



SECOND CLERGY TALK

TALK #4 JUSTIFYING GRACE

Overview of All Talks

One message is delivered during The Walk to Emmaus 72-hour experience; it is communicated throughout the music, meals, clergy meditations, attitudes and actions of the team members, and the talks. You have been selected to deliver one of the 15 talks. In reality, you will deliver 1/15 of the Emmaus talk—one message, fifteen presenters.

Prepare your talk using the outlines provided. In general, 2/3 of your presentation will come from the outlines; the remaining 1/3 will come from your original insights and personal experience.

The talks are sequenced in a defined order; each builds on the next to provide pilgrims with the complete message of Emmaus. Do not try to cover more than your assigned topic. The expanded outline intends to provide a solid understanding of the material from which your talk will be developed. The abbreviated outline helps you see the progression of the main points. *Neither outline is a script*; you will need to add personal examples to give life to the content and make it real to the hearers. Use visual aids to help convey the main points.

The Holy Spirit, as well as feedback from the team after your talk preview, will provide additional guidance for your unique presentation of this talk. Once you incorporate the suggestions offered after your preview, your presentation no longer belongs just to you but to the team God is forming to deliver the Emmaus message.

This presentation is allotted a maximum of 20 to 25 minutes. Please honor the time limit out of a spirit of cooperation, charity, good stewardship of time, and consideration for the hearers.

Overview for Speaker

JUSTIFYING GRACE is the fourth talk of the weekend and the second of the five clergy talks on the grace of God. This talk builds on the understanding of prevenient grace described in the first clergy talk. You do not need to review all that has been said or preview all that is yet to come. Focus on the next step on the journey of grace.

In talk #3, PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS, a layperson challenged the pilgrims to be in mission with God, to make Christ real in their world and in their daily lives. Talk #4, JUSTIFYING GRACE, focuses on how an individual accepts the relationship that God offers. In talks #5–7 (LIFE IN PIETY, GROW THROUGH STUDY, and MEANS OF GRACE) pilgrims will learn about life in Christ as an authentic response to God's grace.

Justifying grace is a gift of God. For some it is the moment we realize that we do not earn a relationship with God, nor can we take it for granted. This relationship is not something we work our way into. In a sense, justifying grace is a double acceptance: we say yes to the relationship God offers; God says yes to us in creation and again in the cross. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, proving God's unconditional love and acceptance of us.

Pilgrims on The Walk to Emmaus are, for the most part, committed Christians. Experience has shown that men tend to relate best to the concept of justifying grace as illustrated in the story of the prodigal son. Justifying grace involves our turning around, our awakened awareness, our eyes being opened to the love and companionship of God in Christ through the cross, and our saying yes to the offer to come home and take our place in God's family. The acts of turning and returning to God—saying yes—are the focus of this talk.

Women tend to relate best to courtship as an analogy for justifying grace. In courtship, when the beloved says yes to the offer of a relationship, everything changes. The lifelong commitment of marriage is one of the closest comparisons to the change that takes place when we say yes to Christ and the church.

The aim of this talk is to deepen pilgrims' awareness of God's unconditional love for them and to lead them to say yes to a living, loving, personal relationship with God in Christ. As you develop the main points of the talk, personalize the content by sharing your own experience of accepting God's invitation to a relationship of unconditional love, which is an act of faith and the beginning of new life in Christ (salvation by grace).

While this talk touches briefly on the reality of sin and separation from God, that is not the focus of the JUSTIFYING GRACE talk. The OBSTACLES TO GRACE talk addresses the issue of sin more directly.

The talk is scheduled for Friday at 3:00 p.m.

Expanded Outline: JUSTIFYING GRACE

Lead the Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Please turn to page 48 in your Worshipbook and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

Choose a story or experience from your own life that is brief, personal, and directly related to the main point of this talk. If you cannot think of an appropriate introduction, consult the Weekend Spiritual Director or Community Spiritual Director. A good introduction will engage the hearts, minds, and attention of pilgrims and move them into the theme of this talk. For example, you might do the following:

- Option 1: To help pilgrims understand that we can miss the opportunity to be friends with God, tell a story about someone who continually refused an offer of friendship, only to realize later that he or she had missed out on the opportunity.
- Option 2: As an analogy of God's desire to win our hearts and develop a loving, life-giving relationship with us, tell the story of someone who tirelessly pursued his or her love and finally succeeded in winning the heart of the beloved.

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is **JUSTIFYING GRACE**.

I. God offers us a relationship of unconditional love and grace.

(3–4 minutes)

- A. In the beginning God created the world, the cosmos, and all things in it—including human beings—and God saw that it was good (Gen. 1–2).
 - 1. While wrong choices separate us from God and diminish our spiritual lives (Gen. 3), as in the case of the separation of the prodigal son from the loving father (Luke 15:11-17), God's gifts of love and grace are greater than all our wrong choices (Luke 15:20-24).
 - 2. Because God created us God's image and designed us for a living relationship with God, nothing else can satisfy our soul—not money, sex, or power.
- B. The central theme of the Bible is the story of God calling us back into the relationship for which we were created.
- C. Jesus called people to accept the relationship God offers them (Matt. 11:28; Luke 19:1-10).

- D. God offers us a personal relationship of self-giving love, not a system of rules and regulations (1 John 4:7-12).

II. Our acceptance of the relationship (5 minutes)

- A. Justifying grace is at work in the moment we say yes to the relationship God offers us in Christ. Our acceptance changes everything.
1. In the story of the prodigal son, justifying grace is evident in the prodigal's turning away from his misery and returning home. Likewise, we are restored to an eternal relationship with the One who knows and loves us better than we know and love ourselves (Luke 15:20-24).
 2. Using the analogy of courtship, when we accept God's grace, we say yes to the One who has been wooing and pursuing us, desiring a relationship with us. As in courtship, saying yes changes the nature of the relationship completely. Love has won, and "yes" marks the beginning point of a lifelong commitment to marriage and a shared life. The commitment to this human relationship resembles our eternal commitment to Christ and the church.
 3. Responding to grace is an act of faith. We cannot do anything to merit a relationship with God (Rom. 3:21-28; Eph. 2:8-9).
 4. Salvation is instantaneous and continuous. It is correct to say: *I was saved by grace, I am saved by grace, and I will be saved by grace.*
- B. In scripture, this spiritual experience of justifying grace is also known as salvation, healing, conversion, having one's sins forgiven, and being born again.
- [This is a good time to share a personal witness of your own Christian experience or the experience of someone with whom the pilgrims could easily identify.]*
- C. Justifying grace is clearly seen in the cross of Christ. He gave his life to prove God's love for us (Rom. 5:6-8).
1. Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross restored our relationship with God (symbolized by the vertical line in the cross).
 2. Christ also restored our relationship with our neighbor (symbolized by the horizontal line in the cross; 2 Cor. 5:18-20).
- D. Conversion continues as we keep saying yes to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. This process involves us as we:
1. come to understand ourselves better and acknowledge our continual need for Christ;
 2. come to understand God better and seek more earnestly for God's will in our lives; and

3. practice the essential spiritual disciplines of prayer, scripture reading, meditation, and active obedience in the ongoing conversion of our will to God's will.

III. God's activity and our response (3-5 minutes)

- A. Justifying grace is a double acceptance.
 1. God said yes to us in creation and again in the cross. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, thus proving God's unconditional love and acceptance of us (Rom. 5:6-11).
 2. We say yes to the relationship God offers us in Christ.
- B. God addresses our intellect; we respond in faith. Faith is a reasonable response to God's revelation (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:17-24).
- C. God appeals to our wills; by grace we are free to choose.
 1. God does not dictate our response; it is a free decision, an act of the will (Rev. 3:20).
 2. Christian faith is an act of trust and self-denial; we take up the cross and follow a crucified Lord (Matt. 16:24-26).
- D. God touches our hearts; we respond with love and enthusiasm. However, we do not depend upon feelings or trust in our emotions.
- E. God calls us to be disciples of Jesus Christ; we respond with trust and obedience (Matt. 11:28-30; Luke 4:16-22).
 1. Saving faith is the foundation of obedience and good works, not the result of them (John 14:15-17).
 2. The disciples experienced the life-giving grace of God and invite us to receive it as well (Acts 3:1-8).
 3. The mission of every believer, once he or she has accepted God's grace, is to join in God's mission and make disciples of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18-20).
 4. Spiritual disciplines are a faithful response to justifying grace; as we follow the spiritual practices of Christ, we become more like Jesus.

IV. Introduction of agape (3-4 minutes)

- A. One way God moves us to the point of acceptance, healing, salvation, or conversion is through the loving acts of other Christians.
- B. This kind of God-love is called *agape*, the Greek word for God's unconditional, gracious love. We can never earn or deserve God's love; it is a gift of grace.

- C. During this weekend, Christians will express unconditional love to you in sacrificial ways by praying, serving, and performing other acts of agape—so that you will know more clearly how much God loves you.
- D. Emmaus communities from across this nation and around the world have sent letters and other forms of communication to let you know about this agape love.

[Ask the Assistant Lay Directors to present some of the general agape letters/posters/banners from other Emmaus communities at this time, in addition to the 72-Hour Prayer Vigil chart.]

De Colores!

Abbreviated Outline: JUSTIFYING GRACE

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(3-4 minutes)

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 2. When we accept God's grace, we say yes to the One who has been wooing and pursuing us—desiring a relationship with us. Saying yes changes the nature of the relationship completely.
 3. Responding to grace is an act of faith. We cannot do anything to merit a relationship with God.
 4. Salvation is instantaneous and continuous. It is correct to say: *I was saved by grace, I am saved by grace, and I will be saved by grace.*
- B. In scripture, this spiritual experience of justifying grace is also known as salvation, healing, conversion, having one's sins forgiven, and being born again.

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- C. Justifying grace is clearly seen in the cross of Christ. He gave his life to prove God's love for us.
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