

## Grace Is The Safe Place

### Points to Ponder:

1. Religion always assess the rules to determine spirituality. But, Christianity always measures the heart in relationship to the Holy Spirit.
2. Religion is rules based - how well you behave. Christianity is relational based - how well you hear the Holy Spirit and obey the Word.
3. The only way a relational based community works is through grace.
4. Modern church has become an unsafe place to be 'real' about your humanity. Church has become about people faking their humanity to appear more holy.
5. The power of Christianity is that grace meets our humanity to make us into the masterpiece of being perfected in Christ Jesus.

### Read Ephesians 2 (The entire chapter is written to believers)

1. God wants to point to the church (which is made up of born again humans) in all future ages as an example of His grace and kindness shown toward us in Christ Jesus. **vs. 7**

**God is not shocked by your humanity. It's why He offered grace through Jesus. He knew you were human.**

**Why do you think people struggle with God being mad at them? If the above verse says He is kind to me through grace, then why do many see God as always being mad?**

2. God has called you His masterpiece. **vs. 10**

**What does it mean to you that God calls you His masterpiece?**

**How can God call a failing human - with all of our shortcomings - His masterpiece?**

3. The Jews looked down their noses at the Gentiles. They were two diversely opposed groups of people. The Jews were proud of their own spirituality, while belittling the Gentile's level of religious behavior. **vs. 11 - 18**

**The Jews had their religious system perfected, yet it never affected their hearts. How is it possible to be so religious acting, and yet have the heart unchanged?**

**Religion always erects a wall where behavior is concerned. Christianity always releases grace where behavior is concerned. Why do you think this is so?**

**A wall corrects and punishes behavior but does nothing about the condition of the heart. Grace, however, corrects the behavior by changing the heart. How does grace change a heart?**

## **HOW TO ALLOW GRACE TO BE THE SAFE PLACE**

*If church is to be a place where we can be real with our humanity, then we must offer grace. Without grace we all have to pretend to be perfect.*

### **1. Don't fear grace.**

Grace isn't granting permission to people to behave ungodly. Grace is a person - JESUS CHRIST, not a permission slip. When you offer grace to someone you are proclaiming that change is possible because of Jesus. Often times, people view grace as 'overlooking' a behavior. Grace changes behavior. (Read Titus 2:12) *Graces teaches us to say NO to ungodly behavior.*

**Describe the difference between these thoughts - Grace is a person vs. Grace is a permission slip.**

### **2. Focus on the masterpiece, not the mess.**

God calls us His masterpiece. We are God's handiwork. At the same time, however, every believer is also a human. We all have our humanity involved with our faith. God deals with this by giving every believer grace. We are a masterpiece in process. In every believers life there will be times where our humanity may look messy. This is why it's so important to stay connected to Jesus Christ, His Word, and His Spirit. The Word and the Spirit can turn messy humanity into a masterpiece.

**Why is it so easy to focus on the mess in other people's lives rather than the masterpiece?**

**Do you find yourself wanting to 'paint' other people's lives - rather than letting Jesus do so? Why?**

**When you first encounter a failure in another believer do you think MESS or MASTERPIECE first? Why?**

**In your own life - do you focus more on your MESS or the fact that Jesus can make it a MASTERPIECE? Why?**

### **3. If you are considered a masterpiece by God then you have great worth.**

Your humanity doesn't scare God. Your humanity doesn't make you worthless. Your humanity makes you priceless. How can a failing human be valuable to God? Because His power is bigger than your failure.

**Do you struggle with feeling worthy - struggling to feel loved by God? Why?**

**How is it possible for God to see our mess and still call us a masterpiece?**

**Do you think you are more of a mess or masterpiece?**

**Do you act like a mess or a masterpiece?**