



SERIES: Spiritual Fitness: Christian Living

SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

Tuesday April 27, 2021

Scripture: 1 John 4:7-8 / Matthew 6:14-15

TITLE: Becoming A Grace-Bearer

My middle son decked his older brother. I don't remember what prompted it, but my oldest got clocked. I took my middle son up to his room. He knew he blew it. He knew the drill. "Let me guess," he said. "I'm getting a spanking." "Is that what you deserve?" "Yep." "Do you know what you call that? It's justice. Justice is getting what you deserve. But I'm not going to spank you." "You're not?" "Nope. Do you know what we call that?" My son said, "A good day!" "You're right. That is a good day, but it's really called mercy. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. But I want you to go get on your shoes. We're going to get ice cream. Do you know what we call that?" "A really good day," he said. "You're right, again, but it's called grace. Grace is getting something we don't deserve. It's a gift." My son looked at me and said, "Man, I'm going to punch my brothers more often!"

You see, friend, we are the recipients of God's mercy and grace. But that grace we receive isn't meant to be hoarded. It's meant to be given away. We are conduits of God's grace, not savings accounts.

John exhorts believers to love one another in 1 John 4: "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God because God is love." (1 John 4:7-8, NIV)

In Kevin Harney's book *Organic Outreach for Ordinary People*, he says that one way to pass on grace is through reckless love: To show the extreme love of God to others. When we are wronged, we forgive, and can go the extra mile by showing kindness. Loving others well without conditions is a sign of being a grace-giver. Forgiving others freely is as well. Jesus said in Matthew 6: "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins." (Matthew 6:14-15, NLT) Now, this wasn't conditional, as some may read it. It's better understood - Because we've been forgiven, we can and will forgive others freely.

So we can love and forgive, but we can also share our time with those who are far from God. Jesus had the reputation of being a friend of sinners. Many Christians today do not. But we weren't called to live in a bubble, but live a life inviting others in.

So here's my challenge for you today: Who is one person you can invite into your life to show reckless love and inclusion? Now, when I say inclusion, I don't mean embracing or endorsing their lifestyles or worldviews. But instead, being available and open to them as people created in the image of God.

Who can you show reckless love to? How can you open up your life to them, so they know the true difference Christ is making in your life today? When we become spiritually fit, we will be grace-bearers to the world around us. So let's go together and win the day.