

THE OVERVIEW

- * In v7-18, we see a typical example of Paul pouring out his PASTORAL HEART ... At its core, Christianity should be ABOUT, FOR & WITH people.
- * In v2-6, Paul reminds us to make sure our EYES are OPEN & UP.
→ *Are your eyes open & up? What does that mean? What evidence is there in your life that they are? How do you keep them so?*
→ *"We're always weighing the balance of filling ourselves up, while making sure we overflow, of devotion on one hand and action on the other, the importance of digging deep, yet reaching out." How do you keep those in balance? Why are they both important? Which one comes more naturally to you? How might you develop in the other?*
- * v2: Before you REACH OUT, you need to BOW LOW.
→ *Why is prayer such an important part of outreach? What are the likely consequences of trying to witness without having a meaningful prayer life? How could / should prayer feed into your evangelistic endeavours?*
- * Be WATCHFUL (1 Peter 5:8-9, Ephesians 6:18) & THANKFUL.
- * v3-4: Prayer is a crucial part of our OUTREACH endeavours. We ask the Lord for WISDOM, CLARITY & BOLDNESS as we proclaim the mystery of Christ both in WORD & DEED.

ALWAYS FULL OF GRACE

- * The sad reality is, Christians are seen predominantly as UNGRACIOUS ... How did a SAVIOUR like Him produce FOLLOWERS with a REPUTATION like that?
- * The Conundrum: Sinners ran TOWARDS Jesus, not AWAY.
- * The Irony: The WORSE a person felt about themselves, the MORE LIKELY they were to see Jesus as a SAFE PLACE.
- * The church is supposed to be a HAVEN of GRACE in a world of UNGRACE
→ *Do you think Christians have the reputation of being lacking in grace? If so, why? Do you think it's fair? How might we change that reputation?*
→ *What does the ungrace world look, smell and behave like? How could or should the church be different? What is a haven and is the church one?*

Jesus stood for, taught & demonstrated radical, extraordinary, life changing GRACE, confirmed by 4 proofs / evidences:

1. His TEACHING was revolutionary
2. He told lavish STORIES of grace
3. In His interactions, He ACTED OUT grace
4. What He CONFRONTED

→ *Which of those are most compelling to you? Which bit of teaching, story or acted out grace most inspires or teaches you about how Jesus stood for grace?*

The Point: If that's what Jesus STOOD FOR, that's what we should be KNOWN FOR.

→ *What would it mean for the church to be 'known for' its grace? What would it take for the church to be 'known for' its grace?*

What does it functionally mean to be FULL OF GRACE?

This should be a place where people

- * Are allowed to be in a MESS.
- * Don't need to have all the ANSWERS or wear a Sunday best MASK to fit in
- * Are allowed to FAIL, and if they do, should be RESTORED not written off.
- * Who are struggling feel they are being LOVED, not JUDGED ... that we're FOR them, not AGAINST them.

Our job is to CULTIVATE that environment and let GRACE do its AMAZING WORK.

→ *How should grace affect how we welcome guests to the church, particularly people with what we perceive to be messy or with baggage? How do we put grace to work? What can it do that we can't?*

→ *How do we cultivate an environment always full of grace?*

→ *"Grace transforms; legalism conforms." Discuss!*

→ *"We must discern what grace sees, rather than condemn what we see. Anyone can do that and many do." Discuss!*

SEASONED WITH SALT

What can we sprinkle into conversation to create a THIRST for / INTEREST in spiritual things? How can we SHIFT the conversation from the usual topics onto MATTERS of the HEART?

→ *How do you normally go about elevating your conversations from the mundane to the spiritual, the temporal to the eternal, the trivial to the substantial? Can you get better at it? Do any of the following help?*

1. Ask, 'How you are REALLY doing?'
2. What's your greatest FEAR or DREAM?
3. Tell them they're LOVED or, if you're really brave, that JESUS loves them.
4. How can I PRAY for you?
5. What simple SEED can I SOW?
6. Can you tell them part of your TESTIMONY? Concentrate on your TRANSFORMATION and let God worry about THEIRS.
7. LISTEN lovingly: People remember less about what you SAY & more about how you make them FEEL.

→ *Do you have any friendships with non-Christians that have become 'stuck'? You'd love to help them meet Jesus, but don't know how? Which of the above list might be helpful?*

RESPONSE

1. Are you FULL OF GRACE? Have you let His amazing grace change your life and does it show? You're overflowing with something and is it sweet aroma of grace?
2. WHO are you PRAYING for? Ask Lord for open doors, divine encounters ... To show you where soil is fertile, fruit is low-hanging
3. How might you sprinkle a little SALT on that conversation? Perhaps there's someone you've been building a friendship with: how could you shift the conversation up a level? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how.