

...FOR THOSE SEEKING THE EMPOWERING PRESENCE OF THE *Holy Spirit*

Lutheran Renewal

GRACE GROWERS

by Graham Cooke

It's not easy to love everyone, but it is the call on every prophet's life. To test us in this, God deliberately puts people around us who are meant to be loved by us. Oftentimes, we will have to be very creative to love them; some of them, by design, are not easy to love. But those unlovable ones, ironically, teach us the most about God's heart.

I call people like these grace growers. They cultivate the grace in my life by forcing me to be intentional about loving them. In Luke 6:27-36, Jesus taught us about grace growers:

"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

"If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."



I first learned about grace growers in the 1980s when I began doing schools of prophecy in the U.K. They were among the first of their kind and so attracted a lot of attention both positive and negative. There were several "ministries" who felt threatened by what I was doing and there were various people who were totally convinced that training people to hear God's voice was demonic!

"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

-Jesus

Three such men began to follow me around convinced it was their calling from God to expose me and protect the body of Christ from my ministry. They genuinely thought

that they had a mandate from God to oppose me and pull me down [John 16:2]. They would visit cities where schools were booked and try to persuade pastors to warn their people not to attend. They would be outside the venues on the day holding placards and handing out leaflets warning people. Then they would come into the school, put their placards at the back of the hall and sit in the front row directly in front of the lectern! They would take copious notes and afterwards write a newsletter explaining the teaching and why I was a heretic. We called them the three stooges.

Lutheran Renewal

(Independent of North Heights Lutheran Church)

© 2006 All Rights Reserved

2701 Rice Street • St. Paul MN 55113-2200

Telephone: 651-490-1517 • Fax: 651-486-2865

Alliance of Renewal Churches

www.arcusa.org • 651-486-4808

The Master's Institute

www.themastersinstitute.org • 651-765-9756

This went on for two years. They booked in to every school! I cried out to the Lord, "Please, kill 'em." Well, that prayer didn't work so I modified it to maiming, "Lord cut off their writing hand ... do something!"

Several weeks later He answered my prayer, though not in the manner I had envisioned. One night I had a dream. I am used to dreaming. Most of my revelatory dreams begin in the same way, so that I am able to retain what I see, hear and experience in the dream.

God is on His throne. I am sat on one arm of it with my legs over His lap and our heads are together talking. In this particular dream the Father had something to show me. When I readily agreed, He gave a command off to one side of His throne. An angel walked in with a huge block of the most beautiful marble I had ever seen. It was six foot high, four feet wide and three feet deep. It was glorious and breathtaking.

Jesus came into view, smiling that lovely slow, small smile of His. He dug a finger into the marble and made an outline of a figure in the stone. I watched entranced. The Father asked "Would you like to see it made?" I nodded enthusiastically and He gave a command. Three pairs of hands and arms [up to the elbow] appeared. Each pair held a hammer and chisel and at the command of the Father began sculpting this figure out of the marble.



"If you encourage them, they will work faster and it will be completed more quickly," He said, smiling at me. I began tentatively to bless and encourage them but it didn't seem to make any difference. "My son, you must always be wholehearted in your encouragements," He said laughing. I began to exhort, bless and encourage, loudly encouraged by the Father. At one point I was standing on the arm of His throne with my hand on the Lord's head [for balance!] shouting encouragement at the very top

of my voice! Everywhere was pandemonium! There was huge laughter and cheering all around me. One angel was lying on the floor beating it with his fists and screaming with laughter. The draught of his wings almost knocked me off my perch.

Eventually the work was finished and the noise became peace. I was exhausted and sank down to my original position. I stared in awe at the figure that had been created. "Do you know what it is?" the Father breathed into my ear. When I shook my

head, mute in awe and wonder, He turned my face to look in His eyes.

"It's how I see you, my son. It's the man I am making you into." I looked again at the figure and began to cry. "But it's so beautiful, my Lord." I whispered. He smiled gently, looking full into my face. "Would you like to thank the sculptors?" He asked with a smile. "Sure!" I said, turning back to the statue. My smile of thanks turned to one of total shock and horror when the three stooges suddenly appeared next to the sculpture. "Aargh!!" I screamed at the top of my voice; so loudly in fact that I woke myself up!

Suddenly a flood of revelation filled my waking heart and mind. I began to realize the purpose of the Lord over the last two years. God allows in His wisdom what He could prevent by His power. All their opposition had driven me to strive to be an excellent teacher. Their criticism had pushed me into a place of continuously upgrading my material and the quality of presentation. School of Prophecy was gaining an excellent reputation because I had consistently upgraded it in the face of their antagonism. What had not been upgraded, I realized, was my own nature and character. Their hostility had not produced in me an opposite spirit that craved Christ-likeness. I had been offended, angry and affronted. I had affected a grieved spirit believing it was justice.

I had not at all seen that the purpose of the Father was also to change my character and personality. He was seeking to beautify me by making me like Jesus. I saw His plan and I wept. I cried because of my stupidity. Why could I not have foreseen His purpose early on in the circumstances?

I got it. I understood the purpose of grace growers. They were present in my life to teach me the grace that is currently mine to be made in the image of Jesus. Grace growers provide an unconscious opportunity [on their part] for us to experience a breakthrough in the image of God. I had only approached the situation from a functional and not a relational paradigm. Pride, vanity had made me change my product but not my heart.

This excerpt was taken from Graham's new book, Approaching the Heart of Prophecy, © 2006. Used by permission of Graham Cooke.

Graham Cooke is part of the pastoral leadership team of The Mission, formerly known as Vacaville Christian Life Center, in Vacaville, CA. He has responsibility for Insight, a training program within the church and for the region. Visit his website at: www.grahamcooke.com.

Graham will be speaking, along with Michael Frost, at our February 9-10, 2007 Equipping Conference, "A Prophetic Life with God, A Prophetic Lifestyle in the World." Brochures will be mailed with the November newsletter.