



DEAN WELCH – TEACHER

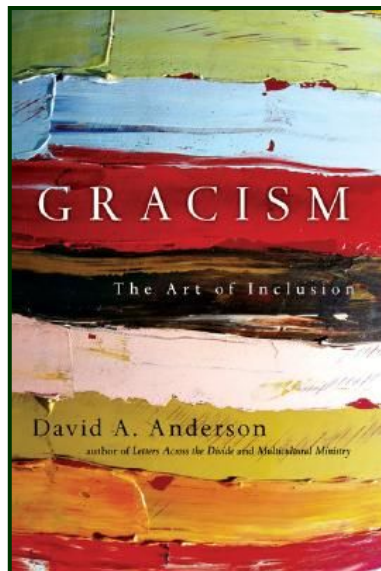


[WHAT WOULD YOU DO?]


WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

AUGUST 23, 2009

LESSON #6 FROM THE *MASTERWORK* SERIES STUDY OF:



HOW'S YOUR HEART? [WHAT WOULD YOU DO?]

 Having a heart as big for our neighbors as we do for ourselves is what we're talking about today as we finish Week 5 of our study from David Anderson's book, *GRACISM*. As you watch this video clip, I want you to think seriously about what **YOU** would do in the same situation?

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Open your Bible to **1 CORINTHIANS 12: 24-25 (NIV)** and follow along as we read our foundational verses for this study on *Gracism*: *"...But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have **EQUAL CONCERN** for each other."* Now, remember that Paul is writing to the church about avoiding division in the body—reminding them that no one spiritual gift is better than another. As John MacArthur points out in his *New Testament Commentary*¹, *"[i]n a mature and spiritual congregation, church members will **have the same care for one another**. We should care as much for the nursery teacher as for the pastor; as much for the janitor as for the Sunday School superintendent."* Is that a picture of **this** body—or of you?

Out of this idea, David Anderson has come up with his sixth principle for our study on *Gracism*, i.e., "I will consider you"—or showing equal concern for others—regardless of race, culture or class. But, let's go back to our opening video. How do you feel when you confront the situation that was shown there with the homeless man standing on the street corner asking for help? How do you typically respond? Do you extend God's mercy and grace to him usually—or not?

Turn to **GALATIANS 5: 22-23 (NASB)** and let's be reminded of the fruit of the Spirit that is within **each** of us as a believer: *"But*

¹ MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, Moody Publishers, 1984, p. 321.

the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law."

A train was filled with tired people. Most of them had spent the day traveling through the hot dusty plains and at last evening had come and they all tried to settle down to a sound sleep. However, at one end of the car a man was holding a tiny baby and as night came on the baby became restless and cried more and more. Unable to take it any longer, a big brawny man spoke for the rest of the group. "Why don't you take that baby to its mother?" There was a moment's pause and then came the reply. "I'm sorry. I'm doin' my best. The baby's mother is in her casket in the baggage car ahead."

Again there was an awful silence for a moment. Then the big man who asked the cruel question was out of his seat and moved toward the man with the motherless child. He apologized for his impatience and unkind remark. He took the tiny baby in his own arms and told the tired father to get some sleep. Then in loving patience he cared for the little child all through the night.

Expressing God's grace through kindness will influence more than eloquence. Showing equal concern for our fellow man seems to be a thing of the past. Our culture is swept more and more into the mindset of an "eye for an eye." Every day there are more and more examples of just how cruel people can be to one another. Our society is filled with things like road rage, spousal or child abuse, revenge hit lists in our schools and so much more.

So, how often do you express God's grace through kindness and showing concern for others on an average day? What about during Biker Week in May or October? Do you see more concern and kindness from Christians or non-Christians, or is it about the same. Why? Can we really make a difference in our society? Do most of us really care?

Kitty Genovese was brutally attacked as she returned to her apartment late one night. She screamed and shrieked as she fought for her life . . . yelling until she was hoarse . . . for thirty minutes . . . as she was beaten and abused. Thirty-eight people watched the half-hour episode from their windows with rapt fascination. Not one so much as walked over to the telephone and called the police. Kitty died that night as thirty-eight witnesses stared in silence.

Andrew Mormille's experience was similar. Riding on a subway, the seventeen-year-old youth was quietly minding his own business when he was stabbed repeatedly in the stomach by attackers. Eleven riders watched the stabbing, but none came to assist the young man. Even after the thugs had fled and the train had pulled out of the station, as he lay in a pool of his own blood, not one of the eleven came to his side.

What's happening? Why the passivity? How can we explain the gross lack of involvement in our world today and especially among Christians?

What would Jesus have us do today—2009? Turn to **LUKE 10: 30-37 (CEV)** and let's see what He says we are to do in responding to others—our neighbors: ³⁰*Jesus answered, "As a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, some robbers attacked him. They tore off his clothes, beat him, and left him lying there, almost dead. ³¹ It happened that a priest was going down that road. When he saw the man, he walked by on the other side. ³² Next, a Levite came there, and after he went over and looked at the man, he walked by on the other side of the road. ³³ Then a Samaritan traveling down the road came to where the hurt man was. When he saw the man, he felt very sorry for him. ³⁴ The Samaritan went to him, poured olive oil and wine on his wounds, and bandaged them. Then he put the hurt man on his own donkey and took him to an inn where he cared for him. ³⁵ The next day, the Samaritan brought out two coins, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of this man. If you spend more money on him, I will pay it back to you when I come*

again.'" ³⁶Then Jesus said, "Which one of these three men do you think was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by the robbers?" ³⁷The expert on the law answered, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Then go and do what he did."

So, back to our opening video—what would Jesus do according to this parable? Then, what's our problem in responding the same way? **Do we not genuinely believe that we are to express God's grace and equal concern to others—no matter what their culture, class or race?** Are we so wrapped up in our own little world, culture, class that we're missing what God wants us to do? I find that a very sobering thing, because I find myself asking this question of my own heart: I wonder if I'm locked into codes, traditions, and systems that men have built around my life so deeply that if Christ came back today and were outside of my box, I wonder how open I would be to welcome Him in to threaten all of those traditions and codes that I have found very comfortable in my own life.

Let's go back to our scripture passage. Now to understand what's really happening in this parable, we have to go back into the context, because it's the context that sets it up. We've heard this story all of our life—haven't we? Our initial thinking about this parable probably is it's a real nice story about morality and ethics, and about how we ought to be nice to people who are hurting. But, it's far deeper than that. So let's go back and let the dialogue between Christ and this Pharisee lawyer set up the meaning of the story for us. That starts back in verse 25, where we read, *"And behold, a [certain] lawyer stood up to put [Christ] to the test."*

Now please remember that often in public gatherings, Pharisees, scribes, these religious attorneys, would stand up and ask Christ a question, not sincerely, but trying to trip Him up before the crowd so they could discredit Him before the crowd and have Christ go away. And so this was one of these trick questions, one of these testing questions. He put Him to the test, "saying,

'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'" In a masterful stroke of strategy, Jesus Christ throws a question right back at him. Watch what happens. The lawyer says, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Verse 26: "He said to him, '[Well, you tell Me, why don't you?] What is written in the law? How [does it read to] you?'" So the religious lawyer answered and said, "[My reading is] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And Christ says—and this is a little troubling, isn't it?—"You have answered right; do this, and you will live."

See what God says: "OK, here's what I want you to do. I want you to, number one, if you've really surrendered and yielded yourself to Me, love your neighbor." And we're saying, "Lord, could we talk about this? I mean, You don't know my neighbor." And so we say, "Lord, let's not start with my neighbor. I'll double-tithe, I'll send my kids to the mission field, I'll do whatever, but not my neighbor." God says, "No, it doesn't work that way." It starts by first of all fully yielding to God, and if you fully yield to God, the way I know you are fully yielded to God is by how you treat your neighbor. And when you do this, everything else takes care of itself.

It's a little like the wonderful Peanuts cartoon, when Lucy, who always has her act together, challenges Linus and says, "Linus, **you** want to be a doctor?" "Yes, I do," he says. "You **can't** be a doctor. You hate mankind." Linus says, "I don't hate mankind; it's just people that I can't stand."

Let's go back to our scripture passage from Luke 10. Verse 30 says that "a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho." That was a seventeen-mile walk. Jerusalem is up on the hill, Jericho is down in the valley, and it's seventeen miles through the desert. In that day, and even up through the 1800s, it was one of the most treacherous stretches of ground on the face of this earth, in light of the fact that robbers and thieves were always there, praying on every pilgrim at any moment they wanted to

who walked down this path. So when He wanted to tell this story, everybody listening understood the danger in this moment. **Can you think of a road we might be familiar with that is like this road?**

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead." Now, this is a very important part of the story. Because in terms of a Jewish mind, the person who would be your neighbor would be one who could be identified as worthy of being your neighbor. For instance, by the accent that they had. Samaritans had certain accents. Non-Jews, they were Hellenistic people who lived in that area. There were other particular sects that lived in those areas who were not Jews. So you could tell by their accents, just like today. Somebody walks up to you and says, **"Park your car over here"** (pronounced **"Pahk" your "cah"** over here), they're probably from Boston, or someplace up there. If somebody says, **"Hi, y'all"** (pronounced **Hah, yaw'll**), they're probably from South Carolina, or Texas or someplace like that. But Christ says this man has been left half dead. He's unconscious. There's no way for him personally to identify his background, his culture, his ethnicity. And he's so beat up that you probably can't tell it by looking at his face.

Not only that, he's naked. They'd taken all his clothes off him, and clothes were also a symbol of who you were and where you were from. Jews had certain markings on the robes they wore. And Christ said this man fell among thieves, they beat him unconscious, and they took all of his clothes off. And Christ is giving us the picture of a person totally stripped of any identity, who is in desperate need. That's a pretty important thought there. Because we normally look at people in need through identity, don't we? Living here at the beach, there are homeless people all over our city. Our church has the Withers Swash ministry that reaches out to them. Homeless people look a certain way. I mean, you just can spot them. Sometimes they're pushing a grocery cart stacked with all their earthly goods, or sleeping on a bench. And it's that identity that kind of prompts us to make a

choice about whether or not we're going to count them to be our neighbor. Because a lot of us are from systems and backgrounds that train us to look at people like that and say, "Look, buddy, why don't you get a job?" Jesus Christ has this person with no identity—very simply, a human being in terrible, desperate need.

"Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side." This is so typical of us, isn't it? We're so busy about religious things. I'll bet these guys had some big appointment in Jerusalem or Jericho, depending on which way they were going. So, isn't it too bad about us that we're too busy to care about our neighbor? We just brush off people in need.

It's more to that here. You see, the priest had a much deeper problem than just that he was late to some appointment in Jericho. Let me tell you the problem the priest had. **It was a problem with his system, with the codes, with the traditions that bound his life.** No priest could get within four cubits of a dead person. Now, God never said that; that was something they dreamed up. So this priest couldn't even get close enough to find out if the guy was dead or not. And he couldn't lean over and feel if he was breathing. So assuming that he was probably dead, he didn't want to be defiled. Because if he would touch this carcass, this person who was unconscious, actually, then he would be defiled, and he would not be able to serve in the temple. So he moves to the other side and walks by.

Are there are any systems, expectations, thought processes, preferences, prejudices in your life that keep you from getting close to someone who is desperately in need.

So following the priest came a Levite. Now, we really don't know a whole lot about why the Levite did this, except to say that on this road from Jerusalem to Jericho, it would be very likely, since it's a dangerous road, that pilgrims always kept in mind who was

around them. I think it would be OK to assume that this Levite, who, by the way, was kind of just below the priest in the religious caste system. He wasn't as important as a priest; nor did he have to be bound by the laws of defilement. So he could have certainly helped this man. In fact, the text says that he went over and looked at him. He didn't have the stay away or do not touch rule. He went over and looked at him. Then he kept walking.

Now, if you were standing in that crowd listening to Jesus tell the story, you would expect that the next person that's going to come on the scene is a layman. Because these were the three structures of Jewish religious hierarchy. There was the priest; then the Levite was his helper; and then laymen were always involved in some way helping the priests and Levites. So the natural thing to happen ... But at this point, Jesus Christ turns the story in a very bold and powerful way. Because to the surprise of everybody, He introduces the next guy to come along: a Samaritan.

Now, I cannot tell you enough ... I don't think I have the capacity to explain deeply enough how much the Samaritans hated the Jews and how much the Jews hated the Samaritans. And this wasn't any recent firestorm of political infighting between these two people. This went back literally generations. It went back centuries. To make matters worse, just before Christ arrived on the scene, the Samaritans had come into Jerusalem and defiled the temple in Jerusalem as an act of war, and scattered the bones of defiled animals in the outer court of the temple. So, I mean, feelings were running real deep. And Jesus says a Samaritan came along.

More surprising, Jesus makes the Samaritan the hero of the story. If you want to know how the Jews felt about the Samaritans, Ben Seerac (?), writing in 200 B.C., said this: *"If you do a turn good, know for whom you are doing it, and your good deeds will not go to waste. Do good to a devout man, and you will receive a reward, if not from him, then certainly from the Most High. Give to a devout man. Do not go to the help of a*

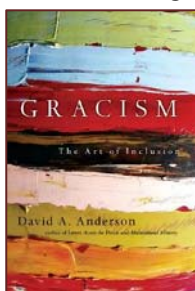
sinner. Do good to a humble man; give nothing to a godless one." And he was talking all about that you would never help a guy in a ditch who you weren't sure was a really good Jewish kind of person.

Then Christ says, "But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him," for the first time in the story, somebody feels compassion for somebody they don't know, and they can't tell their identity, who is in desperate need. The whole turning of the story is on the point of compassion and equal concern—two who did not, and one who does. You know the rest of the story from your Bible study this week. So, how are you going to respond? Do you need to ask the question the Pharisee lawyer asked, "*But who is my neighbor?*"

What I find fascinating and instructive here is that Christ defines the neighbor all the way to my enemies. Think about that for a moment. It's not just people like me. It's not just my friends. It's not just the nice guy who lives next door. It's a lot more than that person with sixteen things in her basket that's in the 10-items-or-less checkout line. It's those people that seemingly are impossible to love. It's our enemies.

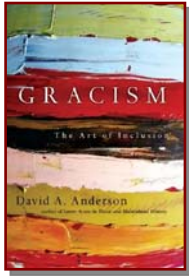
So who are your enemies? Do you have one? Do you have a couple? I don't know who your enemies are. I just know that God calls us to love our neighbor, to care for our neighbor, and that neighborliness goes all the way to your enemy. Listen to these words from **MATTHEW 5: 43-45 (NIV)**: ⁴³*"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'* ⁴⁴*But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* ⁴⁵*that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."* Go and do the same!

Let's Pray!



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SESSION SIX — AUGUST 23, 2009



1. **1 Corinthians 12: 24-25 (NIV):** "...But God has combined the members of the body and given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have _____ for each other".
2. Let's be reminded of the **fruit of the Spirit** from **Galatians 5: 22-23 (NASB):** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, _____, _____, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law."
 - ★ Expressing God's grace through kindness will influence more than _____.
3. If Christ came back today and were outside of my box, how open would I be to welcome Him in to _____ all of those traditions and codes that I have found very _____ in my own life.
4. **Luke 10: 27-28 (NIV)** says, "²⁷...Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" and, 'Love your _____ as yourself.'" ²⁸"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. " _____ and you will live."
 - ★ It starts by first of all fully _____ to God, and if you fully yield to God, the way I know you are fully yielded to God is by _____ you treat your neighbor. And when you do this, everything else takes care of itself.
5. Homeless people look a certain way. I mean, you just can spot them. Sometimes they're pushing a grocery cart stacked with all their earthly goods, or sleeping on a bench. And it's that identity that kind of prompts us to make a _____ about whether or not we're going to count them to be our _____. Because a lot of us are from systems and backgrounds that train us to look at people like that and say, "Look, buddy, why don't you get a job?"
6. Christ _____ our neighbor all the way to those people that seemingly are _____ to love. It's our enemies.