

BEING GRACIOUS TO OTHERS



In this teaching I will be looking at the importance of being gracious in the way that we relate to and speak to others

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”

(Colossians 4:6)



In the gospel of Luke we see that Jesus was gracious in the way that He spoke to others

“So all bore witness to Him, and marvelled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?” (Luke 4:22)



- **We are now living in those times when:
Jesus said “ ... the love of many will grow cold.” (Matthew 24:12) and**

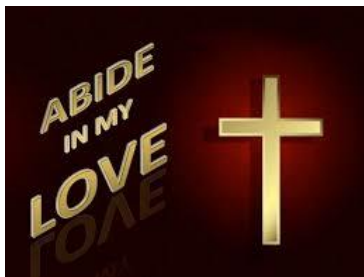
Where the Apostle Paul wrote that people would be, “unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good,” (2 Timothy 3:3)

- **As Christians we now have a great opportunity to shine in this world with our genuine love for others as we share the good news of the gospel**



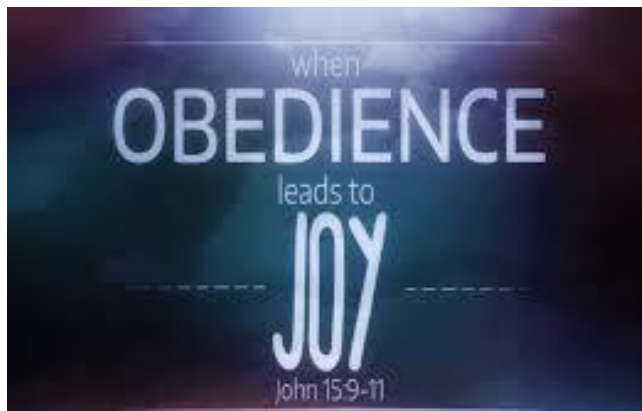
Jesus clearly emphasised the importance of loving others when He said,

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that your joy may be full.*” (John 15:9-11)

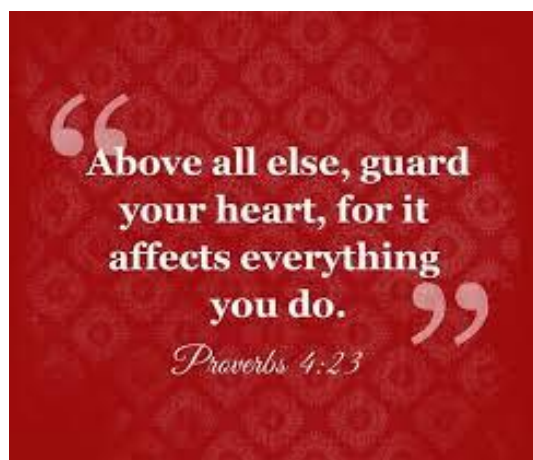


“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.** You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” **(John 15:12-14)**

It pleases the heart of God when He sees us genuinely loving and caring for one another



- We must however be careful to guard our hearts at all times and to not allow the influences of the world around us to negatively influence our mindsets and heart attitudes and our love for others – As Christians we are to be in the world but not of it



We need to be gracious in the way that we:

- Speak to others (We need to speak words of life)
- Relate to others (We need to always respect others)
- Handle disappointments and temporary set backs in life (We must not make others pay for our own disappointments in life – Hurt people so often hurt people), and
- Handle conflict in our lives (Conflict is a part of life as we live in an imperfect world) – We need to always aim for a win-win solution when we have conflicts so that all parties involved are happy with the outcome



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.

Therefore

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” **(Romans 12:17-21)**



- **Meditating on the Word of God helps us to develop Kingdom thinking.** There are many scriptures in the bible that can help us to become more gracious in the way that we relate to others.

I will now look at three such passages of scripture written by the Apostle Paul, “But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,” (2 Timothy 2:23-25)



“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails ...” **(1 Corinthians 13:4-8)**

AND



“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.” **(Colossians 3:12-14)**



- It is so important that we grow and mature in our walk with the Lord, so that we become more Christ-like over time as we learn to walk in the Spirit more and more. (That we seek to become mature disciples of Christ)

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“But the fruit of the Spirit is *love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.* Against such there is no law.” **(Galatians 5:22-23)**



- We all want to have friends in our life who genuinely love us and who are kind towards us

- The way that we live our life and care for people will have the greatest impact on others

Jesus Himself said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

(John 13:34-35)



- People do not care about how much we know, but they do want to know how much we care

The Apostle Paul wrote, "...Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." **(1 Corinthians 8:1)**

Being gracious to others helps to:

- Create healthy loving relationships
- See our church meetings become even more embracing and inviting to others as they experience God's love in our meetings
- Make us truly salt and light in this world so that others are drawn to Christ through our lives, and
- Helps us to experience God's grace in our own lives in a greater and more tangible way



- This message was birthed as I saw people outside a local pub having a genuine interest in the lives of others but really missing out on God's best

- **People need to feel loved and ACCEPTED**



- I then began to think how much more that God has planned for people who are lost in the world
- That if they could connect with God's plan for their life they would experience a whole new level of living - Life and life more abundantly

- However God's plan for our lives is always outworked in connection with other believers as we become part of a church family

In the book of Hebrews we read,

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)**



- I then began to think that if we can consistently create an environment of genuine love and acceptance in all of our meetings and reach out to the lost and hurting in our streets with God's love, it will only be a matter of time before the lost in our community begin to:



i) Connect to Christ in a greater way

ii) Connect to the life of our or another church, and

iii) Then connect with God's best plan for their life

There is no greater life than the Christian walk,
even though we will all go through many trials and
tests for our faith

- There is now little genuine love in the world
- We now see a lot of lonely and isolated people in the world. We were all made to have fellowship with God and with others



- Many people are now caught up with their own problems and with a pursuit of material things
- We now see little tolerance or grace on our roads
- The world is seeking genuine love in many ways as we see violence escalating all around the world



- As Christians we have the ability to love others
UNCONDITIONALLY



- Those in the world and even religious people desiring to do good, do not have the ability to love others with the agape love of Christ as we do as believers. Jesus even asked us to love our enemies which is possible because God's love has been poured out in our heart by the Holy Spirit. Only Christians can love *unconditionally*

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

(Romans 5:5)



- The Apostle Paul said in relation to the last days that there would be many forms of religion having a form of godliness but denying the power that Christ gives us to change as believers and to love others UNCONDITIONALLY
- Only Christ can give us the ability to continually love others unconditionally including those who hurt us and let us down



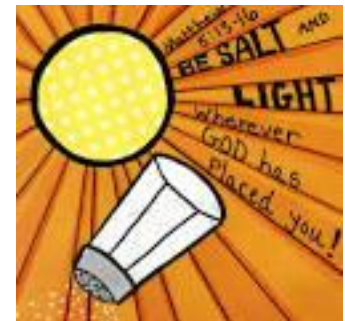
The Apostle Paul wrote,

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” **(2 Timothy 3:1-5)**



- As Christians, given the state of the world that we are now living in, we can truly be the salt and the light of the world with our gracious living and genuine love for all others

Jesus Himself said, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” **(Matthew 5:13)**



“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” **(Matthew 5:16)**

- **WE NEED TO ALSO LEARN TO BE GRACIOUS TO OTHERS EVEN WHEN WE ARE GOING THROUGH OUR OWN PERSONAL STRUGGLES.**
- It is easy to be pleasant to others when everything is going well in our life. As a good friend of mine said, “It is easy to be a fair weather Christian.”
- We need to learn to continually rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15) even during our own winter seasons



- So how can we become more gracious towards others so that we can encourage those in our world in a greater way and help to create a better environment where we live and work. How can we help to see our church fellowship becoming even more loving.



- I will now finish by quickly looking at 8 lifestyle choices and spiritual disciplines that can help us to become more gracious to others

1) We need to spend quality time with the Lord to gain His love for people. Worship helps us to connect with the heart of God

- The more we make time to have intimate fellowship with the Lord, the more we gain God's heart for people



King David wrote,

“Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.”

(Psalm 37:4)

- It is only as we spend quality time on a regular basis with the Lord that we grow in Christ-like character. We need to maintain an ongoing abiding relationship with the Lord and to not allow the things of this world to distract us from having fellowship with Him

Jesus Himself said,

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” **(John 15:4-5)**



2) We need to always look for the best in others and be thankful for the people that God has brought into our lives and *appreciate the differences in others* - God has uniquely created all of us



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” (Philippians 2:3)

The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another.” (Romans 12:10)



- We must never take for granted those that God has brought into our life, but appreciate their input into our lives
- With an attitude of gratitude we will be more gracious in the way that we relate to others

3) We must stop focusing always on the faults of others and let the Lord change US

- We must not be continually looking for the faults in others but let God do the work of change in us

The Apostle Paul wrote, “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;” (Philippians 2:12)



- God has enough work to do in our own lives for us to keep examining the faults of others
- Fault finding will only undermine the atmosphere in our homes and churches and negatively affect our relationships with others

- The Devil will always exaggerate the faults of OTHERS
- We need to be quick to take every wrong and critical thought captive and to replace them with right thoughts about others.



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

(2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

- If we are not quick to reject the wrong thoughts that the enemy puts on our mind about others, it is possible even as believers to become very ungracious in the way that we relate to others

The Apostle Paul emphasised this when he wrote, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” (Galatians 5:14-15)

We must simply refuse to be critical and judgemental of others and realise that we all need God’s grace



This is why Jesus Himself said,

“Judge not, that you be not judged.
For with what judgment you judge,
you will be judged; and with the



measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” **(Matthew 7:1-5)**

4) We need to learn to sacrificially give of ourselves and to be more others focused - Jesus is our example - The spirit of the world will always try and get us *self* focused - A sure recipe for loneliness and depression



Jesus Himself said,

“Yet is shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” **(Matthew 20:25-28)**

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.” (1 Corinthians 14:12)

In the book of Acts we see the Apostle Paul’s great willingness to live for and to help others,

“Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by labouring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (Acts 20:34-35)



5) We need to look for opportunities to encourage those who are hurting and down on life

We need to purposely LOOK for opportunities to encourage others.

All of us need encouragement in life at times.

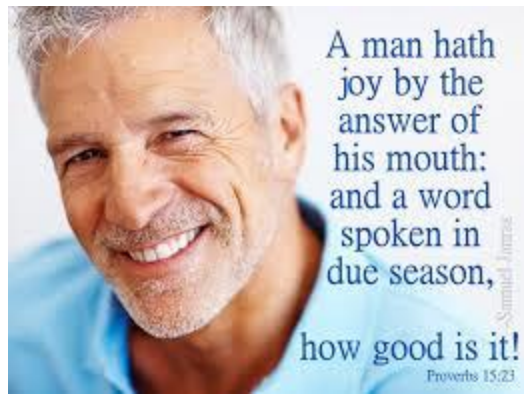
Words of encouragement:

- help people to feel loved and appreciated,
- give hope to people,
- lift the spirits of people, and
- give strength to people to persevere in life and in their walk with the Lord



In the book of Proverbs we read,

**“A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and
a word spoken in due season, how good it is!”
(Proverbs 15:23)**



**“Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.”
(Proverbs 16:24)**

6) We need to be always quick to forgive others because we ourselves will also make mistakes and even unintentionally hurt others at times because of our humanity



We must be quick to forgive others that hurt us.

We must not allow resentment to lodge in our hearts. In the book of Hebrews we read,

“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;” (Hebrews 12:14-15)

Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of quickly forgiving others when He said, “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25-26)

We must be simply *quick to forgive* all those who hurt us

Lord, How Many Times Should I Forgive My Brother?
70 x 7
Matthew 18:21-22



FORGIVENESS
doesn't excuse
their actions.
FORGIVENESS
stops their actions
from destroying
your heart.

7) We need to always remain humble and teachable in life so that people can speak into our life without us reacting and taking offence

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“Apply your heart to instruction, And your ears to words of knowledge.” (Proverbs 23:12)

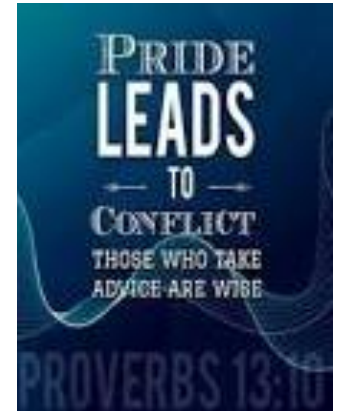
“Listen to counsel and receive instruction, That you may be wise in your latter days.” (Proverbs 19:20)



If we are unteachable and proud we will invariably react in a wrong way if people speak counsel and correction into our lives

**In the book of Proverbs we read,
“By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the
well-advised is wisdom.” (Proverbs 13:10)**

- We need to learn to graciously accept counsel and advise from others and be open to correction.
- The more humble we become, the more readily we are able to receive counsel and correction from others without reacting
- We need to be humble enough to be able to say at times I was wrong and I am sorry



8) Our significant friends need to be people who are gracious and kind towards others. We become like the company that we keep

In the book of Proverbs we read, “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.” (Proverbs 22:24-25)



We need to choose our friends wisely.

We need to associate with people that we want to become like (Good role models)

So in conclusion:

- If we can learn to remain gracious towards others, we will help to demonstrate God's love in the world around us and help to make a great impact in our world for eternity. My mum was a living example of a loving and gracious person who impacted the lives of many



- We all can make a great difference in our world, our church and in our family with our genuine unconditional gracious love for others