

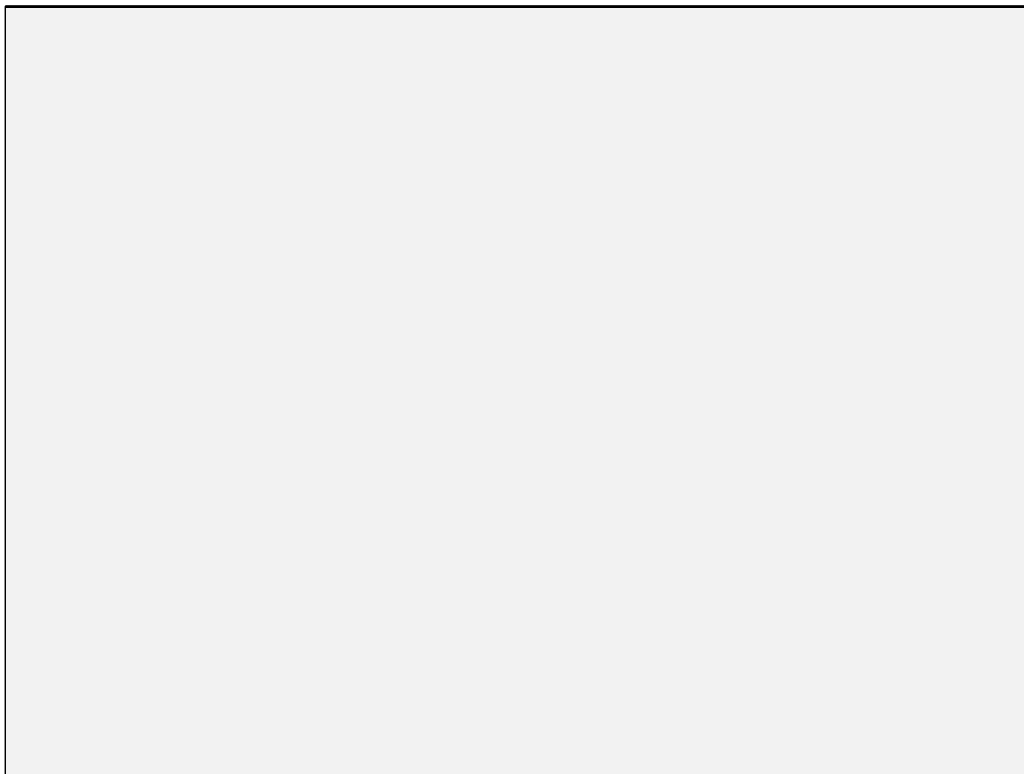
PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations.

Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Please turn to page 48 in your worship books, or direct your attention to the screen, and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.



It was thirty-four years ago when I fell in love. And I had a problem.

The problem was that I didn't know how to love myself, much less another human being. And I was more in love with the idea of being in love, than actually being connected to another person.

And truth be told, I was a miserable son of a gun. What I knew how to do was to get angry – yes, I had mastered rage, if I wanted the cookies, I was going to break that jar.

But the woman I had met had the patience and grace to stick with me, treating me much better than I deserved,

As I slowly got to know about her, and then to know her; as I learned to be me – better – and then to be us, together.

I've disappointed her, I've hurt her, and I've failed her. And to be honest, she's done the same.

But we've stuck together, and because of good times, and bad, we've learned, through the years, what love really is, and what it isn't.

I think that God is like that; patiently loving us so that we can learn how to love.

Sticking with us, leading us, calling us, convicting us, correcting us, redeeming us, and re-making us.

Helping us to let go of the things that keep us apart, encouraging us to hold on to and practice the things that bring us together.

And although God is always treating us better than we deserve, God also helps us to respond, to participate in the relationship, so that we can live in ways that reflect the righteousness of the One who loves us.

SANCTIFYING GRACE

Seamus Enright

My name is Seamus Enright, and the title of this talk is “Sanctifying Grace”.

ONE GOD, ONE GRACE

- What changes? Our Experience.
 - Prevenient
 - Justifying
 - Means of Grace
 - Obstacles to Grace
- Sanctifying Grace is the gift of God providing the desire and the power to grow in our relationship with God – forever.

Although we talk about grace in a variety of ways, all grace is God's grace.

We experience grace preveniently, going before us, the source of life and breath, drawing us, wooing us, so that we can say "yes" to God, and preparing good works for us to do as part of the breaking in of the kingdom.

We experience justification as the gift that God offers of God's self in Jesus Christ, treating us as though we were in right relationship, even though we know that we're not. God's "yes" to us that invites our "yes" to God.

By God's grace we are given the means to encounter, and celebrate, and strengthen our relationship with God – to experience sacred moments of Divine presence and movement.

And through the cross, Jesus has overcome every obstacle, every attitude and action that gets in the way of our relationship with God and with our neighbor.

Jesus meets us where we are, but Jesus doesn't leave us there.

Sanctifying grace is the gift of God providing the desire and the power, the will and ability, to GROW in our relationship with God, a gift that starts in the here and now and extends into eternity.

SANCTIFYING GRACE

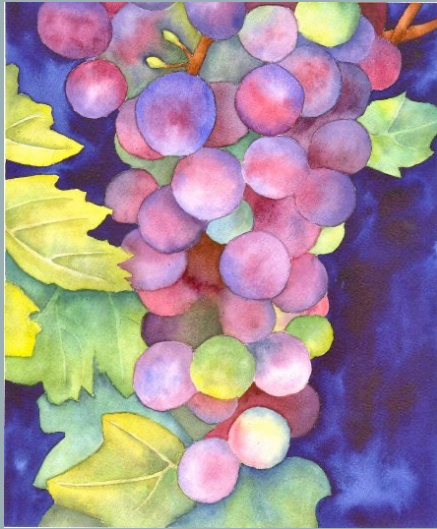
- Sanctifying Grace is the **DYNAMIC** power of the Holy Spirit working **IN** and **THROUGH** every believer.
- Sanctification is growth towards (spiritual) maturity.
- Grace is God's love in action – toward me.
- Grace is God's love in action – toward others and toward Creation.
- We respond to grace with love in action.

Sanctifying grace is how we describe our experience of the power of the Holy Spirit working in us – to bring forth new life, to energize us, enliven us for holy living.

It leads us to maturity in faith – knowing what can be known about God – and knowing God, as Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, Savior, and Lord.

When we open ourselves and participate with this grace at work in us, it works through us, incorporating us into God's mighty acts of salvation, and making us part of Christ's royal priesthood.

In short, it leads us to love like God loves.



Restoring
Imparting
Perfecting
Equipping

Sanctifying grace calls for and empowers our participation with God's grace at work in the world.

Like a branch grafted on to a vine, grace flows into our lives and produces fruit. It makes us "ripe" for glory; the glory that God intended for us, the glory that we were made for.



Sanctifying grace works in us by giving us the desire to be changed, and the power to change our ways

We can't earn God's love by changing, we change because we're loved. And because we're loved, day by day, hour by hour, we have the opportunity to make a fresh start. God is ever willing to forgive, to have us start again, to love rightly.

Part of this is what Paul describes as "God's Spirit bearing witness with our spirit" that we are beloved children of God.

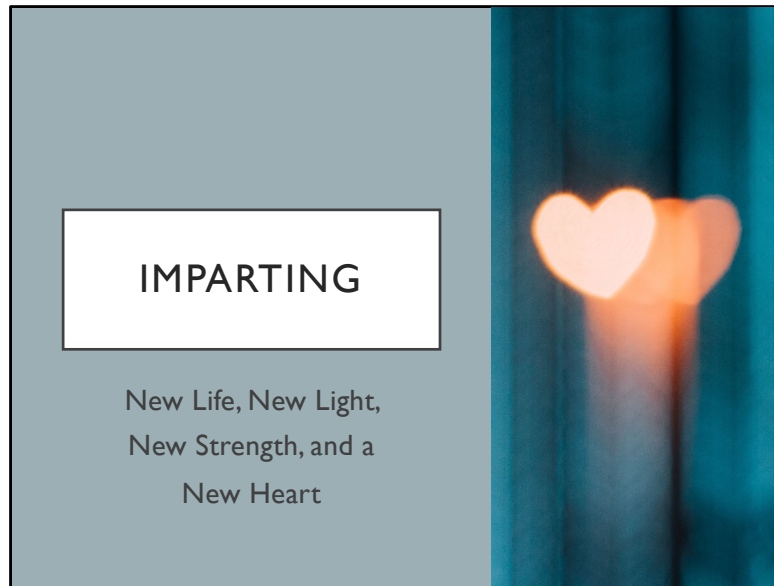
Knowing who we are and whose we are forms the foundation for all other relationships.

Restoration is the healing of the brokenness that results from sin, it's the recovery of our health that comes as we experience freedom from the things that have separated us. It's the fruit of being reconciled to the source of life.

I wasn't particularly angry as a child and was able to express other emotions than rage. I had to be shown and taught that fury was the primary thing to express, and then choose that path. It was God's grace at work in me that convicted me of the harm that my unmanaged anger was doing to others and to myself, and it was grace that taught me a different way than I had learned.

Grace gave me the strength to bear facing what I had done, to be honest with myself, confess to God, and apologize to others.
To see the wisdom and accept the justice of penance, works of repair, and do them.

And grace taught me a better way. The way we were originally made, for connection, relationship, with God and each other.



Justifying grace is the moment when the righteousness of Christ is IMPUTED to us.

We're treated as not guilty, as whole, as well, as though we are in right relationship with God, because of what Jesus has done on our behalf and for our sake.

Sanctifying grace is the process by which the righteousness of Christ is IMPARTED to us – it becomes a part of us.

Our hearts and lives are changed. They become more Christ-like. We become truly Christian – little Christs.

When I first fell in love, I was very focused on making her love me in the ways that I wanted.

That's what emotional immaturity does.

It says, "you change so that I can feel good".

As I became more connected to God, I began to pray that I would love my wife well.

I started with the idea that I was the head, and it was my job to make her submit, even though I didn't know Ephesians (5:15-33), or Colossians (3:18-21), or 1 Peter, chapter 3.

Grace led me, even before I studied the Bible, to a different understanding of marriage, of love, and of covenant relationship; that the other side of that idea of submission is a love willing to die, ready to heal, sacrificing, working, feeding, caring, trustworthy, gentle, patient, kind, forgiving, slow to anger (good Lord!) and abounding in faithfulness.

I didn't know how to become those things, but I knew that God was able, and that I had been freed to choose, and so was she.



Sometimes we struggle with this idea of perfecting. We think of it as being without error or flaw, and we hold by faith to the idea that only Jesus was ever perfect. The same Jesus who said “be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48)

But I find it helpful to think of perfecting as making complete or bringing to maturity. It’s the process of a thing becoming what it was meant to be.

Sanctifying grace produces in us the recognizable image of God, and the likeness of Christ.

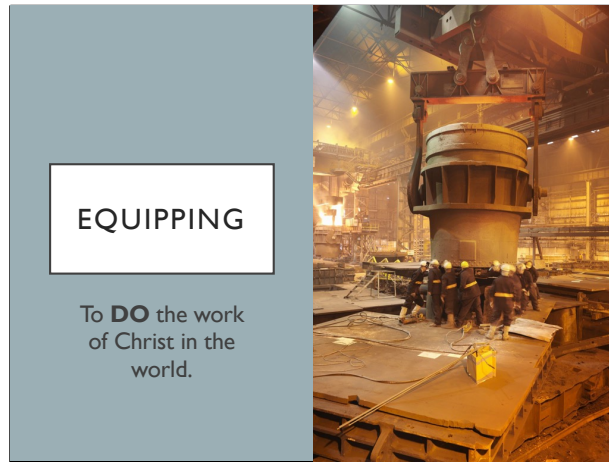
We were meant to be a masterpiece, sometimes to get there we need to have new paint added, sometimes things that are in the way of the picture need to be cleaned off.

We’re given gifts through the Holy Spirit to help us grow and to build up the Body of Christ. (1 Cor 12-14); we get to be a part of the process.

As we mature, our lives display characteristics known as the fruit of the spirit: love joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22).

This process of maturing can be painful. Perfecting a vine involves pruning. Refining a metal involves burning away contaminants. Our call is to a lifelong process of dying to what is evil and rising to what is good and true.

It’s the ability to say, “I will change so that we can all be better”.



As grace conforms us to the likeness of Christ in our hearts, we are empowered to see and to serve the Christ that we discover in the least, the last, and the lost of every place that we find ourselves.

Indeed, Jesus said 31 *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ 37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ 40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”*

Equipped with gifts by the Holy Spirit for the work of ministry of the whole Church.
To Love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbors as ourselves.

To love even our enemies and those who curse us.

To go and make disciples of all peoples, teaching them to obey what Christ has commanded.



This can seem huge.

And sometimes we are called to go out of our comfort zones, to share our faith with those who haven't heard the Good News of God's love.

Sometimes we're confronted with enemies who curse us, even for our faith, sometimes they're our neighbors.

Sometimes we are challenged by how to respond to the unhoused, unwashed, ex-felon in mental crisis who keeps showing up at the church office looking for a grocery gift card that you hope is daily bread but worry is going to be converted into booze and smokes, and even when accounting for the idea of self-medication, how can you possibly be part of that and if not, what do you do?

How do you not turn away?
It's grace.

It can seem huge. But often it's not.
One of the ways it's worked for me is "French-Toast Fridays".

My wife's company was sold, the new owner was a jerk, and she was having a hard time.

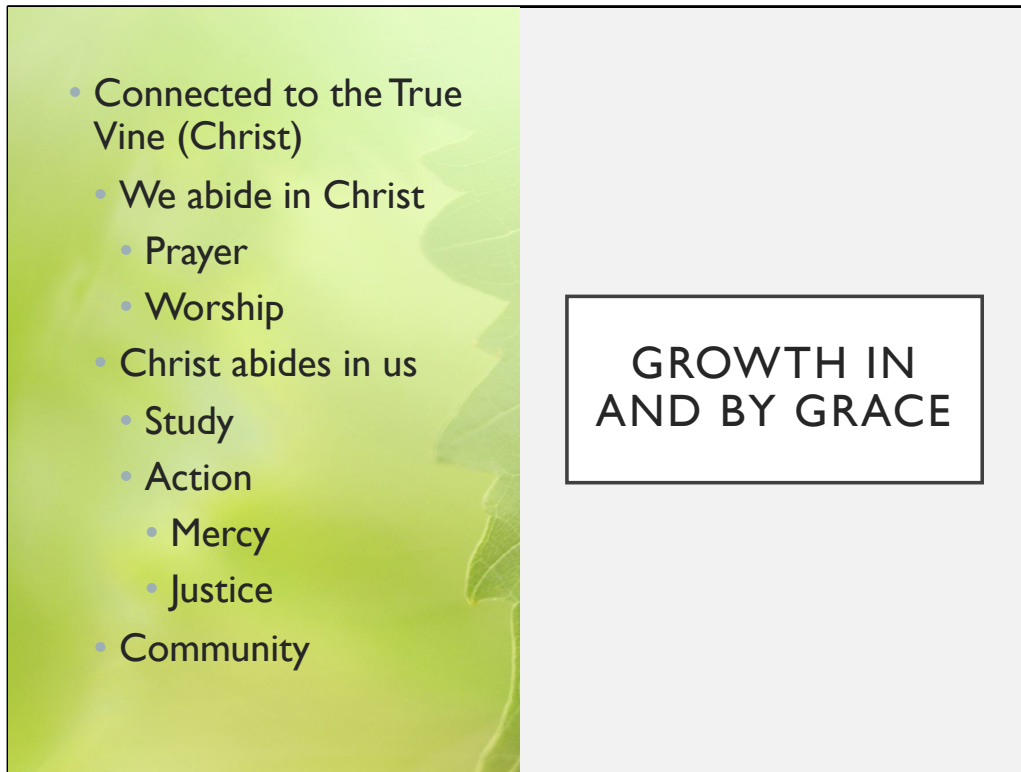
I'm not a cook, and not a morning person, but by the end of each week I could see that the commute and the job, and everything else going on was crushing her. And she was grinding out a commitment to three months of transition, and I was so proud of her faithfulness. I couldn't take away the grind, but I could add a little love, something to look forward to, to start that last day of the week off a bit better. The supernatural power of God, equipping me with gifts that are not natural to me, to rise before the sun, to make edible food, and serve it with a smile. Love is doing. Grace helps us do.

HOW DO WE GROW?

Growth is a Natural process illustrated in the grapevine. (John 15:1-12)

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. 9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.



How do we Grow?

We abide in Christ – our sun and source of living water.

Through prayer and worship we open ourselves to God; we are rooted and grounded in love and intimately connected to Christ.

Christ abides in us –

In study, we give our minds to God and grow in the mind of Christ.

In Christian Action we give our hands to God and participate in the work of Christ.

This work includes **works of mercy** – providing food, water, clothing, hospitality to stranger, comfort for sick

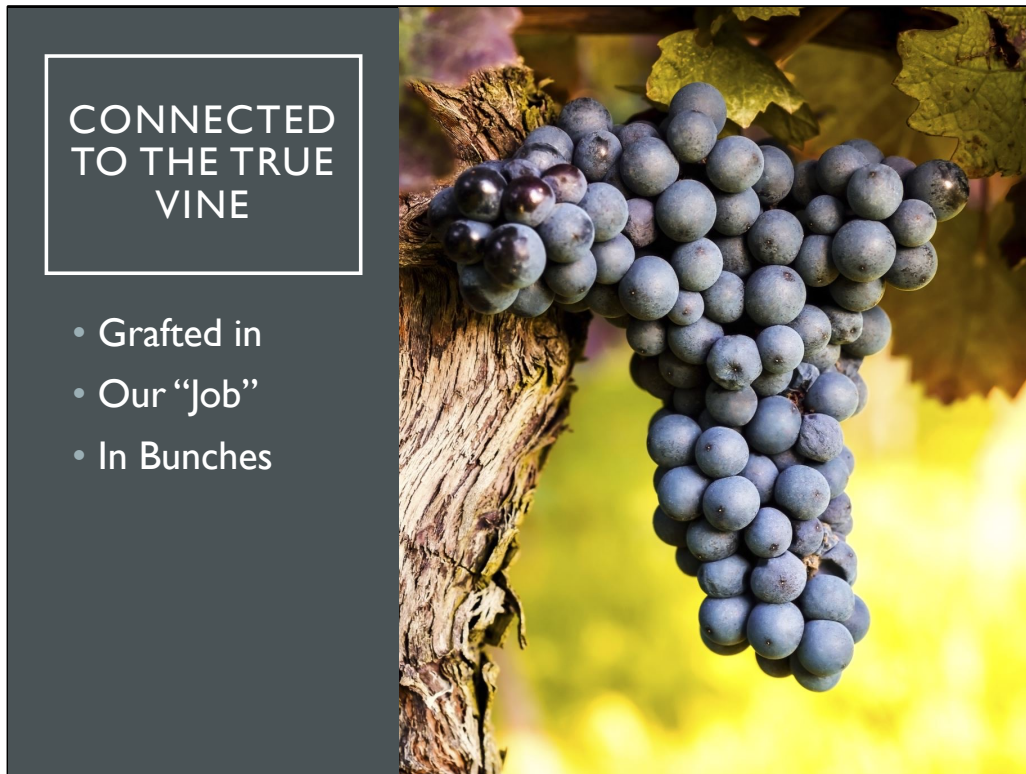
and **works of justice** – release to captives, freedom to oppressed, building a just society.

We open our hearts to receive grace as a gift. Like rain on a vine, Romans 5:5 says “*God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the holy spirit that has been given to us.*”

And then we share grace in the body of Christ. Through participation in the gathered community and small accountability groups, we receive strength and nurture in the same way that a branch does from the vine.

We come alive in Christ, learn the mind of Christ, and help one another stay rooted and grounded in God’s love.

Together, we respond by participating in the mission of Christ in the world.



Closing

For 3 days we've prayed for the Holy Spirit to come and fill us with the fire of love.

We've learned that:

God wants a relationship with us even more than we want a relationship with God.
God goes so far as to graft us in to the true vine.

God's role in sanctifying grace is to fill us with the Holy Spirit and fire, our job is to open our hearts, receive, and walk in the Spirit with Christ day by day.

We don't do this alone.

Small groups are an important means of sanctifying grace for disciples – from the time Jesus called his very first disciples until now, small groups of committed believers are an essential means of grace.

REUNION GROUPS

- Support
- Accountability
- Continued Growth
- Cards
 - Piety, Study, Action

In the Emmaus community, small accountability groups are called reunion groups. It's one of the ways that the seeds planted in these three days bear fruit, part of how we keep growing in our faith.

When we meet as a small group, we follow the order on the group reunion card, which you will find on your table.

Please take your card now and look at it with me as we introduce you to this essential means of sanctifying grace.

Reunion groups are the Emmaus community's primary means of continuing support on the journey towards spiritual maturity.

3 sections, piety, study, and action to assist in helping us hold each other accountable for continued growth, remembering that all of this takes place as part of a church community, connected together. Praying for, and with, each other. Caring for each other.

A Lay speaker will go through card in detail later.

For now, rooted in God's love, abiding in Christ, filled with the Spirit, may you grow in grace, and the knowledge and love of God.

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