

### SMALL TALK

1. What unmerited gift has God graciously given you today?

### VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Exodus 34:6.** How do the events of Exodus 19-34 demonstrate the truth of God's revelation about his own character?
3. **READ Matthew 5:43-48.** What is the logic behind this radical love teaching of Jesus? What marks the difference between typical love and love coming from the "children of God"?
  - Be like God in love towards everyone. That is the mark of the Master. That is the mark of the disciple.
  - Love is the mark which, above all else, should distinguish those who know themselves to have been loved, forgiven, saved, and transformed by a loving God.
  - Because this love is unmerited, it is GRACE. And so we are like God to be GRACIOUS.
4. Is Matthew 5:48 possible or impossible? Explain your answer.
  - As God makes day follow night predictably because of his faithful character, blessing everyone, we are to be like him in character. Gracious Love is not sporadic, and limited, based on the deservedness of the other, but to be based on the developed

character made “mature”, “complete”, “perfect”, transformed by God’s love.

5. **READ Galatians 6:22-23.** What is God’s purpose for giving us the Holy Spirit? What is God’s purpose for giving us his character traits as fruit that comes from the Holy Spirit?
  - Why are we given the fruit of the Spirit? Is it primarily for OUR happiness? It makes us happy, yes, but that isn’t why he gave us the fruit! He fills us to overflowing.
  - We are blessed to be a blessing.

### GETTING PERSONAL

6. When you feel like your character is deficient, what do you do? (John 15:4-5,7; Matthew 7:7-8)

### PRACTICE!

In daily prayer, worshipfully express your gratitude to God for his love and grace. Verbally list the ways that come to mind. As you make it a developed habit to focus on what he has graciously given you, you will be filled to overflowing, and blessed to be a blessing to others.

February 20, 2022

## Character 3-Gracious

When we develop the habit of setting our minds on the goodness of God's character, we move beyond knowing something about God to experiencing his goodness to us in real experiences. We actually experience his goodness, not just know something about his attributes.

Making it a habit to fix your thoughts on God's goodness will change you. Using only the four character traits we are covering in this series, let me describe how this happens..

As we personally experience God as kind, we will become more kind like him. As we personally experience God as loving, we become more loving like him. As we personally experience God as gracious, we become more gracious like him. As we personally experience God as faithful, we become more faithful like him.

So, let's experience God's character this morning together. Today we bring our minds to focus on how God is GRACIOUS! Let's begin at a scene on Mt. Sinai.

*Exodus 34:6 (CSB) The Lord passed in front of him and proclaimed: The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth,*

We need to understand the context behind these words to experience the truth of them.

If Exodus 19-34 were a movie, today is like watching a short movie trailer with a little commentary. I want us to get a glimpse of what was happening on Mt. Sinai.

- **Moses ascends 7 times** to the top of Mt. Sinai to meet with God in **Exodus 19-34**. Moses acts as a mediator. But God breaks the pattern of priestly mediation in Chapter 20. He prepares the people for it with visual aids in chapter 19.
- In **Exodus 20** God reveals his power and glory **DIRECTLY** and communicates **DIRECTLY** with all the people to establish a Covenant with them.
- God's **AUDIO VISUAL AIDS** teach, test, and instruct, and make an indelible memory! **THUNDER, LIGHTNING, DENSE CLOUD, LOUD BLAST FROM A RAM'S HORN, SMOKE**, the Lord Came down with **FIRE**. They shuddered in **FEAR!** The **MOUNTAIN SHOOK** violently, **RAM's horn** grew louder and louder (19:16-19)
- Moses spoke to God, and God answered back **THUNDEROUSLY**. The people witness as their leader, God's prophet communicates with God directly, and God communicates his answer directly!
- Asked Moses to Mediate from that time forward.

**Exodus 20** God's **VOICE** declares the **10 commandments** verbally to all the people and **THEY** are terrified. These 10 statements are like the constitution defining and establishing their New Nation, more laws are coming beyond these 10..

- While the people stand at a distance outside the boundaries, Moses enters the darkness where God is, ascends Sinai again... to receive more. chapters 20-24.

**us 24:3** *Moses came and told the people all the commands of the Lord and all the ordinances. Then all the people responded with a single voice, “We will do everything that the Lord has commanded.”*

- **Then** that night Moses wrote the instructions down. He got up early and set up an earthen altar to lead them through a covenant ceremony. **24:4 COVENANT CEREMONY:**
  - Offered burnt sacrifices
  - Splattered ½ the blood on the altar (held back half in basins)
  - Moses READ the Covenant instructions aloud
  - The people respond, **“We will do and obey all the Lord has commanded” 24:7**

**Exodus 24:8 (CSB)** *Moses took the blood, splattered it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you concerning all these words.”*

- **24:18** *Moses ascends for more instructions Exodus (chapters 25-32)*

**Meanwhile back at basecamp 40 days later. Exodus 32:1 (CSB)** *When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Come, make gods for us who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we don’t know what has happened to him!”*

**ALTHOUGH GOD MADE IT QUITE CLEAR** in the 10 commandments (NEVER make an idol) They say “Make us a god, (IDOL) to lead us” AND Aaron does! “Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!” (32:4)

- **Exodus 32:7** *God interrupts his own instructions to tell Moses that the Israelites have already **BROKEN COVENANT and they are in rebellion.***
- **Have you ever felt like asking your child, “What part of “NO” do you not understand!?” , or What part of NEVER DO THIS....**
- This was no MISTAKE. This was SIN! **How could they do that?**
- Do we really need to ask that? At some point we have all done something we know we should not have done.

**Exodus 32:9–10 (CSB)** *The Lord also said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people. <sup>10</sup> Now leave me alone, so that my anger can burn against them and I can destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.”*

**Was this a test!?**

- **Exodus 32:11–12 (CSB)** *But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God: “. . . 12 Why should the Egyptians say, ‘He brought them out with an evil intent to kill them in the mountains and eliminate them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger and relent concerning this disaster planned for your people.*
- MOSES’ prayer (and this is a prayer. He’s talking to God) was based on God’s character and for God’s reputation!

- **THEN WE READ A SHOCKING PRAYER!** “Forgive them...if not, blot me out from your book!” (32:32) Who would say that? WHO would do that!? MOSES IS WILLING TO DIE FOR THEM.
- Although it is a confusing passage to make sense of, this is the hinge point! GOD RELENTS! What is going on here?
- **From Moses’ vantage point:** Moses has been changed because of his exposure to God in close proximity, he himself has become gracious and convinced that God is gracious.
- **From God’s vantage point:** God has set the stage for the real story that is coming. Think of Moses as the extra who stands in for the star during the filming of a movie. God is setting the stage for the real movie. This is just the dress rehearsal and the star of the show has a stand in. Moses is the stand in, taking the place of the central character of the Drama that is going to be shot when God says (ACTION). We observers are just watching the set up.
- **This is the PRE-STORY to the REAL story. Moses is a prophet and a mediator. In DEUTERONOMY 18:15 we learn that THERE IS GOING TO BE A GREATER PROPHET (a GREATER MEDIATOR) who is like Moses. JESUS accomplishes the ultimate act of making GOD’s GRACE available to those who turn to him in repentance!**
- Moses doesn’t fully understand what his words point to, but God does! Moses speaks as a prophet about the REAL STORY.

**Exodus 34** God tells Moses to come back to the mountain with 2 new stone tablets, because in Exodus 34 God who is **gracious will RENEW his covenant** with a new set of tablets!

- This is the context of this verse on the screen, where God declares who he is, and what he has done (THEN and NOW).

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE GRACIOUS?

### I. Gracious people give GRACE to people

### II. Giving GRACE is giving UNMERITED FAVOR

Jesus taught us to be gracious like God is gracious without using any technical words. He doesn’t even use the word gracious.

*Matthew 5:43–45 (NIV)* “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

- This is uncomfortable. This is difficult.
- Enemies do not deserve our favor; so why give them favor?
- Because God gave us unmerited favor.

As God is gracious toward us who are undeserving, we are to be gracious to the undeserving.
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It is positively wonderful to experience God's character personally! How does anyone take steps toward this?

As we fill ourselves with his thoughts, our thoughts are affected. As we fill ourselves with his love, our love is affected. As we fill ourselves with the fuel of his grace in its many forms, we become more gracious like him.

Here is a practical definition for GRACIOUS.

**III. Do what is BEST for the OTHER PERSON**

This is hard. We can't do it on our own. Here is a practice exercise that will help us become more gracious more often!

In daily prayer, worshipfully express your gratitude to God for his love and grace. Verbally list the ways that come to mind. As you make it a developed habit to focus on what he has graciously given you, you will be filled to overflowing, and blessed to be a blessing to others.