

Your Secret Superpower

1. Warm up: Tell us about a fond memory made during this holiday season of Christmas and the New Year that you will carry with you in your heart.
2. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” Matthew 7:21. He goes on to say, “Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise person who built their house on a rock.” Matthew 7:24. He adds, “By their fruits you shall know them.” Matthew 7:20. Tell us about someone you’ve known whose way of life exhibits authentic spirituality or, conversely, someone who’s very religious but whose way of life belies their profession of faith.
3. On Sunday we began a New Year’s sermon series entitled “By Their Fruits You Will Know Them – 8 Core Characteristics of Authentic Followers of Jesus.” This series will give us a chance to do a personal assessment of where we are on our faith journey. We began by exploring *the #1 hallmark* of an authentic follower of Jesus – **GRACE**. Grace means showing someone unmerited favor. Jeff called grace our secret Superpower with which we can “rip the spacetime continuum and alter the course of reality.”
 - a. Jeff said, “The single greatest characteristic of an authentic follower of Jesus is someone who has received grace and gives grace.” But he pointed out that, in order to give grace, we must first receive it because you can’t give what you have not received. Tell us about a time in your life when someone has shown you extraordinary grace. What happened? And what did it feel like to receive that grace?
 - b. In DC Comics, Barry Allen is transformed into a Superhero with the Superpower of superhuman speed when he’s struck by lightning. The jolt of lightning altered his DNA in a way that was transformational. That’s what it’s like, Jeff said, when we receive grace. It’s like a 300-million-volt jolt of lightning that changes us forever and awakens within us a deep impulse to share grace. Do you buy that? Is that what grace has felt like to you? Why do you think grace is such a profoundly transformational force?
 - c. The Bible says, “By grace you have been saved through faith.” Ephesians 2:8. What do you think that means. Why/how does grace save us?
4. Grace has the power to transform us, the people around us, and the world itself. But here’s the dilemma. You can’t share grace until you’ve received it, and you can’t receive it until you realize how much you need it. Read Luke 18:9-14, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Look again at the words of the Pharisee in his prayer. What do his words reveal about his understanding of how we’re saved? And what do his words reveal about how he saw himself?

- b. Why is the idea of salvation via good works such a deadly idea?
 - c. Now look at the words of the tax collector's prayer. What do his words reveal about his understanding of how we're saved? And what do his words reveal about how he saw himself?
 - d. Why is salvation by grace such a powerful, transformational idea?
 - e. Like the Pharisee, sometimes we're tempted to try to convince ourselves that we're basically good people who've never done anything really terrible. By way of rebuttal, Jeff argued that everyone of us is, in a very real sense, guilty of no less than negligent homicide. He pointed out that just \$15 can provide 10 children with clean drinking water for an entire year, saving them from deadly diseases like cholera. Jeff said, "Many times in my life I've spent \$15 on something frivolous that I could have instead donated to save the lives of children. But I didn't. At least one child, and maybe many more, have died because of choices I've made. That makes me guilty of negligent homicide." Your thoughts? Is this a fair critique? Do you see yourself this way – as someone who beats their breast and cries out, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Why or why not?
5. Once we come face-to-face with our failures, we're finally in a posture to receive grace because we realize grace is the only thing that can save us. So the progression goes like this. First, I have to get in touch with my desperate need for grace by facing my failures with brutal honesty. Second, I open my heart to receive the gift of grace God offers us through Jesus. Third, a deep desire to share that grace with others awakens within me, and I become a bearer of grace, using my Superpower of grace in transformational ways in my interactions with others.
- a. Do you feel like you personally have received the gift of grace that God offers us through Jesus? If so, tell us what brought you to that point.
 - b. What advice would you offer someone who struggles to feel God's grace and instead believes they must work really hard to make up for their sins and earn God's favor?
 - c. Read the words to the worship chorus printed on p. 3, then return to this question: Once we've received grace, we can't help but want to share it. Tell us about a time when you personally were able to show grace to someone in your life who "didn't deserve it." What impact did that act of grace have on you and on the other person?
 - d. In your life right now, where is God calling you to unleash your Superpower of grace by showing grace to someone who "doesn't deserve it?" Are you willing to do that?

Luke 18:9-14

9 Jesus told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: ¹⁰Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector.

¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income."

¹³But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.'

Pass It On

It only takes a spark, to get a fire going,
Then all those around can warm up in its glowing.
That's how it is with God's grace, once you've experienced it.
It's want to sing, it's warm like Spring.
You want to pass it on.