

# THE ATMOSPHERE OF CHANGE

**W**e were created to produce the fruit of God's design and to accomplish the will He established for us. Thus, we will never find satisfaction or wholeness until we align with God's intended purposes. There are many reasons why we end up away from God's plans. Sin and brokenness constantly war against us and cause us to detach, disconnect and live through a core sense of shame rather than through the identity of who God called us to be. Sin is the inward heart disease that provokes all forms of human breakdown. No matter how long we have been Christians, we will continue to deal with its brutal reality (Read Romans 7). However, despite this truth, God's agenda is not that we be sin-focused, but that we learn to overcome moment by moment. Most of us need to revisit past issues and learn to understand the cause and effect of some of our situations that we face today. However, we don't focus on what's not working to chronically measure our ineptness. God gets no satisfaction in simply bashing us over the head with our wrongdoing. Rather, being aware of our sin and areas of brokenness invites us to live a lifestyle of dependency on God where we can access grace.

## WHAT IS GRACE

Grace is not merely a theological statement. Rather, grace is the supernatural power of God released through cross in overcoming sin's destruction. It is utterly not deserved, and it has absolutely no bearing on our effort or behavior. Grace does for us what cannot do for ourselves. Grace does not give us permission to sin; quite the contrary. Grace begins to activate in us a holy awareness of sin and gives us an unquenchable desire to be set free. However, the job of grace is to set the atmosphere where sin is no longer empowered, and its grip no longer has the ability to hold us in chains. Grace declares that the sufficiency of God reigns and rules over any sin issue of the heart - whether we sinned against someone, or someone sinned against us. In a very simplistic way, grace is the predator of shame - meaning grace can actually consume sin.

When Jesus invites us to the inner work of healing and to the process of growth and genuine change, it isn't merely about a process or procedure. We cannot gain access to the marvelous power of grace through doing anything. Rather, He came to reveal His character and to make the purpose of life all about *Him*, as a *Person*. People that focus on "how tos" will exhaust a lifetime of trying to attain the unattainable. That's because the only atmosphere where we change and heal is where grace has been activated.

## Meeting Grace

Jesus asks us to invite Him into our hearts like children - where we have the innocence and simplicity to take Him without cynicism and doubt (Matthew 18:3). For most of us, the battle arises because we don't how to interact with Jesus, *the Person*. We can seek Him out through the Word, attend church, and perform Bible studies. But at a relational level we don't know how to talk, ask, receive,

and communicate with Him. All healing doesn't come because we simply faced our fears, overcame our lies and offered and received forgiveness. It's because *Jesus* met us *in* our fears, exposed our lies, applied grace to our hearts and gives us the capacity to forgive those who have harmed us. It is *His presence* working in us that leads to change.

For us to untangle from the faulty seeds of lies that dominate the gardens of our hearts, God will begin to expose those areas that need change. Some of us are seeking help for the first time and need to go through our entire life history. Those lies are deeply embedded in our past. But others of us have already done deep healing, and need to deal with situations in the present. In either case, the redemptive formula of how God wants to interact with our soul and spirit is the same.

1. God calls us out of darkness so we can see the situation, area of need as He sees it (walking out of denial). He will make us aware of the problem.
2. God asks us to surrender our methods of fixing problems into His hands. We cease operating by self protection and sufficiency and agree to give God access.
3. We confess (agree with God's point of view) our sin, wrongdoing or the way others have us.
4. We repent and choose to walk with God. We don't have to be perfect, just willing.
5. We receive what we need - love, forgiveness, healing
6. We forgive those who hurt us
7. We let God teach us to heal by grieving, releasing and allowing Him into our pain.

While we can use many formulas, support mechanisms and 12 step guides, the prize of any process is simply put to know Jesus intimately ("ginóskó"). Knowing Jesus meant our own effort stops, and the revelation of Him as Person begins (Read Phil 3:7-10).

## Who Is God

Most of us wrestle with the character of God because we have gained theology, but it may not have translated in our actual experience. Being honest about where you stand is vital to being able to activate any level of change. God doesn't meet us by our behavioral attempts to be holy, He meets us when we have invited grace. When we come to Him admitting we can't, that's when grace has the opportunity to be grace (Read 2 Cor 12:8-10). We are going to look at several aspects of God's character, but this barely scratches the surface. We encourage a deeper study on the attributes of God.

*Truth confrontation: If you met Jesus face to face right in this moment, what would He say to you? Can you bring things to Him? Can you receive from Him?*

## #1. The Love of God

God is first and foremost motivated by love. God's love is the unceasing, willful attitude of God that He has our best interest in mind and has an agenda to restore us into His design. If we have not received revelation of God's love, we can't experience intimacy or partake of a relationship with Him. That's because without love, we will by default self protect or feel controlled, used or misunderstood. We will sift God through the same judgmental, critical and harsh filter that we have had modeled in our life experience. He will be another person seeking to harm us, another person that will let us down. But how deep, how strong, how wide is His love (Read Ephesians 3:18, John 15:13, 1 Corinthians 13, 1 John 4:7, Romans 8:38-39)! God's love hunts us down and ravishes us with the joyful, blissful reality that the One who owns everything and spoke everything into existence, knows our name personally, bore our pain personally, and with an open hand seeks to walk into a relationship that will redeem us and make us whole again. *Truth confrontation: How do you interpret God's love? Do you hide from Him? To you misunderstood it? What has His love done for you?*

## The Holiness of God

But while God is loving, He is also holy. This aspect of God's character is easily misunderstood. Holiness is quite simply separation from anything impure. God's holiness states that He cannot and will not come under the influence of anything negative or sinful. Thank God for that! If God mingled good and evil, we would have no set guideline or place to find stability. Like a society without governorship, we would forever be trapped by darkness with no way out. God's holiness is our security. But because we can't be holy like Him, He sent Jesus to be holiness for us (2 Cor 5:21). The misjudgment of Christianity is that God wants our holiness in the form of a packaged gift. As if we holiness is something we give Him. Nothing could be so ridiculous. God knows we have nothing to offer but our petty, sinful heart. The miracle of grace is that God writes His holiness into our heart - He makes us holy, not through our deeds, but by connection to Him (Hebrews 8:10). When we misjudge God's character, we place an angry, hard and wrathful God into the place of His holiness. In some ways, there ought to be a reverence to God's judgments. He will not be mocked (Galatians 6:7). But if you call Him Father, all His holiness is consumed by one thing - to rescue you from the things that harm you and to conform you into His image. *Truth confrontation: What do you picture when you think of God's holiness? Can you picture Him attacking your sin, but loving you?*

## God's Faithfulness

For many of us, we have not experienced a consistent experience. However, God is faithful. God is unable to go against His Word or to cease operating through His revealed character. If we can't see God's faithfulness because of our life experience, we may need to meditate on the placement of the orbits, the stars and the rising and setting of the sun. That is God's faithfulness. It can't be altered. And if He were unfaithful, the laws of nature and the spiritual laws would be caught in chaos. But they aren't! God is, and was and will be (Hebrews 13:8). He is exactly on time, He is perfectly aligned to His character. And His Word is utterly true - it can't not be what it says it is! Our doubt, insecurity and fear must be consumed by this truth before we can tap into the power that this truth contains.

When we filter God through a negative experience, it's often because we try to understand how a faithful and powerful God could

allow bad things to happen. If He is powerful, then isn't He to blame? God's power operates through the most important concept we'll ever understand about Him - that while He contains the power of everything created, He chooses to use power with respect for the right of mankind to make choices. That means power that could be used to push His agenda, even His good agenda, is sacrificed to the dignified right of people to choose. In essence, His power falls under the leadership of the free will. And in many cases, the human being makes bad choices. But that's the cost, the risk of allowing freedom to reign. The choices of people and the fallen, broken reality of the world dictate the wrongful things that occurred. It doesn't make it hurt any less, but we can begin to place things in the proper category. God is a Redeemer. Thus, what He touches He seeks to bring back to life. He meets us in the turmoil of our human experience and facilitates redemption. *Truth confrontation: Do you feel disappointed by God? Do you feel He should have prevented bad things?*

## The Patience of God

God waits for us. He doesn't get concerned by our failure or disobedience. He allows discipline to work itself through (Hebrews 12:7). Like a meticulously prepared feast, He understands that the outcome is worth the beauty and sacrifice, pain and hard work for the final event of consumption to be worth the wait (James 1:1-3). God knows your future more than you do. He knows everything He is working out. He sees the canvas of eternity, and He is quite simply not in a hurry. He doesn't fret at what we missed, He just sits back and lets the brush stroke of experience dip colors onto the canvas that will ultimately create the beautiful landscape of His intentions and purposes. While God waits, we grow impatient. Our feelings that maybe God isn't working can drive us to disconnection. The patience of God requires that we trust in the things we can't see, and believe in Him when it seems He has turned His back. God's ways aren't our ways (Isaiah 55:9) *Truth Confrontation: Are you frustrated by God's timing? Is He working at something that perhaps you can't see? Are you willing to trust Him?*

Until you know God as He is, and experience Him through "knowing" Him intimately, you'll remain in a seeded form of frustration and self protection. Getting out of that condition isn't driven by *effort*, but through the vulnerability of *surrender*. Do you want to give up the lifestyle of survival? Simply ask God throughout your day - dozens of times a day to reveal Himself to you. Make seeking Him, talking to Him, reaching for Him, asking for His help, and offering your earnest desire to be taught be your greatest pursue. Pursuing head knowledge isn't enough - He wants your affection and your heart. Whatever your wants and needs, and wherever the deepest trauma has led us, Jesus wants to come and claim authority over it - to declare His worthiness to you. But He'll only do that when your own soil is able to receive Him.

Jesus absolved your sin on the cross. He bore your shame so that you wouldn't have to bear it. Not only did He bear your sin, but He dealt and personally experienced the violations done against You. Know one knows you better than He does. No human has ever walked through every heartbreak and tragedy, sin, and wrongdoing. Jesus is enough. Call on Him today.