

Stand Alone | Love is Grace & Truth

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INTRO - Love is Grace & Truth

Have you ever:

- 1.) Gotten into a conflict with someone you love and you both got heated quickly, argued, hit a boil over point and didn't actually SOLVE anything because you didn't know how to fix it?
- 2.) Have you ever gotten into a conversation about a charged cultural topic (race, gender, sexual orientation, politics, religion, Justin Beiber), and you felt there were only two options:
 - it was either going to get heated (devolving into an unfixable chaotic conflict) OR
 - you were going to stay silent
- 3.) Have you ever got lost in the tension between humility & confidence
- 4.) Have you ever lost something so valuable that you didn't know how to recover?
- 5.) Have you ever been sad, lonely, disappointed, without hope for the future?
- 6.) Have you ever lost hope for humanity in the middle of an Eastern European war?
- 7.) Have you ever got in a conflict about “masks”?
- 8.) Have you ever been confused about your sexuality or your gender?
- 9.) Have you ever felt hopeless about the tension between races?
- 10.) Have you ever wanted to hide from the political upheavals?
- 11.) Have you ever experienced anger just spilling out over the edge?

Complexity of problems

There is ONE answer:

Jesus

Q: How did you respond internally when I said “Jesus is the answer”?

- Abstract agreement (ok - like the same old dinner... again)
- Confusion (yea, but...) (cognitive and/or emotional dissonance)
- Cynicism + Eye roll

- (well the eye roll isn't technically possible since you don't have eyes inside)
- Frustration, despair
- A deeply settled, experiential agreement

I think MOST of us, if we're honest about our deepest challenges (and I hope we would be): probably locate ourselves in **one of the unsettled answers**.

WHY?

Because we KNOW Jesus is the right answer but not sure HOW He is...

ILL. Answer "4", "4", "4" - BUT "what is 2+2"?

THE QUESTION MATTERS!

It isn't a matter of a different answer, but an understanding of the APPLICATION of the Answer we already have

This happens on an individual level

This happens when a group of individuals interact corporately - culture/world

The tension in your life is most likely
NOT because you don't have the answer, but
because you misunderstand the problem.

God most often re-directing us to a different application...

ILL. Elijah (1 Kings 19) - "why are you here"

12 After the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a still, small voice. 13 When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

ILL. Jonah - "gourd plant"

ILL. Jacob (Genesis 32) - bless me! - "what's your name"

24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." 27 The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. 28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel,^[f] because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

People came to Jesus ALL the time & Jesus asked SO many questions.

God has already given the right answer

We struggle APPLYING HIM to the right questions

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus - is the **manifestation (application)** of grace & Truth into our world.

- Jesus died for us while we were sinners (Romans 5:8)
- Jesus says he came to testify to the Truth & whoever is on the side of Truth listens to Him. (John 18:37)

All WORLDVIEWS (except Christianity) are built on the foundation of Grace **OR** Truth.

DEFINE GRACE

- Divine forgiveness
- Divine Empowerment
- The means by which we can know a holy God
- At a conference for comparative religion - in a discussion about what makes Christianity unique: Lewis interjected. "What's unique about Christianity? Oh, that's easy. It's grace."

DEFINE TRUTH

- **Pen & Podium - "There is an ipad on this stand" a true statement?**
 - But **WHAT MAKES THE STATEMENT TRUE?**
 - Because I see it
 - Because I believe it
 - if you didn't see it, wouldn't it still be true that the ipad is on the stand? Seeing might help you *know* the statement is true, but it isn't what *makes* it true.
 - If you stopped believing, I challenge, would the ipad disappear? No. And would believing really hard make an ipad materialize atop an empty stand? Probably not.
 - "The thing that makes the statement 'The ipad is on the stand' a *true* statement," "is an ipad and the stand, and the former resting on the latter. It doesn't matter if anyone sees it. It doesn't matter if anyone *believes* it. It doesn't matter what anyone *thinks* at all."
 - The truth is completely independent of any subject's thoughts—a "subject" here being any person or any group of people. It is, in other words, completely *mind independent*.
 - The first two responses tie the notion of truth to what is happening on the *inside* of the one responding —a personal belief or an individual sensation of seeing—and not on anything that's happening *outside* the one responding. This inside/outside distinction is the key to understanding any kind of relativism.
 - **ILL. Gravity is gravity - no matter what you think, feel or believe about it**
 - Truth is not sourced from within, but from God making it so

- “You and I can discover the truth, but we cannot create it...Scripture views truth as something outside us, which we can believe or not [believe] but can never sway.” - Rand Alcorn
- Genesis 3 - alternative Truth is the FIRST deception - YOU define it.
- “When you boil life down to the basics, there are two kinds of people: sinners who admit their sin and sinners who deny it.” - Randy Alcorn

Love is not love without both

ILL. A child who is an addict

- grace & truth is the only way out
- Grace or Truth alone is not love

ILL. Critics & Cowards

- Truth alone:
 - **Critics**
 - religious, morally superior, us and them, other, shout truth
 - Pride
 - Arrogance
 - dehumanize “them”
 - us vs. them
- Grace alone:
 - Cowards
 - subjective, blind acceptance, deny moral standards
 - “we look the other way”
- Critics:
 - Do you “win” by dehumanizing the one with whom you disagree?
 - us vs them
- Cowards:
 - Do you blindly accept everything in the name of non-judgement?

Christ doesn't allow us to pick either, but commands us to do BOTH:

**LOVE IS THE COURAGE TO MANIFEST BOTH GRACE & TRUTH
TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T DESERVE IT**

ILL. Love & Cliffs:

- Love is telling someone where the cliff is and that they shouldn't step off it, and then bandaging them up and paying to take care of them after they do it. This is applied to others and to ourselves.

Treat all people as equally valid, not all ideas as equally valid.

Care for people. Contend with ideas.

We do this personally & publicly

ILL. (Public application first) Post Christian West.

- The Church has the answer (Jesus) Grace & Truth but not often helped the world understand the question:

Marriage & Divorce:

The Bible says we shouldn't get divorced.

- There are times for it
- Adultery and Physical & Sexual Abuse is not ok
- There are times for it
- BUT US Census data - #1 reason for divorce "incompatibility" (43%)

Divorce statistics:

- 50% will get divorced
- 60% of second marriages end in divorce
- 73% of third marriages end in divorce

Hey Christians: we already know the answer: we shouldn't get divorced.

- Divorces are complicated
- Lots of things happening
- NOT trying to OVERSIMPLIFY THE PAIN OR CHALLENGES SITTING IN ON THIS SCREEN/IN THIS ROOM
- If you have gone through a divorce you are loved and accepted here.

If you will allow me to Pause the complexities for a moment...

We know the answer

What is the question?

What is the purpose/objective of marriage?

ILL. Q: Purpose of Marriage?

- Culture's Purpose for Marriage = Satisfaction
 - No fault divorce when it doesn't make me happy anymore
 - "when Marriage becomes a detriment to my happiness it should end"
 - Marriage becomes a glorified dating relationship but with big financial and legal risks involved - why do it? (many aren't now days)
 - 1960s & 1970s redefined marriage

- 1960s & 1970s birth control disconnected sex from commitment
- commitment and connected it to satisfaction
- Marriage is something the “State” issues & recognizes
- This understanding of marriage is not surprising since the ethos of culture is personal happiness. This is simply culture’s worldview applied to marriage.

- **Christianity’s Purpose for Marriage = Sanctification**

- Marriage is a covenant not a contract
- A relational earthly covenant that is “a shadow” of the covenant between Abraham and God and then ultimately completed in Jesus and the world/church - a non breakable commitment from BOTH sides
 - WHY?
- The heavenly **covenant is FOR** the growth/development and transformation of the person involved
 - Christianity is about being born again and becoming a new type of being - a human filled with God’s Spirit
 - In a very real way the Covenant is a relational commitment of GRACE & TRUTH that serves as a container for the hard journey of transformation & change.
 - Sanctification
- So marriage is a type and shadow of a “commitment container” for two broken humans to serve each other in the process of transformation
- In short:
 - It is a covenant with another person who is close enough to see, and be wounded by your sin & weaknesses, but committed enough to not leave you.
 - No alleviation of the Truth (tension) of your sin.
 - No removal of relational commitment (Grace)

So in one relationship you have a mechanism:

- for TRUTH (your sin is evident and can’t hide) and
- for GRACE (they aren’t leaving).

Marriage is for mutual sanctification & spiritual transformation -
this OFTEN grates against temporary personal happiness.

If you ask the marriage question written by culture, Christianity seems archaic and very out of touch.

- “Why would a person have to give up their happiness to love someone who is damaging and hurtful to them?”
- Framed that way it is a genuine and logical thought
- The better question is what is actually “hurtful” to them”?

ILL. A credit card swiped at will, with an empty bank account, can make you *temporarily* happy, but will not make you *ultimately* happy.

If you ask the marriage question written by Christianity, the Bible gives a time tested path, throughout all scenarios, regardless of ethnicity, culture, experience, age, economic or government status, or situation, (*gives a path*) into transformation and love (which ironically - often times leads to a larger degree of LONG TERM happiness as a byproduct).

- Ultimately everyone *wants* to watch the movie where the 60 year old man lovingly holds the hand of his wife after traversing life's challenges together instead of celebrating a 60 year old man who hits the bars and sleeps around on the weekends to pursue his own personal desires and happiness.

When we ask the *wrong questions* the *right answers* can look foolish

Personal Application: If you've been divorced: you need Grace & Truth

- Truth: reflection on the realities of what happened
- Grace: God loves & accepts & forgives

How about we start with OURSELVES

You start with You.

Truth & No Grace = Cancel Culture

- "based on our belief I degrade your humanity"

Grace & No Truth = Blind acceptance of things we know are wrong

- "The emperor is wearing no clothes"

Truth without grace is mean. Grace without truth is meaningless.

- Jimmy evans

Truth without grace is harsh. Grace without truth is lying.

- Tim Keller

John 1:14

Jesus manifesting Grace & Truth into a broken world is love

We are to do the same personally & publicly
start with yourself...

Care for people. Contend with ideas.

Q: Where do you need to apply God's Grace?

Q: Where do you need to apply God's Truth?