

Higher Math



I probably learned more about grace, during a short lunch conversation the other day, than I had by listening to any past single sermon on grace (which are, sadly, few and far between).

Tony and Tim (no last names please) are members of AA. I wish I remembered the exact conversations but I think I asked them what was “the point” of AA. Tim said it was being humble.

I do not know much about AA except I had heard it was started as a Christian organization, but more recently had “progressed” to a “higher power” focused organization – meaning, I assume, praying to any higher power would have an equal effect.

Then it dawned on me that AA apparently understands what most churches don’t – a truth so foundational, the *Bible* repeats it three times:

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Sadly, many in churches (often in self-righteousness) never see a need for humility (and, therefore, never experience its ensuing grace).

AA has forgotten His name.

The Church, too often,
has forgotten what He does.

God gives grace to the humble to “save them” from the trials they face that they cannot overcome themselves.

Grace comes in diverse forms for many different reasons. Successful AA adherents learn the truth of grace by and through application to ONE issue of life. If only both groups could put 2 and 2 together – AA to understand alcoholism is only one need for humility and resulting grace (there are many other important issues of life and death) and churches to understand the reality of grace and its ONLY source, humility! But sadly, too often, people only know 2, not 2 + 2.

2 for AA

At some point it would be wise to ask: “Who is the ‘Higher Power’ that solves my drinking problem? If there is a Higher Power is he ‘specific’ or just an impersonal force? If he is impersonal, why would he help me personally?”

What AA has shown is that God’s promise of grace for the humble is a universal principle He established for the world – not based on the “higher power” we appeal to. And if our only problem were drinking, it would be OK not to know the true God. But if they are wise, AAers will see other issues and needs and seek the true Grace-Giver.

Just because alcoholism is a more obvious weakness does not make it more damaging. Many, internal, hidden problems are far more debilitating and would

benefit from a _____ Anonymous program. We should have greater concern for others (and ourselves!) for those weaknesses that are not socially frowned upon because, for these, it is usually harder to humble ourselves to find God's grace.

2 for The Church

Paul, in talking to us through the Galatians, probably makes the point clearest to the Church:

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit [by grace through humility], are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? ^{Gal 3:1 - 3}

And Jesus highlights the downside of any religion that focuses on what we do rather than on what God does for the humble:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.” ^{Mt 23:15}

With Peter telling both the Church and those who, through humility, have found God's grace:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. ^{2Pe 3:18}

With what shall I come before the LORD
and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God. ^{Mic 6:6 - 8}

Everyone needs a (an) (several!) _____ Anonymous of some type(s) (so they see their need and humble themselves) and everyone that experiences the benefit of any _____ Anonymous will best benefit if they seek and find the true Grace Giver – the One who can and will help them in other “Anonymous” needs, especially the big one (eternity) that all universally face.

If it is not one Anonymous it is another! Children, spouse, work, greed, illness, money, rest, entertainment, eating, lazy, health . . . and there is hope for those who know 2 + 2 – God's higher math!