

December Leadership Trait: GIVING GRACE

Grace is a word we bandy about with ease in our Christian circles. It has almost become a code word proving our spirituality. Yet what does it mean to lead with grace?

As we continue our study of leadership traits in Colossians 3, the concept of giving grace enfolds all the other traits. Without grace, we have no ability or desire to demonstrate compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, love, or unity. Grace is the empowerment to express the heart of Christ in our leadership.

If we search for grace in the context of Colossians 3, we will find the pathway that opens our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit, the giver and sustainer of grace, the good will and loving favor of God's merciful kindness. Grace is all gift—every ounce and instance of grace is a sweet blessing from the Lord.

Grace must be received in order to be given. As leaders, we cannot give what we do not have. How often do we try to bypass receiving grace before serving? How often do we depend on our own strength and abilities?

TRACE THE PATHWAY OF GRACE IN COLOSSIANS 3:

1. *"So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective" Col. 3:1-3 MSG.*

- Live out your faith for nothing can take the place of living the life of Christ within you. From the core of our innermost thoughts to the activity of our words and actions, the life of Christ is active and present.
- Stay focused, set your mind, on the true things that count. Refuse to be distracted and bogged down in the weeds of the details and drama of our plans and desires. See the details from the perspective of grace, make plans through prayer asking God for His vision rather than asking Him to bless your plans.
- If we lose the perspective of grace, we can trip over the challenges and distractions that are always present in leadership and ministry.
- Let go of our own opinions and seek to see things from the perspective of the Spirit.
- **Discussion Question:** Evaluate your leadership in terms of your mindset. In what ways are you staying focused on the things above and the perspective of Christ?

2. *“And that means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. That’s a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God. It’s because of this kind of thing that God is about to explode in anger”* Col 3:5-6 MSG.

- Avoid leading from the old tendencies and temptations of the flesh, the old man before Christ. The old ways of doing business and getting our needs met have no place in leadership. Keep watch for any way that idolatry creeps into our feelings and thoughts, particularly when we are stressed or upset.
- Idolatry is anything that we elevate above Christ and includes any shortcut that we take to making our plans happen, getting our needs met, or ensuring our way.
- Idolatry in leadership is focused on self, image, pride, and success that comes from our natural abilities, experience, and instincts.
- Giving grace as a leader can only come from a heart that is free from the idolatry of self.

3. *“It wasn’t long ago that you were doing all that stuff and not knowing any better”* Col. 3:7 MSG.

- Remember where you have come from—“in them (the deeds of the flesh) you also once walked, when you were living in them.” The grace of humility never forgets that we are all sinners, we all make mistakes, and we all have struggles to do what is right.
- Remembering what God has saved us from keeps our hearts tender with the gratitude of one forgiven.
- This also protects us from the pride of self-righteousness and keeps our leadership approachable and transparent.

4. *“But you know better now, so make sure it’s all gone for good: bad temper, irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk”* Col. 3:8 MSG.

- Put off the ways of the flesh. To put off is an intentional and vigilant attitude and action. We may know better, but isn’t always easy to act better.
- We cannot assume that we will not err on the side of the flesh. Leaders are not immune to anger, wrath, malice, or inappropriate attitudes or speech.
- Putting off the ways of the flesh is not a one-time effort, but a continual monitoring of our thoughts and attitudes.
- **Discussion Questions:** In what ways can the mindset of the flesh detract from ministry and leadership? In what ways are you tempted to rely on your natural abilities rather than on the Spirit? Has this been a struggle for your board as you work together? How can you encourage one another to take off the ways of the flesh?

5. *“... a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all”* Col. 3:11 NASB.

- Giving grace protects us from the division of factions and differing opinions, preferences, and backgrounds.
- At the beginning and end of every day, every plan, every meeting—Christ is all and in all.
- Here again, keeping our minds grounded in Christ is the position from which grace flows.
- **Discussion Question:** How does believing and remembering that Christ is all and in all enable us to extend grace in leadership?

6. *“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful”* Col 3:12-15 NASB.

- Giving grace is the natural outcome of putting on the ways of the Spirit. As we receive the mercy and goodness of all that Christ is within our hearts, He will express Himself through us as mercy, kindness, humility, patience, etc.
- Giving grace begins with a bended knee and a bowed heart that submits and lets the peace of God rule, direct, control, determine, and settle.
- Grace creates gratitude. Grateful leaders know that every outcome is in God’s hands. Gratitude relaxes the pressure to succeed, trusting God to work in every situation.
- **Discussion Question:** What practical ways of giving grace to one another can benefit your leadership?

7. *“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God”* Col. 3:16 NASB.

- Abiding in Christ through His word is the foundation on which graceful leadership is built.
- To dwell is to make our home in the word of Christ, to take Him in deeply so that it transforms all that we do.
- When we abide in God’s word, it becomes the motivation for all that we do. Our words and actions reflect the presence of His word in our hearts. There is no separation of spiritual and practical.

8. *“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father”* Col. 3:17 NASB.

- Giving grace to our selves and to others keeps our attitudes and actions grounded in the influence of Christ.

- Commit to lead in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ with a thankful heart. Grace grows where Christ is present, from the smallest deed to the grandest endeavor. The presence of Christ is the substance and heart of gracious leadership.

“Gracious confidence in the power of Christ at work within us releases us from the pressure of proving ourselves. Gracious confidence means that we do our best as we take the gifts God has placed within us and develop them as fully as we can, in every way we can, depending on Him for every opportunity and outcome.” (Jodi Detrick, *The Jesus-Hearted Woman*, p. 29.)

As leaders, let’s give God our best as we give others His grace.