

Grace vs. Discipline: There is a Solution

Max Barnett, Dick Jaques and Mike Story

I. Question and Answer Session

A. How has God taught you about grace?

1. Max - I learned early that the only way I could live was through dependence upon God. I do not want God's grace applied to me to be in vain; therefore, I realized that I needed to live a disciplined life. I am not disciplined by nature, but I believe that God has called me to it.

B. How has God taught you about discipline?

1. Dick - God is still in the process. I found out that the more that I was involved in the Christian disciplines, the more that my mind was set on the things above, than on the things on earth; I look at the disciplines as a tool to know the almighty God. I have much greater peace because of them. If I am not in the disciplines, I know that my heart and mind will wander to worldly things. I discipline myself, because I know that in God there is life and there is life in nothing else. Additionally, I know that ministry is an outflow of meeting with God.

C. Anything you want to add?

1. Mike - We serve a holy and unapproachable God who has created us for fellowship. I look at grace as a conduit to know his holiness and his love. The disciplines allow me to be a continual conduit of his grace to other people.

D. According to Jerry Bridges, the disciplines flow out of a gratitude for grace. According to John Piper, my disciplines should be in light of a future grace based on the grace already given. How do we reconcile the two?

1. Dick - Grace is free and I cannot earn that grace. Gratitude is a discipline I need and it leads me to worship reflecting upon all that God has done. The gratitude I have moves me into faith that I may know him. Looking backward is gratitude, looking forward is faith. My foundational belief is this: the greatest thing in life is to know God - I have to become more and more convinced to know that he is my answer. Unless I practice the disciplines, I will never know the love and the awesomeness of God.

2. Mike - I thought early that God wanted my fellowship. I don't have to see grace in every verse to live under it. I think that living by faith is living by grace. As you understand the grace of God he is going to lead you to be disciplined. I don't think Jerry Bridges has a problem - I don't think we understand him. I don't have to make Piper fit; I have to make the Bible fit into my life.

E. Growing up in the church there were several people who never reflected the grace of God or the power of God. Knowing how this generation looks at the word *discipline*, can you expound on how the apostle says to do this very thing?

1. Mike - "It's time to cowboy up." Living grace out is costly. If I am going to be usable in God's sense, I must have a disciplined heart and mind. Paul had an earnest desire to know God so that he could honestly make him known. I recommend *Transforming Grace* by Jerry Bridges. The grace of God compels us to want to know him.

F. The question always comes up with girls about discipline. I usually go to Galatians 2:20-21 to answer them. The point in my life where the disciplines became important was when I became secure in my identity in Christ. Is this right or wrong?

1. Max - You don't have to do the disciplines, but there is such a thing as being skillful. It is not enough just to love Jesus. David had an upright heart, but he also had a skillful hand. More and more I want to give people an answer based upon the Word of God so that students will know to go to the Word to find their answers. You can make it without reading your Bible, but you will find yourself doubting your salvation. Discipline is hard, but we do it in order that certain things will happen - not so that we will earn the grace of God.

2. Max - The fact that you want to know the Word is that God is working in you, but you have to yield to God's working. We are co-laborers with God. It is God who does the work, but he asks us to co-operate and we do so through the disciplines. We don't remember things that we never heard in the first place; therefore, scripture memory is an important discipline. We all have pure motives, but we live in a fallen world and even Christians need some motivation.

3. Dick - It appears to be a heart problem. I encourage you to honestly pray Psalm 119 telling God that this is not your heart, but asking him to make it so.

G. Sometimes when I feel like I am doing my disciplines for the right motives, I want to know God. Is that wrong?

1. Dick - No, to me that is faith. On another note, let me clarify: I think that Jerry Bridges is not teaching that we owe God.

H. How can I bring someone to Christ that I lent a credit card to and misused it?

2. Mike - I'd be very cautious about loaning my credit card to someone. The key is to get the credit card issue out of the way, and once that is taken care of tell her that you have a concern for her and want to tell her about a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you lent her your credit card, tell her that you'd like to share something else with her that is more important. You can't make her be a Christian and you must make a covenant that you will be her friend even if she doesn't become a Christian.

II. Closing remarks.

A. Dick

1. Max and I don't disagree on grace and discipline. The issue is how the disciplines are communicated. There are Paul's and Barnabus's in this world - discipline is done differently, and the we all communicate differently - that is okay.

B. Max

1. God wants our fellowship. One of the ways we can have fellowship with God is through quiet time, but our purpose is fellowship. The question is, what is your objective? I don't want you to have a quiet time because of peer pressure. Always go back to the purpose. We don't do it to earn favor - we already have favor. We do it to be the man that God wants us to be.

C. Mike

1. Never forget how great God's love for us is. Let your heart cry be that of the Great Commandment; dwell in God's love. The great problem with us as Christians is words. We will sit and discuss a word when God wants us to experience a reality. We will theologize and make the simple love of God complex. Just love God with your whole self, and love your neighbor as yourself.