

SECTION 6

Participant Pages

Readings for Huddle Participants



SouthBrook
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SECTION 6:

GRACE AND TRUTH (INVITATION AND CHALLENGE) MATRIX

(NUMBERS 19-21 IN “52 WEEKS OF HUDDLES”)

THE S OF SUPPORT IS ALL ABOUT FAMILY.

If nothing else can be said for what families are “supposed to be,” it’s that families support one another. Right? We care for one another. We stick together. We have each other’s backs. We encourage each other’s growth. We share common values.

Most people are a part of some sort of family, whether biological or otherwise. If not, we *desperately* want to be. No one wants to belong to no one.

We like shows like *Modern Family* and *Parenthood* because we see our own families in their humor and struggles. Even the characters on the hit USA show *Suits*, who because of their pursuit of power and superiority as top lawyers have no time at all for any sort of meaningful relationship outside their office, continuously refer to one another as family. And you’re not really hooked on *Walking Dead* because of the zombies...are you?

When we place our faith in Jesus, we are immediately and automatically given a place in God’s massive and marvelous extended family. We *belong forever*. We are a part of God’s household, His “*Oikos*.”¹ Now that we’re a part of the family, the journey of learning to treat one another like family begins.

Of course, this notion of “treating one another like family” does not necessarily bring to mind positive images, does it? We’ve all experienced dysfunction to some degree in our families, whose ideas of support don’t always feel very supportive.

Some of us may know a person who constantly offers advice and criticism to their child or spouse without consideration for their feelings or perspective. To some, that is support.

Some of us may know of adult children who provide financially for a parent who uses their money to engage in unhealthy or destructive life choices, only to apply the “family card” to get more once it runs out. To some, that is support.

Some of us know families that just seem to exist together, like strangers living under the same roof, where polite conversation occurs when necessary, but otherwise, they stay out of each other’s business. To some, that is support.

Many of us have experienced similar dynamics in God’s family, the church, as well. Just because we’re family doesn’t mean we’re yet a healthy family. What does healthy Support look like in God’s family?

¹ Oikos is the Greek word for household in the New Testament

THE JESUS STANDARD

To find our “True North” for the S of Support, we need to look to the One who is both our compass and captain, Jesus Christ. As God’s perfect representative, Jesus *always* offered Support in its most beneficial form. In the first chapter of His gospel, John described Jesus being the embodiment of two things that filled every interaction He ever had. See if you can find them in these two verses:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. —John 1:14

“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”²
—John 1:17

Grace. And Truth. Together, they are what true love looks like. One without the other falls short of what it means to truly love.

Grace is unearned favor. It says, “I love you just as you are. I am *with* you.”

Truth is what’s real. It says, “This is how it is.” Truth sets a standard, and calls people to change.

Look at a couple of instances where Jesus clearly offered grace and truth:

A woman had been caught in the act of extra-marital sex. When she was presented to Jesus along with the law that required such women be stoned, Jesus said, “Let he who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.” Everyone left but Jesus, who could have thrown one, but didn’t [grace].

Jesus asked her, “Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared [grace]. “Go now, and leave your life of sin [truth].”

At seeing the power of God at work through Jesus in a miraculous catch of fish, Simon Peter felt the weight of his own shortcomings, saying, *“Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”*

Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid [grace]; from now on you will fish for people [truth].”

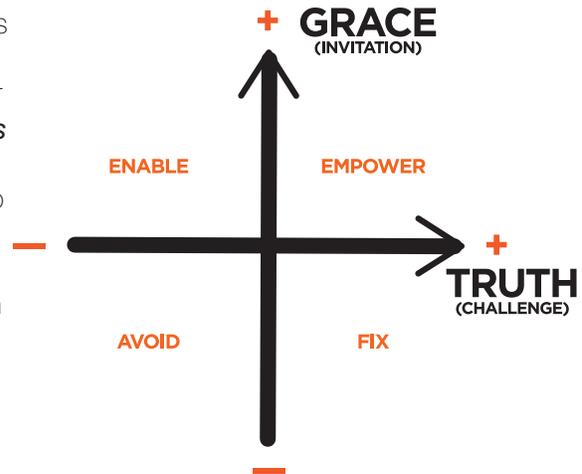
Grace and truth didn’t always look the same in the way Jesus offered them. To the woman caught in adultery for example, it seemed He offered a large portion of grace to go with the truth. To those of the religious establishment like the Pharisees and teachers of the law, he seemed to offer scathing doses of truth at times. But that is all part of what it means to love: Learning how to calibrate grace and truth for different people in different circumstances, based on what God’s love dictates. Because of Jesus’ love for people, we can be sure that the grace/truth combination he offered was just what each of them needed at the time.

² John 1:17 NIV, Emph. mine

We too must learn to effectively calibrate grace and truth in our interactions with others. Paul called for us to *“speak the truth in love,”*³ and for our conversation to *“always be full of grace and salt, so that [we] may know how to answer everyone.”*⁴ Often times, we are better at offering one than the other, as illustrated by one of our tools for Support, “The Grace and Truth Matrix.”

Some of us are better at offering grace than truth.

Grace without **Truth** says, “I love you just as you are...but I won’t share what I really think or feel, or invite you to consider what’s better or truer.” Offering grace without truth *enables* people to remain where they are, even if it’s not God’s best for them or you. The scenario mentioned in which adult kids continually provide money for a parent’s destructive habits without ever offering “tough love” is an example of this kind of dynamic.



Why don’t we offer the truth with the grace sometimes? We may be afraid the other person will feel judged or offended. We may fear crossing that line will change the relationship forever for the worse. We may tend to be people pleasers, and we’re afraid if we offer the truth, the person won’t like us. We may have tried to offer truth in the past and it didn’t work or was not well received. Ultimately, grace without truth falls short of true love, and truth-less grace isn’t really grace. Often when we don’t offer the truth with the grace, we are the ones who suffer in a relationship. After a time of that frustration building up, it may seep out in passive-aggression, or explode out in anger.

Some of us are better at offering truth than grace.

Truth without **Grace** says, “This is how it is and here’s what needs to change... and I’ll point it out to you without stretching out to understand who you are, where you are in life or how you feel.” Offering truth without grace makes people feel like you just want to fix them. Like they’re a project, a problem to be solved. People may respond like Steven responded to Nacho: “Why do you always have to be judging me?”⁵ The inconsiderate criticizer mentioned previously is an example of truth without grace.

Why don’t we offer the grace with the truth sometimes? Maybe we’re tired, and it just feels easier and faster to just tell someone what to do. Maybe we feel like we clearly see what is best for the person, even having Scripture to back it up, and we think that by not mincing words we can make them see it. Maybe we feel like past attempts at offering grace were taken advantage of. Maybe we just struggle to empathize with others. Whatever the reason, truth without grace falls short of true love, and graceless truth isn’t really truth⁶. Rick Joyner wrote that speaking the truth without grace is what Satan does when he masquerades as an angel of light.⁷

Some people find themselves in relationships of **no truth** and **no grace**. An absence of both grace and truth says, “I will *avoid* meaningful interaction with

³ Ephesians 4:15

⁴ Colossians 4:6

⁵ Colossians 4:6

⁶ Ben Sternke addressed these dichotomies in his web article, “What Does a Community Full of Grace and Truth Look Like?”, January 2015.

⁷ From his book, *The Final Quest*

you. I'm checking out." It means there is little or no beneficial investment in the relationship, and interactions can be boring, shallow, deceptive, or even cruel and toxic. We may share the same space, but I'm not with you. And I'm not real interested in God's best for you. The "strangers under the same roof" family mentioned above is an example of this.

What would make us end up in the "avoid" quadrant in a relationship? Maybe we've been hurt badly by someone, and no longer trust them. Maybe a person truly just annoys us, and we don't want to give them any reason, neither grace or truth, to want to step nearer to us. Maybe we just get tired of hearing about how we don't measure up from a "truth without grace" person. Maybe politeness and formality are all that feel acceptable in the relationship, since real investment has never been offered. This dynamic, of course, falls short of God's best.

Contrarily, God's desire is that we would grow into people who embody **Grace** and **Truth**. Grace and Truth together **empower**. They communicate, "I love you just as you are, and I'm with you. Let's step together into something new, something better." Being full of grace and truth means telling it like it is when and how love dictates we do so, but doing so with empathy and with the other's best in mind. The other person still may not receive it, but that is between them and God.

I have this weird problem. I forget to close our kitchen cabinet doors. Sometimes my wife will walk in, and seven of our cabinet doors will be standing open, exposing their contents like that scene from *"The Sixth Sense,"* and I'm nowhere in sight. For a while, I was completely oblivious to it.

My wife could have said, "Ryan, why do you always have to leave the cabinets open? I'm tired of closing them for you. I'm not your mom." (High Truth, Low Grace). Or she could have said to herself, "Oh well, this is just how Ryan is. I guess I'll just learn to live with following behind him and closing his doors," while inwardly the frustration would build. (High Grace, Low Truth). Instead, smiling, she said something to this effect: "Ryan, thank you so much for emptying the dishwasher earlier! I don't know if you notice this, but often times you leave the kitchen doors open after you put the dishes away. Would you please close them? It would make me feel less stressed."

That, to me, felt like grace and truth.

INVITATION AND CHALLENGE

While learning to apply grace and truth, particularly in discipleship and other coaching relationships, it is often helpful to view them through the long-term lens of invitation and challenge⁸. Consider one of the first commands of Jesus to Peter and Andrew:

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."
—Matthew 4:19

"Come follow me" is an expression of invitation. Jesus intentionally offered His disciples long term, relational access to Himself. He invited them to His life. "Come be with me. I'm with you. Let's do life together."

"I will send you out to fish for people" is an expression of challenge. It says, "If you accept my invitation, things in your life are going to change. I'm going to ask you

⁸ Thanks to Mike Breen and 3DM for their tool *The Invitation and Challenge Matrix*, upon which the Grace and Truth Matrix was largely based.

to do new things. Your life will not be the same.” Jesus would train and equip His disciples to do everything He could do, even give their lives for the sake of the kingdom.

Like the coming and going of the tide, Jesus invited His disciples to a relationship and challenged them to move. *Constantly.*

Consider a time when Jesus offered invitation and challenge to Peter during His third post-resurrection appearance to His disciples. In John 21, we read of Jesus showing up on the shore while His disciples were out fishing. Peter jumped into the water and swam to shore.

Now, remember Peter’s storyline at the time Jesus had been arrested and crucified. Peter was the one who had adamantly declared that even if all the other disciples turned away, he would never deny Jesus! And then hours later, He publicly denied ever associating with Jesus three different times. Peter had wept bitterly at his failure.

No doubt, as he swam to shore, his failure still weighed on his mind. Would Jesus still receive him?

“Come and have breakfast,” Jesus said to them all. It was an invitation to continued relationship. Jesus included Peter with the others as still part of His group, calling Him in. Surely it was a relief to Peter. Jesus still loved and received him.

After breakfast, Jesus began a conversation with Peter:

“Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

Jesus’ repeated question stung, bringing Peter’s failure into the light. Three times, Peter had denied Jesus. And now three times, Jesus asks for him to declare his devotion. Jesus had offered grace for denying Him. But Jesus had appointed Peter to a crucial role in taking the gospel to the nations, which required complete devotion. No more denials. Jesus was offering a challenge.

Just as Jesus did with His disciples, we too must learn to calibrate invitation and challenge with those we are coaching.

Vulnerability, encouragement, and spending time with those we are coaching are all ways we express **invitation**.

Accountability, instruction, and moving people toward multiplying their lives to become coaches themselves are all ways we express **challenge**.

Patrick, my first huddle leader, was great at this. Now, Patrick would be the first to tell you that when it came to offering these two dynamics, the challenge came more naturally to him. One of the two typically comes more naturally to each of us. But Patrick had learned how to offer invitation effectively as well.

About six months into that huddle, Patrick and I had a conversation while standing in the youth room at Crossroads Church in Cincinnati. I was expressing to him how I was like a sponge in his huddle, soaking up everything I could, and loving it. And how I couldn't wait to start my own huddle so I could wring all of it out on others.

"Yes," he said. "You're close to being ready. You're not there yet, but you're close."

I only paid attention to one thing. "*You're not there yet.*" What? Not there yet? Do you think you're *better* than me? I'm Ryan Massey! Have I not memorized every shape, list and tool you've drawn for me on your white board app? Have I not been in ministry longer than you? **I** will be the one to decide when I'm ready, PATRICK.

Of course, all of that dialog took place in my head. All Patrick saw was my nod. But Patrick's comment had struck a cord, exposing my pride and arrogance. His statement was one of *challenge*. And he was right. I still had a lot through which I needed to work, and it was important for me to know it. I just didn't want someone else to notice.

A few minutes later, in the same conversation, I told Patrick about the then-current plight of my wife, Jody, who had been suffering from vicious, non-stop migraines for several months. She had mostly been confined to bed, lonely, sad and in terrible pain, unable to be exposed to light, noise or much movement at all. I felt so sad for her, yet so powerless to do anything about it. She'd tried every headache treatment and doctor east of the Mississippi. I just wanted her to experience relief. To further seek the Lord's help, I told Patrick I was planning to fast and pray for three days for my wife. The 3-day fast I was preparing to do was going to be a "juice only" fast.

Now, fasting, if you're not quite sure, is when you choose to go without food for a time in order to seek God. I don't understand it completely, but somehow it amps up our connection with God, and can even throw more power behind our prayers. Some people really like fasting. I don't. Even though I know its benefits, I dread it. I really like eating.

"Let me know when you do that," Patrick responded. "*I'll fast with you.*"

All of my indignation at his "not there yet" comment fled away. Fast with me? For three days? With a guy you've only known for six months? For my wife, whom you've never met? I had plenty of people say they would *pray* for my wife, but never had someone said they would enter into the battle with my like this. And he did fast with me, for three days, a week or so later.

I was very near tears when he said it. I thanked Patrick and told him how humbled and grateful I was for how he would stand by me in prayer for my wife. His comment was one of invitation. This guy was with me. He truly cared for me and had my back. And this expression of invitation created a bridge for me to fully accept the word of challenge he had offered earlier. It's a lot easier to receive challenge when we know and see someone truly has our best in mind.

FOUR TEAMS, FOUR CULTURES

To get moving toward healthy cultures of grace (invitation) and truth (challenge) in our Support relationships, it's helpful to take account of where we currently are. Offering different degrees of each creates different cultures that can be identified, and help us know how to proceed. Each of the quadrants on the grace and truth matrix represents a different kind of culture.

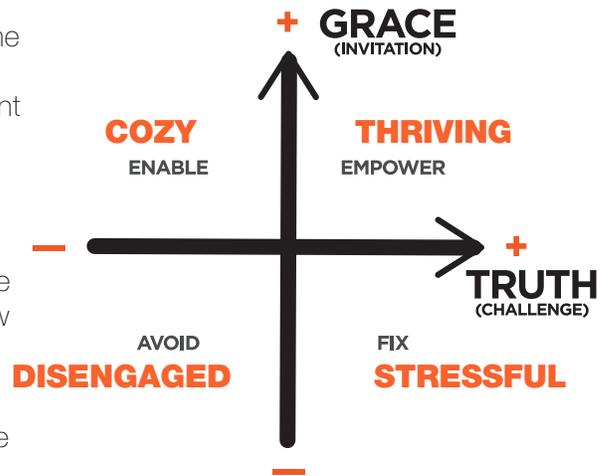
If you've ever been on a sports team, you have without a doubt experienced one or more of these cultures. My son Isaiah is no exception. In fact, over the past five years, he's experienced each of the four quadrants on soccer teams of which he has been a part. Let's journey through those teams so we get a picture of what the culture of each quadrant might feel like.

Five years ago, Isaiah played on a rec team. He was new to the sport, so this team was a great beginning point. The emphasis was on having fun. Kids got equal playing time. Score was not kept. Both teams were celebrated and cheered, regardless of what happened on the field. The coaching was almost all encouragement with very little correction. The coaches did all they could to provide a comfortable environment for these little guys; they invested a lot, and expected very little from the players in return (as is often the case with this kind of culture—even if they're adults!). This was a high grace/invitation, low truth/challenge environment. A word that describes this culture? **COZY**.

The next year, we signed Isaiah up for the same encouraging, friendly, fun club. But this year, Isaiah started to get antsy, bored. He didn't want to be treated like a little kid anymore. He was eight now. He had a knack for the sport, and wanted to be challenged to grow. All the grace and encouragement offered had to *him* begun to feel less inviting. He began to check out. The team, for him, had sunk to the low invitation/low challenge quadrant. That culture's feel in a word? **DISENGAGED**.

The next year, he tried out for a select team. He made it! The competition was steeper. Score was kept. Parents yelled sometimes. Tournaments could be won or lost. And his coach was on the S.W.A.T. team. I'm serious. I really liked his coach; he was a man who jumps into danger to see justice done. That work requires lots of discipline. Can you guess the kind of culture that coach might create? If you guessed high challenge/truth, low invitation/grace, you got it! Once I counted, how many corrective versus encouraging comments he offered the team in one half time: 17 corrective, 1 encouraging. He would bench players, sometimes for the whole game, if they messed around on the sideline. Some kids did well in this environment. Isaiah, my 9-year old, was discouraged, and started playing not to fail. He would frequently glance at the sideline to see if he would get yelled at or yanked when he made a mistake. This culture in a word, for him? **STRESSFUL**.

Because of his relationships with teammates, Isaiah remained on that team for three years. But it was time for a change. He joined a new club, at the same level of competition. In the first couple minutes of his first game, I remember watching Isaiah



glance over at his coach after he made a mistake, waiting for the rebuke. None came. Another mistake, another glance. Then another. No rebuke. And then I clearly saw Isaiah's face do something on the field that even as I type now brings tears: His eyes lit up, and he grinned, BIG. The instruction did come, later, on the bench, with lots of encouragement to go with it. Over the course of the season, Isaiah regained his love for the game, in this new environment of lots of grace/invitation, and lots of challenge/truth. He's growing like crazy as a player and loving it. A word that defines this culture? **THRIVING**.

Which of these cultures or dynamics can you spot as you look at your relationships with other Christ followers, whether in your family, your PLAY Group, your small group, at work or with friends?

Can you spot a **COZY** dynamic, where maybe one or two people are shouldering most of the work, enabling the others to chill and enjoy, or where there's lots of love but little forward kingdom movement?

Do you see a **DISENGAGED** culture, where everyone is on screens, checked out, responding with one-word answers, avoiding real and meaningful interaction?

How about a **STRESSFUL** dynamic, where there's lots of "truth-bombing" or challenge, with little vulnerability, grace or empathy offered?

Discerning both the current climates of our Support relationships, and our own tendencies, gives us clues for how to begin stepping forward in grace and truth.

Over time, we will become what God imagines for us—a thriving, empowered, Christ-centered family.