



TEACH IT TALK SESSION 3

This talk guide is just that: a guide. It's not intended to be a manuscript to read aloud. It's here to give you ideas, structure, and stories to blend with your personal study (Prep It) as you prepare your talk.

The content complements the other Teach It guides and allows you to give a talk on the same topic students are studying in other settings, such as small groups, without too much overlap.

1. Materials (Optional)

Children's artwork of any kind

2. Optional Openings

VISUAL/INTERACTIVE

Show children's artwork, and ask students about the difference between what parents and kids call great art. Ask their opinions of what great art really looks like.

QUOTATIONS

Share a few of these quotations to introduce the subjects of grace and judgment and the paradox they seemingly present.

A state of mind that sees God in everything is evidence of growth in grace and a thankful heart.
—Charles G. Finney (1792-1875, American revivalist, leader in the Second Great Awakening)

It is not until you become a mother that your judgment slowly turns to compassion and understanding.

—Erma Bombeck (1927-1996, American humorist and newspaper columnist)

Only one thing is certain—that is, nothing is certain. If this statement is true, it is also false.
—author unknown

Without one form of justice or the other, the result is ultimately disorder and grief for you and everybody. Thus justice is itself not unmerciful. Justice is the grammar of things. Mercy is the poetry of things.

—Frederick Buechner, *Whistling in the Dark* (1926-present, American author and minister)

3. Digging In

PERSONAL STORY

Share your thoughts on children's art, and draw out the contrast that kids' art is special, but it's not great art. Here's an example:

I have a two-year-old son who's always making me stuff. He constantly makes me art projects. He'll sculpt something out of Play-Doh. He'll paint, draw, or put together various art and craft projects. The thing about these creations is that they're really not very good.

Now before you think I'm a Scrooge or something, you should know that I love these art projects. I think they're great. It's just that, to be honest, they probably wouldn't command much money at an auction. If I put them in an art competition they really wouldn't do so well. They're just not that impressive by the art world's standards. They might be genius works of art in the world of two-year-olds, just not in the world of adults. The thing is, my son loves these pieces of art. I love them, too, because he made them for me. It'd be incredibly awkward if I threw the painting in his face, yelling, "This isn't up to my standards." It'd be awkward because I love my little boy, and that's not how I want to react to his gifts.

There's a difference between something being good and something being loved. I love his art. It's good to me because I love my son. In much the same way, God loves the things we do for him because he loves us. It's not that the stuff we do is all that impressive by God's standards. It's just that he loves our hearts and loves the fact that we do things because we love him.

Continue with—

2 Timothy 1:8-10 says—

But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and *grace*. This *grace* was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus (emphasis added).

2 Timothy 4:1 also says that Christ Jesus “will *judge* the living and the dead” (emphasis added). And 2 Timothy 4:8 calls Jesus “the righteous *Judge*” (emphasis added).

Grace and judgment. Both of these are found in Jesus. But how in the world would these two go together? We know that our greatest endeavors, our greatest works, anything we can give or do or offer to God amounts to nothing more than “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). So the question we have to ask ourselves is this: Do we want to live out our lives trying to earn God's love? How many filthy rags do we have to crank out before we finally impress him?

The good news—no, the GREAT NEWS is simply this: God loves us. He loves it when his children do things to show him they love him. He loves it when we follow his lead. He loves it when we love one another. We're not going to impress him with how much great stuff we can accomplish. We're like children trying to make great art. We're not that good. But we're loved.

We'll never outdo or outlove God. We just can't really compete on that level. But isn't it great that we have a Father in heaven who is watching our every move and excited about our hearts for him?

OPTIONAL MIX-INS

You may want to point out some background on 2 Timothy:

-Anytime we open up any book of the Bible, we should always be on the lookout for what that book tells us about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

-Because every book of the Bible addresses different issues and life situations, we learn something new about each member of the Trinity in every book.

-Second Timothy is a very practical book—especially for teens. So we learn some really practical things about Jesus in this book.

-In 2 Timothy we see that Jesus provides grace, but we also see that he brings judgment.

-You wouldn't think grace and judgment would go together.

4. Taking It Inward

Continue—

On one level God will love whatever we do for him. It might be the equivalent of a little kid's painting, but it's still loved and appreciated. We will never earn his love, but we *will* be judged on whether or not we accept his grace.

What is grace? According to Webster's, grace is "unmerited divine assistance." We didn't merit God's divine assistance by anything we've done. If we did, it wouldn't have been grace. And here's what Paul said about this in another of his letters: "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" (Galatians 2:21).

VISUAL ILLUSTRATION

Project or show a picture of a rowboat with oars, and talk about the two oars of the boat. Share something similar to the following with your students as you show the picture:

Both are important. Both work. Both create problems if they're not working. Rowing a boat with only one oar on one side means you're just rowing in circles. You could call one oar *grace* and one oar *judgment*. (The same point can be made with an airplane and its wings.) Stay with me, and you'll see why.

So how do judgment and grace live together? Jesus judges us on whether or not we accept his grace. It's that simple. If you think that sounds too good to be true, you're half correct. It *is* too good. But it *is* true. It kind of sounds like Jesus is giving us a big piece of our favorite cake and then judging us by whether or not we take the cake (and eat it too). That's why they go together so well—like two oars on a boat or two wings on a plane. You really can't have one without the other. If there were no judgment, you wouldn't need grace. The idea of being judged is what makes grace such a great thing. And if there were no grace, judgment would simply be inevitable and may not seem like much of an actual consequence. If judgment were simply a way of life with no possibility of grace, there would be no pass. It's kind of like the difference between being imprisoned for life with no possibility for parole and being imprisoned for life *with* a possibility of parole.

5. Wrapping It Up

Finish with—

So maybe the question is: What kind of artwork are you presenting to God? You know it's nowhere near anything that meets his standards, and you know it's nowhere near anything he could do on his own, but is it *your* best? And are you willing to let Jesus' grace make up the gap between what you can do and what God is capable of doing?

In God's eyes, you may not be good, but you are loved. Accept that.