

FIRST CLERGY TALK

TALK #2

PREVENIENT GRACE

Overview of All Talks

The Walk to Emmaus 72-hour experience delivers one message that is communicated through the music, meals, clergy meditations, attitudes and actions of the team members, and the talks. You will deliver one of the fifteen talks. In reality, you will deliver one-fifteenth of the Emmaus talk—one message with fifteen presenters.

Prepare your talk using the outlines provided. As a good general rule, two-thirds of the talk will come from the outline and one-third would be the speaker's original insights and illustrations.

The Emmaus model sequences the talks in a defined order; each builds on the next to provide pilgrims the complete message of Emmaus. Do not try to cover more than your assigned topic. The expanded outline intends to provide a solid understanding of the material from which you will develop your talk. The abbreviated outline helps you see the progression of the main points. *Neither outline is a script*; you will add personal examples to give life to the content. Use visual aids to help convey the main points.

The Holy Spirit, as well as feedback from the team after your talk preview, will provide additional guidance for your unique presentation of this talk. You will incorporate the suggestions offered after your preview. Then your presentation no longer belongs only to you but to the team God is forming to deliver the Emmaus message.

This presentation is allotted a maximum of twenty to twenty-five minutes. Please honor the time limit out of a spirit of cooperation, charity, stewardship of time, and consideration for the listeners.

Overview for Speaker

The first morning meditation, The Loving Father and the Prodigal Son, establishes the direction for the day—inviting each pilgrim to enter a new relationship with God, who is full of grace and love. Talk #1, PRIORITY, presented by an Assistant Lay Director, reminded pilgrims that human beings can choose from many options and set a priority for their lives.

The five clergy talks focus on our relationship with God. This talk, the first of the grace talks, introduces the overarching theme of God's grace and shows how God's love begins to work in our lives even before our awareness of it or response to it. PREVENIENT GRACE serves as the foundation for all the other grace talks because it defines the nature of God and the relationship God offers.

The JUSTIFYING GRACE talk will remind pilgrims of the need to respond by accepting God's offer of relationship; they learn to celebrate and nurture this relationship in the MEANS OF GRACE talk. The OBSTACLES TO GRACE talk addresses hindrances to a relationship with God. The final clergy talk, SANCTIFYING GRACE, helps pilgrims understand how Christians grow and mature in their relationship with God.

Videos and recorded songs should not be part of the talk. Any projection during the talk should be kept simple.

This talk is scheduled for Friday at 11:15 a.m.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

PREVENIENT GRACE

Lead the Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Please turn to page 48 in your Worship Booklet and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

Choose a brief, personal story or experience that relates to the main point of this talk. If you cannot think of an appropriate introduction, consult the Lay Director or Spiritual Director for assistance. A good introduction will engage the hearts, minds, and attention of pilgrims and move them into the theme of this talk. For example, you might do the following:

Option 1: Share a personal story of prevenient grace at work in your life.

Option 2: Read Psalm 139:13-15, emphasizing verse 14.

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is PREVENIENT GRACE.

I. Definition of prevenient grace (5 minutes)

- A. The root meaning of the word *grace* (from the Greek *charis*) is “gift.” God, in Christ, offers us the gift of a relationship that includes salvation, reconciliation, and eternal life. (See Ephesians 2:4-9; Second Corinthians 5:18.)
- B. God's grace is one grace with many facets.
 1. We describe the experience of grace with different words—*prevenient*, *justifying*, and *sanctifying*—that relate to the various stages of our spiritual journey.
 2. The nature of grace (one grace experienced in many ways) resembles the mystery of the Trinity (one God in three persons). Within God's grace are both unity and diversity.
- C. Prevenient grace means God is present with us throughout our lives. This grace is most clearly at work from our conception to conversion—from the moment we begin

to be until the time when we accept for ourselves the relationship God offers us in Christ.

1. The term *prevenient* comes from the Latin *praevenire*—“to come before.” In Christian theology, it means **the grace that comes before** any human decision or endeavor. Prevenient grace is at work before our awareness of it.
2. It is the love of God **wooing us**—like a bridegroom courting his bride. (See Revelation 22:17.)
3. It is the will of God **drawing us**. (See John 6:44-47.)
4. Prevenient grace is the desire of God **pursuing us** throughout our lives to bring us into friendship with God—a love that will never let us go. (See Romans 5:8.) The poem “The Hound of Heaven” by Francis Thompson powerfully conveys God’s pursuit of us.
5. It is the gift of God **freeing us** so we may respond to God’s offer of a relationship and place our trust in Jesus Christ. (See Romans 8:31-39; 1 John 4:10, 19.)
6. It is the activity of God **empowering us**, giving us spiritual strength. (See Romans 5:6.)

II. Clear biblical message: Human beings are created in God’s likeness for relationship with the divine. (3 minutes)

- A. In the beginning God created the world, the cosmos, and all things in it—“and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1: 25).
- B. God created humankind, male and female, in God’s own image and likeness—and declared that they were good. (See Genesis 1:26-31; 2:4-22.)
 1. Like Adam and Eve, each of us is a unique and beloved child of God.
 2. Because God is love (see 1 John 4:16), each of us has the capacity to love and be loved.
 3. Because God is Spirit (see John 4:24) and God created us in God’s image and likeness, each of us is a spiritual being—“wired” for God from the very beginning.
 4. Because we are created in God’s image and likeness, the deepest part of us longs for a relationship with God. As Augustine said in his *Confessions*, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you [God].”
- C. The good news of our origin in God precedes the bad news of human sin.
 1. Adam and Eve made wrong choices that result in their expulsion from the Garden and bring disorder to all creation. (See Genesis 3; 6:1-11) Yet God provides for them.
 2. Each of us has made wrong choices that separate us from God and diminish our spiritual lives, yet God provides for us.
 3. God’s love and grace are greater than all our wrong choices.

III. God continues to offer relationship. (4 minutes)

- A. God desires a relationship with us even more than we want a relationship with God. (See Jeremiah 31:3.)
- B. The nature of this relationship is that of covenant love.
 - 1. A covenant is the strongest form of relationship identified in the Bible. See the covenants with Noah (Genesis 9:8-17), Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21), Moses and the Israelites (Exodus 19:3-6), and David (2 Samuel 7:5-16).
 - 2. The prophets repeatedly called the Israelites back to a genuine relationship of love and obedience to God. (See Ezekiel 12:1-6; Hosea 3:1-5.) They proclaimed God's promise to make a new covenant with the people. (See Jeremiah 31:31-34.)
 - 3. Jesus offers us a new covenant and a new relationship with God. (See Luke 22:14-20; Matthew 28:18-20.) This relationship is one of love and grace. (See John 13:34-35; Ephesians 2:4-10.)
 - a. Divine love (See John 1:14; 3:16.)
 - b. Seeking love (See Ezekiel 34:11-16; Luke 19:2-10.)
 - c. Everlasting love (See John 13:34-35; Psalm 136.)
 - d. A gift of love (See John 3:16.)
- C. God takes the initiative to seek us; it is not up to us to seek God. (See Genesis 3:8-9.)
 - 1. We experience this divine initiative as grace.
 - 2. Preventive grace helps us overcome our brokenness and alienation. (See Romans 5:6-11; Luke 15:20-32.)

IV. How do we experience God's preventive grace? (5 minutes)

[This is a good place for a personal witness. You may choose to share a time when you became aware of God reaching out to you, drawing you, or pursuing you. Preventive grace is the courtship period of our relationship with God; God woos us into this relationship of grace. God takes the initiative to reach out to us, get our attention, and help us see that a relationship with the divine is the relationship for which we were created.]

- A. **Through events, both positive and negative.** The Holy Spirit can speak to our minds and hearts through the struggles, frustrations, difficulties, and pain of unemployment, divorce, or the loss of a loved one. The Spirit can also speak to us through music, art, and beauty. (See John 16:13-15.)
- B. **Through the care and sacrifice of others** who embody God's love toward us; for example, parents, relatives, and friends. (See 2 Timothy 1:5.)
- C. **Through the body of believers**, the church. The church helps us experience God's grace and presence through corporate worship, prayer, sacraments, and small groups. (See Ephesians 4:11-16.)

- D. **Through the Holy Spirit awakening our conscience** and convincing us that we can never reform ourselves or earn a place in God’s family. (See 2 Corinthians 7:9-11.)
- E. **Through the Holy Spirit courting us**, not forcing us.
- F. **Through us to others.** God can work through our words, attitudes, and actions to help others open their hearts and lives to God’s prevenient grace.

V. Conclusion

The critical question for each of us this weekend is this: Will we open our hearts to God and accept the relationship God offers us in Jesus Christ?

De Colores!

ABBREVIATED OUTLINE

PREVENIENT GRACE

Lead the Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Please turn to page 48 in your Worship Booklet and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is PREVENIENT GRACE.

I. Define prevenient grace. (5 minutes)

- A. The root meaning of the word *grace* (from the Greek *charis*) is “gift.” (See Ephesian 2:4-9; 2 Corinthians 5:18.)
- B. God’s grace is one grace with many facets.
- C. Prevenient grace means God is present with us throughout our lives. This grace is most clearly at work from our conception to conversion—from the moment we begin to be until the time when we accept for ourselves the relationship God offers us in Christ. Prevenient grace is
 - 1. **the grace that comes before** any human decision or endeavor; it is at work before we are even aware of it
 - 2. the love of God **wooing us**
 - 3. the will of God **drawing us**
 - 4. the desire of God **pursuing us**
 - 5. the gift of God **freeing us**
 - 6. the activity of God **empowering us**

II. Clear biblical message: Human beings are created in God’s likeness for relationship with the divine. (3 minutes)

- A. In the beginning God created the world, the cosmos, and all things in it—“and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1: 25).
- B. God created humankind, male and female, in God’s own image and likeness—and declared that they were good. (See Genesis 1:26-31; 2:4-22).
- C. The good news of our origin in God precedes the bad news of human sin.

III. God continues to offer us a relationship. (4 minutes)

- A. God desires a relationship with us even more than we want a relationship with God. (See Jeremiah 31:3.)
- B. The nature of this relationship is that of covenant love.
- C. God takes the initiative to seek us; it is not up to us to seek God. (See Genesis 3:8-9.)

IV. How do we experience God’s prevenient grace? (5 minutes)

[This is a good place for a personal witness. You may wish to share a time when you became aware of God reaching out to you, drawing you, or pursuing you. Prevenient grace is the courtship period of our relationship with God; God woos us into this relationship of grace. God takes the initiative to reach out to us, get our attention, and help us see that a relationship with the divine is natural—the relationship for which we were created.]

- A. Through events, both positive and negative.
- B. Through the care and sacrifice of others who embody God’s love toward us.
- C. Through the body of believers, the church.
- D. Through the Holy Spirit awakening our conscience and convincing us that we can never reform ourselves or earn a place in God’s family.
- E. Through the Holy Spirit courting us, not forcing us. Through our words, attitudes, and actions toward others.

V. Conclusion

The critical question for each of us this weekend is this: Will we open our hearts to God and accept the relationship God offers us in Jesus Christ?

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