

The False Grace Message Can Lead to Lukewarm Apathy

I agree with false-grace adherents on one key point—intimacy with Jesus is the goal.

As one who has an escalating concern over the false-grace (or what I prefer to call the unbiblical grace) message, you can imagine that I open myself up to all sorts of accusations.

I will take responsibility for failing to communicate my position comprehensively enough at times. This failure can result in knee-jerk analysis and critiques that often presume I hold to a particular position due to my silence on a related and connected point.

One such point that I want to clearly communicate here is that intimacy with Jesus is the goal. In fact, it's not only the goal, but it's also the primary focus of our journey.

When we are deeply intimate with Jesus our heart explodes with love and our passion for Him becomes intense and immeasurable. Oh how I love to spend countless hours in the secret place enjoying God, praying in the Spirit and worshipping him with unbridled exuberance! If there's anything that defines my life in God it's intimacy!

If we are madly in love with Him and are cultivating intimacy, the unrighteous invasions into our lives will be soundly rejected. We will guard our love connection with God jealously. This is where holiness dominates in a sin-wrecked world.

So, where do unbiblical grace teachers and I part ways? In more than one place, but the key point is this:

If we don't feel intimacy with Jesus, if we aren't in a place

of abandoned desire for him, we must beware. I think we would all admit that it's terrifyingly easy to fall into a life of lukewarm apathy. The result is a careless approach to sin that puts our salvation at risk, and this is where the departure between the camps begins.

Neither camp would ever argue that it's OK to sin. Neither would casually deal with sin. But one camp teaches that indifference to sin and a continued pattern of unforgiveness, anger, lust or any number of other issues will result in one following Jesus in an unsaved condition. The other camp would teach that those sins don't threaten eternity. This is why we must deal with this topic carefully. I believe millions of people are living daily with unforgiveness in their hearts or with lust and they are not repentant. These are the people who are at risk of an eternity separated from God.

For the sake of clarity, if we are living a repentant life, rejecting our sin and understanding that God deeply loves us and is ready to set us free, we are in a very good place! It's not a single sin that will cost us our eternity, it's a willful, deliberate, continual life of sin that will.

"For if we willfully continue to sin after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:26-27).

With this in mind, we'll go back to square one—intimacy with Jesus.

The Command to Love

Let's talk about the call to love. This is the call that God has for us to be intimate with Him. Have you ever considered this mandate? It's very, very intriguing. I can understand calling someone to serve, to give money, to feed the poor or to avoid sin. That makes sense very easily. However, a mandate

to love?

Certainly the act of love in many ways is fully intentional and can often be void of feeling. We act in love toward others. This is also quite easy to understand. But this idea goes well beyond a call to act out in right ways. It's a call to intimacy, a mandate to be deeply intimate with our Lover.

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5).

In the original Hebrew, the word love is *ahab*. It means: to have affection for.

Additionally it means to like as a friend.

I don't know about you, but I'm not sure I can be forced to like anybody, much less have deep affection for them. But this is what Scripture is telling us. Could it mean that the call isn't for instant intimacy, but rather a determined and unwavering process of pursuit and faith toward the promise of experiencing an enjoyable God?

As we, in faith, more easily believe that being with God in a continual and significant way will result in continual and significant enjoyment, we will allow the old things to pass away. We will not stop until we discover the joy that only God can provide.

So, if we are to understand that God is mandating us to fall deeply in love with Him, there is a disciplined process that must commence. The goal is deep and passionate intimacy with our Lover, the invisible God.

It makes sense that when we discover this ultimate of pleasures, that we will not be as inclined to pursue the human desires that demanded so much of us in years past. It's been said more times and in more ways than we know, "Our sin causes

separation from God. We, in effect, trade intimacy with God for intimacy with the world.”

Certainly there is truth to that statement. However, if we view the issue from the other side, we could say, “Intentional pursuit of intimacy with God carries with it the reward of perpetual discovery. Deliberate surrender of human desire coupled with a craving for the manifest presence of God Himself in our lives will lead, sooner or later, to fulfillment that cannot be measured or effectively explained. It’s that extreme. It’s that good.”

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:43-44).

In the above passage, the Hebrew interpretation of the word “love” is different than *ahab*. It is *agapaō*, which emphasizes the attitude of love. It’s the moral and socially appropriate act of service and attention to others, including both mankind and God Himself.

Throughout Scripture we do see various translations of that single word “love”, and God is the central figure regardless of the interpretation. However, it’s that unique call to *ahab* love that has captured my attention. It’s a mandate to intimacy.

“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am faint with love.” (Song 5:8).

Faint with love! What a phrase that is. As you might guess, the Hebrew translation is *ahab*. In the Song of Songs we see this amazing story of love unfold beautifully. In the following verses the word “love” is translated *ahab* each time. As we gain insight into the intimate longing of our God for us, our hearts melt and our understanding changes.

"I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. The watchmen found me, as they went about the city. 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?'" (Song 3:2-3).

"[The Shulamite to the Daughters of Jerusalem] He brought me to the banquet house, and his banner over me was love. Sustain me with raisins, refresh me with apples; for I am faint with love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases." (Song 2:4-7).

"He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple; its interior was inlaid with love by the daughters of Jerusalem" (Song 3:10).

"How fair and pleasant you are, O loved one, with all your delights!" (Song 7:6).

"[The Shulamite to Her Beloved] Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its fires of desire are as ardent flames, a most intense flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly condemned" (Song 8:6-7).

Read the last passage, Song of Songs 8:6-7, over and over. Its communication of passionate desire is intense. As we establish a vow with our Lover, the intentional and disciplined pursuit of intimacy with Him is alluring and strong. It is a vehement flame that even water, the fierce enemy of fire, cannot drown. It's this that we are pursuing, the fire of passion that will overcome the waters of human desire.

In the following Song of Songs passage, we discover a

different translation of love.

“[The Shulamite] Draw me after you, let us run. The king has brought me into his chambers. [The Daughters of Jerusalem] We will exult and rejoice in you; we will remember your love more than wine; rightly do they love you” (Song 1:4).

The Hebrew word used for “love” in the part of the passage that says, “We will remember your love more than wine” is *dôd*. The literal meaning is to boil. The idea is that God’s love is actively boiling. It’s hot and constant and intentionally set on us. The enemy of human desire is a very strong one.

A simple resolution to avoid sin and do good is far too weak to be seriously considered for inclusion in our arsenal. The burning fire of passion for God, *ahab* love, is our most effective weapon. The reward of the perpetual discovery of new depths of God’s zeal for us is enough to keep us burning with a vehement flame that the waters of carnal human desire cannot put out.

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