

GOSPEL GRACE

What do you think Christians are known for today?

Your neighbors don't think they need saving
from their sins. They think they need
saving from you.

Antagonism toward Christianity may be growing in our society, but this is no time to despair. The early church didn't grow exponentially because the government and the culture was behind them, but because they trusted the Spirit and boldly proclaimed the gospel. They took the commands Jesus had given them—to love their neighbors and take the gospel to them (see Matt. 22:39; 28:19-20)—and they turned the world upside down.

In Christ you have God's kind company
that redeems not only your soul
but also gives you a meaning and a purpose
and a grace within that trial.

Read John 1:14.

Jesus had a ministry filled with both grace and truth. Where in Scripture do we see both at work?

What happens when these attributes are out of balance in our ministries?

Your words can never be stronger
than your relationships.

Truth without grace is fundamentalism. Grace without truth is sentimentality. Jesus possessed both grace and truth in equal measure. He cared so greatly for our souls that He left the comforts of heaven to come and give both grace and truth to a world that is broken and hurting.

Truth without grace is fundamentalism.
Grace without truth is just sentimentality.

Read John 4:1-26 .

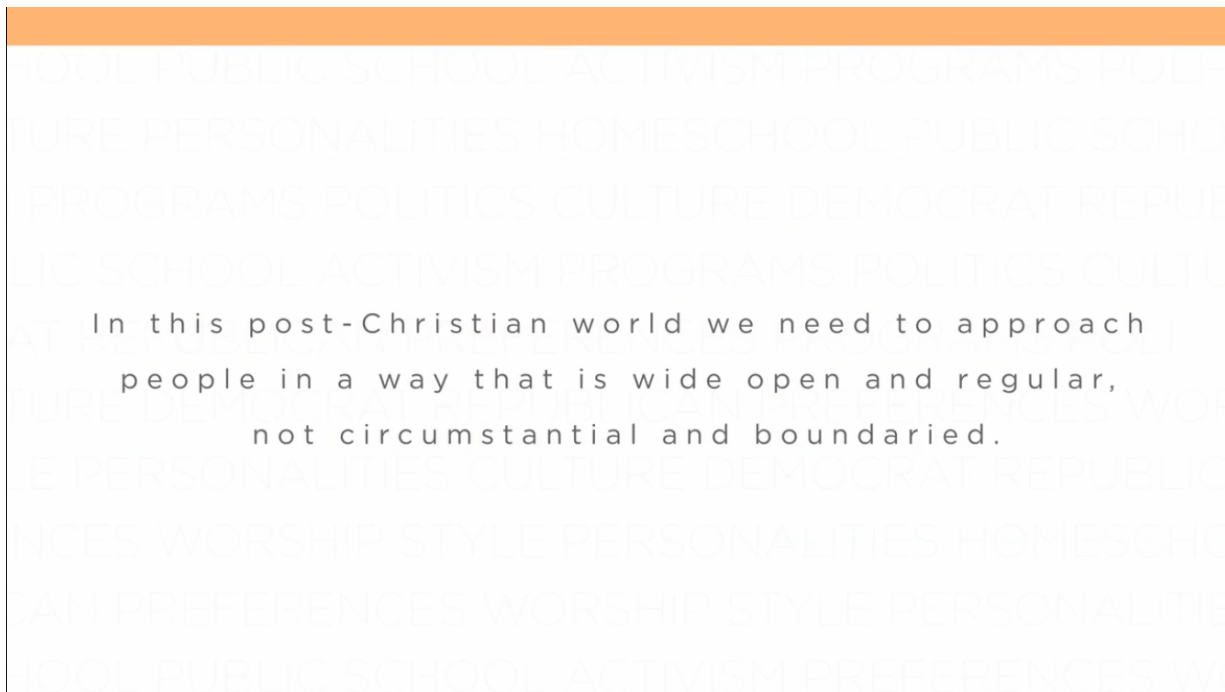
How did Jesus express grace and truth equally in His interaction with the woman at the well?

How did Jesus form a connection with this woman? What can we learn from the way He treated her?

In this account, we see grace and truth in balance. Jesus approached this woman, entered a conversation with her, asked her for a favor, and spoke to her heart. At the same time, He didn't hesitate to speak the truth. He confronted her when necessary, but this confrontation came within the context of care. Our interactions with nonbelievers need to reflect the balance of grace and truth that Jesus expressed.

In a world that's increasingly hostile to the gospel, grace needs to precede truth in our conversations with people who have rejected Jesus because our words will never be stronger than our relationships.

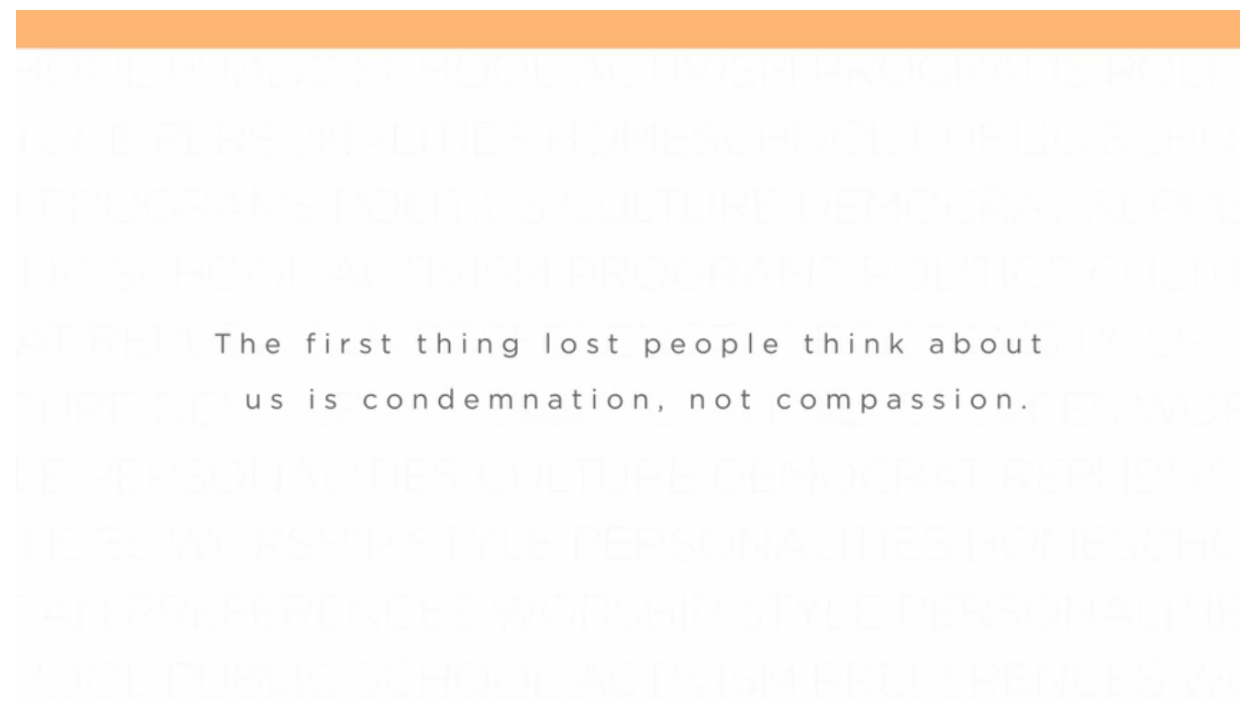
How available would you say you are to others on a regular basis?



How could changing the way you approach lost people open up gospel opportunities for you?

A simple change that shows people you care is making yourself available. Most of us are overscheduled and tired. Perhaps the most obvious and correctable way to be more gracious is simply to make yourself available to people. Because openness is uncommon in our culture, it stands out. Being willing to be present with someone may be all that's needed for a meaningful conversation to occur. As Christians, we need to be known for the same kind of compassion that characterized our Savior.

What are a few ways you can serve in your neighborhood or larger community?



Before people care about what you know, they need to know you care. Acts of service break down boundaries and allow us to enter places we may never have gone before, thereby enabling people to encounter the grace of Christ in the lives of His people.

Is anyone in the group already involved in serving your community? If so, how has service created an opportunity for you to get to know someone?

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What do you think keeps more Christians from developing relationships this way?

What changes could you make in order to build more gospel bridges to the lost people around you?

When you ask Jesus to enter a conversation with
an unbeliever at the table, it's not to stop
the conversation. It's to enrich it.

How might intentionally making yourself available give more opportunity to share the gospel?