

Sunday, 19, 2009—Grace School of the Bible Summer Family Bible Conference

Teen Study: The Four Great Challenges Facing Grace Young People

### **Introduction**

- I spoke to many of you in February at the Teen Winter Retreat in Michigan. As a result of that meeting I have been asked to come and speak to you in greater detail about some of the issues I raised at the end of our time together in February.
- Personal information:
  - Married to Becky, Andrew 4, Daniel 19 Months
  - Leader of Grace Life Bible Church in Grand Rapids, MI
  - History teacher in a public high school in MI
  - High School Football coach
- At the Teen Winter Retreat in February I presented 5 lessons in a series entitled Grace Based Apologetics. Each one of these lessons sought to answer one central question.
  - What is Truth?
  - Does God Exist?
  - What About the Bible?
  - What About Jesus? Was He Really God? Did He Really Rise From the Dead?
  - Jesus Among Other gods: Is Jesus Really the Only Way to God?
- This evening I would like to speak with you in greater detail about a couple things that came up at our last question and answer session in February.
- I have titled this evening's talk *The Four Great Challenges Facing Grace Young People*
  - Acceptance
  - Marriage
  - Post Modernism—the attack on the absolute nature of truth
  - Grace Religion
- I choose these four based upon the following criteria:
  - My own experiences growing up in the Grace Message.
  - The departure of my cousin from the Message of Grace in favor of Atheism.

- Observing numerous grace friends of mind depart the faith through their choice of who to marry.
- The insights I have gleaned from being a Christian Educator in the Public School system.
- Here is the reality:
  - For some of you the only reason why you are here this week is because your parents made you come.
  - All of you whether you go to a public schools, private school, or are home schooled are capable of being removed away from the truth of grace for a variety of reasons.
  - You are at a stage in life where you are looking more toward your peers than your parents for acceptance.
  - Therefore, you are either standing, or about to stand at crossroads in your life where you are going to need to make a decision about whether or not you believe grace doctrine. How is it going to impact my life?
- My objective with you this evening is too be candied, forthright, and blunt if need be about these four issues and hopefully engage you in honest discussion about them.

### Acceptance

- It is a natural human need to feel love and acceptance. We want to be liked and feel that people view us a haveing something to contribute.
- I see this need for acceptance played out every day in the hallways of my school. It is this need which causes teenagers to jump in and out of bed with each other, drink and do drugs as they scream for someone to love and accept them.
- As teens who have grown up understanding the grace message you need to always remember that the only place that your need for unconditional love and acceptance can me be meet is in Jesus Christ.
- Ephesians 1:6—one of the Spiritual blessings we have in Jesus Christ is the unconditional love and acceptance that we all need as human beings.
- No other human beings can ever satisfy this deep yearning of our souls that way Christ can. If you put your trust in another human being you will only be disappointed.

- You need to guard against: unrealistic expectations, and displaced dependencies.
- Romans 8:14-15—you are accepted to the point of being considered a joint heir with Jesus Christ. You and I get the same inheritance as Jesus Christ.
- Romans 8:35-39—not only are you accepted but you have the security of a guaranteed acceptance.
- A fail to recognize or rest in this unconditional love and acceptance has lead many grace young people to make poor decisions regarding who to become romantically involved with and ultimately who to marry.

## Marriage

- Despite what Hollywood and pop culture is saying, you do not need to be married to be a happy and complete person if you recognize the truth of your acceptance in Christ.
- That being said, I know that many of you have a desire to be married some day. I want to talk to you about a Pauline decision making model that will help you in choosing a spouse.
- First, God has not determined in advance if you are going to get married or who you are going to marry. **IT IS YOUR DECISION. YOU NEED TO CHOSE WISELY**
- I Corinthians 7:39—your exercise your free will as a human being when you decide to get married.
  - Knight in Indiana Jones the Last Crusade
- The will of God is clear: **YOU NEED TO MARRY A BELIEVER.** Do I need to marry a Grace Believer?
- II Corinthians 6:14—it is always preferable to marry someone with whom you have commonality of beliefs because of the potential for conflict in this area.
- **IN EVERY CASE I HAVE SEEN WHEN A GRACE BELVIEVER CHOOSES TO MARRY A NON-GRACE BELIEVER THE GRACE BELEIVER DEPARTS THE FAITH IN FAVOR OF DENOMINATIONAL TEACHING.**

- So what do you do if you don't like your prospects here this evening:
  - Make God's Priorities Your Priorities:
    - I Samuel 16:17
    - I Peter 3:4
  - Guard Your Heart—do not allow yourself to get emotionally attached before you know where a person stands theologically. Tell my own story.
  - Make Your Decision Based on Truth and Renewed Mind
    - Romans 12:1-2—just because something is lawful or permissible does not make it the best decision you could make.
- A failure to turn up any viable grace believers can cause some to begin to question the truthfulness of the message. Are we really the only ones to have a market on the truth? What about these other denominations, religions, and philosophies? Am I being closed minded, exclusive, or too dogmatic in hold to the doctrines of grace.
- These questions are not limited to the context of dating and marriage, however, that is when the temptation to compromise on them will be the strongest.

### **Postmodernism**

- We are currently living in a post-Christian culture. It is cool today to be “spiritual” but not Christian.
- The philosophy of relativism has undermined the faith of many young people. **Relativism** is the belief that there is no such thing as absolute truth.
- What is wrong with this statement? It is self-defeating it does not pass its own truth test.
- Despite the absurdity of believing that absolute truth does not exist the culture has embraced the view that something is not true until they choose to believe it. They believe that the act of believing makes things true.
- In a survey conducted of Christian young people in 2006 81% said they believed that all truth is relative to the individual and his/her circumstances. As a result, 70% of the Christian young people surveyed believed there is no absolute truth.
- Seven truths about truth.

1. Truth is discovered, not invented. It exists independent of anyone's knowledge of it. (Gravity existed prior to Newton)
  2. Truth is transcultural; if something is true, it is true for all people, in all places, at all times. (2+2=4)
  3. Truth is unchanging even though our beliefs about truth change. (The earth is round)
  4. Beliefs cannot change a fact, no matter how sincerely they are held.
  5. Truth is not affected by the attitude of the one professing it.
  6. All truths are absolute truths. Even truths that appear relative are really absolute.
  7. Truth is that which corresponds to its referent.
- In short, contrary beliefs are possible, but contrary truths are not possible. We can believe everything is true, but we cannot make everything true.
  - While most religions have some beliefs that are true, not all religions beliefs can be true because they teach opposites.
  - John 18:38—what is truth?
  - Psalm 119:142—“Their righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and their law is the truth.”
  - John 17:17—“... thy word is truth.”
  - II Timothy 2:15—“... rightly dividing the word of truth.”
  - The current culture that we live in accuses Christians being too exclusive and close minded. Surely there must be other routes or paths to God. They say things like, “all paths and roads lead to God.” Is this true? Are all the world's religious just different paths up the same mountain?
  - John 14:6—Jesus claims to be the only path to salvation
  - Acts 4:12—“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
  - I Timothy 2:5—Paul says that Jesus Christ is the only way to God.
  - The notion that all religions teach basically the same thing—that we ought to love one another—demonstrates a serious misunderstanding of the world's religions.

- While most religions have some similar code of conduct because God has implanted right and wrong on our consciences, they disagree on virtually every major issue, including the nature of God, man, sin, salvation, heaven, hell, and creation.
- Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe in different versions of a theistic God, while most Hindus and New Agers believe that everything that exists is part of an impersonal, pantheistic force they call God.
- Many Hindus believe that evil is a complete illusion, while Christians, Muslims, and Jews believe that evil is real.
- Christians believe that people are saved by grace through faith while other religions, if they believe in salvation at all, teach some kind of salvation by good works.

### **Grace Religion**

- For some of you the only reason you are here is because your parents made you come. I know this because not long ago I was in your shoes.
- Some of you have never read or owned a modern translation of the Bible. Many of you could draw the “Time Past” “But Now” and “Age to Come” chart in your sleep if you had to. Perhaps you feel that there is nothing left for you to learn. Maybe you think your parents are hypocrites because they preach grace but fail to demonstrate it toward you in your family life.
- I know this because I was also a second generation grace believer who grew up with a father who was a grace preacher. None of our parents are perfect people and none of us always live up to the high calling of our belief system.
- Consequently, for many of you, grace does not mean anything to you other than that thing we hear about on Sunday, at youth group, and at teen retreats and conferences.
- We have a major challenge of keeping second, third, and fourth generation grace believers in the doctrine.
- Many of your parents and grandparents had a religious awakening of sorts; they were saved out of the religious system.
- Many of you have been raised in a grace system that has become your religion. Grace has become a stale religion rather than a dynamic life style.
- Each of you will come to a point of decision where you will have to decide whether or not grace is your belief system or that of your parents.
- Own it. Make it your own.