

The Parables: The Sinner by Mary Kane



Have you ever wondered if you had sinned so deeply that you were beyond the grace of God? Please realize that God is not looking for perfect records; He's looking for humble hearts that long to follow Him. To do the parable study [The Sinner](#), please click on the link.

photo *Silhouette of a Man* by Markuso

<http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/search.php?search=silhouette>

The Parables: The Black Sheep by Mary Kane

Have you ever wandered far from God? I know I have. God's Word says that we all, like sheep, have gone astray. Thankfully, the Good Shepherd is ready to carry us home! All are welcome! To do the study ["Black Sheep"](#) just click on the link!

A Mixture of Grace and Truth

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” Ephesians 4:15

Sometimes being a Christian can appear complicated and confusing, especially when it seems as though Christians have always been battling between showing unconditional love and grace and speaking the truth boldly and without apology. Most Christians tend to take either one side or the other, but if we look at the life of Jesus, He had a balance of both.

He showed grace to those who needed an extra measure, yet to people such as the Pharisees He wasn't afraid to have a stern hand and rebuke them. For Jesus, it was more about the heart of the people He was reaching and what method would bring them closer to Him and the truth. What really matters to Christ is our heart behind our actions, and I think if we were to focus on reaching people's hearts, it would be easier to find that balance between truth and grace. If we have a bitter or angry heart, we are more likely to complain or argue with others. Once we get our hearts in line with Christ's Word, we will start to become more like Him in all areas of our life, including in how we talk to and witness to others.

What different Biblical types of love are there?

In the Greek, *phileo* represented a friendship or brotherly love, and *agape* represented a God-like love. The type of love talked about in this passage is *agape*, reminding us that when we speak the truth, the love that needs to be shown is a love that says what others need to hear in kindness, instead of just saying what others think they want to hear.

Is there an example of Jesus being a witness by speaking the truth?

In the New Testament Jesus found Himself speaking the truth to the Pharisees on many occasions. One such confrontation that occurred took place in Luke 11:37-44. Christ doesn't keep anything back, He calls the Pharisees greedy and wicked and compares them to unmarked tombs that others don't even notice. The reason that Christ found it important to confront the Pharisees instead of just showing grace was because they knew the law and were twisting it to make themselves look good. The Pharisees needed to be confronted so that they would stop using the law to make others feel inferior and unworthy of the love of Christ.

Is there an example of Jesus being a witness by showing love?

One of the most beautiful examples of Christ showing grace in the New Testament took place in John 8:3-11 when Christ showed grace to the adulterous woman. The woman knew what she had done was wrong and didn't need Christ to tell her how to change her life. At that point she needed to know that Christ loved her despite her past, but that He loved her too much to allow her to stay that way. So what Jesus gave her was hope and a second chance, which most others wouldn't have given her.

What situations have you found yourself in where you had to choose between showing grace and truth?

When has someone had to be truthful with you when you would have rather just had grace, but later you were glad they were honest with you?

How have you grown from others' loving honesty toward you?

How can you apply how they treated you into witnessing and talking to others?

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degree for ministry.



Easter Week-Tuesday: Who Says So?



Jane VanOsdol

During the week before Jesus' death, His authority was constantly challenged. It wasn't challenged so much by the Jewish people as it was by the religious leaders: the Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees and the scribes. We can see this in the following example.

Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?" Matthew 21:23

In reading the scriptures, we see that the religious leaders challenged Jesus numerous times throughout the week, just looking to trip Him up so that they could find a justification to kill him. What's so interesting is that Jesus often

responded to these challenges in parables, including the parable of the two sons. In that parable, the second son represents those who claimed to be religious but actually reject Jesus, of course a reflection on Jesus' accusers. Jesus would answer them in such a way that they were rebuked without Him seeming to do it! It made it very difficult for them to respond back to Him.

While reflecting on this part of the Easter story, I thought about how arrogant the religious leaders were to question Jesus. "Surely, after seeing all the miracles Jesus performed that alone should have been enough to convince them," I thought.

But then an uncomfortable thought crept into my mind. Would I have accepted Jesus' authority then, and do I accept His authority in my life now?

I can remember as a little child if one of my sisters told me I had to do something I would often retort, "Who says so?" I wanted to know whose authority was backing up what they were saying. Sometimes if I wanted my own way bad enough, I would ignore them even if they said "Mom says so!" or "Dad says so!" I have to admit that sometimes today I am tempted to ignore Jesus' authority if I really want to do something. I'll reason that it's only a *small* transgression, or it's not as important as the other really big rules I would never break.

But the thing is, once you question or ignore Jesus' authority, it becomes easier to do it again and again.

So, today I'm going to reflect on Jesus' authority in my life and whether I am yielding to Him or questioning His right to run my life! It seems this week of Easter is bringing up some difficult issues that I need to deal with

Tomorrow we'll look at the anointing at Bethany. Until then, pray on!