



The  
**FLOW**  
Adult CURRICULUM

#29

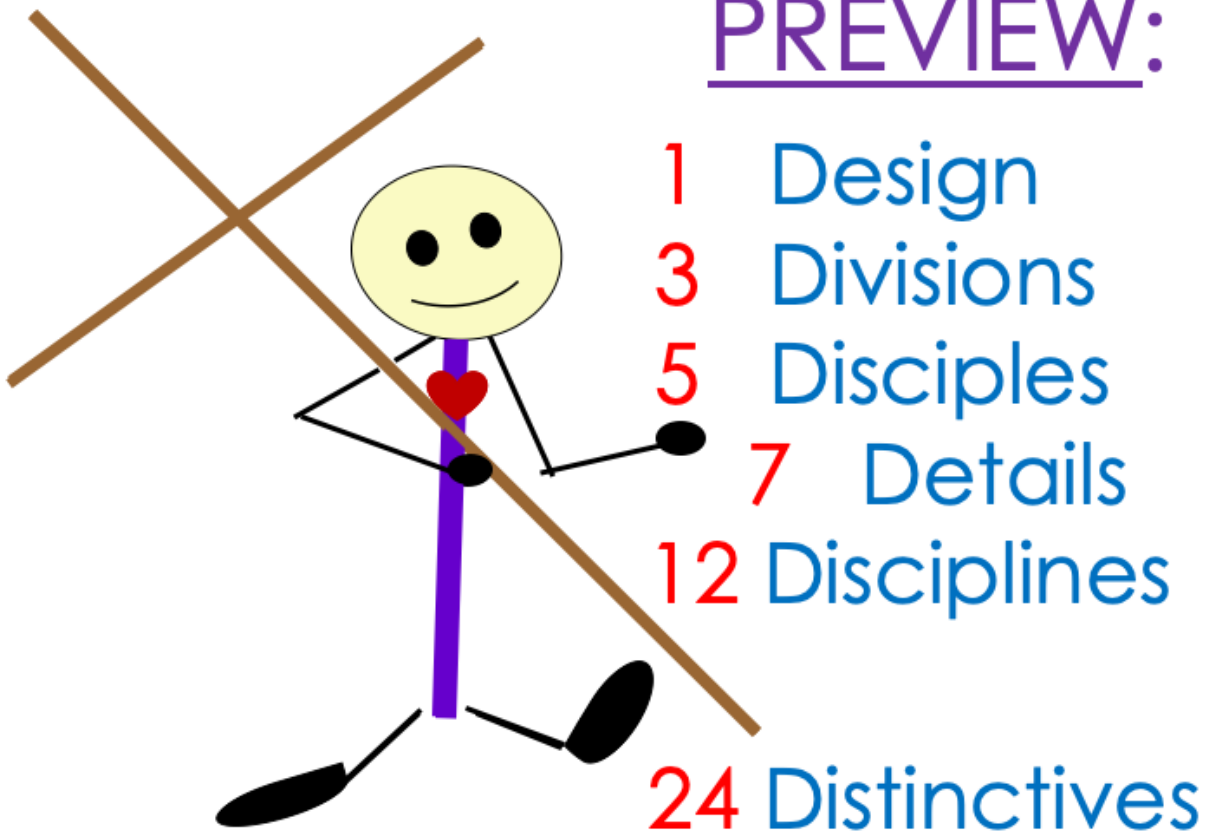
Responding To Grace

Matthew 28:16-20

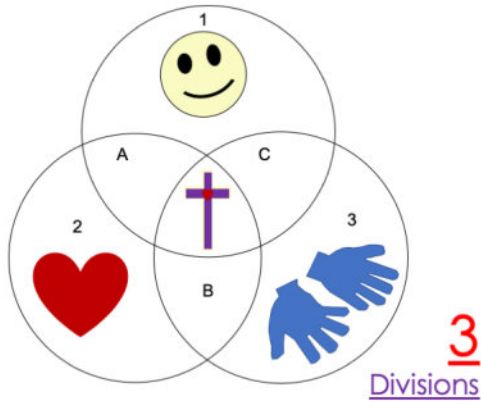
(Come And See Christianity book pages 84-92)

# The FLOW

## PREVIEW:

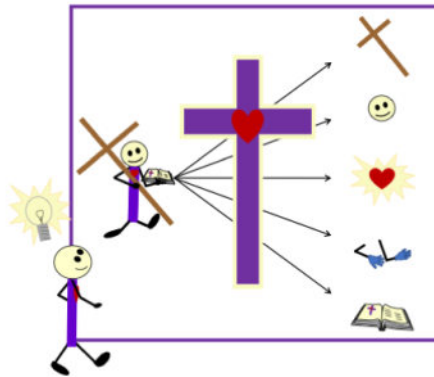


SECTION SIX: 12 Disciplines



**The Disciple's "Hands"** put into **action** the **truth** & **love** of God's Word, God's will, & God's ways. In short, when **each Christian's Head, Heart, & Hands** are united in purpose & power, the family of God is **living** as the **Body of Christ!**

## 24 Family Distinctives:



## **24 DISTINCTIVES:**

The “distinctives” are a family portrait... When you add God's Word, God's Spirit, God's Truth, God's love, and God's people all together, the distinctives are what **we look, love, & live like :-)**

# We are...



INTRO:

As we begin to **see the beautiful, biblical portrait of Christ's faith-filled family** defined and described by God's Word, will, and ways, it is critical to remember that the Holy Bible is to ALWAYS BE our ultimate source, authority, and interpreter in ALL things pertaining to one's understanding of reality and application of truth in love.

**Remember,**  
**The biblical Church is Christ's missional family...**  
**Moreover, God's Word reveals our Father's will and His family's ways.**

### **[2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)**

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Here are ***24 defining & describing HANDS-on DISTINCTIVES of Christianity:***

True Christians are biblically, miraculously, intentionally, missionally, and imperfectly...

1. *Responding to grace*
2. *Repenting of sin*
3. *Trusting the Bible*
4. *Obeying God's Word*
5. *Growing in Christ*
6. *Living Spirit-led*
7. *Praying for guidance*
8. *Following by faith*
9. *Dying to self*
10. *Carrying our cross*
11. *BE-ing The Church*
12. *Loving one another (truly loving one another)*
13. *Equipping the saints*
14. *Exemplifying supernatural unity*
15. *Ministering as ambassadors*
16. *Discerning matters shrewdly*
17. *Worshipping God vertically*
18. *Experiencing Him horizontally*
19. *Proclaiming the Gospel (no matter what)*
20. *Fishing for men*
21. *Making disciplined warriors*
22. *Winning spiritual warfare*
23. *Loving our King*
24. *Serving His kingdom*

PRAYER:

LORD, we seek to bless You with all that is within us. Help us here, we pray, to be that blessing as we come to better understand You and Your eternal truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Help us to see with Your eyes and love with Your love, all that You would reveal to us through Your Word, Your will, and Your ways. May we grow in our grasp of Your realities, Your means of restoration, and Your mission of reproduction. In the holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen and Amen

## CONTEXT:

### Macro

**This lesson marks another major transition point** in our curriculum's eye-opening explanation of Christianity. By way of review, we began in Section One with the reality of Almighty God having 1 Divine DESIGN (also known as a biblical worldview and the eternal application of Jesus Christ's Gospel). In Section Two, we addressed the 3 DIVISIONS (Head, Heart, and Hands) that make up the "being" in every human being. Next, in Section Three, we demonstrated how Christianity accounts for, defines, and describes all of humanity, every person, past, present, and future. We noted that all people can be identified as one of the 5 DISCIPLES – Lost, Lover, Learner, Leader, or Lifer. Moving forward, Section Four revealed, engaged, and explained the 7 fundamental DETAILS of God's Divine DESIGN... because **we all need to know what we need to know**. To be more specific, those seven truths are: The Foundations, The Framework, The Facts, The Fight, The Faith, The Family, and the truth about Forever.

Then, in Section Five, which we just completed, our focus shifted from HEAD based truths to 12 HEART shaping exercises or disciplines - each having the potential to strengthen one's personal relationship with Christ, His Church, and their collective mission: bringing God glory by finding & growing more glorifiers.

We used the acronym **J.E.S.U.S.'S. P. S.W.O.R.D.** to outline and harmonize a biblical, missional, and intentional methodology for growing in God's love - & His loving witness. The 12 HEART DISCIPLINES are: **J**ournaling... **E**ating-nothing (fasting)... **S**cripture-intake... **U**nderstudy of Scripture... **S**tewardship... **S**olitude... **P**rayer... **S**erving... **W**orshipping... **O**utreach... **R**elationships... and **D**evelopment.

Now, our curriculum and study will transition to The HANDS. This is where **Christians demonstrate to the world that Christ is in their worship & witness**. Whereas our time spent in the HEAD sections (1-4) focused on the truths that Christians need and seek to LEARN, and our concentration on the 12 HEART DISCIPLINES of section 5 helped us to grow in God's LOVE, our sixth and final section will **walk through the 24 DISTINCTIVES, which explain & exemplify how Christians are to faithfully LIVE... and fully BE The Church... together** – all by God's grace & ALL for His glory!

God's Word puts it this way:

***"Let us not love with word and tongue but in action and truth."*** – 1<sup>st</sup> John 3:18

*And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, **47**praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. – Acts 2:46-47*

## I. **DISTINCTIVES are FRUIT:**

It is important to realize that God’s miraculous and authentic **Christian DISTINCTIVES are the FRUIT of saving grace and faith** (Ephesians 2:1-10). As Jesus described in John 15, people can do nothing outside of their abiding in Him and obeying His Word, will and ways. In short, there will be no fruit unless one remains attached to and provided for by the true Vine and divine Root. With that said, a cautionary note is worth sharing here, beware the counterfeits that abound around the world. ***Plastic fruit is deceptive vs. DISTINCTIVE!***

### Galatians 5:22-25

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

## II. **DISTINCTIVES are FAMILY:**



DISTINCTIVES, by definition, are those “distinguishing characteristics that are notable for having a special quality, style, and/or attractiveness” (Dictionary.com).

When it comes to God’s family, the true Church, each Christian and their individualistic DISTINCTIVES are as unique as their potential. At the same time, in the same way that a billion unique snowflakes can be combined to make a single snowstorm, or countless swatches of scrap fabric can be sewn together to make a single quilt, so it is with God’s family. The LORD creates His Christian family with a both/and combination of DISTINCTIVE uniqueness, as well as DISTINCTIVE love and defining unity.

**Christianity’s DISTINCT family (ecclesia) has a DISTINCTIVE unity (koinonia).**

*“By this all people will know that you are My disciple, if you have love for one another.”*  
– John 13:35



*“The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us.”*

*- Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

### III. **DISTINCTIVES are WITNESS:**

The most biblical and healthy understandings of Christianity will include an embrace of two overarching and DISTINCTIVE purposes. Namely, per God’s Word, will, and ways, every Christian has received miraculous, saving grace, as well as the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to:

1. Bring glory to God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,  
**do all to the glory of God.***

2. BE Christ’s witness.

Acts 1:8

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, **and you will be My witnesses** in Jerusalem (locally), and in all Judea and Samaria (regionally), and to the end of the earth (globally).”*

**God’s DISTINCTIVE people have been filled with His Holy Spirit for the express purpose of living DISTINCTIVE lives.** When the world sees the LORD’s loving family living out their divinely empowered and God-honoring worship, work, and warfare, the resulting fruit will serve as a faithful witness, built with supernatural, grace-based, and missional DISTINCTIVES.

*“God created me—and you—to live with a single, all-embracing, all-transforming passion—namely, a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life.”*

*- John Piper*

## The Christian Distinctive

What distinguishes Christianity from all other religions is that it is a *revealed* religion. Christianity is not about our search for God or our means of finding him. Christianity is not a religion that works its way upward. It is all about God coming to us — God in grace making himself known to us and making a way for us to enjoy fellowship with him.

And so, at the very heart of Christianity is, simply, a message — a message from God to us about what he has done to bring us to himself.

If Christianity is distinctively revealed religion, then it is also uniquely *authoritative*. It does not offer itself as the best and highest of human thinking about God or even the best or most successful of human efforts to know God. It professes to be nothing less than the unique word from God, his very own self-disclosure and the record of the actions he has taken in Jesus Christ to bring us into fellowship with himself.

One of Rudyard Kipling's characters declares, "The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone; He don't obey no orders unless they is his own." That is to say, human religions lack authority — they form their own ideas and "discover" their own beliefs.

By contrast the Christian is "under orders," because unlike human religions, Christianity is a revealed religion — divinely revealed. We Christians are not our own touchstone of truth, and we do not confuse our ideas about God with His own self-revelation. We learn truth about God not from "inner lights" within ourselves but from God's own objective Word.

And apart from this external authority, there is no Christianity. This, at bottom, is Christianity's leading distinctive.

And so, we **Christians, prize Scripture as God's Word. We joyfully submit to it. And we enthusiastically proclaim its message of grace in Jesus Christ to the world.**

- Dr. Fred Zaspel

Micro

***“Responding to grace” is how all received blessings begin.***

*“We do not have the ability in ourselves to accomplish the least of God’s tasks. This is the law of grace.”*

*- Puritan John Owen*

With that said, as we get our first glimpse at our curriculum’s portrait of God’s collective people, dissected into 24 DISTINCT perspectives, let us chew on all three words in this lesson’s description. First, “RESPONDING” is a word that is pregnant with potential. At the same time, by definition, **RESPONDING requires relationship...** The implication is that there is a causal agent and an impacted entity. The results of any dynamic relationship, to some extent, can be seen and measured in the RESPONDING of those acted upon. In short, ***TRUE Christian living is the proof of radically transformed people who have biblically RESPONDED to Christ & His Gospel of GRACE.***

The second word in our lesson’s title is also critical and needs to be righteously applied and personally understood. In this case, the two letter word “TO” connects human responsibility (RESPONDING) “TO” God’s sovereign “GRACE.” **Christianity requires connection!**

Ironically, the “†” in TO is visually symbolic of the cross in Christianity.

Closing out, the final word in our title is “GRACE.” Like “love,” GRACE is a term that is hard to fully get our Head, Heart, and Hands around. Think about it... While we can quickly and accurately define biblical GRACE as God’s unmerited favor, ***none of us will ever be able to define the depths, scope, or unique qualities of God’s favor.*** There is so much more to the eternal and loving truth of God’s GRACE than we will ever completely comprehend...

**God’s GRACE is an immeasurable & unfathomable force!**

Message

*“Life is wasted if we do not grasp the glory of the cross, cherish it for the treasure that it is, and cleave to it as the highest price of every pleasure and the deepest comfort in every pain. What was once foolishness to us—a crucified God—must become our wisdom and our power and our only boast in this world.”*

*- John Piper*

BIG IDEA: **Every example and/or experience of Christianity's good news is a byproduct and gift of God's loving GRACE.**

PREVIEW:

1. RESPONDING
2. TO
3. GRACE

TEXT:

**Matthew 28:16-20**

*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

**1. RESPONDING**

**Matthew 28:16-17**

*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.*

Illustration:

*"God created me—and you—to live with a single, all-embracing, all-transforming passion—namely, a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life."*

*- John Piper*

Explanation:

**There is no Christianity without humans RESPONDING to Christ.**

In our text, we see three responses which are symbolic of a much larger picture. Namely, first, ***God honoring disciples RESPOND with faithful obedience, following Christ's commands and instruction...*** Next, within the context of missional submitting, we see the professing believers worshipping The LORD as soon as they see Him. Note that their response is described as instinctive, intentional, and without prodding. By contrast, the third group of people in the crowd were RESPONDING with doubt... Do not ever forget the lesson of Genesis 3 and the serpent's deceptive, divisive, and destructive ways. Doubt, like pride, ignites and then fuels many of sin's fiercest fires.

**Where and when doubt is winning... the Devil is working!**

The important principle to take away here is simply this, never doubt or stop RESPONDING to the fact, per the Bible's emphatic declaration and demonstration, that ***if something is good, it comes from God and His grace.***

This truth pertains to all good things past, present, and future... all good things that inform, inspect, and inspire... all good things that bless our Head, Heart, and Hands... all good things that people RESPOND to locally, regionally, and globally. In short, **humans must never stop RESPONDING to the fact that we cannot create "good" without God's grace.** We will never stumble upon "good" – it always comes from God's grace. Every aspect of a Christian's "good" reality, to include our awareness of sin, confession of sin, repentance of sin, forgiveness from sin, faith in Christ's Gospel, following Christ's lead, embracing God's Word, will, and ways... plus the passion to BE God's faith family... they ALL become the Christian's good reality, only and always, in the process of our RESPONDING To Grace. Amen and AMEN

Application:

*"A man can no more take in a supply of grace for the future than he can eat enough today to last him for the next 6 months, nor can he inhale sufficient air into his lungs with one breath to sustain life for a week to come.*

*We are permitted to draw upon God's store of grace from day to day as we need it."*

*- Dwight L. Moody*

*“Some days we may be more acutely conscious of our sinfulness and hence more aware of our need of His grace, but there is never a day when we can stand before Him on our own two feet of performance, when we are worthy enough to deserve His blessing.”*

*– Jerry Bridges*

*“Nothing can be more cruel than the tenderness that consigns another to his sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe rebuke that calls a brother back from the path of sin.”*

*– Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

## 2. TO

### Matthew 28:18

*And Jesus came and said to them,*

*“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

Illustration:

*“All the grace contained in [the Bible] is owing to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior; and, unless we consent to Him as our Lord, we cannot expect any benefit by Him as our Savior.”*

*– Matthew Henry*

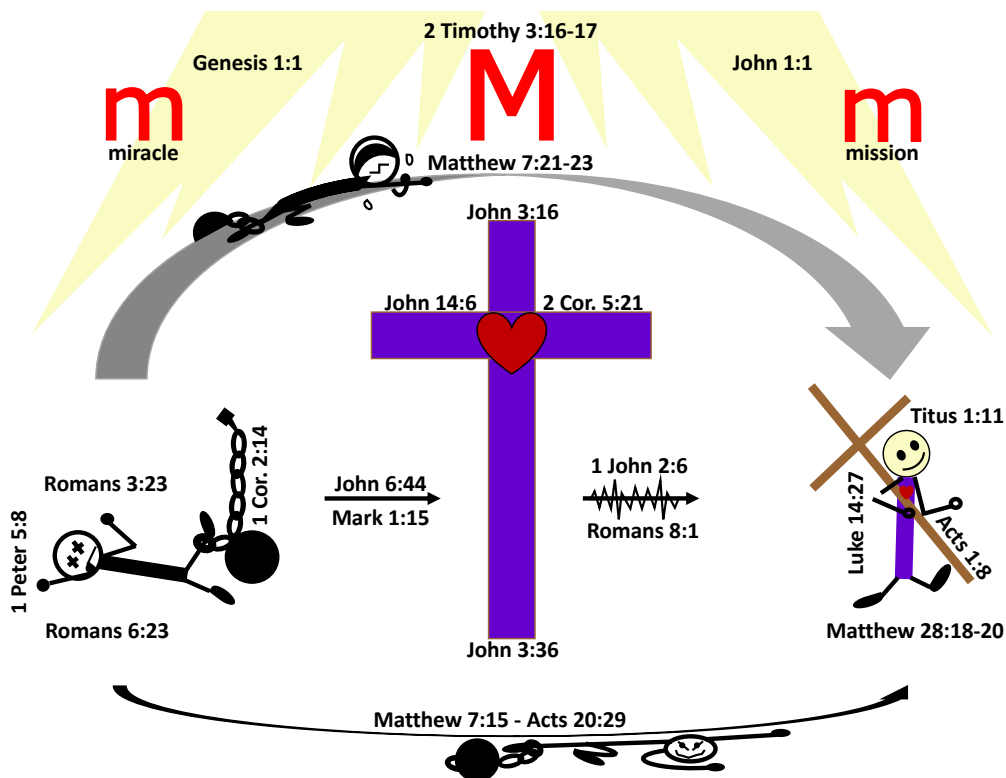
Explanation:

At the risk of overstating the obvious, let us be clear. Christ is in the defining core of every Christian. Literally, the term “Christian” means “Christ’s one.” Moreover, Christ is the Root and root-word in Christianity. Thus, **Christ and Christ alone connects Christians to Christianity.** It is Jesus The Christ to whom we RESPOND. And again, it is Jesus The Christ who dispenses divine GRACE.

The weight and essential takeaway from these somewhat obvious truths is centered in the following facts... Take to heart both, our eternal need for RESPONDING, and the eternal GRACES that come, to Christ's faith-family.

- Only the biblical Christ should be RESPONDED to biblically.
- Only the biblical Christ has "all authority in heaven and on earth."
- Only the biblical Christ has the power to dispense biblical GRACE.
- Only the biblical Christ and His GRACE anchor the biblical Gospel.
- Only the biblical Christ, Grace, and Gospel can biblically save souls.
- Only the biblical Christ, Grace, and Gospel sanctify souls biblically.
- Only the biblical Christ, Grace, and Gospel empower lives biblically.
- Only the biblical Christ, Grace, and Gospel can transform biblically.
- Only the biblical Christ, Grace, and Gospel will overcome biblically.
- Only the biblical Christ, Grace, and Gospel bring VICTORY biblically.

The "TO" in between our curriculum's "RESPONDING" and "GRACE" points to and connects everything to Christ and His cross. Most importantly, the "TO" attaches to the Christ of Matthew 28:18... The Christ of John 1:1 ("In the beginning was the Word and Word was with God and the Word was God.")... and John 14:6 ("I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"). To understand the purpose and power of this "TO" is to understand the universal and ongoing need that every human being has for The Gospel of Jesus Christ - today and every day!



Application:

*“Certainly, we should be very active in seeking God, & Jesus himself called us to ‘ask, seek, knock’ in order to find him. Yet those who enter a relationship with God inevitably look back and recognize that God’s grace had sought them out, breaking them open to new realities.”*  
– Tim Keller

### 3. GRACE

Matthew 28:19-20

*19Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Illustration:

*“Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times.”*  
– Martin Luther

*“Grace is but glory begun, and glory is but grace perfected.”*  
– Jonathan Edwards

Explanation:

God and His Word have defined and described divine GRACE in so many ways... As noted above, **the One constant component that is always at the center and core of every experienced GRACE is the purposes, presence, power, and purity of Christ.**



Now we are also introduced to the GRACE that is shared through faithful obedience, Christ-like service, biblical discipleship, courageous commitments (i.e. global missionary work; uncompromising teaching; bold baptizing; etc.). Herein, our text once again begins to open the bouquet of GRACE and invite us in to smell of its distinct and dividing aroma!

### 2 Corinthians 2:14-17

*14*But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. *15*For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, *16*to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? *17*For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

While a study of biblical GRACE could fill a thousand lifetimes, in this lesson, as the opening to 24 Christian DISTINCTIVES, let us see and hope to appreciate the all-encompassing umbrella of God's GRACE that is here laid out. Note the unmerited favor that is defined and described by:

1. One's adoption into the family of God as a disciple of Jesus Christ...
2. One's having been set-apart, Spirit-filled, & sent-out to serve Christ
3. One's own Knowing, Growing, & Going as an ambassador for Christ
4. One's blessing in helping others to love, come to, & grow in Christ...
5. One's eternal, blood-bought, & intimate relationship to Jesus Christ

Think about the GRACE in (and how we should RESPOND to) the mind blowing truth in love declared, promised, and guaranteed in Matthew 28:20... ***"And I (Jesus Christ) will be WITH YOU ALWAYS, even to the end of the age."*** When one couples those loving, merciful, and miraculous words with the truths of **Romans 5:8** (*"For while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."*) and **Hebrews 12:2** (*"For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross."*) and the most well known verse in the Bible, **John 3:16** (*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but will have everlasting life."*), biblical GRACE begins to inform, inspect, and inspire the family of God. **GRACE is Christianity's #1 defining family trait!**

*"How wonderful to know that Christianity is more than a padded pew or a dim cathedral, but that it is a real, living, daily experience which goes on from grace to grace."*

**- Jim Elliot**

Application:

In a time and global context when AI (artificial intelligence), countless counterfeit scams, and all kinds of complex identity theft are spreading like wildfire around the world, the biblical call for Christian authenticity, accuracy, and missional fighting against sinful apathy are needed more than ever. In other words, Christianity's RESPONDING TO and championing of God's amazing GRACE is needed to combat the devilish corruptions that continue to plague our planet.

*"Abounding sin is the terror of the world,  
but abounding grace is the hope of mankind."*

*- A. W. Tozer*

**It's time for God's family to RESPOND TO His GRACE and BE His Church!**

*"When I consider the cross of Christ,  
how can anything that I do be called a sacrifice?"*

*- Amy Carmichael*

CLOSE:

*"But whatever you do, find the God-centered, Christ-exalting,  
Bible-saturated passion of your life, and find your way to  
say it and live for it and die for it. And you will make a  
difference that lasts. You will not waste your life."*

*- John Piper*

**For What?**

*"Grace can neither be bought, earned, or won by the creature.  
If it could be, it would cease to be grace."*

*- A. W. Pink*

*"I wrote a book on grace, and grace is a free gift, but to receive the gift you have to have your hands open. And a lot of people don't have their hands open, there's something they're grasping because there's a lot of things to grasp in a prosperous country."*

*- Philip Yancey*

*"Circumstances may appear to wreck our lives and God's plans, but God is not helpless among the ruins. God's love is still working. He comes in and takes the calamity and uses it victoriously, working out His wonderful plan of love."*

*- Eric Liddell*

## **So What?**

*"You get one pass at life. That's all. Only one. And the lasting measure of that life is Jesus Christ."*

*- John Piper*

*"The way we live ought to manifest the truth of what we believe. A messy life speaks of a messy and incoherent faith."*

*- Elisabeth Elliot*

*"God's love is felt the most when you realize the gravity of your sins."*

*- Janneker Lawrence Daniel*

*"If Noah waited for signs of rain to build an ark, he would have been swept away by the flood."*

*- Matshona Dhliwayo*

*"I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."*

*- Bobby Henderson*

## Now What?

*"If you believe in a God who controls the big things, you have to believe in a God who controls the little things. It is we, of course, to whom things look 'little' or 'big.'"*

*- Elisabeth Elliot*

*"We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations."*

*- Chuck Swindoll*

*"When we received forgiveness instead of judgment, we, too, were made ready to forgive the brethren. What God did to us, we then owed to others."*

*- Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

*"Christians are like manure: spread them out & they help everything grow better, but keep them in one big pile & they stink horribly."*

*- Francis Chan*

## PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, thank You so much for the Truth and Love of Your Word, will, and ways. Please help us to absorb and apply ALL that You have shared and commanded in the Bible. May our heads be infilled with Your defining Scriptures, for the express purpose of informing, inspecting, and inspiring our sanctified hearts and serving hands.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen and Amen

Support Sermon:

*"Becoming The Work Of God"*

Matthew 28:16-28

January 6, 2013

Sermon Series: BE-coming (The Work of God)