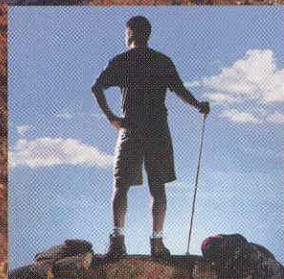


RANDY ALCORN

the GRACE *and* TRUTH
PARADOX

RESPONDING *with*
CHRISTLIKE BALANCE



the GRACE *and* TRUTH
PARADOX

RANDY ALCORN

Learning Activities and Leader Guide
by Debbie Kubik Evert

LifeWay Press®
Nashville, Tennessee

Contents

About the Author	4
Preface	5
Week 1: Two Foundational Concepts.	6
Week 2: What Is Grace?.	26
Week 3: What Is Truth?.	54
Week 4: Grace and Truth in Balance	78
Leader Guide	95
Christian Growth Study Plan.	111



week 1

Two Foundational Concepts

day 1



Case in Point

For most of today's lesson you will read a story that really happened to me. It illustrates the heart of this study.

Late one rainy night my wife and I were leaving a movie theater when Nanci noticed an older man in the parking lot leaning on a walker and struggling. I helped him get into his car. Because he was exhausted, I asked if I could drive him home. He declined, but I said we would follow him home in case he needed help. As he pulled out of his parking place, driving erratically, we prayed he wouldn't find the street. Our prayers were answered when he got trapped in a fast-food drive-through line. I opened his door and asked him to move to the passenger seat so that I could drive him home, while Nanci followed.

As I pulled out, two men jumped in front of the car, waving their arms and a cell phone. One shouted, "My wife's having our baby, and I have to get home! Can you drive us?"

"Well," I said, "this isn't my car, and I don't know this man sitting next to me." Sounded pretty lame, don't you think? Keep reading. It gets better.

I asked Nanci to drive the older man's car and follow me while I took the guys home (wherever that was). After dropping them off, I hopped back in with George—by now I knew his name—to

take him home (wherever that was). When we reached his place, I helped him to his room.

I found out that George had been a political-science professor at San Francisco State University for 28 years. I realized that most people of George's background would not count Bible-believing Christians among their favorite people! George asked me why we had helped him. I told him we that are followers of Christ, and I left him my book *In Light of Eternity*. I prayed that God would touch his life, and I hoped we'd hear the rest of the story in eternity. As it turns out, we didn't have to wait that long.

Two months later my assistant, Kathy, woke up in the middle of the night experiencing a strange medical problem she'd never had before and hasn't had since. The next day she went to her doctor, taking with her a copy of *In Light of Eternity*. When the doctor saw it, he said, "One of my patients was carrying that book the other day, and he told me he wished he could talk to the author."

Kathy returned to our office with George's phone number. I called George and asked whether he wanted me to drop by. He did. George was full of questions. He wanted to know the truth about Jesus Christ. He couldn't get over the idea of grace, that God could really forgive rotten people. He said it sounded too easy.

Two hours of discussion followed. I saw God's Spirit at work in George. Finally he prayed, confessed his sin, and accepted Christ's gift of eternal life.

Now what are the chances of all these events coinciding? No chance at all. They were a series of divine appointments! A small act of grace by my wife and me (two small acts, counting the trip to the woman having a baby) somehow made an impression on George and placed into his hands a book that offered him the truth.

What was it that George saw, wrestled with, and ultimately brought him to Christ? Grace and truth. These are the qualities that give believers away.

A friend sat down in a small London restaurant and picked up a menu. "What will it be?" the waiter asked.

Studying the puzzling selections, my friend muttered, "Uhh ..."

The waiter smiled. “Oh, a Yank. What part of the States are you from?”

Although my friend hadn’t said a word, he had already given himself away. In the first century Christ’s followers were also recognized immediately. What gave them away?

It wasn’t their buildings. They had none.

It wasn’t their programs. They had none.

It wasn’t their political power. They had none.

It wasn’t their slick publications, TV networks, bumper stickers, or celebrities. They had none.

What made the early believers stand out? You can discover what it was by reading a passage from a book that tells the story of the first-century church.

Read Acts 4:32-33.

**What actions made
the early believers easily recognizable?**

THE MULTITUDE OF THOSE WHO BELIEVED WERE OF ONE HEART AND SOUL, AND NO ONE SAID THAT ANY OF HIS POSSESSIONS WAS HIS OWN, BUT INSTEAD THEY HELD EVERYTHING IN COMMON. AND WITH GREAT POWER THE APOSTLES WERE GIVING TESTIMONY TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS, AND GREAT GRACE WAS ON ALL OF THEM. *ACTS 4:32-33*

The early believers testified to the truth about Christ and lived by His grace. Truth was the food they ate and the message they spoke. Grace was the air they breathed and the life they lived. The world around the first-century Christians had never seen anything like them. It still hasn’t.

How closely would you say that you follow the early church's example?

No resemblance

A partial resemblance

A close resemblance

In what ways is your church similar to this early church?

Remember, no church is perfect, because it is made up of humans. So be gentle in evaluating your church. On the other hand, where you see an area to improve, pray for your church's leaders and members to seek God's heart and to have His priorities. Also pray that you will be the church member God wants you to be.

Let's take a moment to clarify what I mean by grace and truth. Grace isn't good manners, and by truth I don't just mean speaking honestly.

Truth refers to the legal demands on humanity that God's character requires and the absolute law He established in His Word. God's holiness, justice, and wrath are expressions of His truth. The fact that God hates sin and judges sin illustrates the integrity of His character and the uncompromising demands of His truth.

Grace, on the other hand, is the aspect of God's character that overrides His judgment of our sin. God's grace led Him to sacrifice His Son to pay the penalty for our sin, offering all people an opportunity to be forgiven and to have new life in Christ. God's love and the good news of Jesus Christ are examples of the grace God extends to us.

**Categorize each of the following words
as describing either grace or truth.**

- | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|
| Law | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grace | <input type="checkbox"/> | Truth |
| Forgiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grace | <input type="checkbox"/> | Truth |
| Mercy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grace | <input type="checkbox"/> | Truth |
| Obedience | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grace | <input type="checkbox"/> | Truth |
| Wrath | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grace | <input type="checkbox"/> | Truth |
| Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grace | <input type="checkbox"/> | Truth |
| Gospel | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grace | <input type="checkbox"/> | Truth |
| Love | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grace | <input type="checkbox"/> | Truth |

THE DAY IN REVIEW

Review today's lesson. What was the most important concept you read today?

How will this truth challenge you to be like Christ?

Pray, asking God to help you begin to understand the concepts of grace and truth. Write your prayer below.
