



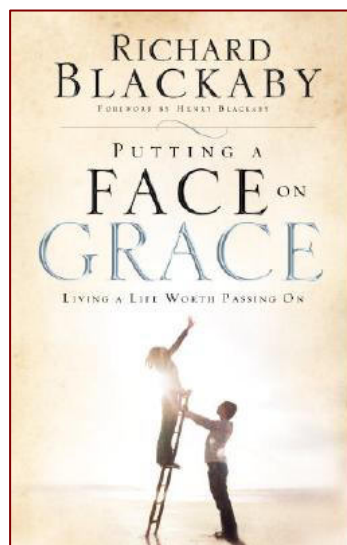
DEAN WELCH – TEACHER



WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

JULY 12, 2009

LESSON #6 FROM THE *MASTER WORKS* SERIES STUDY OF:



JULY 12, 2009

GRACE FOR THE WORLD

[WEEK #6—PUTTING A FACE ON GRACE]



In the movie *Dead Poet's Society*, Robin Williams plays the role of English professor John Keating, a teacher in an exclusive eastern prep school. On the first day of school, he takes the class of boys out into the hallway to look at the pictures of past, now dead, graduates of the school. He motivates them to learn and excel in life with the following words: "We are food for worms, Lads! Believe it or not each and every one of us in this room one day will stop breathing, turn cold, and die. Step forward and see these faces from the past. They were just like you are now. They believed they were destined for great things. Their eyes are full of hope. But, you see, gentlemen, these boys are not fertilizing daffodils. If you listen real close, you will hear them whisper their legacy to you. Lean in. What do you hear?" Then Robin says in an eerie grave-like voice, "Carpe Diem!" (Latin for seize the day) "Seize the day boys! Make your lives extraordinary!" That's good advice for every Christian! Seize the day while you may! How are you doing with that philosophy these days?

What would you do if you could do it all over again? A life "*do over!*" Ever think about it? I have this week and if I had it to do all over again, I'd fish more. How about you? What would you do? Speaking of fishing, do you remember the story by Max Lucado about the game warden that got a quick lesson on fishing? It seems he noticed how this one particular fellow named Sam consistently caught more fish than anyone else. Whereas the other guys would only catch three or four a day, Sam would come in off the lake with a boat full. Stringer after stringer was always packed with freshly caught trout.

The warden, curious, asked Sam his secret. The successful fisherman invited the game warden to accompany him and observe. So the next morning, the two met at the dock and took off in Sam's boat. When they got to the middle of the lake, they



stopped the boat and the warden sat back to see how it was done. Sam's approach was simple. He took out a stick of dynamite, lit it, and threw it in the air. The explosion rocked the lake with such a force that dead fish immediately began to surface. Sam took out a net and started scooping them up.

Well you can imagine the reaction of the game warden. When he recovered from the shock of it all, he began yelling at Sam. "You can't do this! I'll put you in jail, buddy! You'll be paying every fine there is in the book!" Sam, meanwhile, set his net down and took out another stick of dynamite. He lit it and tossed it in the lap of the game warden with these words, "Are you going to sit there all day complaining or are you going to fish?" Now, although that's a cute joke, it's not exactly the kind of fishing I had in mind for my life "*do over.*" I'm talking about fishing for men.

Listen to these words from **MATTHEW 4:18-20 (NIV)** when Jesus called his first disciples, Andrew and Simon: ¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you **FISHERS** of **MEN**." ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.

Today, we finish our 6-week study from Dr. Blackaby's book *Putting A Face On Grace* by looking at grace in the world—in other words to unbelievers. I hope that by now you've been able to put a face on grace and that that face is YOU! We've spent the last six weeks talking about what grace is—and isn't—and that we must express God's grace to all—to those within our families, to those within our church, and now to others. Life is short! As Professor Keating said in the movie, "Carpe Diem!" **SEIZE** the **DAY** by showing God's grace to **EVERYONE!**

So, how can we become better fishermen—that is, fishers of men? Let's begin by turning to **COLOSSIANS 4:2-6 (NIV)** and reading the words of Paul about some final instructions for us in these so-called last days: ²*Devote yourselves to prayer, being*

WATCHFUL and thankful. ³And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Look at verse 2 again. What does it mean to be “*watchful*?” [WATCHFUL LITERALLY MEANS “STAY AWAKE” AND REFERS TO AN ATTITUDE OF BEING SPIRITUALLY ALERT.] We often remind ourselves in this class of Peter’s words about being watchful and alert for our adversary, the devil. Turn to **1 PETER 5:8 (NLT)** and follow along as I read those words again: ⁸*“Stay alert! WATCH out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”* Believers need to be alert because Satan wants to devour them.

Now look again at verse 3 of COLOSSIANS 4: ³*And pray for us, too, that God may OPEN a DOOR for our message...* What does Paul mean when he says to pray that God “open a door” for our message? I think it ties in with the *Great Commission* that God has given each believer in **MATTHEW 28: 19-20** about *going*. Listen to those words: ¹⁹*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

Josh Hunt tells the story about a group of seminary students who discovered that a Promise Keepers' convention was coming to Soldier Field in Chicago. The students took a commuter train downtown, then caught a cab to the stadium. They were running late, but still hoped to get a good seat. The cab driver, a man who spoke little English, probably felt intimidated as the six seminary students piled into his taxi, jabbering loudly. Traffic was heavy and got worse near the stadium. They slowed to a crawl and it appeared they weren't going to get that good seat after all.

A couple of the students started talking about hopping from the cab and running the rest of the way to the stadium. The plan sounded good, but one of the students, named Michael, spoke against the plan. He was more concerned about the cabby. If they got out at that point, the driver would be stuck in traffic without being able to refill his taxi. He'd be losing money. After Michael spoke with the others, he turned his attention to the foreign driver. Michael shared about the conference they were going to, and then he shared the good news of Jesus Christ. Josh Hunts says that they don't know if the man was affected by the message, but it was clear that Michael's concern provided a base of credibility for sharing the gospel that the rest of the seminary students had overlooked. That's the *open door* that Paul is talking about.

As believers, our days are numbered. Even more importantly, however, the days of an unbeliever are also numbered. Every day God gives us opportunities to plant the seed of the gospel into the hearts of the lost. **So, how do we keep ourselves aware of the opportunities around us?** How can we "*seize the day*" and make the most of our time? The Christian believer must be **AWARE** of the needs of the **LOST**. The great temptation is to get caught up in our **OWN** spiritual accolades and success. Listen to this sobering story: *A local newspaper in New Philadelphia, Ohio, reported in September 1985 about a celebration at a New Orleans municipal pool. The party around the pool was held to celebrate the first summer in memory without a drowning at any New Orleans city pool. In honor of the occasion, two hundred people gathered, including one hundred certified lifeguards. As the party was breaking up and the four lifeguards on duty began to clear the pool, they found a fully dressed body in the deep end. They tried to revive Jerome Moody, thirty-one, but it was too late. He had drowned surrounded by lifeguards celebrating their successful season.*

I wonder how many visitors and strangers are among us drowning in loneliness, hurt, and doubt, while we, who could help them, don't realize it? We Christians have reason to celebrate,

but our mission, as the old hymn says, is to "rescue the perishing." And often they are right next to us.

Look again at verse 4 of Colossians 4, "*Pray that **I** may proclaim it clearly, as I should.*" What would you do if you bumped into someone that you felt needed to know the Gospel? For instance, let's say that after church today you and your family go out for lunch, maybe K&W or someplace similar. Anyway, as you get out of your car, a rather disheveled man walks up and asks for some change for lunch, saying he hasn't eaten in a couple of days. He then says that he will be glad to work for food if you have something for him to do. **How would you respond?** Not, how should you respond—but how you would actually react? That's probably happened in some manner or fashion in the past. Did you respond the way Michael did in the story about the Promise Keeper's convention in Chicago with the foreign cab driver?

Today in your chair or on your table I've placed what many of you are already very familiar with—a small red glass stone. Most of you have heard me tell the story about how I received my first one and the significance of it. Several years ago, I went with one of our FAITH teams on a visit to a couple that had been attending Sunday School and had visited our church several times. They are now active members of our church. As many of you know, our FAITH visits not only are to enroll people in Sunday School, but also to present the gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Anyway, after getting through the introductions and general interests conversation, I asked them what we call the Key Question: "*In your personal opinion, what do you understand it takes for a person to go to heaven?*" Another way to ask the same thing is, "*If you died tonight night, do you know for sure if you would go to heaven?*" Anyway, the response of the man was overwhelming. He excused himself, went back to another room of the house and then came back out and handed me and the other two FAITH team members one of these RED STONES. He then asked me if I had seen one of the stones and knew what it was? I was stumped and he explained that he and his wife had recently been looking into buying a

timeshare in Anderson. They had made several trips to the project and talked with one particular salesman numerous times. The salesman had always been gracious and spent many hours with them. Due to some personal matters, however, they finally decided NOT to purchase the timeshare but were reluctant to tell the salesman. On a final trip back to Anderson and the project to break the bad news, they went by to see the salesman and explained how sorry they were. They explained how hesitant they'd been to tell the salesman of their decision because they thought he would be angry and upset with them. Much to their surprise, the salesman explained that he was not angry. He said that he was a Christian and then reached into his pocket and handed each of them one of the little red stones adding, "I keep this red stone in my pocket with my money to remind me of the price that Christ paid for my salvation and of what I owe Him in return." Now, that's the way God uses us, as believers, to share the Gospel. When you least expect it, the opportunity arises to share the hope you have with someone else. Remember the words of **ROMANS 10:9 (NKJV)** and how simple it really is: *"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

Some of you know Marge Kindberg in our church. A couple of days ago at the church picnic she shared a perfect example about being sharing her faith with others when least expected. It was one of those days when nothing seemed to go right and to top it off, Marge's older model car was acting up. She took it in to a local repair shop and was told a particular part was shot and beyond repair. A new replacement part would cost her about \$750-\$800. Marge and her husband (Steeg) talked about how good the car had been, that it was paid for, that they had the money to have it fixed, and how grateful they were for the car's dependability so far. So, they decided to fix the car and pay the money. Marge told the mechanic to go ahead and repair it without complaining or fussing and thanked him graciously. Someone in the repair shop saw her gracious attitude about the whole situation and came over and asked if she wasn't really just



furious? Marge responded with a smile and that she was really OK. When the person asked her a simple why, Marge said, "I guess it's because I have everything I really need and because of Jesus." And the other person asking the question of Marge said, "Do you really believe that's the reason?" And Marge without hesitation said, "I know it is." True story!

Turn to **1 PETER 3:15 (NIV)** and look at the last part of that verse: *Always be **PREPARED** to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the **REASON** for the hope that you have.* Is that a picture of you? As I thought about what Marge was telling me, I silently thought that I would not have responded so gracefully with the news about having to spend \$750-\$800 for an old car. Whew! But look at what God did with her response? He used it to show the reason for the hope that she has in Christ.

This idea that we're talking about of expressing God's grace to those around us that aren't believers is one of the hardest things we do. But just like the lesson that we see in Marge's attitude with the car repairs, God wants us to do the same thing. He reminds us in the *Great Commission* that **AS WE GO**, we are to make disciples, baptize others and teach them about God's Word and His Son. I've always heard that a picture is worth a thousand words. Whereas one person out of a hundred may read the Bible, 99 will read you! What does your life and example show to others? Are you expressing God's grace to others?

Let's look at verse 6 of COLOSSIANS 4 for a moment. Not only is our talk to be gracious, but it is to have an effect. Listen: *⁶Let your conversation be always full of grace, **SEASONED WITH SALT**, so that you may know how to answer everyone. **What does it mean that our conversation is to be seasoned with salt?*** John MacArthur in his Commentary on Colossians says, "The speech of the new man must also be seasoned...with salt. It is not only to be gracious, but also to have an effect. Salt can sting when rubbed into a wound (cf. Prov. 27:6). It also prevents corruption. Believers' speech should act as a purifying influence, rescuing conversation from the filth that so often engulfs it. Salt

also adds flavor, and the speech of the new man should add charm and wit to conversation."

In our Monday night Bible study on *DANIEL*, we've been trying to memorize several verses of Scripture that seem applicable to what I'm saying this morning. Listen to these words from **DANIEL 2:20-21 (NIV)**: *²⁰"Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are His. ²¹He changes times and seasons; He sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning."*

You see, it's not about you—or me! It's about God. He's the one that gives us the wisdom and the knowledge to be able to share the hope we have in Christ. That's exactly what Marge told me the other night too. She said she knew exactly where the response to the other person's question came from—God! On her own, she clearly said she would not have thought of that response.

I love the words of David in **PSALM 139** and encourage you to read it and make it a part of your very being. Turn there now and let's look at **verses 23-24 (NIV)** and see if maybe these verses could be a prayer you'd be comfortable in praying: *²³Search me, O God, and KNOW my heart; TEST me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Does God's Word ever cause you discomfort? When you read the Bible does what you read make you uneasy? Or maybe when you hear a sermon, the scripture seems aimed directly at you. You are experiencing the reality that the word of God is alive and can read your thoughts and judge your intentions. When God's Word speaks to you, it is always for a purpose. See, God knows your heart and knows what you need to do to bring your life into conformity to Christ. If you have a problem with sinful talk, the word that comes to you will address the tongue. If you are struggling to forgive, God's word will confront you with His standard for forgiveness. If pride has a stronghold in your life,

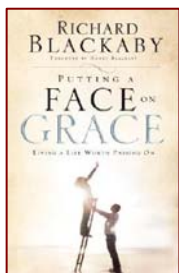
God's word will speak to you about humility. Whatever sin needs addressing, you will find you are confronted by God's word on the matter.

The words we just read in **PSALM 139:23** are right on point. If you can pray the words of the psalmist, asking God to search your heart and test you, He will do just that and you, in turn, can show God's grace to a lost and dying world. Just as Paul tells you in **EPHESIANS 5:26**, you should *regularly allow the word of God to wash over you and find any sin or impurity*. Always make the connection between your life and what God is saying to you through His word. Make a habit of taking every word from God seriously, knowing that it is able to judge your heart and mind.

So, how are you in expressing God's grace to those who aren't "so graceful?" I close with this thought. Imagine you have a six-year-old son or grandson whom you love dearly. Tragically one day you discover that your son/grandson was horribly murdered. After a lengthy search, the investigators of the crime find the killer. You have choice. If you used every means in your power to kill the murderer for his crime that would be *vengeance*. If however, you're content to sit back and let the legal authorities take over and execute on him what is proper – a fair trial, a plea of guilt, capital punishment - that is *justice*. But if you should plead for the pardon of the murderer, forgive him completely, invite him in to your home and adopt him as your own son, that is *grace!*

Now do you see why grace is so hard to grasp and to accept? Very few people (if any) would happily and readily do that. But God does it *everyday*. *Go and do likewise is what He tells us!*

Let's pray!



© 2009 R. DEAN WELCH
JULY 12, 2009