

Main Idea: As far as grace and truth go, two things are true of Jesus according to John 1:14 and 17, and these two truths have tremendous implications for our lives.

- I. The Logos is full of grace and truth (14).
 - A. Grace is unmerited kindness and help towards undeserving sinners.
 - B. Truth is the God-pleasing standard of what is good and right.
 - 1. Grace without truth is shallow and sentimental.
 - 2. Truth without grace is harsh and legalistic.
- II. The Logos brought grace and truth (17).
 - A. Jesus gives us what we lack.
 - 1. To be right with God we need grace and truth.
 - 2. If we are right with God, we still need grace and truth.
 - B. Jesus gives us an example to follow.
 - 1. He exhibited grace and truth towards a Pharisee (John 3).
 - 2. He exhibited grace and truth towards the woman at the well (John 4).
 - 3. He exhibited grace and truth towards 5,000 hungry men (John 6).
 - 4. He exhibited grace and truth towards a woman caught in adultery (John 8).
 - 5. He exhibited grace and truth towards two grieving sisters (John 11).
 - 6. He exhibited grace and truth towards some dirty feet (John 13).
 - 7. He exhibited grace and truth at the cross (John 19).
 - 8. He exhibited grace and truth towards Thomas (John 20).
 - 9. He exhibited grace and truth towards Peter (John 21).
 - C. What Jesus gives us, we are to share with others.
 - 1. If we are like Jesus, we will exhibit grace.
 - 2. If we are like Jesus, we will exhibit truth.
 - 3. If we are like Jesus, we will exhibit the beautiful balance of grace and truth.

Intentional Application: Four commitments in 2024...

- 1. We need to ponder two questions, from Randy Alcorn’s *The Grace and Truth Paradox*.
 - The grace question*: Why did sinners want to be around Jesus, but don’t want to be around us?
 - The truth question*: Why did sinners crucify Jesus, but have no problem with us?
- 2. We need to refuse to justify any lack of resemblance to Jesus.
- 3. We need to learn to hate every sin but love every sinner.
- 4. We need to live in constant communion with Jesus.

This morning we’re finishing our four-part series, “*When God Became a Man*.” We’ve been beholding the Logos through the lens of John 1:1-18. Logos is the name/title that the apostle John gives to Jesus in the passage. Jesus, the child who began His life laying in wooden manger and finished His life declaring from a wooden cross “It is finished,” is the Word. And He didn’t begin His life in a manger, nor finish it on a cross, for He lived before the manger, and continues to live after the cross.

He is the Logos, the Creator, the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead who became a man to rescue fallen mankind. And we’ve been marveling at Him in the past three messages. But this morning’s message is a little different, for we’re going to learn, not about Him, but from Him. Today’s message is entitled, “*Learning from the Logos about Grace and Truth Living in 2024*.”

Scripture Reading: John 1:14-18

There’s a brand of atheism post 911 that doesn’t just deny the existence of God but says that belief in God is evil and dangerous. This atheism is aggressive in its attempt to eliminate any belief in God.

^{***}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ This sermon has been adapted from earlier messages preached at WBC in 2010.

A few years ago I checked out (and should say I *don't* recommend) the website "The New Atheism."² The front page reads, "Tolerance of pervasive myth and superstition in modern society is not a virtue. Religious fundamentalism has gone main stream and its toll on education, science, and social progress is disheartening. Wake up people!! We are smart enough now to kill our invisible gods and oppressive beliefs. It is the responsibility of the educated to educate the uneducated, lest we fall prey to the tyranny of ignorance."³

In a world that prides itself in tolerance, this new atheism certainly isn't very tolerant. As I continued to scan the website I found an article that appeared on NPR, "A Bitter Rift Divides Atheists," October 19, 2009⁴, by [Barbara Bradley Hagerty](#). Let me read it to you...

Last month, atheists marked Blasphemy Day at gatherings around the world, and celebrated the freedom to denigrate and insult religion.

Some offered to trade pornography for Bibles. Others de-baptized people with hair dryers. And in Washington, D.C., an art exhibit opened that shows, among other paintings, one entitled *Divine Wine*, where Jesus, on the cross, has blood flowing from his wound into a wine bottle.

Another, *Jesus Paints His Nails*, shows an effeminate Jesus after the crucifixion, applying polish to the nails that attach his hands to the cross.

That's why I used the term "aggressive" to depict this new brand of atheism. Later in the article the author had this to say:

New atheists like Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins and journalist Christopher Hitchens are selling millions of books and drawing people by the thousands to their call for an uncompromising atheism. For example, Hitchens, a columnist for *Vanity Fair* and author of the book *God Is Not Great*, told a capacity crowd at the University of Toronto, "I think religion should be treated with ridicule, hatred and contempt, and I claim that right." His words were greeted with hoots of approval.

Religion is "sinister, dangerous and ridiculous," Hitchens tells NPR, because it can prompt people to fly airplanes into buildings, and it promotes ignorance. Hitchens sees no reason to sugarcoat his position.

"If I said to a Protestant or Quaker or Muslim, 'Hey, at least I respect your belief,' I would be telling a lie," Hitchens says.

Asked why he feels compelled to be so blunt, he responds: "I believe it's more honest, more brave, more courageous simply to state your own position."

The more outrageous the message the better, says PZ Myers, who writes an influential blog that calls, among other things, for the end of religion. On Blasphemy Day, Myers drove a rusty nail through a consecrated Communion wafer and posted a photo on his Web site.

"People got very angry," he recalls. "I don't know why. I mean, it's just a cracker, right?"

Myers, who teaches biology at the University of Minnesota, Morris, says he received about 15,000 hate e-mails. He says one reason he favors the provocative approach is that it works, especially for the next generation of atheists.

² <http://newatheism.org/>

³ <http://newatheism.org/>

⁴ <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113889251>

"Edgy is what young people like," Myers says. "They want to cut through the nonsense right away and want to get to the point. They want to hear the story fast, they want it to be exciting, and they want it to be fun. And I'm sorry, the old school of atheism is really, really boring."⁵

What strikes you as you hear this? Perhaps the hostility of the proponents of this new atheism, or their brash in your face approach. I'll tell you what grabbed my attention. *The 15,000 hate emails*. The Minnesota biology professor who promoted his anti-God message says he received 15,000 hate emails, apparently from offended people who claim to believe in God.

So today, we want to go deeper into a phrase we saw twice last week in John 1, both in reference to Jesus Christ. We saw it first in 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, who came from the Father, *full of grace and truth*." We saw it again in verse 17, "For the law was given through Moses; *grace and truth* came through Jesus Christ."

That phrase grabs my attention because I'm *not* that way far too often, yet want to be and need to be. How would Jesus respond to an aggressive atheist? Would He write a hate email? No, there's no grace in that. Would He ignore his anti-God criticism as if it didn't matter? I don't think so, for there's no truth in that. And Jesus was *full of grace and truth*.

There are two straightforward points to this message, and I'll give them to you now, then develop them, and then discuss implications regarding them. Point one, **Jesus is full of grace and truth**—that's what verse 14 says. Point two, **Jesus brought grace and truth**—that's what verse 17 says.⁶

I. The Logos is full of grace and truth (14).

There's an Old Testament background to this balance of "grace and truth," but you have to look for synonyms to see it. For instance, on the day that God revealed Himself to Moses in the cleft of the rock, He said this in Exodus 34:6 (NIV), "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in *love and faithfulness*." **Love**—the Hebrew word is *hesed*, which speaks of God's unmerited covenant love towards His undeserving people. And **faithfulness**—the Hebrew is *emet* which means trustworthy and true. It could well be translated, "abounding in grace and truth."

And it's not just in that passage. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures we see God Himself exhibiting this balance of grace and truth. Here are other examples.

Psalm 85:10 "*Love and faithfulness* meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other."

Psalm 86:15 "But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in *love and faithfulness*."

Psalm 89:14 "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; *love and faithfulness* go before you."

Psalm 115:1 "Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your *love and faithfulness*."

The LORD is full of grace and truth, says the Old Testament. And in John 1:14, John says, so is Jesus, for Jesus is God.

⁵ The article appears at <http://newatheism.org/>

⁶ I'm quoting from the NIV in most passages in this message.

We need to define our terms, so let me give you a couple of working definitions.

A. Grace is unmerited kindness and help towards undeserving sinners. It's *unmerited*, for it's not based on what a person does or doesn't do. It's *unmerited kindness*, for there's no grudging frown on the face of grace. It's *unmerited kindness and help*, for it takes action; it feeds the hungry and reaches out to the lonely. And does it all towards *undeserving sinners*. Since no one ever deserves grace, there's no calculating involved.

Interestingly, the word "grace" doesn't appear in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and never after the opening prologue of John's gospel. But that doesn't mean grace is absent from the four gospels. While the word is absent, we see the display of grace on every page.

Then, when we come to the epistles, we see the word "grace" all over the place. It appears 123 times in the New Testament, with the majority in the epistles. Peter, James, Jude, the writer of Hebrews, and especially Paul use the word again and again.

Jesus is full of grace. And truth, too.

B. Truth is the God-pleasing standard of what is good and right. It is the *God-pleasing* standard—for God is the One for whose pleasure the universe exists. Truth is the God-pleasing *standard*—a standard that never changes, so that what's true today will always be true; truth is not relative. Truth is the God-pleasing standard of *what is good and right*—God's standard is not harsh but good and right, morally good and right as well as good and right for us.

Like the word "grace," the word "truth" is all over the place in the New Testament. It appears 183 times. It's worth noting that one of Jesus' most repeated statements was, "I tell you the truth" ("Verily, verily" in the KJV; 77 times in the four gospels). Jesus made it clear that what came from His lips was *the truth*. How could it not be so? Jesus is full of truth.

He's full of grace, and He is full of truth. Not grace sometimes and truth sometimes, but grace and truth together in perfect balance all the time. Our text says that Jesus came from the Father "full of grace and truth."

What comes to mind when you hear the word "balance"? I think of riding my bike when I was about seven or eight years old, in a subdivision in Dover, Ohio that had a nice block for bike-riding. I used to go round and round that block without touching the handle bars. You feel the wind in your face when you learn to practice *balance*.

Then I think of riding a Honda 70 trail bike with my friend, Bryan, in the seventh grade. I can still feel the brief thrill of leaving the ground after going over a little hill, and the not so pleasant crash that resulted when my friend and I hit a rut in our landing and lost our balance.

Balance. It's so important in life, and not just for bike riding. Someone has well said, "Balance is the brief experience you achieve every so often when you cross the line from one extreme on your way to another."

We're so prone to go to extremes, to embrace one virtue to the neglect of its biblical counter-balance. Think of the man who says to his wife, "You may not want to hear it, but I'm going to tell you anyway because it's true," and then blows her out of the water with a verbal assault. We might call that truth without grace.

Think of the mother who keeps shielding her child from the painful consequences of his sinful choices, with the justification, "Oh, I just can't stand to see him get hurt. I love him too much." That's a pseudo-grace, at best, and it's neglecting the truth.

Grace and truth work together. Both are vital. *Grace without truth is shallow and sentimental.* But on the other hand, *truth without grace is harsh and legalistic.* In his book, *The Grace and Truth Paradox* (which I highly recommend), Randy Alcorn talks about this need for balance:

Truth without grace breeds a self-righteousness legalism that poisons the church and pushes the world away from Christ. Grace without truth breeds moral indifference and keeps people from seeing their need for Christ.

Truth is quick to post warning signs and guardrails. Yet it fails to empower people to drive safely, to avoid plunging off the cliff, and fails to help them when they crash. Grace is quick to post ambulances and paramedics at the bottom of the cliff. But without truth, it fails to post warning signs and build guardrails, and therefore encourages the very self-destruction it attempts to heal.

Grace without truth deceives people, and ceases to be grace. Truth without grace crushes people, and ceases to be truth.⁷

Jesus did neither. Jesus, of course, exhibited grace and truth in perfect balance, and all the time. That's point one, from verse 14. The Logos is full of grace and truth.

II. The Logos brought grace and truth (17).

That's what verse 17 says, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Notice the verse "came." Grace and truth *came* to earth. How did it get here? It came, not through the law, but through the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus brought grace and truth to planet earth.

Let that sink in. If grace and truth came through Jesus, what does that say to us about Jesus, and about us? Two conclusions.

A. Jesus gives us what we lack. He is the deliverer of what we need. Think about it.

1. *To be right with God we need grace and truth.* The Bible teaches that grace and truth are what a sinner needs for salvation, and Jesus is the source of both. A sinner is saved by grace, not his works, and Jesus is the source of that grace. And to be saved, a sinner must embrace the truth, and Jesus is the truth. Because Jesus brought grace and truth, Jesus alone can give us what we lack so that we may be right with God.

But it doesn't stop there.

2. *If we are right with God, we still need grace and truth.* Grace to get along with that difficult person at school, and truth to navigate the mine-fields in a sin-cursed world. We may be saved from our sins, but we still need grace and truth. Which means we still need Jesus. And what we need we have, for Jesus gives us what we lack.

For salvation. For living. For serving. For suffering. He who brought grace and truth gives us precisely what we lack. And here's something very specific He gives us.

B. Jesus gives us an example to follow. When we look at His life, what do we see? We see the balance of grace and truth in living color over and over again. Let's walk through John's Gospel and consider a few examples of Jesus' interacting with people.

1. *He exhibited grace and truth towards a Pharisee (John 3).* In John 3 a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to see Jesus. Remember, the Pharisees are the ones who ultimately put Jesus in their cross-hairs and instigated His murder. But when a Pharisee came to Jesus, what did Jesus do? He met with him—for that's what grace does.

⁷ Randy Alcorn, *The Grace and Truth Paradox*, quotes taken from the official website of Randy Alcorn: http://epm.org/books/the_grace_and_truth_paradoxDetail.php

And He told him he needed to be born again—for that's the truth. And in the end grace and truth transformed that Pharisee into a follower of Jesus!

2. *He exhibited grace and truth towards the woman at the well (John 4).* What kind of woman? A Samaritan woman. A woman with five failed marriages who was presently living in adultery with another man. How did Jesus treat her? He invested time with her and offered her living water—that's what grace does. And He brought up the painful subject of her husband and corrected her faulty thinking about worship—because He is full of truth.

3. *He exhibited grace and truth towards 5,000 hungry men (John 6).* When He saw the hungry people, He fed them—that's grace. And when they tried to get more bread out of Him the next day, He confronted them with their need for eternal life (6:26)—for that was the truth.

4. *He exhibited grace and truth towards a woman caught in adultery (John 8).* “Should we stone her?” the religious leaders wanted to know. “If you are without sin, throw the first stone,” Jesus said, and that's grace. And then He told the woman to leave her life of sin—for that's the truth of what she needed to do.

5. *He exhibited grace and truth towards two grieving sisters (John 11).* Jesus wept, says John 11:35—that's grace. And Jesus proclaimed, “I am the resurrection and the life”—for that's the truth these grieving sisters needed to hear.

6. *He exhibited grace and truth towards some dirty feet (John 13).* He washed His followers' feet—that's grace. And He told them why He did it, and exhorted them to do the same—that's truth. And here's the greatest display.

7. *He exhibited grace and truth at the cross (John 19).* “Dear woman, here is your son,” Jesus told Mary, thus entrusting her care to the apostle John—that's grace. Then He announced, “It is finished,” declaring that His ransom payment for sinners was paid in full—for that was the truth for which He lived and died and later conquered death.

8. *He exhibited grace and truth towards Thomas (John 20).* “Reach out your hand and put it in my side,” was His invitation to doubting Thomas—that's grace. “Stop doubting and believe”—that's the truth of what Thomas needed to do.

9. *He exhibited grace and truth towards Peter (John 21).* Peter denied Him three times, swearing, “I don't know the man.” But Jesus invited Peter to breakfast—that's grace. And asked him three times, “Do you love me?”—because before restoration can occur a sinner must face the ugly truth of his sin. And then He gave Peter a new ministry, “Feed my sheep”—more grace!

And that's just a sampling. The examples of grace and truth in beautiful balance abound in the life of Jesus! Inspirational? Yes, but to what end?

C. What Jesus gives us, we are to share with others. If Jesus exhibited grace and truth, ought not His followers? Yes! Let's start with grace.

1. *If we are like Jesus, we will exhibit grace.* Indeed, the Bible commands us to do so, again and again.

Colossians 4:6 “Let your conversation be always *full of grace*, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

2 Corinthians 8:7 “But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also *excel in this grace of giving*.”

1 Peter 4:10 “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully *administering God's grace* in its various forms.”

2 Peter 3:18 “But *grow in the grace* and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

In Acts 20:24 Paul says he lived to help people see God’s grace, “I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of *testifying to the gospel of God’s grace*.”

We are to be instruments of grace. Is there a need for grace in our world?

Last week some numbers jumped off the screen in an email from Operation Word.⁸

There are 89 million forcibly displaced people in the world, and 42% of them are under 18 years old. Were these displaced to form a country, it would be the 17th most populous in the world! Most refugees have come from Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Nearly 7 million Syrians - more than 1/3 of its population - are refugees. 5.4 million Ukrainians and 4.6 million Venezuelans have fled their respective countries. War and conflict in Afghanistan and Myanmar have newly displaced millions more. Africa continues to be wracked by many civil conflicts, Islamist violence, and epidemics. These have combined to generate huge numbers of refugees. Pray that these millions would encounter Jesus, who Himself was a migrant (from heaven to earth) and a refugee (fleeing to Egypt from Bethlehem).

We are followers of Jesus, brothers and sisters! So if we’re walking in His steps the world ought to see a lot of grace in our lives. But not just grace.

2. *If we are like Jesus, we will exhibit truth.* Again, as with grace, the Scriptures exhort us to exhibit truth. The ungodly suppress the truth (Rom. 1:18). They exchange the truth of God for a lie (Rom. 1:25). But not us. We’re truth-people, and we see this too again and again in our Bibles.

Romans 9:1 “I *speak the truth* in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 13:6 “Love does not delight in evil but *rejoices with the truth*.”

2 Corinthians 4:2 “Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by *setting forth the truth plainly* we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

2 Corinthians 13:8 “For we *cannot do anything against the truth*, but only *for the truth*.”

Galatians 2:14 “When I saw that they were not acting *in line with the truth* of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all...”

Ephesians 5:9 “For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and *truth*.”

Ephesians 6:14 “Stand firm then, with the *belt of truth* buckled around your waist.”

1 John 3:18 “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but *with actions and in truth*.”

2 John 1 “The elder, To the chosen lady and her children, whom I *love in the truth*—and not I only, but also all who *know the truth*.”

3 John 1 “The elder, To my dear friend Gaius, whom I *love in the truth*.”

3 John 3 “It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your *faithfulness to the truth* and how you continue to *walk in the truth*.”

3 John 4 “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are *walking in the truth*.”

Now let’s put the two together. Grace *and* truth.

⁸ Operation Word email on December 26, 2023. These are 2022 numbers.

3. *If we are like Jesus, we will exhibit the beautiful balance of grace and truth.*

Listen again to Randy Alcorn:

John 1:14 boils down for us what it means to be Christlike. It means to be full of only two things: Grace and Truth. Instead of a dozen, this gives us just two balls to juggle. It's succinct, a two point checklist of Christlikeness. Everything we do can and should be measured by the test of grace and truth.

Christlikeness means living by grace and truth, extending both to others. Instead of the world's apathy and tolerance, we offer grace. Instead of the world's relativism and deception, we offer truth.

If we minimize grace the world sees no hope for salvation. If we minimize truth, the world sees no need for salvation. To show the world Jesus, we must offer full-orbed, unabridged truth and grace, magnifying both, never downsizing or apologizing for either.⁹

A few years ago, Gracia Burnham spoke in chapel at Cedarville University. As you may recall, Gracia and her husband, Martin, were missionaries in the Philippines for 17 years when a militant Muslim group took them hostage. More than a year later, a firefight freed them, but Martin was killed in the crossfire. I'd like you to listen to part of what Gracia had to say (taken from Cedarville's *Inspire*, Spring 2010). Behold the power of grace and truth in action:

While Martin and I were held captive, we met a young man named Nadim. One day, after he finished his Koran reading, I asked him what it said, and he replied, "I don't know. It's written in Arabic, and I don't speak Arabic." Nadim based his entire life and his eternity on a book he had not read.

How will Nadim hear the Gospel without a preacher? We need preachers willing to go to the hard places. Missionary C.T. Studd said, "Some people like to live within the sound of church or chapel bell. I want to build a rescue shop within a yard of hell." Working within a yard of hell is not a pleasant place. But we need people willing to go to those hard places, and hard places are what are left in this world.

God has a plan to fix this problem — and we are it. God gave the job of winning and caring for this world to us. You might look around and think, "Well, that's a bad plan." But if we're willing, God will use us to accomplish His work.

Jesus said to love your enemies, to do good to those who hate you, to pray for those who spitefully use you. Maybe our job is to love Muslims, to do good to them, to pray for them. We can hope against hope that God can use us to make a difference in the lives of these blinded people.

My children and I have been praying for those guys who held Martin and me captive. We're praying that they get to hear the Gospel in their own language so the Holy Spirit can start working in their hearts. And why are we so surprised when God does something awesome and answers our prayers?

Just recently, I learned that Nadim and several of our other captors are in jail in Manila for the rest of their lives. They're reading through the Scripture in their own dialects and going to Bible studies. I paid for boat tickets so family members could visit one of the prisoners. I am also supporting two of the poorest so they can buy soap and extra food. Three of the men have come to know the Lord as their Savior. We just can't believe what God is doing!

⁹ Randy Alcorn, *The Grace and Truth Paradox*, quotes taken from the official website of Randy Alcorn: http://epm.org/books/the_grace_and_truth_paradoxDetail.php

Had I known, when we were going through our hard year in the jungle, that even one of those guys would come to know Jesus because of our experience, I think the days might have been easier to bear. I kick myself and say, “Would it not have been enough to trust a good God with the days of my life?”

Maybe planting seeds isn’t always fun; maybe it’s downright uncomfortable. But all of a sudden you see what God is doing. I’m reminded how the seeds we planted in the jungle did not die. Others are reaping what we sowed seven years ago. Keep planting those seeds, my friend. Keep on when you don’t see any fruit — because it’s God who’s going to do the work on down the road.¹⁰

Intentional Application: Four commitments in 2024...

1. *We need to ponder two questions, from Randy Alcorn’s The Grace and Truth Paradox.*¹¹ First, the *grace question*. Why did sinners want to be around Jesus, but don’t want to be around us? Do your neighbors like being around you? Do they even know you? Would they be disappointed if you moved away? My friends, people loved being with Jesus, and I mean all kinds of people—soldiers, prostitutes, tax collectors, blue collar fisherman, powerful noblemen, and more. And why? Because He could quote the Bible? No. Because He loved them, and they *knew* it.

I’m not sure my neighbors know I love them, probably because I really don’t love them like I should. Let alone the people in the next neighborhood. I’m way too wrapped up in my own life. I need to work on changing the answer to the grace question. How about you?

Second, the *truth question*. Why did sinners crucify Jesus, but have no problem with us? Have you offended anyone recently, not because you were offensive, but because you loved them enough to tell them the truth?

Young people, do your classmates even know you’re a Christian? Have you told them the truth? You say, “I’m a lifestyle Christian. I don’t need to talk about it.” It’s great you’re living the lifestyle, but if you don’t tell why they’ll just think you’re into morality.

Is there anyone who shies away from you for the simple reason that you belong to Christ and you’ve told them *they* need Christ? If so, be encouraged. You’re in good company. Jesus spoke the truth. It’s why sinners rejected Him. If not, I urge you to take a hard look at the truth question.

2. *We need to refuse to justify any lack of resemblance to Jesus.* We’re so prone to justify our lack of grace because “I’m a truth guy,” or our lack of truth because “I’m a grace guy.” But if either grace or truth are missing, then we don’t resemble Jesus. And to whatever degree with don’t resemble Jesus, we need to repent and change.

One more quote from Randy Alcorn:

Any attempt to "soften" the gospel by minimizing truth ultimately keeps the world from grace. Any attempt to "toughen" the gospel by minimizing grace keeps the world from the greatest truth—His redemptive work on man's behalf. Christ went to the cross, in the ultimate act of grace, because He would not ignore the truth of His holiness and our sin. Grace never ignores or violates truth—rather, it offers restitution and joy by satisfying Truth's demands. ("Go and sin no more.")

¹⁰ http://www.cedarville.edu/alumni/inspire/~media/Files/PDF/Publications/Inspire/inspire_sp2010.ashx

¹¹ Randy Alcorn, *The Grace and Truth Paradox*, quotes taken from the official website of Randy Alcorn: http://epm.org/books/the_grace_and_truth_paradoxDetail.php

Like a binary star consisting of two suns that revolve around each other, truth and grace are equal and inseparable. Luther said the devil doesn't care which side of the horse we fall off of—as long as we don't stay in the saddle. A saddle has two stirrups. To stay in the saddle, the church needs to mount the horse with one foot solidly in the stirrup of truth, and the other solidly in the stirrup of grace.¹²

3. *We need to learn to hate every sin but love every sinner.* A little over a decade ago I received a letter in the mail and noticed in the return address the name of a man who had visited our church a few years earlier. I remembered the man because I went to his home several times to talk with him about his need to repent of his sin and put his trust in Christ. I knew from our conversations that his love of sin was destroying his life, as it always does. I opened the envelop and found a four page letter that began...

Pastor Brad,

You're probably wondering who is this? I'm (his name) from (where he lived). You and Dale (Lupton) stopped by now and then. He moved up north but gave me a Bible which I still own. I attended your church, and you were helping me with my drinking problem. Remember yet? Hope so. For that's what this is mostly about. You may have figured it out by now. I'm in jail now, for a DUI again...

There's power in grace and truth. Grace—visiting a man who's wasted his life and burned his bridges. And truth—giving him a Bible so he can get to know the only person who can set him free and give him a new life. Grace—looking past the ugly effects of alcohol and spending time with him in his trailer in order to get to know him as a person. And truth—sharing the Word of God knowing this man needs more than our time; he needs to hear what God has said, about sin, about judgment, and Christ and His cross, about the resurrection and His offer of forgiveness and eternal life.

Friends, there's something compelling about grace and truth, like a magnet to a steely heart. I was thankful to hear from this man again, grateful to hear him say he was reading his Bible and that he wanted to return to WBC when he got out.

I'm thankful to be part of a church that welcomes people like this man who have a past. And why do we? Because we are grace and truth people, beloved, as our Savior was and is. And He is giving us a heart like His.

You say, "I'm not there. I'm a Christian, but I don't have that balance. What do I need?" You need what I need...

4. *We need to live in constant communion with Jesus.* He is full of grace and truth. So let's stay close to Him and we will be too.

Closing Song: #390 "*May the Mind of Christ, My Savior*" (all six verses)

December Benediction: 2 Corinthians 2:14

¹² Randy Alcorn, *The Grace and Truth Paradox*, quotes taken from the official website of Randy Alcorn: http://epm.org/books/the_grace_and_truth_paradoxDetail.php