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Alright. What's up Traders Point family? How are we doing today? Good to see all of you. Want to welcome you whether you are joining us in person at one of our campuses, or online. So many exciting things happening at TPO. Watch parties are popping up all over. Get this: 26 states, 10 different countries it's amazing to see.

So we have watch parties popping up in places I've never dreamed they could pop up. Not only in back yards but also bars, nursing homes, college campuses, all over. So really glad to have you from wherever you may be joining us.

If you remember, back on August 2 we began a study in the gospel of Luke. And, just by way of quick review, Luke is one of the four gospels. It's the way the New Testament begins: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They are four different accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus, written by four different people with four different groups of people in mind to help us know and understand Jesus better.

If you've ever wondered why it is that we have these four gospels that tell us sort of the same thing but sort of different things about Jesus, it's so that we get a well-rounded view of who he is. And I love that.

So we said that Matthew's gospel was written primarily with the Jewish people in mind. Matthew makes all kinds of references to Jewish tradition and the Jewish people so that way they would know and understand the Messiah.

Mark writes, though, to Gentile converts living in Rome. That's who he had in mind. So it changes his reference points.

John, I love his heart, because he writes to communicate the truth of Jesus in the most understandable way. This is why many times when people say, "I'm sort of new to Bible study, where do I begin?" I'll say, "Man, start with the gospel of John, because John has you in mind."

But I really love Luke's heart because Luke writes for a friend. Luke has a person in mind. He actually names him at the very beginning of his gospel. He writes to a guy named Theophilus. And we don't know a whole lot about him, but we do know that he was somewhat well accomplished and successful.

But we also know that he was still looking for purpose and he wasn't fulfilled. He had some questions that he didn't have answers to. And perhaps he was a little bit skeptical, which is why Luke phrases what he says in the way that he says it. He says, "I've taken the time to put together a well-ordered account," because he knew that his friend valued that.

And Luke was a well-accomplished guy. He was educated. He was a physician by trade. And he said, "I've written this so that you might come to believe." In other words, we would say that Luke, in many ways, is the gospel for skeptics.

And if there is a little bit of skeptic in you, if there is a little bit of skeptic in me, then this is going to be really, really good material for us, because Luke is authentic and he's real, and he's honest, and he really wants us to know and understand who Jesus is and why that matters.

And so as we began this study—we are sort of cutting it up in segments. We just sort of want to work our way through Luke. And so the first portion of our study was called *Settled in Spirit*.

But then we resumed a few weeks ago after our *Behind the Mask* series. And Ryan and Kyle kicked off the first two weeks of this second segment—and by the way, haven't they done a great job? Those guys have just crushed it the last two weeks. I've been traveling and on the road, so I joined on TPO and was just really challenged and fed by their teaching.

But we're calling the second segment of our study *Strengthened in Spirit*. And we're going to be in this 'til November 15 when we'll break and do a couple of series toward the end of the year around the holidays.

But I love this second segment, because we needed to be settled earlier in the year, now we just need to be strengthened. Anybody with me? We are not in a sprint. We are in a marathon. We're just kind of grinding this thing out.

And if you're anything like me, you just feel tired. Maybe not physically, but emotionally. You feel tired in spirit. You're just like, "Man, how much longer are we going to be in this season?" And we really need strength that comes from God. And Luke gives it to us in this next section.

So, I'm really excited about chapter 6, as we spend the next few weeks in it, because it's really, really practical stuff. It's really a message Jesus preaches, and Luke breaks it down for us.

The longer version of this message that Jesus preaches can be found in Matthew. It's called the beatitudes. Luke gives us a little bit more of a condensed version of it here in chapter 6. And the messages that Jesus preaches is just filled with application.

I was thinking about it this last week, and I just thought there are so many things going on around the world right now that you and I cannot control. We can't control the election. We can't control the virus or the pandemic. We can't control the economy. And there are so many things out of our hands.

What we can do, though, is pay attention to our own hearts. What we can do is pay attention to the inputs that are going into our mind, and what we allow there. What we can do is pay attention to our own interpersonal relationships and make sure that we don't get lazy there. To make sure that we are loving and compassionate toward the things that we can have influence in. That's where our focus needs to be.

Not that those other things aren't important. But let's continue to pay attention to the fruit of our own hearts and lives. That's really what Jesus is getting at here. He is talking about something that really is so challenging in all of our lives.

Just to give you a little bit of context before we get into chapter 6, if you've got a Bible or a Bible app go ahead and turn there, but Jesus has just finished telling his disciples, not only to love their enemies, but how to love their enemies by offering mercy and grace to the very people who had treated them badly.

And then he tacks on to the end of that, he's going to speak to an issue that, honestly, is really, really complicated. And you're going to know why as soon as I mention it here in a minute.

The issue that Jesus brings up here—we've all wrestled with at some point in our lives as to how to apply it and how to handle it. And few of us really know how. They didn't give a class like this in college. All of us have likely been the recipients of somebody who tried to do this

toward us, but they did it poorly and it really damaged the relationship, or really made us feel bad.

If you're anything like me, you've tried to do this in the lives of those you care about, you meant well, but you still mis-handled it. And it's not a very popular subject to talk about within our culture, especially in the times in which we live. I think you'll know why here in just a minute.

But let me just phrase it up with a question before we look at what Jesus teaches us. Here's the question. Don't answer it too quickly. But here's the question:

Is it ever OK to judge?

And I think what we don't like is that word, judge, because it comes with a lot of baggage. It comes, maybe, with a lot of painful memories of the past. What's your knee-jerk reaction to that question? The idea of judging or judgment sort of carries with it a negative connotation in our minds, and probably for a really good reason.

As I was thinking about this last week... There were a few images, kind of pop culture, that entered into my mind as I was thinking about the word *judgment*. Maybe this lady right here comes to mind, Judge Judy. And I'm sure that she is a very lovely lady, I don't mean to judge her—bad joke, bad joke—but she's terrifying, right? Have you ever watched that show? I would never want to try to get something past her. I don't think you could.

Or maybe this image right here, Ned Flanders from the Simpsons. You know, just the next store neighbor who is kind of holier than thou.

This is my favorite one right here. The church lady from Saturday Night Live. Remember her, or him? I don't know. Isn't that special?

There are these images, and nobody wants to be on the other side of that. So we look at that and we go: is it ever okay to judge. And many of us are like, "No, it's never okay to judge."

And yet, at the same time, you have to say, "Now, wait a second." If you were to frame it a little bit differently, has there ever been a time in your life where you were witnessing somebody you love and care about make poor decisions? And shouldn't you say something? Well, isn't that kind of like judgment? Well, yes. But no. Not really, but kind of. It's complicated, isn't it?

If you are a parent of a child of any age, there are going to be times when you're going to need to make a judgment of some kind, an assessment of some kind, and you're going to have to choose whether or not you're going to speak up or stay silent.

How about this? Has there ever been a season in your life where you were confused and you were making poor decisions and your life sort of ended up in a ditch—relationally, financially, spiritually—and nobody said anything. And it's like, "Does anybody love me enough to speak up? To speak words of truth in love, to speak words of compassion. And even though it may not be easy for me to hear, I definitely need someone to speak."

There have definitely been times in my life where people who maybe hadn't earned the right to speak into it, spoke, and it hurt. And then others who had earned the right to speak, but didn't. And that hurt too.

This is a complicated subject. And we're going to need the wisdom of God to know how to navigate it well. And Jesus gives us that wisdom in Luke, chapter 6. Because, as it turns out,

there are going to be lots of moments in life... I want you to pay attention to this next phrase, because really this is the heartbeat of the message:

There are going to be so many moments in life where love requires us to say something.

And it's not going to be easy. It's not going to be easy to say. It's not going to be easy to hear. You know there are sometimes when love requires us to stay silent. And you just say, "Well, maybe that won't be the most helpful thing in the moment and I'm going to allow the Spirit of God to do what only he can."

Knowing the difference between whether you speak or stay silent is going to require the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. And there is a lot at stake. And when handled well, speaking the truth in love, or hearing the truth in love can be a pivotal moment in our lives that changes everything. If it's handled poorly, that can change everything too.

So, let's look at the wisdom that only Jesus can give. He starts off in the passage and he says this. He almost appears to be settling the matter before we can even talk about it. He says:

*"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged." Now most of the time this is where we stop, because we like that—right? Don't judge and you won't be judged. But he goes on. He has more to say. And he says: "Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you."*

Now, what I want you to notice is that Jesus seems to be making some sort of distinction between judgment and condemnation. That's why he mentions the two in these back to back statements. And there are moments when it is going to be difficult not to judge.

Just a quick question. How many of you like to be judged? Anybody? There are a couple of you—a couple of weird ones, alright? Not to judge.

How many of you judge others? Come on. You've got to raise your hand on that. We do it all of the time, whether it's internally—maybe we don't ever say it, but maybe mentally we sort of judge. We do it all of the time. It is impossible not to judge.

And there are going to be moments when actually, we need to make appropriate judgments. If you are a boss, you've got employees. You've got to make some assessments, some judgments at times. If you are a parent, you've got to. A loving parent will know when to speak up because to not speak would actually not be the most loving thing to do. Like, "If I see my child veering off in a certain direction I need to speak up." There are judgments that we need to make all of the time. Sometimes we have to.

What Jesus is saying here is that there is a difference between making an appropriate assessment of something and condemning someone. Those are very, very different. In fact, let me give you a definition of condemnation:

Condemnation is coming to hasty conclusions about someone else's actions, motives, and behaviors without taking the time to get all the facts.

And then:

It's a failure to understand where they are coming from or what they are going through. *And in order to understand where they are coming from or what they are going through—that requires a relationship. There are some people we have not earned the right to speak truth*

*into—not yet. And there are others that we have. And Jesus says that what is so damaging to people in relationships isn't that we speak truth into somebody's life, but we speak up in such a way that maybe it is abrasive, maybe it is shaming, maybe it feels like condemnation.*

*And Jesus says that if you do that, that's eventually going to come back on you, but if you can forgive others you will be forgiven. We talked about that several weeks ago.*

*And then he says, "Give, and you will receive." And oftentimes I think we look at these verses in the context of financial generosity, and I think the principle certainly applies, but Jesus is talking about personal relationships here. He says, "Give and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back."*

That is a great description there. What's he talking about? Pressed down, shaken together?

You know, a couple of times a year I have meetings in New York City and oftentimes I will try to take one of my kids with me just trying to create some memories. So we'll go for a day on either side of the meeting and just do some fun stuff around the city.

And all of my kids, over the years, have always wanted to go to one place. The M & M Store in Time Square. Not my favorite place to go. Not because I don't want to have a good time, but because I would just rather not pay double the price for regular old M & Ms you can get at the gas station. That's just me, alright?

But they go there and what they will do is they will get (if you've ever been there, or maybe just any kind of candy store at the mall) they get these clear bags and they go around to the dispensers and they fill them up. And right when the bag is starting to get kind of full, what do they do? They press it down. They shake it together so that they can get as much as possible in there.

That's what Jesus is talking about. And he says when we can give this type of grace in our interpersonal relationships, that's what will be given to us and he says, "It will be chock full, pressed down, shaken together, making room for more." Why? Because we all need it. I don't know anybody who is like, "I could use a little less grace in my life." No. I will speak for me. I need as much grace as can get. And the generosity that we apply to our interpersonal relationships is the same.

In verse 39, Jesus then gives this illustration. He goes:

*"Can one blind person lead another? Won't they both fall into a ditch?"*

Ever been in that stubborn kind of relationship? Like the blind leading the blind. Neither one will give. Neither one will give grace or generosity. And you both sort of end up in a ditch.

Instead, he says in verse 40:

*"Students are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher."*

*He's saying you and I are the students, he's the teacher. And he says, "When it comes to interpersonal relationships, don't simply reflect the spirit that the other person gives to you." Be a reflection of who Jesus is to them. That's what that means.*

*And then he says in verse 41, he gets to the heart of the passage:*

*“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying, ‘Friend, let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.”*

Now, maybe you’ve heard that passage before. But think about that for minute. The visual for that is so bizarre isn’t it? Because when was the last time you had a log in your eye, literally? Have any of you had a piece of dust or sawdust or something like allergies in your eye? We’ve all had that, right? It’s so annoying. It’s microscopic. You can’t see it, but you can feel it. But none of us have ever had a 2 x 4 in our eye.

Jesus is sort of giving this analogy and he’s saying, “Hey, listen. Whenever you’ve got a board in your eye, don’t just walk up to your friend and go, “Hey, I’m noticing a little speak of sawdust in your eye.” If you do that, he’s saying you’ve lost all credibility.

So what does it mean? Oftentimes in our society and culture we sort of use that to say, “Well, we shouldn’t say anything at all.” We use this phrase, “Who am I to judge? I’m not perfect. You’re not perfect. So why don’t you just do you and I’ll do me.”

Jesus isn’t saying that here. What is he saying? He goes, “First, remove the 2 x 4 from your head.” Because we would all agree that between a 2 x 4 and a piece of sawdust, what’s the bigger problem?

Once you remove that from your eye, then—then you can effectively go to your friend with some credibility and say, “Hey, you know what? I noticed that you’ve got a little bit of sawdust in your eye. And take my word for it, because recently I had a board in my head and it wasn’t very much fun. I removed it and it was painful, but now the quality of my life has improved dramatically. I can actually see so much clearer and I’d like to help you too before that speck of sawdust ever turns into a log.”

And what happens is that a generosity of spirit here turns us from a potential hypocrite into a credible friend. So, how do we navigate that? And I can’t think of very many subjects that are as difficult to apply as this: knowing when to speak into somebody’s life and knowing when not to.

And when you speak, how do you do it? What spirit? What tone do you have? Nobody likes to be judged. And our culture values individualism and autonomy. Yet, at the same time, love often requires us to speak up. Let me just give you a couple of examples.

When I was a senior in high school—my sister was two years younger than me, she was a sophomore—my parents went out of town for a weekend and she had some friends over late at night. They all hung out outside in the driveway. I went to bed.

I got up early the next morning and I was mowing the yard. I noticed my sister’s trunk was popped open. So I went over to close it. And when I went to close it, I kind of raised it up to then close it. But when I raised it up, I noticed that there was a brown paper bag sticking out from underneath the spare tire. And so I pulled up the spare tire and I saw a bunch of alcohol bottles lining the wheel well of the spare tire.

And in that moment, I knew I needed to do something. I had a decision to make. I love my sister. So I had a decision to make. I could go, “Well, looks like she had a good time last night,” shut the trunk, never say anything. Or do I speak up? Do I say something?

I chose in that moment to speak up. Now, I will say that I could have done it with a lot more generosity of spirit. Let me just say it that way, alright? But I was a teenaged boy. The frontal lobe hadn't fully developed yet. And some would argue that it still hasn't, but that's neither here nor there.

I gathered up all of the bottles. Took them inside. I don't recommend you do this, but I did have fun doing it. I lined them up all on the dresser and then I woke her up and I was like, "Hey, what's that?" I probably had too much fun with that. But love required me to say...

Now, by the way. She turned out way better than me. She owns her own business. She's married. She has great kids. She lives in Nashville. I'd like to think it's because she has a great older brother who would speak truth into her life, but maybe not.

Let me give you another one. A few years ago there was a church where I knew the leaders really, really well. And they called me, and they just asked for a little bit of counsel. They said, "Hey. We have somebody on staff." I knew who they were. They had somebody on staff who was engaged to be married, "We just found out that they were purchasing furniture for their new home on the church credit card. And they tried to hide the purchases from us, and they lied about it. What should we do?"

I've got to tell you, my heart broke because I knew them personally. And I knew how gifted they were. And I knew how much they loved Jesus. And I don't know how they slipped into that mode in their life, but I remember just with my heart broken, I said, "You're going to have to let them go."

Now, does that mean that I think that they are beyond God's grace? Absolutely not. Does that mean that they couldn't be rehired and restored into ministry at some point? Absolutely they could. But love wouldn't require you to look the other way on that, love actually required you to say something for their good and for the good of others.

This is complicated, isn't it? And I would imagine right now, because I've given you just those two examples, maybe your mind may be connecting some dots.

Maybe there are some situations in your life in the past, present, or future and some conversations that maybe you know you need to have. Or maybe there are some conversations that didn't go so well. Or maybe there are some potential conversations that you know need to happen but you're not quite sure how they can happen.

And this gets so challenging because some of us, depending upon our personality... Some of us in the room are kind of aggressive types and we don't really mind confrontation or maybe we see things just purely black and white and we're justice driven and we're like, "Yeah, I've got to say something." And we don't really pay attention to the tone or to the attitude of our hearts and we end up crushing the other person.

Or maybe it goes the other way, and we're sort of afraid of confrontation and we're peacemakers and we know we need to say something, but we don't want to say something because what if he takes it the wrong way? Maybe we don't say something.

And when it gets really, really challenging we're going to have to give each other lots and lots of grace. That's really kind of the issue. How do we apply this?

We look at the life and ministry of Jesus and we see that oftentimes he spoke words of judgment into the lives of people who should have known better—the religious leaders. He was

actually very direct with them. You might even say harsh. He called them liars. He called them thieves. Why did Jesus get so upset with them? Well, because they were pushing people farther away from him.

Then one day he came along the booth of a tax collector named Matthew who was also cheating people. But Matthew didn't know God. And Jesus' tone is very different. And he said, "Hey, Matthew. Why don't you come and follow me?"

On another day he comes across the path of a man who was somewhat vertically challenged, a guy named Zacchaeus. He was ripping people off. And Jesus said, "Hey, I'd like to have lunch with you, because Zacchaeus your life could be so much better. You're better than this."

One time he came across a woman at a well who was dying of thirst, not just physically but relationally and emotionally and spiritually—one broken relationship after another. And Jesus didn't shame her or guilt her, but he gave her hope.

We see Jesus perfectly applying the principle that he is laying out here in Luke chapter 6 all throughout his life and his ministry. And it's because of this... I want you to remember this, write this down:

There is a big difference between making judgments, which we're all going to need to do at times in our interpersonal relationships—love requires it. But there is a big difference between that and being judgmental.

Being judgmental is writing people off. Being judgmental is actually enjoying a little too much watching others squirm. Being judgmental is actually saying, "You know what? I'm going to actually communicate with you in such a way that says you are beyond hope, you're beyond the grace of God." It demoralizes people.

So how do we do this? How do we speak up and into the lives of others? Well, primarily what Jesus is concerned about here is the attitude of our hearts.

Jesus judges. The Spirit of God is there, partly to bring conviction. What do you think conviction is? Conviction is a judgment of some kind. It is an assessment of some kind of our actions, our behaviors, and our words, because love requires it.

But the way that Jesus judges us is with a generosity of spirit, a way out of it, a hope for the future. He knows the whole truth about you and me. He knows the whole truth about the extent of our sin, and yet he still reaches out to us in mercy granting us forgiveness through his death on a cross and life through his resurrection. And the grace we give should mirror the grace that is given to us. And it is the grace that we so need.

See, he is gracious to the gracious. And he's generous to the generous. And all of us, before we ever speak into anybody's life, we have to first ask God to speak into ours. And we have to do a heart check. And we have to recognize that we've all got our own junk.

I've got to acknowledge some stuff that I need to deal with in my life. And I need to lay my heart before the Spirit of God and let him do spiritual surgery on me. I'm not in a position of authority over anyone, but you know what? Romans, chapter 14, verse 10 says we all will stand before the judgment seat of God. And that statement right there is enough to humble me.

Nobody has ever been changed by shame. Nobody has ever been changed by a guilt trip—maybe temporarily but not long term. And what God is after is not behavior modification in your



life. What God is after is heart transformation. And heart transformation requires two things: truth wrapped in grace.

There is nothing more powerful than that. All truth and no grace, I can't hear you. All grace and no truth, it won't change me. But you actually take those two things together and they have the power to soften the hardest of hearts and turn it around.

So it's this balancing act that admittedly is so hard between being overly accommodating or overly abrasive. And we can't be either one. And actually, if we're going to error, we just need to error on the side of grace and let the Spirit of God do what only he can.

And I remember the truth of that came home to me so clearly when I was in college. There was one semester where I was really getting undisciplined. I'm probably the only one in the room that ever had that happen in college. But I stayed up too late, I was sleeping in too long, I wasn't working hard enough, I was slacking in school work and really, I needed somebody to speak into my life.

And there was one class that I was taking, it was an English Composition class and there was a test coming up. I wasn't motivated to study for it. I was really letting some of my grades slip and I just didn't prepare for it.

I remember I went in and I was just kind of winging it. I took the test and I bombed it badly. When I say bomb, I don't mean like an F. I mean like out of 100 I got a 22 percent. It was really, really bad.

I remember getting the result back and I remember I got angry and I got defensive. And I knew, inside, that I hadn't done the work, I hadn't prepared myself, but I was like, "I don't deserve a 22 percent. Do I deserve maybe a 45 percent? Yeah, but not a 22 percent."

So I asked for a meeting with the professor. I remember that I went into her office and I sat down and I began to whine and complain and I said the test was too hard and she didn't cover this in class and was just trying to pin the blame on her, really, it's what I was trying to do.

And I remember she sat there, and she listened to me and she said (this was a Friday), "Aaron, thank you so much for coming in to talk to me." She goes, "Give me the weekend to think about it." I was like, "Alright."

So the weekend went by. I went back into her office on Monday afternoon and I will never forget this conversation. It's the reason why it's an illustration right now. It happened some 24, 25 years ago. There are lots of conversations I've had with people and professors that I don't remember, but I remember this one.

I remember sitting down in her office. And she walked around her desk and she took off her glasses and she looked at me. She said, "I've given a lot of thought to what you said." She goes, "Honestly, I don't think that the test was as hard as what you think."

She goes, "I think you could exert a little bit more effort, because, Aaron, you're better than this." She was like, "You are a better student than this. You are a better person than this." She goes, "However, I don't know for sure. Maybe the test was a bit harder than what I intended it to be." So she said, "Here's what I'm willing to do. I'm willing to raise your grade. I'm willing to give you a better grade than what I think is reflected from your work."

And I walked out of her office stunned. That was not how I expected the conversation to go. I thought she might tell me I could retake the test for half credit. I thought she might try to make me feel bad. I thought she might try to shame me.

Turns out, she had a whole lot of wisdom because she knew in the moment that by trying to push on me or to lean on me or to shame me, maybe it would get me to work harder temporarily, but what she was going after was long-term change. And it stuck, because what happened to me is, I walked out of there feeling convicted, not by her but by the Spirit of God. I didn't deserve that. And it made me want to be better.

That's what grace does. Sometimes the Holy Spirit wants to speak through you to the lives of others, but the Holy Spirit doesn't want you to be judge and jury. You've got to allow God to do what only he can. And grace is a more powerful motivator than what shame ever will be.

Now, once again, don't misapply this. Does that mean that every single time she should have raised my grade? No. And she didn't, believe me. The next time around, not necessarily the same deal.

But it is to say, there is nothing more powerful than grace. And God knows that. And there is nothing more powerful than a group of imperfect people coming shoulder to shoulder with others and simply saying, "I've been there too." I love those words. They are so powerful when you are talking to somebody who may be struggling.

It's just these words here: Man, I have too. "I'm really, really going through a hard time." You know what? You just go, "Hey, Man. I have too."

"I'm really struggling with this addiction right now."

"I'm so glad you told me, I have too."

"I let my anger get the best of me."

"I totally get that I have too."

You know what this is called? This is called identification. This is called attunement. This is called empathy. And there is something so powerful about that. It's a common human experience.

But we don't just go, "It's okay. You just kind of continue to do you." No, we actually challenge each other to say, "You know what? There is a better way. We don't have to stay in this rut. We can actually come out of it together."

And we serve a God who doesn't just judge us at a distance. We serve a God who is willing to come close. In Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 15 it says:

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."*

*See, God is the only one who has the power and the position to judge anyone, but instead he sent his Son to become our judgment. So we can offer that same kind to others. And we have to ask ourselves, does the Holy Spirit really reside in me?*

*And you know, one of the most common objections that people have of the church—I hear it all of the time—is, "Well, I'll be judged there. Christians are judgmental." And you know what? At times we can be. They have kind of a point.*

*I think what we need to do is not go to the other side of just being overly accommodating to everything, we need to come back to the gospel center to keep these two things in balance: truth and grace.*

*To recognize that this is a place for everyone without shame. You should never feel shamed. You should never be pinned to the ground by your past. There is a way forward. God is for you, not against you. God can see a better way. That's why Jesus went to a cross. And without that none of us would have any sort of hope.*

If God can't save everyone through his grace, then he can't save anyone. Isaiah puts it so well. In chapter 53, verse 6 he says:

*"All of us," all of us, "Like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.*

So I want you to know what kind of church you walked into or what kind of church you just joined online:

We will offer a hand of help, not a finger of condemnation.

We are going to love people right where they are and offer grace. Why? Because that's what we've been given and that's what we continue to need. And we're going to offer mercy and forgiveness because all of those things are what transformation is made of, and transformation is for everyone. See:

The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

There are not degrees of sin. There's just plain old sin. And so regardless of your past, regardless of the mistakes that you have made, regardless of the divorce, regardless of the addiction, regardless of the bankruptcy, regardless of the anger issues—there may be consequences to behavior, but God says you can still have a future. You can still be redeemed by my grace. There is a better way.

And today, if you have responded to that grace, man, I'd love to introduce you to Jesus. I'd love for you to place your trust in him right now, to reach out and claim what he died for you to have. And not just for you, but for the people who you know and love as well. Because that is the only way.

Let's pray together.

Father, we come to you right now and I thank you for how practical this teaching is even though it's so hard to hear. And, God, we need your help to know how to apply this because it can get messy. Relationships are challenging and at the same time we know that love requires the best of us. So, God, help us to keep this tension in balance between truth and grace, especially in this season that we are in right now as a people and a nation.

God, I pray if there are some listening to this that right now, today, and they started listening without hope, I pray that as we wrap up here in a few minutes that they would find hope, that, God, here in a few minutes they would be able to drop the chains of shame that have been binding them up for so long.

I pray that you would give us wisdom so that we would know how to navigate this throughout our lives. Thank you for the cross. Thank you for your grace, because without it none of us

have hope. So now give us the strength to pass it on to others. And we ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody says: Amen.