disciples' boldness; perceived lack of education, recognized they were with Jesus

4. Peter's walk on water – Grace in action *Mt. 14.25-33*

a. Grace also involves walking the talk.

b. Where was Bohnhoeffer when Hitler was coming to power in 1935?

5. Peter's confession and Jesus' rebuke – Grace in the name *Mt. 16.13-23; Mk. 8.27-36; Lk. 9.18-36*

a. Peter sees both Jesus as Christ, and thus the scandal of the cross – that the chosen and Holy One would die? On a cross? It can't be; that's impossible. Scandalous.

b. Bonhoeffer – cheap v. costly grace

6. Peter's denial predicted and fulfilled – Grace in spite of failure *Mk. 14.26-72; Mt. 26.30-75; Lk. 22.31-62, Jn. 18.15-27*

a. Don't miss the beauty here –surety and grace before and during man's sin.

b. Important foreshadowing – Peter falls asleep while on watch. *Mt. 26.36-40*

c. Luther said, "Sin boldly!"

1. What did he mean, anyway?

2. Admit and confess publically

d. André – “That’s something we like about you; you’re just a normal guy.”

7. Peter’s reinstatement – Grace in forgiveness and commission *Jn. 21.2-20*

a. Jesus asking three times is redeeming each denial, NOT rubbing Peter’s nose in it, but thoroughly cleansing not just the sin, but the man.

b. Grace is that each and every one of our sins is seen and covered.

c. Reinstatement = put back in place or restore to effective state; affirm/validate

1. When did Peter stop being a disciple? How do we know?

2. Who chose? What effect did it have?

d. Connection: Follow me in Mk. 1.17 same as Jn. 21.19.

8. Peter’s ministry – Grace in power and persecution

a. Acts 1.14-15 – unity of body & Peter’s leadership

Acts 2.14-41 – Peter preaches with great boldness & 3,000 people believe

Acts 2.42-10 – signs, wonders, unity, glad/generous hearts, more are saved

Acts 3.1-10 – Peter heals lame man at temple & crowds praise God

Acts 4.1-12 – Peter and John arrested then preach to elders and scribes

Acts 5.14-16 – more than ever were coming to faith; all brought are healed

Acts 5.40-42 – threatened, beaten, and rejoiced at worthy of suffering

b. Making disciples ...

c. Making it real...

d. Making it more...

9. Closing thoughts: as disciplers, we are receiving more grace. Why?

a. By knowing God more fully. How to glorify Him with joy and thanksgiving as we go through affirming times and also what we see as defeats.

b. By growing ourselves as God's field. Witness God's gift and are sign to others.

c. By sharing the live, faith, hope, and love with others as we remind them day after day to "Follow Him." Our experience and understanding of grace increases; it multiplies as it's given away and in this manner fulfills the love of a perfect God to His people here today.

Run, man, run, the law commands,
But gives neither feet nor hands.
Better news the gospel brings;
It bids one fly and gives us wings.
-attributed to John Bunyan

Additional reading

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995)

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together* (New York: Harper Row, 1954)

Thomas S. Kepler, Martin Luther und William Hazlitt. *The Table Talk of Martin Luther* (New York: World Publishing Co., 2005)

Philip Yancy. *What's so Amazing about Grace?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997)

Jerry Bridges. *The Discipline of Grace* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994)

Eric Metaxes. *Bonhoeffer* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2010)

John Piper. *Future Grace* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 1995)

And also a tribute and testimony to the lives and witness of many faithful, colorful, and dear east German friends and partners who have much to teach us in the ministry of grace.