

Session 7: Living Out Grace in Home, Work, and Society

Series: The Christian Life: Living Under Grace / Dr. Randy White

- This session builds on the first six sessions.
- The series has argued that Christian living is not a loose collection of moral opinions.
- It flows from a few settled convictions:
 - Doctrine produces ethics.
 - God’s character grounds morality.
 - Scripture corrects conscience.
 - Grace motivates obedience.
 - Right division keeps the Body of Christ from living under another dispensation’s law.
 - The local church helps form stable conviction.
 - Modern questions must be reduced to their older moral categories.
- Session 7 asks how those truths become ordinary Christian living in the places where most life is actually lived:
 - The home.
 - Work.
 - Civil society.
 - Speech and witness.
 - Mercy and practical service.

I. Christian Living Must Become Ordinary

- The danger after studying ethics
 - We can begin to think of ethics mainly as controversial questions.
 - We may think first of technology, politics, sexuality, bioethics, or public disputes.
 - Those questions matter, but most Christian living is not dramatic.
 - Most Christian living happens in repeated, ordinary decisions.
- Scriptural truth:
 - Colossians 3:17
 - * Whatever the believer does in word or deed should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus.
 - 1 Corinthians 10:31
 - * Even ordinary actions should be done to the glory of God.
 - Titus 2:11-12
 - * Grace teaches believers to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world.
- The practical point
 - Christian ethics is not only about saying no to obvious sin.
 - It is about learning to live before God with a clear conscience in ordinary responsibilities.
 - The Christian life is tested in:
 - * How we speak at home.
 - * How we handle money.
 - * How we work when no one is watching.
 - * How we respond to authority.
 - * How we treat people who cannot benefit us.
 - * How we use liberty without becoming self-indulgent.
- The key idea
 - Grace does not remove daily responsibility.
 - Grace changes the motive and authority behind daily responsibility.
 - The believer does not live well in order to gain standing.
 - The believer lives well because he already stands in grace.

II. Christian Living in the Home

- The home as a primary place of ethical formation
 - A person’s public convictions are often exposed by private conduct.
 - It is possible to sound doctrinally careful in public and still be careless in the home.
 - The home tests whether grace has become a way of life rather than only a doctrine to defend.
- Marriage
 - Marriage belongs to God’s created order (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6).
 - Marriage is not the source of completeness.
 - * The believer is complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10).
 - * A spouse is a gift, not a savior.

- Marriage should be treated as:
 - * The proper setting for sexual union.
 - * A covenant of loyalty and care.
 - * A place where love becomes practical rather than merely sentimental.
- Ephesians 5:22-33
 - * Marriage illustrates Christ and the church.
 - * The passage should be honored without turning marriage into a system of domination, anxiety, or performance.
- Parenting
 - Children need instruction, correction, affection, and example.
 - Parenting under grace is not parenting without discipline, but discipline should not become anger dressed up as righteousness.
 - Ephesians 6:4
 - * Fathers are warned not to provoke their children to wrath.
 - * Children are to be brought up in nurture and admonition.
 - Grace-oriented parenting aims to form:
 - * Discernment.
 - * Responsibility.
 - * Truthfulness.
 - * Self-control.
- * Respect for God, parents, and others.
- The goal is not merely outward compliance.
- The goal is a child learning to think honestly before God.
- Money and stewardship in the home
 - Financial decisions are moral decisions because they reveal trust, desire, fear, and contentment.
 - Scripture warns against covetousness and the love of money (1 Timothy 6:6-10).
 - A grace-shaped home should learn:
 - * Contentment without laziness.
 - * Enjoyment without idolatry.
 - * Planning without fear.
 - * Generosity without display.
 - * Debt caution without pride.
 - The home becomes unstable when desire rules the budget.
 - The home becomes legalistic when simplicity becomes a badge of superiority.
- The practical test
 - Does our home make sound doctrine believable?
 - Does our use of authority reflect grace or mere control?
 - Does our speech build up or wear down?
 - Does our handling of money show contentment or appetite?

III. Christian Living in Work and Vocation

- Work is a moral arena
 - Work is not merely a way to earn money.
 - It is one of the main places where integrity, diligence, fairness, and patience are tested.
 - The believer should not divide life into “spiritual” activities and “ordinary” responsibilities as though God only cares about church work.
- Scriptural truth:
 - Colossians 3:22-24
 - * Servants are told to work heartily as unto the Lord.
 - * The principle applies to the believer’s ordinary labor.
 - Ephesians 4:28
 - * The one who stole is to labor, working with his hands, so that he may have to give to others.
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12
 - * Believers are instructed to live quietly, work with their own hands, and walk honestly toward those outside.
- Integrity at work
 - The Christian should reject:
 - * Theft of money, time, tools, or credit.
 - * Dishonest reporting.
 - * Manipulation of customers or coworkers.
 - * Careless work hidden behind spiritual language.
 - * Laziness justified by resentment.
 - Truth remains truth at work.
 - Justice remains justice in business.
 - Love of neighbor applies to customers, employees, employers, coworkers, and competitors.
 - Ambition and contentment
 - Ambition is not automatically sinful.
 - Laziness is not spirituality.
 - But ambition becomes morally dangerous when it is ruled by:
 - * Envy.
 - * Status.
 - * Greed.
 - * Fear of being ordinary.
 - * Willingness to sacrifice family, conscience, or truth.
 - Contentment does not mean refusing improvement.
 - Contentment means refusing to be ruled by what God has not given.
 - Work as witness
 - A believer’s work habits can adorn or undermine his doctrine (Titus 2:9-10).

- The workplace is not mainly a stage for religious performance.
- It is a place to be honest, dependable, fair, patient, and ready to speak truth when appropriate.
- A poor worker with loud religious talk may harm the very message he claims to defend.

IV. Christian Living in Civil Society

- The believer is not detached from ordinary public life
 - Christians live among neighbors, laws, institutions, rulers, communities, and conflicts.
 - Right division keeps the Body of Christ from confusing itself with Israel's national covenant program.
 - But right division does not make the believer indifferent to honesty, order, justice, or neighborly duty.
- Government and civil order
 - Romans 13:1-7
 - * Civil authority is part of God's ordering of human society.
 - * The believer should not treat lawful order as though it were meaningless.
 - 1 Timothy 2:1-4
 - * Prayer should be made for rulers and those in authority.
 - * The desired result is a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and honesty.
 - Titus 3:1-2
 - * Believers are told to be subject to authorities, ready to every good work, and gentle toward all men.
- The limit of obedience
 - Civil authority is real, but it is not absolute.
 - Acts 5:29
 - * When human command contradicts God's command, "We ought to obey God rather than men."
- Christian resistance should not be driven by pride, theatrics, or love of conflict.
- It should be marked by:
 - * Clear biblical conviction.
 - * Willingness to suffer consequences.
 - * Respectful speech.
 - * A clean conscience.
- Politics and public speech
 - Political interest is not wrong.
 - But politics easily becomes a rival source of identity, fear, anger, and hope.
 - The Christian should refuse:
 - * Falsehood for a preferred side.
 - * Cruelty toward opponents.
 - * Panic as a way of life.
 - * Treating political victory as the church's mission.
 - * Treating political defeat as though grace has failed.
 - Philippians 3:20
 - * The believer's citizenship is in heaven.
 - That truth should steady the Christian's earthly citizenship rather than make him careless with it.
- The practical balance
 - We should be responsible citizens without becoming kingdom-now activists.
 - We should care about justice without importing Israel's civil code as the church's mandate.
 - We should speak truth publicly without making public controversy the center of Christian identity.

V. Speech, Witness, and Compassion

- Speech as an ethical test
 - Words reveal doctrine, desire, pride, fear, and love.
 - A person can be technically correct and still speak in a way that is needlessly harsh, manipulative, or self-serving.
 - Ephesians 4:25
 - * The believer is to put away lying and speak truth.
 - Ephesians 4:29
 - * Speech should edify and minister grace to the hearers.
 - Colossians 4:5-6
 - * The believer should walk in wisdom toward outsiders, with speech marked by grace and salt.
- Witness
 - The believer is an ambassador for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).
 - The ministry of reconciliation should not be confused with every good cause.
 - The church's central task is not to become a humanitarian agency, political machine, therapy center, or cultural brand.
 - The central message is reconciliation through Christ.
 - Good works can support the witness.
 - Good works must not replace the witness.
- Compassion and humanitarian work
 - Acts of mercy are good and should not be despised.

- Helping the needy, visiting the sick, caring for widows, supporting neighbors, and relieving suffering are morally fitting.
- Galatians 6:10
 - * Believers should do good unto all men, especially unto those of the household of faith.
- But compassion must remain truth-guided.
- Mercy becomes confused when it:
 - * Enables sin.
 - * Denies truth.
- * Seeks applause.
- * Replaces the gospel.
- * Makes the church’s mission indistinguishable from social activism.
- The practical test
 - Am I telling the truth?
 - Am I speaking in a way that fits grace?
 - Am I helping in a way that truly helps?
 - Am I keeping the gospel central?
 - Am I using compassion as service or as self-display?

VI. The Daily Pattern of a Biblical Literalist

- The study of ethics gives a simple practical pattern:
 - Know the Word.
 - Walk in grace.
 - Stay engaged without compromise.
- Know the Word
 - A conscience that is not continually informed by Scripture will drift.
 - It may drift toward culture.
 - It may drift toward tradition.
 - It may drift toward fear.
 - It may drift toward somebody else’s rulebook.
 - 2 Timothy 2:15
 - * The believer must study and rightly divide the word of truth.
- Walk in grace
 - Grace protects from legalism.
 - Grace also protects from libertinism.
 - Legalism says:
 - * “I must perform in order to gain standing.”
 - Libertinism says:
 - * “Since I have standing, my conduct does not matter.”
 - Grace says:
 - * “Because I am complete in Christ, I am free to live responsibly before God.”
 - Galatians 5:13
 - * Liberty is not an occasion to the flesh, but a call to serve by love.
- Stay engaged without compromise
 - The Christian should not disappear from ordinary life.
 - He should be present in family, work, neighborhood, citizenship, and service.
 - But he should not allow those settings to define truth for him.
 - Romans 12:1-2
 - * The believer must not be conformed to this world, but transformed by renewed thinking.
- The closing challenge
 - The Christian life is not measured by how loudly we reject the world.
 - It is not measured by how comfortably we blend into it.
 - It is measured by whether sound doctrine has produced a life of truth, grace, conscience, love, and faith.
 - The goal is not to become strange.
 - The goal is to become clear:
 - * Clear about God.
 - * Clear about grace.
 - * Clear about Scripture.
 - * Clear about conscience.
 - * Clear about the gospel.