## Intimate Ethics: A Pastoral Theology of Mutuality Between Committed Partners Robert W. Thompson, MDiv, ThM, DMin; LPC, LMFT; Diplomate AAPC; Approved Supervisor AAMFT

Intimate Ethics arises from a grace-grounded ethos depicted as "facing each other."

The proposed three kinds of facing (forgiving):

- 1. Facing that invites (turning toward)
- 2. Facing that clears away (forgiveness process)
- 3. Facing that enriches (relationship by meaning-making)
- . I propose a theological claim to undergird intimate ethics. Social science theories often implicitly reflect and operationalize this pastoral theology.
- I. Ethos manifests itself in biblical covenants.
- 2. Covenant ethos=grace as relationship.
- 3. "Facing each other" illustrates grace as relationship.

Constructed from John Wesley's three-fold view of grace:

- a. Prevenient Grace (God reaches out to us; takes the initiative)
- b. Justifying Grace (God forgives & restores relationship)
- c. Sanctifying Grace (God guiding our growth; process)

### Suggestions for Using this Pastoral Theology of Intimate Ethics

- 1. Invite partners to explore & articulate one's own faith views (theologies).
  - a. Jesus said that the second great commandment is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
    - --What do you think Jesus meant by this?
- -- What does it mean to you?
- b. What do you think this means: "forgive us our sins/trespasses as we forgive those who sin/trespasses against us"?
- c. What other faith ideas or Scripture are meaningful to you?
- 2. Then invite them to explore how those faith views influence their attitudes/outlook & behaviors toward one's partner.

How do your views/attitudes influence the way you think about and behave toward other persons? Toward your partner?

3. Ask them about their observations of and experiences with the three kinds of "facing."

When have you (or someone you observed):

- a. Maintained a respectful connection to an offender even though you were still upset with the offense?
- b. Clearly forgave someone (unspoken or not)?
- c. Reminded/assured yourself that conflict and hurt are part of intimate relationship, and resolution is enriching (forgiven and forgiving)?

How to respond to "I dunno" (!!) Ask them to recall something from a movie, TV program, song, book.

Our discouragement often filters out these "sparkling moments," so it takes some work to recall them.

# Exploring My Theology of Grace For each statement choose the number that best fits your view.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

A Sometimes grace seems too good to be true.	
B We earn God's grace through our good behavior.	
C Forgiveness and reconciliation are processes more than events.	
D At times I accept God's grace better than at other times.	
E At times I accept grace from others better than at other times.	
F Conflict is inevitable among persons at times.	
G I like some persons better than others.	
H Sometimes I feel concerned about tension between family, neighbors, co-workers, or church.	
I I can forgive but I can't forget.	
JThe pastor should handle the conflict.	
K I can't treat someone well until I have forgiven him/her.	
L I've witnessed/experienced persons reconciling with each other.	
M It's hard to forgive until I've talked to the person involved.	
N Sometimes I treat certain persons better than other persons.	
O There's someone I need to forgive.	
P I tend to avoid tense encounters.	
Q Sometimes forgiveness takes time.	
Multiple Choice and True/False	
1. The word "grace" in Scripture is similar to:     a. Mercy b. Steadfast love c. Favor d. All of the above.	
2. True or False? At various times in the past, the church has often fallen off the "grace" bandwagon.	
3. Grace is fundamentally about (circle all that apply):  a. Removing penalties b. Avoiding consequence c. Restoring relationship d. Feeling better e. Forgetting bad things	es
4. True or False? Many persons experience Christians as not gracious.	

### EXPLORING FORGIVENESS: Where Does It Come From?

For each statement below, please circle the number that stands for your opinion.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure		Disagree		S	Strongly Disagree	
	1	2	3		4		5		
		"I will forgive (a	t least begin the	proces	s of for	giving	)":		
1 if you forgive me (we both did wrong)."					2	3	4	5	
2 so I can stop feeling awful inside.			1	2	3	4	5		
3 because it will make me look good.			1	2	3	4	5		
4 because God forgives me."			1	2	3	4	5		
5 because I did wrong to someone else			1	2	3	4	5		
6 because God requires me to forgive others.			1	2	3	4	5		
7 to let go of resentmentit's eating me up.			1	2	3	4	5		
8 "freely you have received; freely give."			1	2	3	4	5		
9.	because I did	you wrong, too."		1	2	3	4	5	
10	so I can feel	better inside.		1	2	3	4	5	
11.	so I can get	on with my life.		1	2	3	4	5	
12	to pass on t	he mercy God give	s to all."	1	2	3	4	5	

What image of grace/salvation is depicted in the following Scriptures?

Rescue/Recover?	Rinse/Cleanse?	Relate (to God)?	
Psalm 30:	Psalm 95:6		
Ps 31:4		Luke 15:4-6	
Ps 31:8		Psalm 80:3	
Isaiah 1:16		1 John 1:7	
Psalm 31:16		Psalm 38:21-22	
Isaiah 1:1	8	1 John 1:3	
Luke 15:8	3-9	Psalm 67:1	
Isaiah 1:2	5	1 John 4:13	
Psalm 25:	15	1 John 1:8	
1 John 4:8	3; 5:20	Psalm 30:7	

In Scripture: God's face=God's presence

-Long to see God's face, Ps 31:16; 80:3

-God's facing presence saves, Ps 16:11; 41:12b No shame; radiance, Ps 34:5 God's justice, Ps 34:16 ("to root out")

-Jesus' face like Moses' face, 2 Cor 3:18; 4:6

-God's face=God's spirit, Rom 5:5; 1Cor 2:10-11; 2 Cor 3:6, 7, 8; Ps 51:11; 104:29; 139:7

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