

# Your Christian School: A Culture of Grace?

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*By Paul David Tripp*

*Michael E. Breece contributor*

Discussion Guide to be used with the conference on DVD  
(Ten 25 minute sessions on 3 DVDs)  
for In-Service Days, School-wide Development,  
Classes, Small Groups, or Personal Study

*This is a resource of:*

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# YOUR CHRISTIAN SCHOOL: A CULTURE OF GRACE?

## INTRODUCTION

No matter what your role in education is - teacher, administrator, or support staff - much is usually expected of you. You can often feel pulled in multiple directions and as a result you can often feel discouraged, burned out, and ineffective. What should be your priority as an educator? How do you decide where to focus your energy and time? Are you really supposed to attend to *all* the needs of *all* the students? How should Christian education be different from secular education?

As an educator, you have probably been exposed to multiple instructional tools, methods, and theories that inform and assist your role in education. New ideas and new technologies have become a constant part of education often claiming superiority over past practices. As Christian educators, however, we follow an unchanging standard based on God and the gospel of Jesus Christ that is the central theme of His Word. How does this story of transforming grace inform your methodology, theory, and practice?

Your Christian School: A Culture of Grace? will allow you to examine your priorities in your role of education. It will help and compel you to create a school or classroom that is aligned with the work God is doing in the lives of students.

May God bless you greatly as you continue to serve him in your role in education!

We are asking the law to do what  
only grace can accomplish.

## SESSION 1: APPLE NAILING

Total Time: 60 minutes

(DVD - 29 min; Review & Discussion - 15 min; Activity - 10 min)

Complete the following items BEFORE watching the DVD.

If there were one character trait I would like to see developed in my students it would be:

\_\_\_\_\_

How do you see the lack of this character trait in your classroom?

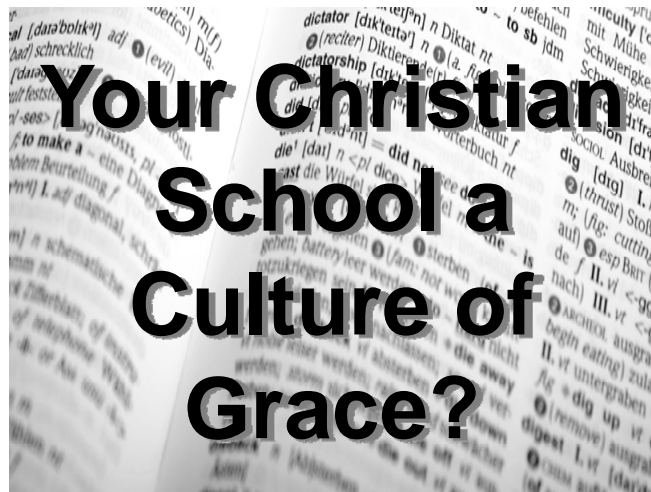
**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:** Luke 6:43-45

**KEY QUESTION:** Where does real change take place?

### KEY IDEAS

1. Real change takes place through the work of the Redeemer.
2. The law will never deliver students from sin.
3. As teachers, you do not deal with just the mind of a student.
4. Students live “out of their hearts”.

### NOTES:



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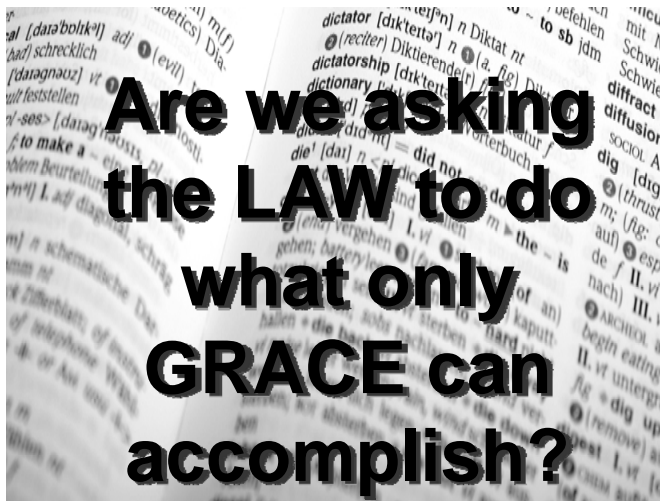
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Why is teaching so  
Difficult?  
Or  
Who are our  
Students Anyway?

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Principle #1  
Your Students  
Live  
out of  
the Heart

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**ACTIVITY**

“If you are going to get to the heart issues of your students you need to begin with your own heart.”

Examine your own heart as it relates to your role in education:

- |  |       |        |           |       |        |
|--|-------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|
| 1. I feel I am where God wants me to be.                             | Never | rarely | sometimes | often | always |
| 2. I feel I am effective in the lives of my students.                | Never | rarely | sometimes | often | always |
| 3. I am joyful in my role.   | Never | rarely | sometimes | often | always |
| 4. At the end of the day I feel satisfied.                           | Never | rarely | sometimes | often | always |
| 5. I desire to have a positive influence on my students.             | Never | rarely | sometimes | often | always |
| 6. I feel anger toward my students.                                  | Never | rarely | sometimes | often | always |
| 7. I feel hopeless about my ability to effect change in my students. | Never | rarely | sometimes | often | always |
| 8. I blame my students.  | Never | rarely | sometimes | often | always |
| 9. I complain about my students.                                     | Never | rarely | sometimes | often | always |
| 10. I avoid having to deal with students' personal problems.         | Never | rarely | sometimes | often | always |

## SESSION 2: LITTLE MOMENTS OF PROFOUND CHANGE

Total Time: 60 minutes

(DVD - 25 min; Review & Discussion - 15 min; Activity - 15 min)

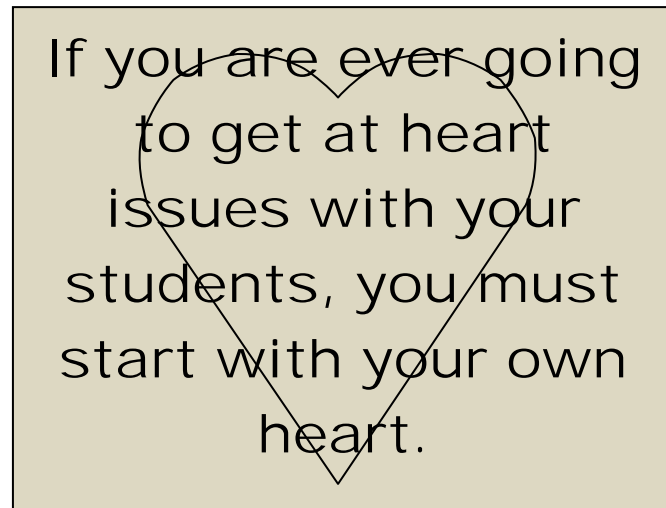
**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:** Dt 6:6-9

**KEY QUESTION:** How does real change take place?

### KEY IDEAS

1. Change is always a process; not an event. You are one of many instruments of change and God's grace in each child's life.
2. Christian education needs to focus on the whole person; not just academic skills.
3. Change occurs through and during the little moments of your classroom.
4. If you are going to get to heart issues of your students you need to begin with your own heart.

### NOTES:



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### REVIEW

1. What role does the teacher play in changing the hearts of students and how does the heart of the teacher affect this?

### DISCUSSION

1. Why should heart issues be a priority over academic issues?

2. Which character trait did you identify before beginning SESSION 1?  
How do you see this heart issue being displayed in students' behaviors, words, or attitudes?  
How can you address this issue on the level of the heart?

**ACTIVITY**

Begin to brainstorm a mission statement for your classroom and a definition of a Christian educator.

A Christian educator is a person who:

My classroom will be a place where:

Share your ideas with the group.



## SESSION 3: THE PATH TO REAL CHANGE

Total Time: 50-60 min

(Pre DVD activity - 5 min; DVD - 27 min; Review & Discussion - 15-20 min)

*BEFORE watching the DVD, discuss the following:*

What behaviors do you see in students that interfere with learning?

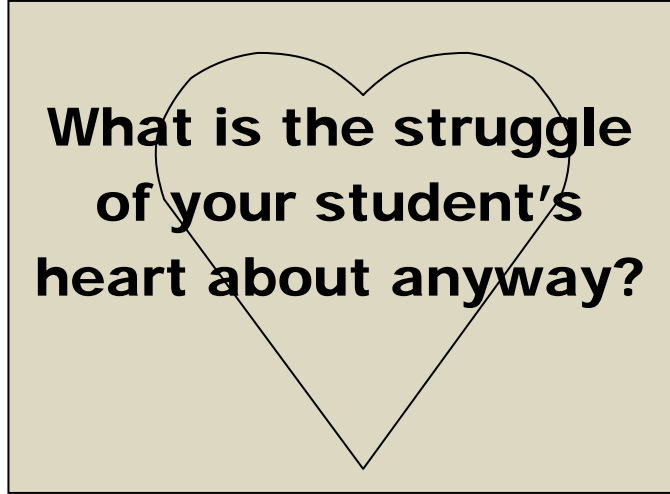
**KEY QUESTION:** Is it really my job as a teacher to address the issues of my students' hearts?

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:** 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15; Psalm 145:1-7

### KEY IDEAS

1. Lasting change always travels through the pathway of the heart.
2. We were made to live our lives as a part of God's glorious Kingdom, but sin causes us to focus our lives on self instead.
3. The selfishness of sin brings learning to a halt.

### NOTES:



What is the struggle  
of your student's  
heart about anyway?

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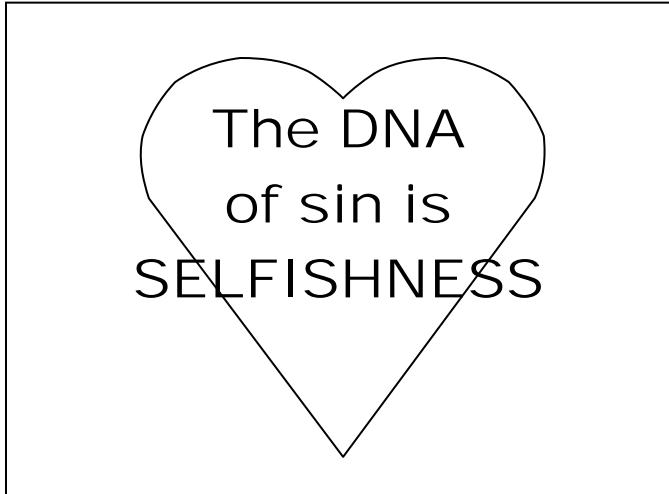
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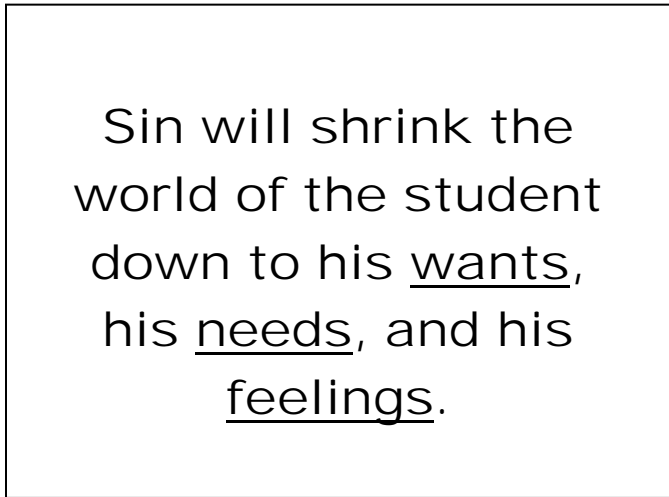
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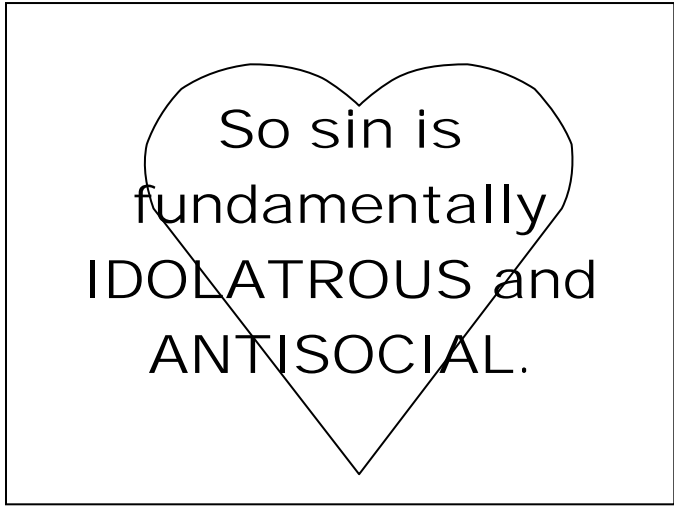
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**REVIEW**

1. As teachers, why must we not ignore the heart issues of our students?

**DISCUSSION**

1. Think back to the list you made of students' behaviors that interfere with learning. Analyze these behaviors to try to identify the heart issues at work.
2. Identify ways your school or classroom helps students to place God at the center of their lives instead of themselves at the center.



## SESSION 4: CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR V. REACHING THE HEART

Total Time: 55-65 minutes

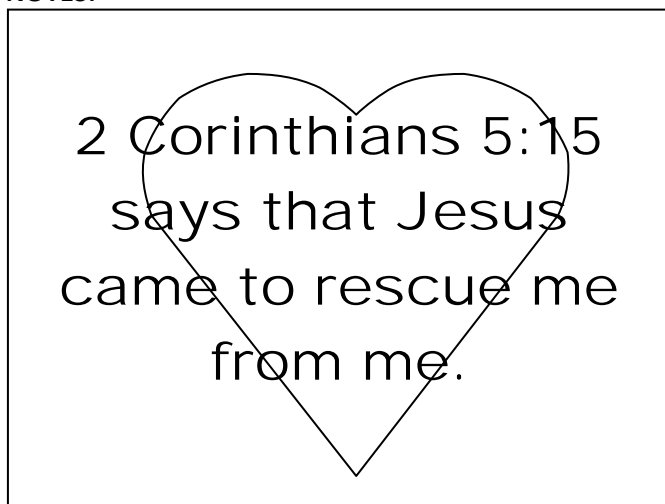
(DVD - 25 min; Review & Discussion - 15 min; Activity - 15-25 min)

**KEY QUESTION:** What is the core purpose of Christian education?

### KEY IDEAS

1. We need to care about the heart issues because God cares about the heart issues—it is why he sent and sacrificed his Son.
2. The core of Christian education is to bring students to allegiance to Jesus Christ.
3. As teachers, we cannot be content with systems of behavioral management and control.
4. There are three control systems: threats, manipulation, and guilt.

### NOTES:



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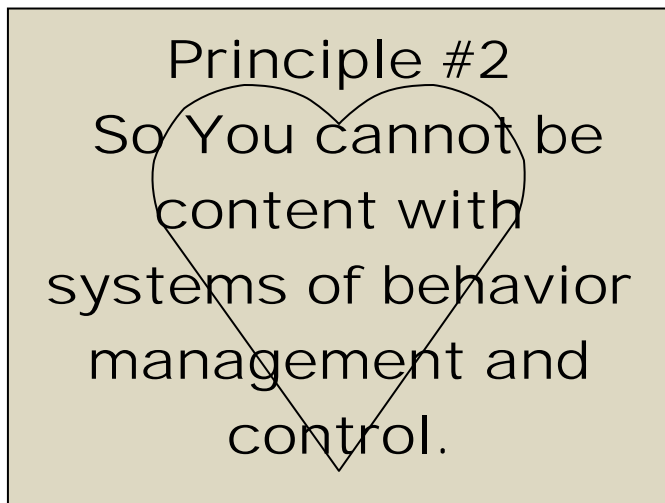
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Three Control  
Systems:  
THREAT  
MANIPULATION  
GUILT

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Principle #3  
So Lasting  
Heart Change  
must be our  
Target

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**Five Heart Questions:**  
**1. What was going on?**  
**2. What were you thinking and feeling as it was happening?**  
**3. What did you do in response?**  
**4. Why did you do it, what were you seeking to accomplish?**  
**5. What was the result?**

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**REVIEW**

1. As you address heart issues, what is the purpose of rules and regulations?

2. Explain the two control systems presented in this session (the third is presented in Session 7). Give an example for each and the problem with them.

## **DISCUSSION**

Examine the enforcement of rules at your school or in your classroom.

Does the enforcement seek to reach heart issues?

What percentage of enforcement is based only on threats or manipulation?

What are the challenges in your school or classroom in addressing heart issues?

## **ACTIVITY**

1. Read the following scenario.

Tom refuses to participate in the learning activity and makes sure everyone else in class knows his opinion of the activity—it's "totally stupid!" As the teacher, you decide to ignore his attitude and rebellion as you get the rest of the class on-task. However, once the other students are working, you go to Tom with the intent of revealing his heart problem.

Select one person to be the teacher and one to be the student, Tom. The teacher should practice using the heart-directed questions (below) to address the heart issue of the student.

### **Heart-directed Questions:**

1. What is/was going on?
  2. What are you/were you thinking/feeling?
  3. What did you do/are you doing as a result?
  4. What were you/are you hoping to accomplish?
  5. What was/will be the result?
- A) Evaluate the role playing. Did the teacher get to the heart issues or was the focus only on the behavior? What challenges did the teacher face? What are some possible solutions to these challenges?
- B) What might a teacher do or say in this situation if he/she were not focusing on addressing the heart?

- C) Share with your group a particularly challenging student or situation in your classroom. Share how you may try to begin to address the heart issues involved. Ask for further ideas from your colleagues.



## SESSION 5: BRINGING ABOUT REAL CHANGE

Total Time: 60 minutes

(DVD - 27 min; Review & Discussion - 10 min; Activity - 20 min)

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:** Isaiah 55:10-13

**KEY QUESTION:** What does real, biblical change look like?

### KEY IDEAS

1. Foundational to Christian education, in every subject, is: a) a solid belief in the need for Jesus Christ; and b) an abiding belief in the authority of the Bible.
2. God is working toward total transformation and restoration of a child's heart.
3. Children suffer from Identity Amnesia.
  - o They are worshippers.
4. You can and should be gracious to your students because you too are in need of grace.



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- a) What could it look and sound like if a teacher were to demolish Darlene's heart?
  
- b) What could it look and sound like if a teacher were to try to remodel Darlene's heart?
  
- c) What could it look and sound like if a teacher were to try to transform and restore Darlene's heart?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**  
Where do you find *yourself* needing  
God's grace and compassion?

- 2. Pick a lesson or unit you teach in your classroom.  
Share the big ideas of the lesson/unit with your group and then share with each other ways you could incorporate Scripture into this lesson/unit.

## SESSION 6: REVEALING THE PROBLEMS OF THE HEART

Total Time: 60 minutes

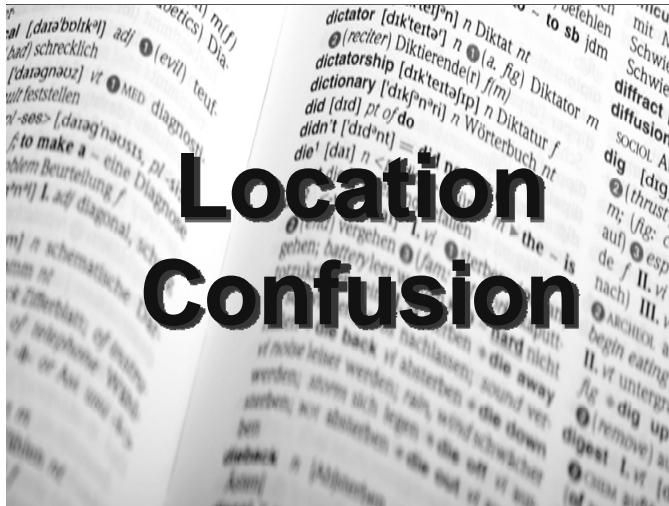
(DVD - 23 min; Review & Discussion - 15 min; Activity - 20 min)

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:** Romans 8: 18-22

**KEY QUESTION:** What are the key problems that exist in the heart of a child?

### KEY IDEAS

1. Children suffer from Identity Amnesia.
  - They are worshippers.
  - They are sinners.
    - Iniquity=moral *uncleanness*.
    - Transgression = willing *rebellion* against God's standards.
    - Sin = *inability* to do what is good and right.
2. Children suffer from Location Confusion.
  - They live in a fallen and broken world.
3. Children suffer from Function Ignorance.
  - They need to be reminded that the greatest problems of their life exist inside of themselves.
4. Children suffer from Hope Deprivation.



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**DISCUSSION**

1. In what ways does your school or classroom provide the hope of Jesus Christ to students?
2. How could your school or classroom lead students to a greater hope in Christ when they fall?

**ACTIVITY**

Join with two other people.

Create a 5-10 minute devotional that will remind/teach students about one of these areas of biblical understanding: a) we all are worshippers; b) we all are sinners; c) we all live in a fallen and broken world; d) our hearts are our greatest problem; or e) we can be honest about our sin and weaknesses because we have hope in Christ.

Use the template on page 23 as a starting point for developing your devotional.



## DEVOTIONAL EXAMPLE

**What do you want the students to know or do as a result of this devotional?**

*We want the students to know that others will sin against them because we all are sinners (we live in a fallen world). We want students to respond with grace when they are sinned against.*

**What passage or verse of Scripture will you base your lesson on?**

*1 Peter 4:12*

**Provide a short script for explaining the meaning of this passage:**

*The people Peter was writing to were being persecuted because of their faith in Christ, and Peter is telling them not to be surprised.*

*Why do you think they should not have been surprised at that?*

*[Because not everyone loves God; we live in a world where people are bad and people sin—we all are sinners. We should never be surprised when someone sins against us because we all are sinners].*

**Provide a short example/illustration/story/analogy that will help students understand the basic principle/idea of the passage.**

*[Show a picture of a real fast food hamburger; show a picture of the same hamburger as it is advertised].*

*Ask: am I surprised that the real burger does not look like the advertisement? [No. I know that advertisers always try to make things look better than they really are. I show the restaurant mercy and grace because I understand the world of advertising. In fact, sometimes we do the same thing—we make ourselves look better than we really are].*

**Apply the principle/idea to your students and classroom.**

*We can have that same perspective when others sin against us—instead of showing the person anger or revenge, we can give that person mercy and grace because we know that we all are sinners. Reread the verse.*



## SESSION 7: CREATING A CULTURE OF GRACE

Total Time: 60 minutes

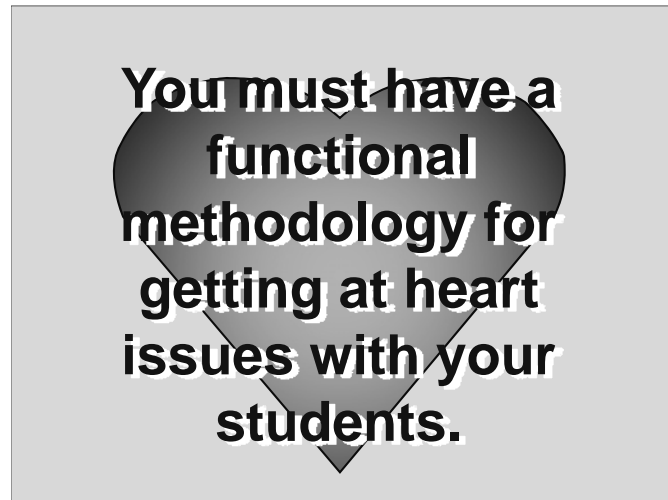
(DVD - 28 min; Review & Discuss - 10 min; Activity - 20 min)

**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:** 2 Corinthians 5: 16-20

**KEY QUESTION:** How do we create a “Culture of Grace” so hearts will be transformed?

### KEY IDEAS

1. Theology is not an end in itself, but needs to be actively applied in our lives so that our lives are pleasing to God. (Theology needs to lead to methodology).
2. There are three control systems: threatening, manipulating, and shaming (guilt).
3. The method for bringing about a “Culture of Grace” and heart change is:
  - o Love
  - o Know
  - o Speak
  - o Do
4. You are God’s ambassador to your students.



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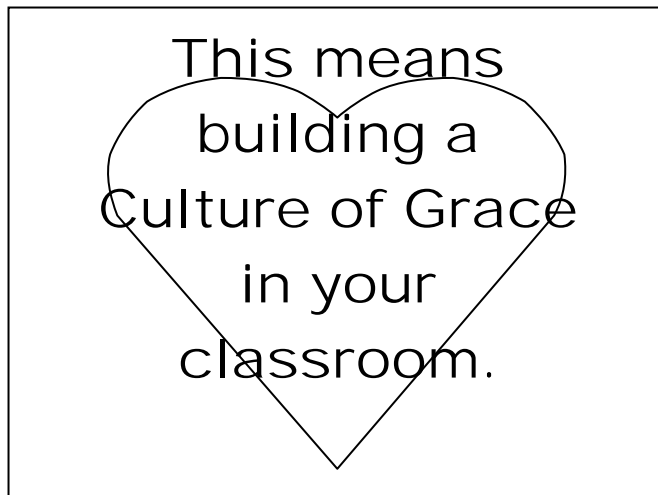
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**A Culture of Grace**

**LOVE**

**KNOW**



**SPEAK**

**DO**

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**LOVE:**  
Building Relationships  
in which  
God's Work of Change  
can Thrive

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**KNOW:**  
Getting to know my  
students and  
discovering where  
change is needed

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## SPEAK:

Helping my students  
see what God wants  
them to see

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## DO:

Helping my students  
apply new personal  
insights to everyday  
life

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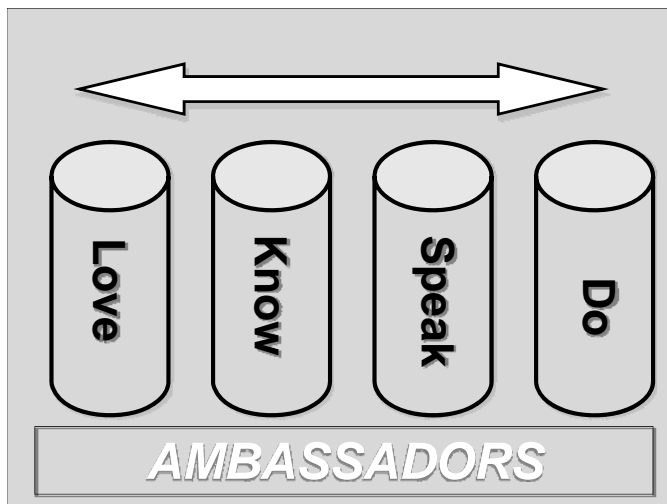
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## **REVIEW**

What then does a “Culture of Grace” look like in a Christian school? (Explain “Love” “Know” “Speak” “Do”).

## **DISCUSSION**

How does seeing yourself as God’s ambassador to your students influence the way you should relate to them?

## **ACTIVITY**

Join with teachers of similar grades or subjects. Share with each other areas of methodology (Love, Know, Speak, Do) you would like to improve upon. Pray together for one another.

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

How strong and active is your hope in the transformational power of Christ for your students?

Which action(s) [love, know, speak, do] do you want to begin to improve upon with your students? Are there one or two particular students you think you should apply these actions with?

# SESSION 8: LOVING & KNOWING

Total Time: 60 minutes

(DVD - 20 min; Review & Discussion - 10 min; Activity - 25 min)

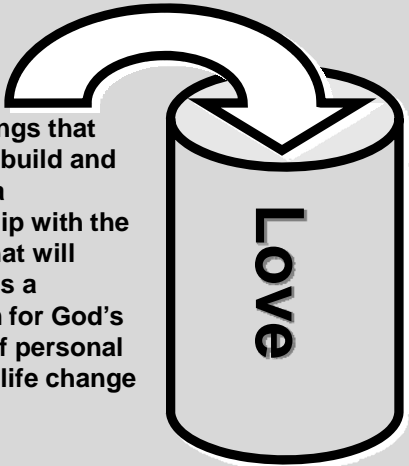
**KEY QUESTION:** How does loving and knowing our students lead to a culture of grace?

## KEY IDEAS

1. Students will be predisposed to listen to those they feel love them.
2. Students have an entire history that affects who they are and the condition of their hearts.
3. Because you are God's ambassador, you never relate to your students neutrally—you are either part of what God is doing or in the way of it.

## NOTES:

All the things that you do to build and maintain a relationship with the student that will function as a workroom for God's process of personal heart and life change



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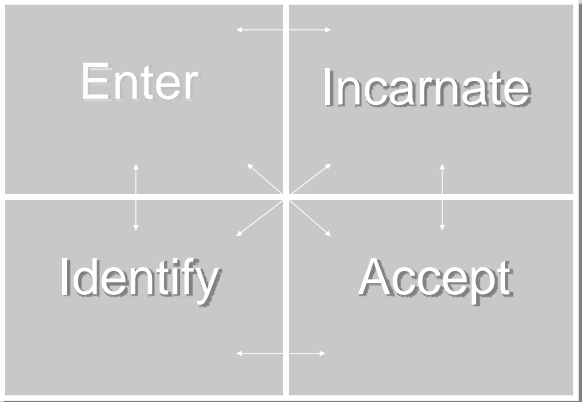
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Four Relational Commitments

Enter	Incarnate
Identify	Accept



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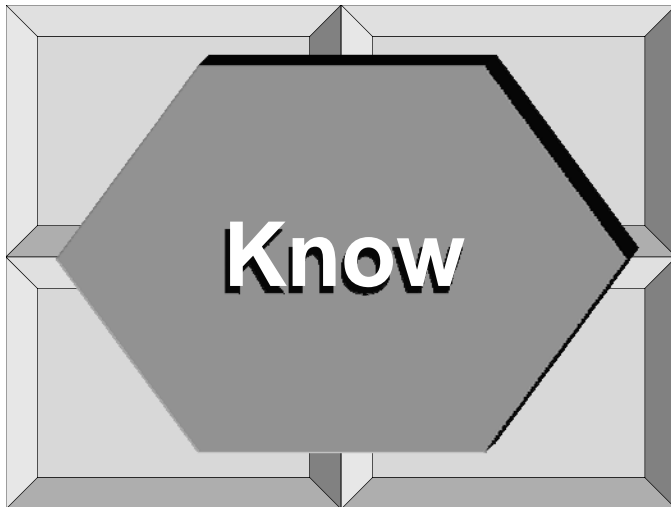
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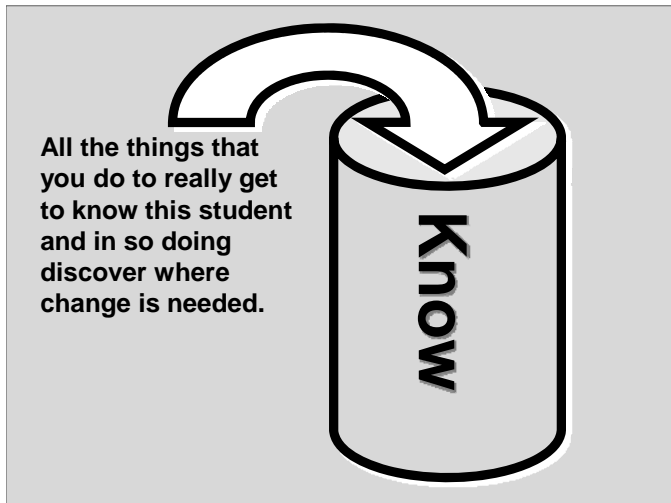
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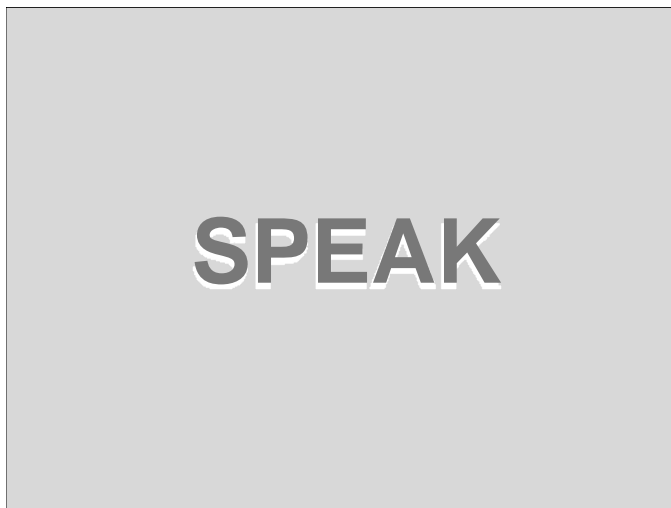
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**REVIEW**

1. What needs to be intentionally done to love our students?
  
2. What can we do to intentionally know our students?

**DISCUSSION**

1. Identify students at your school who are not receiving the love they need from you as a school. Discuss ways you can love this student together.

**ACTIVITY**

1. Join with similar grade level teachers and pray for students who you think you need to better love and know.
  
2. Using your class list(s) consider:
  - a) What may be a heart issue in that child’s life?
  - b) What does that child need in order to be loved and cared for?
  - c) What do I wish I knew about that child?

It may be helpful to create a chart for recording your observations, interactions, and prayer requests. It may look like the following:

	<b>Possible Heart Issue</b>	<b>What I Would Like to Know</b>	<b>Needs</b>
Joseph B.	<i>longs for acceptance</i>		<i>affirmation/challenged to find his acceptance in Christ</i>
Krista H.	<i>self-sufficiency</i>	<i>what her parents do for a living</i>	<i>encouragement to share prayer requests/opportunities to serve others</i>

## SESSION 9: SPEAKING AND DOING

Total Time: 65 minutes

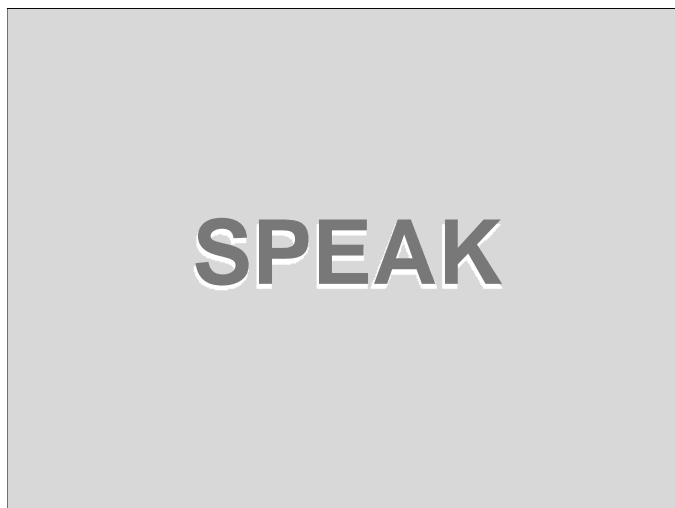
(DVD - 27 min; Review & Discuss - 15 min; Activity - 20 min)

**KEY QUESTION:** How do we speak to the spiritual needs of our students?

### KEY IDEAS

1. Change is a process and not an event; you are one of many of God's instruments, therefore there will be limits to what you will accomplish.
2. A culture of grace is focused on building one Kingdom—God's.
3. Personal spiritual insight is always the result of community—people speaking to our spiritual blindness and needs.

### NOTES:



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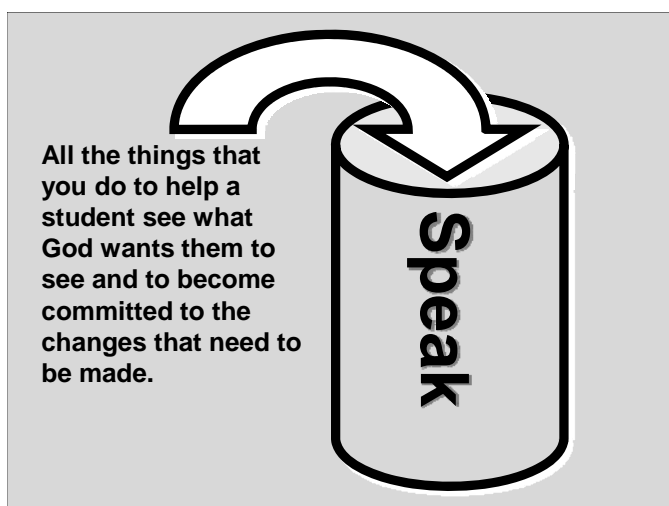
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**REVIEW**

1. Why will change in your students' hearts require a "culture of grace"?
  
2. Why is it necessary to help others see their own spiritual weaknesses? How do we this?

**DISCUSSION**

1. Join with four or five other people. Share with your group people who have played a part in your spiritual development. Describe the role they played.

**ACTIVITY**

1. In your group: When you think about encouraging and creating a culture of grace in your school, what do you think would help your school develop such a culture? Consider each of the following participants. Share and record your ideas.

- a) What could you do?
  
- b) What could your colleagues do?

c) What could the administrators do?

d) What could parents do?

e) What could students do?

# SESSION 10: DOING

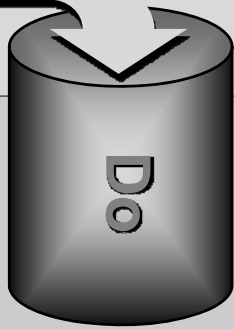
Total Time: 65 minutes

(DVD - 28 min; Review - 5 min; Activity - 15 min; Discussion - 15 min)

**KEY QUESTION:** How do we support change into our students' world?

## KEY IDEAS

1. Love requires sacrifice.
2. As teachers, we must take into consideration the hearts of our students.
3. God will enable you for the task he desires from you. You may not be able, but God is.
4. God wants you to be his instrument of his grace in the lives of your students.

<p>All the things you do to help this student apply new insights and commitments to the situations and relationships of their daily life</p>	
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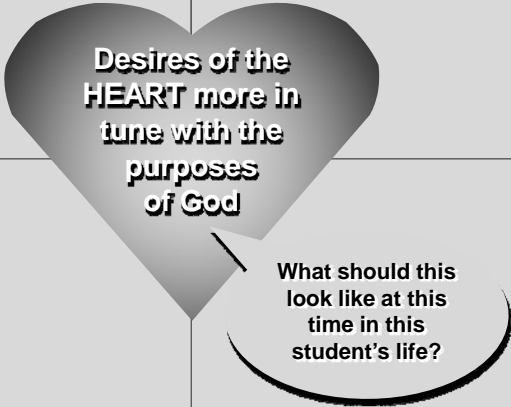
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<h1>Change?</h1>	
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**What Specific Changes?**  
Relationships?  
Living Situation?  
Functional Goals?  
Def. of what is Important/Needed?  
Spiritual Habits?  
Response to Authority?  
Response to Conflict?  
School Work?  
Future Goals?  
Thoughts?

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**Accountability**

**Wisdom**  
**Encouragement**  
**Warning**

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What changes need to take place in you and your classroom?

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## REVIEW

1. What can we do to help support change in a child's heart? And for what purpose?

## ACTIVITY

1. Join with one or two others and list the difference between a culture of law and a culture of grace. You can use the chart on page 38. Be prepared to compare/share your descriptions with the rest of the group.

## DISCUSSION

1. Share your thoughts—concerns, hopes, commitments—as a result of what you have heard and considered through this material. What will you change or do in your classroom or with the students you have contact with?

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

Where do you need to be softened to become an effective brush in God's hand?

**A CULTURE OF LAW**

**A CULTURE OF GRACE**