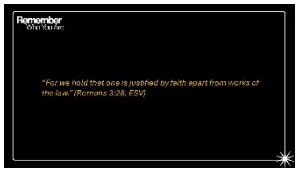


Make a Difference

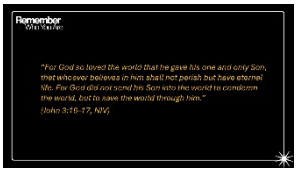
Remember Who You Are #3 • October 25, 2026



A Word about Grace

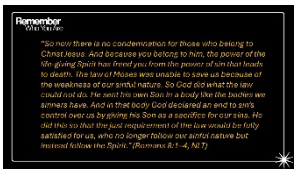
> *"For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law."* (Romans 3:28, ESV)

The good news of Jesus Christ tells us that we have hope, not because of anything we have done…not because of anything we have earned…but only through our faith in God's work. We trust and believe and cling to the truth that we are sinners saved only by grace!



> *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*
> (John 3:16–17, NIV)

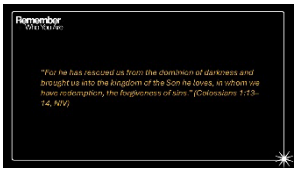
The God who made you isn't sitting on his throne weighing your tasks and accomplishments – putting them on a scale of good and bad – to decide if you've done enough good to get into heaven (news flash – you didn't, and you can't). No, we understand that we are found guiltless solely based on the work of Jesus.



> *"So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit."* (Romans 8:1–4, NLT)

The God whose image you bear isn't looking over your life ready to strike you down if you stray from the path. He is looking to transform

you and make you into something better than you are now. Not based on your own goodness or self-worth…but based only on His.



> *"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."* (Colossians 1:13–14, NIV)

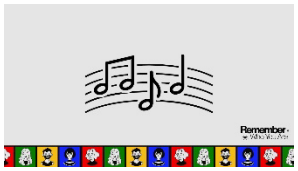
Stop and let all of that sink in.

Have you forgotten it? Have you dismissed it? Have you ignored it? Have you never understood it?

Pause, and ponder the magnificent, awe-inspiring, deeply humbling grace of our Lord and Savior!

There is deep truth in these words. And it demands a response.

If you have accepted this free gift of God as your identity – you are a forgiven, no-longer-ruled-by-sin-and-death, covered-by-the-love-and-sacrifice-of-Jesus, presently-being-changed, ultimately-being-glorified, currently-carrying-the-Holy-Spirit, child of God…then **stand up** and give God praise for what He has done!



> Amazing Love (I'm Forgiven Because You Were Forsaken) – Play Lyric Video
>
> *Join me in singing a worship song that has been around for a few years (dropped out of our rotation), but it echoes that idea!*
>
> ---



If you didn't stand up because that's not you yet (or if you stood because…well…peer pressure), and you haven't yet accepted that amazing love, don't wait. Choose Jesus and His free gift – free to you, though it cost him dearly. Not because you are good enough. Not because you know enough. Not because you are convinced that you'll follow Him closely enough…but simply because *He* is offering it to you.

If you want Him, you can raise your hand now so we can help you move forward with that decision.

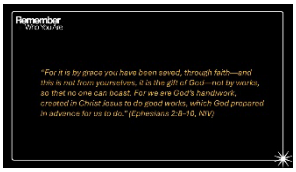
If you aren't ready to raise a hand, but you want to talk more about it, write your name down on your connection card and give it to me after service…or come talk to me or one of our elders and we would love to guide you closer to Jesus.



"Making a Difference"

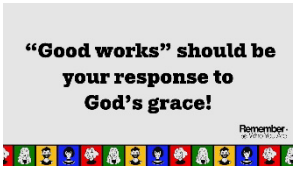
I spelled all this out for you on the *front end* of today's sermon because today's topic sometimes stirs up feelings of "earning" rather than "receiving." It creates thoughts of self-sufficiency rather than God-dependency.

I do not want anything I say today to cloud the idea of grace! Grace is forever our reality.



> *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* (Ephesians 2:8–10, NIV)

Like Paul's statement in Ephesians, we emphasize the grace and faith aspect of our salvation…BEFORE we talk about what should come from it.

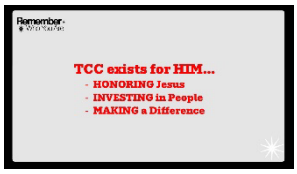


But…there IS something that should come from it.

"Good works" should be your response to God's grace!

Recap

For the past two weeks, we've been remembering **who we are** here at TCC. And the phrase we've used to explain it is our vision statement:



> **TCC exists for HIM:**
> **Honoring Jesus, Investing in People, Making a Difference.**

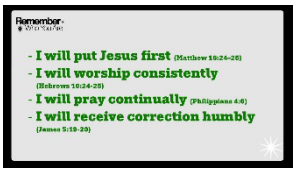
That is the vision of Tonganoxie Christian Church.

We've talked about that vision as a way to frame our pursuit of **God's glory** as we engage in **God's mission**. *It is who we are*. And since that's who we are, we need to be actively engaged Christians.



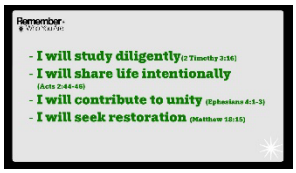
We talked about **practical environments** the church encourages our members and attenders to inhabit:

- **Worshiping** in services (weekly)
- **Studying** the Bible in a class (weekly)
- **Sharing** life in a small group (regularly)
- **Serving** (meaningfully)

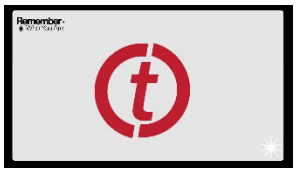


We also talked about **decisions and fruit** those environments should be producing:

- "Honoring Jesus" should have you saying…
  - I will put **Jesus first** *(Matthew 16:24–25)*
  - I will **worship consistently** *(Hebrews 10:24-25)*
  - I will **pray continually** *(Philippians 4:6)*
  - I will **receive correction humbly** *(James 5:19-20)*



- "Investing in People" should have you saying…
  - I will **study diligently** *(2 Timothy 3:16)*
  - I will **share life intentionally** *(Acts 2:44-46)*
  - I will **contribute to unity** *(Ephesians 4:1-3)*
  - I will **seek restoration** *(Matthew 18:15)*



The last piece of fruit we will talk about is found in the letter "M" of "HIM"– "Making a Difference."

What do we mean by that?

Let me read the "Making a Difference" part of our member agreement.

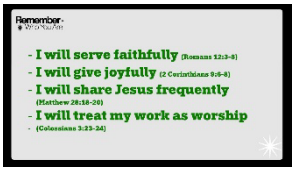
"As a member of Tonganoxie Christian Church, to the best of my ability and with grace from the Lord and extended by my church family…"

> **SIDE NOTE: This is **aspirational** language, not **punitive/legalistic** language. We want our members to aspire to and pursue these things, and if you say "I'm in," then we'll push you and encourage you in these areas. Not* police *you. Not hunt you down. Not kick you out if we don't see perfection. The elders are here to **pray** for you, **pastor** you, **preach truth** to you, **protect** you, **listen** to you, and **cultivate** you through these areas.*

So, please hear these statements with the right heart behind them!

Let me start again…

"As a member of Tonganoxie Christian Church, to the best of my ability and with grace from the Lord and extended by my church family…



I will grow in the way I Make a Difference

- **I will serve faithfully.** I will use my talents and spiritual gifts in service at TCC.

  "Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly." (Romans 12:3–8, NLT)

- **I will give joyfully.** I will give cheerfully from my income to support the Lord's work at TCC and beyond.

  "Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you

need and plenty left over to share with others."
(2 Corinthians 9:6–8, NLT)

- **I will share Jesus frequently.** I will teach and lead my family in the gospel. I will look for opportunities to talk about Him with others.

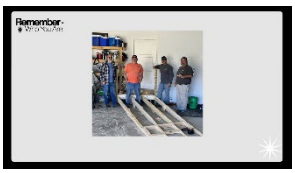
  "Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."" (Matthew 28:18–20, NLT)

- **I will treat my work as worship.** I will treat my occupation as my unique call to worship and witness, doing my work with excellence and sharing Christ as the Lord gives me opportunity.

  "Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ."
  (Colossians 3:23–24, NLT)

Each of those choices is important.

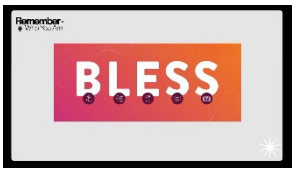
We hope you will live them out and make a difference in the life of others!



- **Serve faithfully** – in a ministry role or team. Lots of you already do this, by the way. Over 180 people (different individuals!) have done something at this church in the past year, ranging from basic tasks to skilled tasks to leadership over tasks and over people. TCC is better off when you use your varied gifts to bless others!

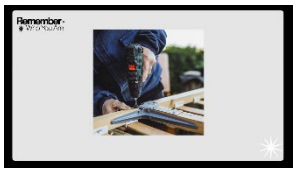


- **Give joyfully** – through weekly offerings. When I say it's "offering time" we don't want you to just cheer. We want you to cheer *as you give* – celebrating what you can offer to God's mission. Lots of you already do this, by the way. We are thankful for those who give (*I don't know the specifics – I stay oblivious to who is donating*). I know some of you are extremely generous. Others are just starting to learn what trusting God looks like when it comes to finances. That's okay for now. But just keep testing Him out and give joyfully. TCC and those we support are better off when you contribute to them.

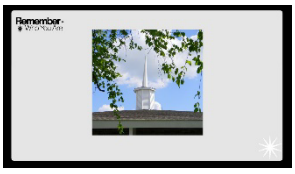


- **Sharing Jesus frequently** – through evangelism. Talking about your faith with others. You can use the B.L.E.S.S. acronym to think about this practically
    - **Begin with prayer**
    - **Listen to them**
    - **Eat with them**
    - **Serve them**
    - **Share your Story with them**

  And I hear stories of you doing this already. Some of you have even brought friends with you to church as part of this investment! We need you to keep telling people about the amazing love of Jesus. Our community is better off when you B.L.E.S.S them!



- **Treat your work as worship** – remember that your worship of Jesus isn't confined to *this* building or *this* day. Wherever you are investing time and energy, do it in a way that honors Jesus. Model your faith. Show your love. Pursue holiness. Be honest. I see that in you, too. Many of you ask for prayers for coworkers and people connected to your business. Keep it up! Your work circles are better off when you honor Jesus there.



I know some of you might hear those admonitions and feel some skepticism. The first three (especially!) might be met with some cynical comments – serving, giving, and evangelizing are "self-serving" tasks that benefit the church. "More people = more money =

more stuff for us to do…so we can get more people and more money, etc."



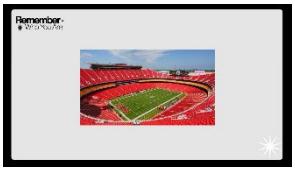
I won't lie. Those choices DO benefit the church. But we have bigger reasons for encouraging those behaviors.

"Good works" should be our response to God's grace!



Love vs. Legalism

You can't give enough money, win over enough people, or do enough tasks to EARN God's love. That's not how His grace works.

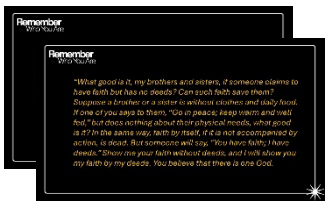


But once you HAVE it, shouldn't you live differently in light of it?

> If the Chiefs called me up and said, "*Congrats! You've just been given season tickets for life! With parking passes and free concessions*," I might be skeptical. Surely there are strings attached! What if I cheer for the Broncos? What if I don't use the tickets for an entire season or five, until Arrowhead is just down the street? What if I do go, but I order all the expensive snacks on their tab?
>
> "*Doesn't matter*," they say. The tickets are mine.
>
> How would that change my relationship with the Chiefs? Wouldn't you think I would start to go more? Wouldn't you think I would grow in my appreciation for them? Wouldn't you think I would speak well of them in other situations? Wouldn't you be more likely to see me in some Chiefs gear and cheer for them during the upcoming season?
>
> And on the flip side, if I said, "Oh, I love the Chiefs now," but I never go, never pay attention to those tickets, and even avoid Whataburger because Patrick Mahomes likes it… no one would believe me.
>
> My actions would show my response to the Chiefs' grace, right?

Is it any different with Jesus?

We don't ***earn*** any of what He gives. But there is a ***response*** that should accompany what we've received. James puts it this way:



> *"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.... You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.... As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."* (James 2:14–19, 24, 26, NIV)



If our actions are done out of requirement and compulsion, that's **legalism** – a belief that following the rules is what matters; we align with God because we're forced to.

But if our actions are done out of joy and thanks for what is graciously given, that's **love** – showing appreciation and aligning with God because He is worth it and because we want to!

There is a huge difference. And only you know which one is your motivation.

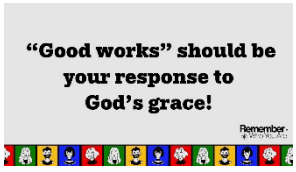
But let me encourage you to act and respond because you are amazed at the love you've been shown. Allow that to inspire your words and your actions and your attitude!

Conclusion

Let me reiterate:



- Don't **work** just for a paycheck
- Don't **give** under compulsion.
- Don't **evangelize** out of fear.
- Don't **serve** out of guilt.



I still hope you do those things…but do them to glorify God because of what God has already done for you!

"Good works" should be your response to God's grace!

If these actions are part of your life now, keep it up! If they aren't, don't add them for my sake. Don't add them for the church's sake. Add them as a gracious and natural response to the free gift of a great God!

Then, and only then, will they truly **make a difference** for others!



Prayer

Invitation

Honoring Jesus. Investing in People. Making a Difference.

We have encouraged you to make those actions a part of your walk with Christ, and part of belonging to this church.

Next week, we are inviting you to say "yes" to these things with one other tangible action. We are going to ask those who are baptized believers in Christ to join us in **signing the member agreement** that we've been discussing.

> *(I know some of you bristle at the thought of signing anything. But remember what I said earlier – this isn't a contract. It is a declaration. It is a way to proclaim, "I want to do these actions in response to God's grace!"*
>
> *If you hate the idea, maybe you could extend grace as our leaders are trying to elevate and encourage our church to look more and more like the bride of Christ – pure and spotless and pleasing to God! Come alongside us as members of the local church, even if you don't particularly like the method we use!)*

If you have questions about the agreement, read it over. But I invite you to come back next week, ready to claim these "good works" as your response to a good God and as your commitment to making a difference with this church!

Sermon Notes

A Word about Grace

(Romans 3:28; John 3:16–17; Romans 8:1–4; Colossians 1:13–14)

“Making a Difference”

(Ephesians 2:8–10; Romans 12:3–8; 2 Corinthians 9:6–8; Matthew 28:18–20; Colossians 3:23–24)

Love vs. Legalism

(James 2:14–19, 24, 26)

Sermon Discussion Questions

- How has the church made a difference in your life?
- Where is the last place you served in church? Talk about your experience. Who did you help? What did you do?
- Why is it important for people within the church to use their gifts (see Romans 12:3-8)?
- Privately calculate how much you give toward God's Kingdom. Do you give this amount joyfully? Does your level of giving reflect the priority Jesus has in your life, or does it need to be adjusted?
- Who is the last person you've talked to about your faith in Christ? Was it an ongoing relationship or out of the blue?
- Who is the next person in your life who needs to hear about Jesus? Are you praying for them? Are you praying for opportunities?
- Why is your work an important place to show your worship for God? How freely can you talk about Him there? How faithfully can you follow Him there?
- As you do these things, what is your motivation: love or legalism? Explain.