



DEAN WELCH – TEACHER

---

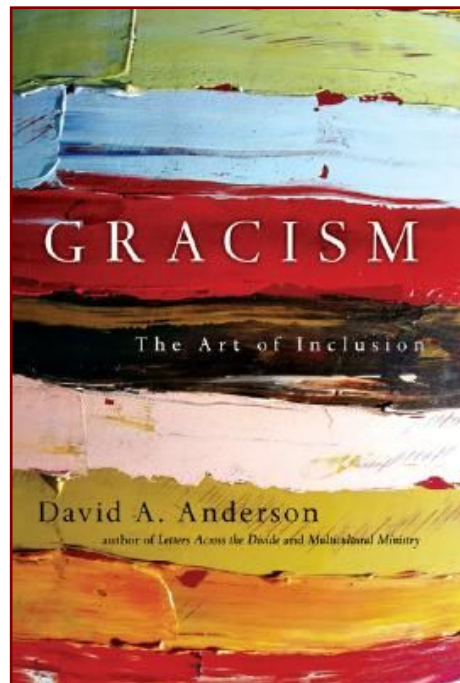
ELEVATORS OF  
GRACE

---

WEEKLY SUNDAY  
SCHOOL LESSON


JULY 19, 2009

LESSON #1 FROM THE *MASTERWORK* SERIES STUDY OF:



## ELEVATORS OF GRACE

[WEEK #1— "SPECIAL HONOR"]

 There was a movie that came out last year about the life of Ernie Davis. Anybody ever heard of him? The movie, *The Express*, is based on the incredible true story of the inspirational life of college football hero Ernie Davis, the first African-American to win the Heisman Trophy. Under the guidance of Coach Ben Schwartzwalder, a hard-nosed coach with an obsession for winning a national football title, Davis overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles to become an unstoppable running back for the Syracuse Orangemen. Following his draft by the NFL, tragedy struck the star athlete and he was never able to take the professional field. But his story would forever change the face of professional sports and although he never played one down in the NFL, the Cleveland Browns retired his number, #45, in 2005—42 years after his death. Davis died in 1963 at the age of 23.

Watch the movie trailer as we introduce this new series from David Anderson's book called *Gracism*. [LINK FOR MOVIE TRAILER: [http://wingclips.com/cart.php?target=product&product\\_id=16829&substring=discrimination](http://wingclips.com/cart.php?target=product&product_id=16829&substring=discrimination) (2:29)]

Today, we start a 7-week study from the book *Gracism* by David Anderson and will be spending a lot of time in 1 Corinthians 12. Since we've spent the past week learning about this concept in our daily Bible study time, let's talk about what it really is. Obviously, it grows out of the *racism*, so let's begin by defining what that means TODAY—July 19, 2009! **How do you define "racism"?** Anderson says that when people deal (speaking, acting, thinking) with color, class or culture in a negative way, that's racism. **In your opinion, does the 2009 "church" still have a problem with this? Let's talk about examples of favoritism (not favor) or prejudice you see in the church today. List some people groups who might feel uncomfortable in our church. How can our church make those people feel more welcome?**

I love how David Anderson takes the next step—which is what each of us as members of the body of Christ are also to do. In our MasterWork series, we've spent the past 6-weeks talking and learning **HOW** to put each of **OUR** own faces on grace as well as how we are to express it to others—no holds barred! We know that grace is God giving us what we **DON'T DESERVE**. So, if we take the negative act of racism and merge it with the positive aspects of grace, a new term emerges. In other words, when you put a **"G"**, which stands for God, in front of the negative concepts of racism, then one has begun identifying solutions and resources to address the race problem in the world. It's simply turning a negative into a positive. Listen to these words by Paul to the church in Galatia from **GALATIANS 6:10 (NIV)** on the subject of extending favor to others: ***10Therefore, as we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.***"

*In 1962, George Wallace ran for governor of Alabama on a platform that was blatantly racist. He promised to fight integration to the point of defying federal orders and personally blockading schoolhouse doors. He ended his inaugural address with the infamous statement, "I say segregation, now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." That summer, he refused to allow black students to register at the University of Alabama until forced to do so by the threat of military intervention. Through his tenure as governor and a run for the presidency in 1968, Wallace spouted racial hatred while blacks were beaten and jailed, black churches were burned, and black children were murdered.*

**Do you think progress has been made in our country regarding racism since those days? What are some examples of work that still needs to be done?** Clearly, progress is being made slowly, but as individual members of the body of Christ each of us needs to think about how we can have a change of heart and attitude, both inside and out—that is, as Paul tells us, we are all new creatures in Christ. We are not to show favoritism, or partiality, but we **ARE** to extend God's **FAVOR**,

or grace, to others. Recall the words of James in **JAMES 2:8-9 (NASB)** about this: *<sup>8</sup>If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. <sup>9</sup>But if you show PARTIALITY, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*

In this new series, David Anderson uses 1 Corinthians 12:22-26 as the framework for this entire 7-week study. As you spend time in this chapter each week, may I challenge you to memorize this passage over the next 7-weeks, remembering the words of **ROMANS 10:17** that our *faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*

Let's read our foundational scripture passage for today. Turn to **1 CORINTHIANS 12: 22-24 (NIV)** and follow along as we look at some verses on various parts of the *body*: *<sup>22</sup>On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup>and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with SPECIAL HONOR. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup>while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it.*

To help you understand this passage a little clearer, let me read the same verses, 22-24, from Peterson's The Message: *<sup>22</sup>As a matter of fact, in practice it works the other way--the "lower" the part, the more basic, and therefore necessary. You can live without an eye, for instance, but not without a stomach. <sup>23</sup>When it's a part of your own body you are concerned with, it makes no difference whether the part is visible or clothed, higher or lower. You give it dignity and honor just as it is, without comparisons. <sup>24</sup>If anything, you have more concern for the lower parts than the higher. If you had to choose, wouldn't you prefer good digestion to full-bodied hair?*

**What parts of the body are typically overlooked and why?**  
**How does this principle apply to race?**

Notice verse 23 of 1 Corinthians 12 says that we are to pay “*special honor*” to certain parts. In other words we are to *lift them up*. Like the title on the board, we are to become elevators of God’s grace not only to those within our circle—but to everyone. Did you understand David Anderson’s story about visiting Heathrow Airport in England and having to take the elevator—called a lift—up to the next level. **We are to do the same thing in our relationships with others, but how do we do that? Let’s talk about some examples**

We can see a perfect example of what Paul is talking about extending the love of Christ, His favor and grace, to others not in our “*circle*” in the story of the woman at the well. Do you remember the facts? Turn to **JOHN 4** and let’s look at these verses for a moment to help us understand what it means to lift someone up—that is, giving them special honor—when others don’t think they deserve anything. Recall that in the first century, the Jews and the Samaritans hated each other. The Jews considered the Samaritans half-breeds and religious deviants. Following the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., Samaria had been resettled by colonists brought to the land by the Assyrians. These colonists intermarried with the remaining Jews, and the Samaritans were descendants of these mixed marriages. The Samaritans rejected the Old Testament Scriptures beyond the five books of Moses. Furthermore, they built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. To express their disdain for the Samaritans, Jews traveling to Galilee would generally avoid Samaria by crossing over the Jordan River into Perea. Are the people that you do the same thing to today?

Follow along as I read **JOHN 4: 1-42 (NCV)**: *<sup>1</sup>The Pharisees heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more followers than John, <sup>2</sup>although Jesus himself did not baptize people, but his followers did. <sup>3</sup>Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard about*



him, so he left Judea and went back to Galilee. <sup>4</sup>But on the way he had to go through the country of Samaria.

<sup>5</sup>In Samaria Jesus came to the town called Sychar, which is near the field Jacob gave to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was there. Jesus was tired from his long trip, so he sat down beside the well. It was about twelve o'clock noon. <sup>7</sup>When a Samaritan woman came to the well to get some water, Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." <sup>8</sup>(This happened while Jesus' followers were in town buying some food.) <sup>9</sup>The woman said, "I am surprised that you ask me for a drink, since you are a Jewish man and I am a Samaritan woman." (Jewish people are not friends with Samaritans.)

<sup>10</sup>Jesus said, "If you only knew the free gift of God and who it is that is asking you for water, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." <sup>11</sup>The woman said, "Sir, where will you get this living water? The well is very deep, and you have nothing to get water with. <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than Jacob, our father, who gave us this well and drank from it himself along with his sons and flocks?" <sup>13</sup>Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but whoever drinks the water I give will never be thirsty. The water I give will become a spring of water gushing up inside that person, giving eternal life." <sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so I will never be thirsty again and will not have to come back here to get more water." <sup>16</sup>Jesus told her, "Go get your husband and come back here." <sup>17</sup>The woman answered, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right to say you have no husband.

<sup>18</sup> Really you have had five husbands, and the man you live with now is not your husband. You told the truth." <sup>19</sup>The woman said, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that Jerusalem is the place where people must worship." <sup>21</sup>Jesus said, "Believe me, woman. The time is coming when neither in Jerusalem nor on this mountain will you actually worship the Father. <sup>22</sup>You Samaritans worship something you don't understand. We understand what we worship, because salvation comes from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>The time is

*coming when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, and that time is here already. You see, the Father too is actively seeking such people to worship him. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." <sup>25</sup>The woman said, "I know that the Messiah is coming." (Messiah is the One called Christ.) "When the Messiah comes, he will explain everything to us."*

*<sup>26</sup>Then Jesus said, "I am he—I, the one talking to you." <sup>27</sup>Just then his followers came back from town and were surprised to see him talking with a woman. But none of them asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" <sup>28</sup>Then the woman left her water jar and went back to town. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup>"Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. Do you think he might be the Christ?" <sup>30</sup>So the people left the town and went to see Jesus.*

...

*<sup>40</sup>When the Samaritans came to Jesus, they begged him to stay with them, so he stayed there two more days. <sup>41</sup>And many more believed because of the things he said. <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, "First we believed in Jesus because of what you said, but now we believe because we heard him ourselves. We know that this man really is the Savior of the world."*

Let me paint a picture of what we just read so we can understand a little better our first principle (of seven principles) of *gracism*—*"I will lift you up,"* i.e. lifting them up when others won't so much as give them the time of day. Picture the woman in the parable. Her shoulders stoop under the weight of the water jar. Her feet trudge, stirring dust on the path. She keeps her eyes down so she can dodge the stares of the others. She is a Samaritan; she knows the sting of racism. She is a woman; she's bumped her head on the ceiling of sexism. She's been married to five men. Five. Five different marriages. Five different beds. Five different rejections. She knows the sound of slamming doors. Her current mate won't even give her his name. He only gives her a place to sleep.

On this particular day, the woman came to the well at noon. Why hadn't she gone in the early morning with the other women? Maybe she had. Maybe she just needed an extra draw of water on a hot day. Or maybe not. Maybe it was the other women she was avoiding. A walk in the hot sun was a small price to pay in order to escape their sharp tongues. "Here she comes." "Have you heard? She's got a new man!" "They say she'll sleep with anyone." "Shhh. There she is." So she came to the well at noon. She expected silence. She expected solitude. Instead, she found one who knew her better than she knew herself.

He was seated on the ground: legs outstretched, hands folded, back resting against the well. His eyes were closed. She stopped and looked at him. She looked around. No one was near. She looked back at him. He was obviously Jewish. What was he doing here? His eyes opened and hers ducked in embarrassment. She went quickly about her task. Sensing her discomfort, Jesus asked her for water. But she was too streetwise to think that all he wanted was a drink. "Since when does an uptown fellow like you ask a girl like me for water?" She wanted to know what he really had in mind. Her intuition was partly correct. He was interested in more than water. He was interested in her heart.

They talked. Who could remember the last time a man had spoken to her with respect? He told her about a spring of water that would quench not the thirst of the throat, but of the soul. That intrigued her. "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." "Go, call your husband and come back." Her heart must have sunk. Here was a Jew who didn't care if she was a Samaritan. Here was a man who didn't look down on her as a woman. Here was the closest thing to gentleness she'd ever seen. And now he was asking her about ...that. Anything but that. Maybe she considered lying. "Oh, my husband? He's busy." Maybe she wanted to change the subject. Perhaps she wanted to leave—but she stayed. And she told the truth. "I have no husband." (Kindness has a way of inviting honesty.)

You know the rest of the story. I wish you didn't. I wish you were hearing it for the first time. For if you were, you'd be wide-eyed as you waited to see what Jesus would do next. Why? Because you've wanted to do the same thing. This woman wondered what Jesus would do. She must have wondered if the kindness would cease when the truth was revealed. *He will be angry. He will leave. He will think I'm worthless.* If you've had the same anxieties, then get out your pencil. You'll want to underline Jesus' answer.

**In verse 17**, Jesus says, "You're right. You have had five husbands and the man you are with now won't even give you a name." Did you see something unusual? No criticism? No anger? No what-kind-of-mess-have-you-made-of-your-life lectures? No. It wasn't perfection that Jesus was seeking, it was honesty. The woman was amazed. "I can see that you are a prophet." Translation? "There is something different about you. Do you mind if I ask you something?" Then she asked the question that revealed the gaping hole in her soul. "Where is God? My people say he is on the mountain. Your people say he is in Jerusalem. I don't know where he is."

I'd give a thousand sunsets to see the expression on Jesus' face as he heard those words. Did his eyes water? Did he smile? Did he look up into the clouds and wink at his father? Of all the places to find a hungry heart—Samaria? Of all the Samaritans to be searching for God—a woman? Of all the women to have an insatiable appetite for God—a five-time divorcée? And of all the people to be chosen to personally receive the secret of the ages, an outcast among outcasts? The most "insignificant" person in the region?

Remarkable. Jesus didn't reveal the secret to King Herod. He didn't request an audience of the Sanhedrin and tell them the news. It wasn't within the colonnades of a Roman court that he announced his identity. No, it was in the shade of a well in a rejected land to an ostracized woman. His eyes must have

danced as he whispered the secret. Look at verse "I am the Messiah."

The most important phrase in the chapter is one easily overlooked. Look at **verse 28**, *"Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?'"* Don't miss the drama of this moment, please. Picture her eyes, wide with amazement. Listen to her as she struggles for words. "Y-y-y-you a-a-a-are the M-m-m-messiah!" And watch as she scrambles to her feet, takes one last look, turns and runs right into the burly chest of Peter. She almost falls, regains her balance, and hotfoots it toward her hometown.

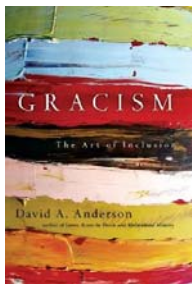
Did you notice what she forgot? She forgot her water jar. She left behind the jug that had caused the sag in her shoulders. She left behind the burden she brought. Suddenly the shame of the tattered romances disappeared. Suddenly the insignificance of her life was swallowed by the significance of the moment. "God is here! God has come! God cares ... for me!"

That is why she forgot her water jar. That is why she ran to the city. That is why she grabbed the first person she saw and announced her discovery, "I just talked to a man who knows everything I ever did ... and he loves me anyway!" The disciples offered Jesus some food. He refused it—he was too excited! He had just done what he does best. He had taken a life that was drifting and given it direction. He was exuberant! "Look!" he announced to disciples, pointing at the woman who was running to the village. "Vast fields of human souls are ripening all around us, and are ready now for the reaping." Who could eat at a time like this?

Is that a picture of you today? Do you reach out to the unreached? The minorities? The unloved? Do you go the extra mile? I reminded of the verse that says, *"How will they know if no one tells them?"* Notice that Christ crossed racial lines here. Samaritans were hated. They couldn't even co-exist with Jews.

And, as we know, there are countless modern parallels to the Jewish-Samaritan enmity—indeed, wherever peoples are divided by racial and ethnic barriers. The Jews and Palestinians in Israel. The Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. The Muslims and Arabs in our world. Perhaps that’s why the Gospels and Acts provide so many instances of Samaritans coming into contact with the message of Jesus. It is not the person from the radically different culture on the other side of the world that is hardest to love, but the nearby neighbor whose skin color, language, rituals, values, ancestry, history, and customs are different from one’s own. Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. With whom do you have no dealings?

Let’s pray!



© 2009 R. DEAN WELCH  
JULY 19, 2009