Introduction: Why is understanding grace so important?

What is grace?

- A dictionary definition
- A theological definition
- A Sunday school definition
- The problem: It’s still ________________________.

How do we get a grasp of grace?

- Examine its roots  
  Exodus 33:19-34:5
- Examine the life of Jesus  
  John 1:14-18
- Examine the teaching of Jesus  
  Luke 15
A Prodigal Love *

A. This is an incredible and (in Jesus’ time) __________________________ flabbergasting chapter of scripture!

B. This is the only time in Scripture when Jesus tells 3 stories in one parable. He wants to dramatically emphasize some essential and (to His audience) revolutionary truths about God.

1. Jesus wants us to __________________________ what God is like!

2. Jesus wants us to understand the __________________________ of the Father.

C. Jesus ministered in a Middle-Eastern __________________________ culture.

1. Even the “urban” and the educated had their roots in that peasantry.

2. The peasant __________________________ and traditions were known by everyone in the culture.

D. “Jesus __________________________ sinners.”

1. What flabbergasted and angered the Scribes and Pharisees was that Jesus, who claimed to be one with the Father, __________________________ sinners as friends!

2. Jesus was __________________________, and defiling, God’s reputation. At issue was God’s character.

*Notes adapted by permission from Roger Williams, CEO – Mt. Hermon Christian Conference Center, 4 months before his death.
E. “He ______________ with them.”

1. Eating a meal together has great significance in the Middle East – it is a sacramental act signifying total acceptance and conferring blessing.

2. This act ______________________ Jesus, according to the Pharisee’s norm.

F. “…muttered…”

1. This _______________ is used only twice in the New Testament – here and in Luke 19:7

2. Because of a special prefix, it has added strength. There is a murmuring through the crowd – they are actively stirring up a public undercurrent of _______________ and disapproval.

G. Notice the ______________________ of this chapter:

1. In the first story the lost is one in a hundred. In the second, the lost is one in ten. In the third, the lost is one in two.

2. In the first story, the lost is out in a wide wilderness. In the second, the lost is inside the house. In the third, the lost is inside the ______________________.

H. Notice the parallel characterizations of this parable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>The Lost Sheep</th>
<th>The Lost Coin</th>
<th>The Lost Son</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>The Shepherd</td>
<td>The Woman</td>
<td>The Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinners (Irreligious)</td>
<td>The Lost Sheep</td>
<td>The Lost Coin</td>
<td>The Younger Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinner (Religious)</td>
<td>The 99 Sheep</td>
<td>The Nine Coins</td>
<td>The Older Son</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. Notice the common themes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Something Valuable Is Missing</th>
<th>Something Valuable Is Found</th>
<th>Celebration!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lost Sheep:</td>
<td>Missing Sheep Matters</td>
<td>Missing Sheep is Found</td>
<td>Luke 15:5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost Coin:</td>
<td>Missing Coin Matters</td>
<td>Missing Coin is Found</td>
<td>Luke 15:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost Sons:</td>
<td>Missing Son Matters</td>
<td>Missing Son is Found</td>
<td>Luke 15:22-24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions to Ponder:

1. How do you tend to view God?

2. How would you now explain grace?

3. What do you think God is saying to you in this lesson?

Suggested Reading:

*The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen
*Prodigal God* by Tim Keller
*AHA* by Kyle Idleman