



COMMUNITY OF GRACE

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Journey to the Center of Grace: A Four Week Prayer Adventure

Week 2

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. (Ephesians 1:15-16)

Hey, Grace'rs,

During the month of August, I am inviting you on an adventure of prayer...an adventure of following Jesus into the center of grace. Fall is a time of new beginnings and new schedules and provides a chance for us to align our lives with God's grace. I hope you will use this as a "family dinner time" discussion this week with your kids, your spouse, with a group of friends, or even as a meal time devotion by yourself.

Have you ever fallen in love? If so, take a moment to remember it and then try to put it into words during your meal time discussion.

Perhaps you've never fallen in love with someone, but you've felt deep love for a family member or friend. Try to put that kind of love into words.

(Take turns reading the following devotion. You may want to come back to this again in a few days at another family dinner to see what new insights God has inspired in you.)

We were wired for love...to be loved and to love. Our Creator is love so it's understandable that God created us to be loved and to love.

Love has a unique energy. When you fall in love with someone, all you can do is think about that person. You want to be with that person every moment of every day. When I fell in love with Jan, it hit me hard. I could hardly breathe at times. My hands would get sweaty when I was near her. For a guy who uses words for a living, I was at a loss for words around her...yet managed to spend hours on the land-line telephone each night talking to her.

The thing about love, however, is that it can't keep up that kind of energy. Eventually the hormones and the excitement regulate, and the love takes on a daily rhythm. That's a good thing. If it didn't, our hormones would eventually blow us up!

But there is a risk with the normalcy of love: If it's not tended to, it can begin to die out. Distractions, life, other interests, challenges can get in the way and eventually the love is seemingly gone.

The church in Ephesus was a church passionate about God's love, and sharing God's love. Paul commended them for it. God's love was the primary shaper of their lives.

But years later that love had lost its energy. In the book of Revelation Jesus says to the church in Ephesus:

But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. (Revelation 2:4-5).

That's the challenge of love. Normalcy can lead to distraction and ultimately a dying out of the love. It's never intentional. It happens subversively.

In the case of following Jesus, we can often become so distracted that we feel God has abandoned us. We wonder where God is. But God's love never leaves us nor forsakes us. Period. Ever. God's grace, as Jesus did for the church in Ephesus, calls us back again and again to that most important love...the lavish, bold, reckless love of God in Christ.

Prayer Time:

What is it about God's love that inspires you? Moves you? Captures your imagination? Grabs you?

How are you keeping that relationship with God fresh on your end? What distractions get in the way of your first love for Christ?

If Jesus were to look at your schedule and your priorities, what might he say to you? Why do you think that?

What might your life/schedule/priorities look like if they were shaped by God's lavish grace for you and your family?

Pastor Tim

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