

A CULTURE OF GRACE



INTRODUCTION

- The Cinnabon Effect
- Review: Five Features of the Family of God: A Love for Christ, A Hunger for Truth, A Culture of Grace, A Mind to Work, a Heart for Missions.

A CULTURE OF GRACE (EPHESIANS 4:31-32)

- Fixing our eyes on Jesus – “as God in Christ forgave you” (4:32; cf. 2:8-9)
- Forsaking the flesh – “let all bitterness be put away” (4:31)
- Finding opportunities to love – “be kind” (4:32)
- Flowing from the heart – “tenderhearted” (4:32)
- Forgiving others – “forgiving one another” (4:32)

AMAZING GRACE

- Grace should be familiar, because we are recipients of God’s amazing grace (John 1:12-13; 6:44; Eph. 4:32; 2:8-9; Rom. 3:24; 4:5; 11:5-6; 2 Cor. 3:5-6; 2 Tim. 1:9; Jam. 1:17-18; 1 Pet. 1:3-5)
- Our actions should be gracious, loving our neighbor as ourselves (Lk. 10:25-37)
- Our speech should be gracious, seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6; Prov 15:4; 16:21-24; 25:11; Titus 2:7-8)
- We cannot use negative feelings or circumstances to excuse rude behavior (1 Cor. 13:5; Prov. 15:1)
- Without love, even our best ministry will be noisy and obnoxious (1 Cor. 13:1; Eph. 4:1-3)
- It is only by love that the world will know we are Christ’s disciples (John 13:34-35)

A CULTURE OF GRACE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

- We will be diligent to pursue the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3)
- We will be as passionate and devoted to love as we are to truth (Eph. 4:15). Both are essential.
- We will practice the golden rule, treating others as we wish to be treated (Matt. 7:12)
- We will expect our love and grace to be tested in times of disappointment or disagreement. When we disagree, we will do so charitably and respectfully and not hold grudges (James 4:1-7).
- We will resolve not to gossip or slander one another. If there’s a problem, we will start by going to that person privately and seeking to be reconciled (Matt. 5:23-24).
- We will be humble and approachable, not being defensive but quick to hear (James 1:19-20).
- We will not always expect to be treated the right way by others, but this will not stop us from loving in return (Rom. 13:17-21)
- We will avoid being judgmental, leaving space for members to have different views on secondary issues and matters of conscience (Rom. 14:1-15:7)
- We will correct and admonish when needed in a spirit of gentleness and patience (2 Tim. 2:24-26)
- We will model this grace at home with our spouse and children (Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Pet. 3:4, 7-9)
- We will both ask and offer forgiveness (Eph. 4:32; Matt. 6:12; 18:21-35; Lk. 17:3-4; Col. 3:12-13).
- We will give time for the Holy Spirit to work, knowing that sanctification is a process (1 Pet. 1:14-16)
- We will pray for and appoint leaders who model gentleness, humility, and self-control (1 Tim. 3:1-7)
- Chuck Swindoll: “One of the marks of maturity is the ability to disagree without becoming disagreeable. It takes grace. In fact, handling disagreements with tact is one of the crowning achievements of grace. Unfortunately, the older we get the more brittle we become in our reactions, the more tedious and stubborn and fragile. For some strange reason, this is especially true among evangelical Christians. You would think that the church would be the one place where we could find tolerance, tact, plenty of room for disagreement, and open discussion. Not so! It is a rare delight to come across those in the family of God who have grown old in grace as well as in knowledge.” (*Grace Awakening*, 173).