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Now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Acts 20:32 (NIV)

GRACE THAT WORKS IN '24

This is a 4-week daily devotional with 6 each week and a "day off" for the interruptions of life. It will transform you by the grace of God as you invest time and attention to Him and His grace. Jesus invites you to step up into a new season of grace, joy, power, and effectiveness as rewards for your diligence.

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

1. Choose to believe that your life is going to be transformed by the grace of God as you invest time and attention to Him and His grace for a month.
2. Intentionally step into the presence of God before each devotional, by quietly acknowledging His goodness, thanking Him for such great salvation, and telling Him that you are ready to tremble in His presence (Jeremiah 5:22) and to tremble at His word (Isaiah 66:5), because you choose to fear the Lord, and expect Him to speak to you and give you grace through your reading of His word.
3. Read the scripture passage slowly and attentively, with open ears and heart, allowing yourself to be impacted by it. You may find it helpful to read it out loud.
4. Trust the hearts of these writers. Let yourself be moved by the pastor or other leaders who wrote the devotional, listening for the Holy Spirit who

inspired them. These devotionals have been reviewed and approved by our pastoral leadership for your spiritual vitality.

5. Journaling is encouraged for your optimum benefit, but is not required. If you take time to journal, you may want to do it on a document you create in your cell phone or computer so you can easily share selections from it with others for their encouragement, by simply copying and pasting.

Journaling suggestions:

- a. Ask God how to answer the questions, and listen.
 - b. Write down the thoughts that He gives you. They will usually be the quick and simple ideas, not the complex or confusing ones that come if you get out of the "pool of grace."
 - c. Add any other thoughts that you feel are coming to you by the Holy Spirit, even if they are on different subjects.
6. When you get to the end, ask God for grace, and write a devotional yourself for another day, or two, or three...

If you think only ordained ministers can hear from the Lord and write thoughts that encourage, engage, or challenge others, you may be delighted to hear Him speaking to, and then through, you, as you create with His grace.

SHOUTS OF GRACE

by Senior Pastor Dan Roth

*...This [is] the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, Says the LORD of hosts. 7 Who [are] you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel [you shall become] a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of, 'Grace! Grace!' to it."
Zechariah 4:6-7 (NKJV)*

In any endeavor for the Lord, we have to be aware that we are not able to do what God is calling us to without His divine supply. The Bible calls this divine supply *grace*. This word *grace* has been celebrated for centuries as what we are saved by. Along with the celebration came the standard definition of *grace*: *unmerited favor*. It is *unmerited* because we didn't do anything to earn it or deserve it, and it is *favor* because God is granting us something we desperately need.

But as we look at *grace*, we find out it is so much more. The Bible speaks of the multifaceted *grace* of God. Just like a diamond that sparkles and has many colors we can see that *grace* in the Bible has many different expressions. *Grace* empowers us to do what we couldn't do on our own. It is God's sovereign, divine ability to get the job done on our behalf when we can't do it ourselves. It is God's power in us to do what His truth demands of us. Simply put, it is the empowerment of God for our lives.

This divine supply keeps us dependent on God. We are reminded that God opposes us when we are proud and think we can do life on our own, but He

gives us grace, power and ability when we depend on Him in humility. This is why the Apostle Paul stated that when he is weak, that is when he is strong (2 Corinthians 12:10). In his dependency on God for strength, God imparted His grace to do what Paul couldn't do on his own. Paul went through persecutions, beatings, imprisonment and even shipwrecks. Even though all these things happened to him he was still able to plant churches and strengthen believers in his writings. Still today two thirds of the books of the New Testament we read were written by Paul. What amazing grace!

Throughout your life you will be confronted with challenges that are outside of your ability. This is where you can cling to God and ask for His grace to help. Throughout this devotional you will find many facets of God's grace for your life. The grace of God takes many forms. It may be through the wisdom God gives, through the strength He imparts, through the comfort He brings or so many other ways. What a joy to know that we can face any challenges that life may bring by the grace of God. In the coming days make sure to confess your weakness and depend on God. Ask for His Divine supply of grace!

Prayer Confession:

Father God, I confess that I am not able to do life in my own strength. I need Your divine supply. Please empower me with grace to live the life You have for me. I humbly ask in Jesus' name, amen.

Journal Directions:

1. What areas do you need God's grace (Divine supply)?
2. Are there areas that you are holding on to in pride that you need to humble yourself to allow God's grace to be released?
3. Since you know that God is willing to give you His divine supply of grace, what do you want to accomplish? Take some time to ask God for His divine supply to accomplish those things.

[illegible]

THE GRACE TO RIDE OUT THE WAVE

by Senior Pastor Jessica Roth

Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
2 Corinthians 12:8-10 (NLT)

There was a season of my life where I was drained and weary and extremely broken. You may find yourself in this place as well. This was a time like I had never experienced before. We as a family had taken some hard hits. Our work roles were new and we were stepping into big shoes, and with big weights to carry. We were judged, mistreated, hated, blamed for things we had nothing to do with. We were still going, barely. We had taken some time to separate from our crazy, busy lives and all the demands that come with it. Every morning while on this break I would journal, pray, and read my Word.

This is a normal everyday routine in my life, but this was different. As I was talking to God at the beginning of my time away and explaining to Him how I was feeling. I told Him I felt like I'm in an ocean and the waves were tossing me back and forth, and I am using all my energy to keep my head above the water and try to make it back to shore. The Lord

began to pour out His wisdom and grace into my life for the next few weeks. Everyday it felt like I was being filled and filled more. His love and grace were so evident.

As this time away was coming to a close and I was feeling so much better, the Lord had healed me and given me a word from God on many matters in life and my future. I asked God this: "How am I going to do life when I get back? I don't want to feel like I'm drowning again." The Lord showed me a vision. He brought me to a beach and showed me the surfers riding the waves into shore. He told me to get in the water this time and take a surfboard. I pictured myself running to the ocean and paddling out to catch a wave.

He told me the surfboard represents His grace and the waves are His plans and purposes for my life. He said, "Take your board and ride *grace* all the way into safety. I will take you where you need to go. I already have it covered and you are safe in me. Ride the board of grace in this season of life."

He went on to explain that the surfer knows that they will make it to shore if they can just catch the wave. I have been catching the waves of life everyday since then, riding with God and resting in His grace to carry me safely to the next day.

Today I want you to take this beautiful picture for yourself. What in life has been hard? Have you been doing life in your own ability, knowledge, or energy? You can't do it on your own. But with God you can just receive the beautiful gift of grace that He has given you. Let God carry you and lead you.

1 Peter 5:7 says “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

Allow God to move in your life. Let him take the pressure and the demands. You just ride the wave with Him into the shore. The weight and pressure are not for you to carry, they are for Him to carry. So let's do ourselves a favor and give it all to God, today.

Prayer:

Join me in prayer: Lord, today I want to ride the wave of grace. Please show me how to do this. I ask for Your discernment in the tough places. Help me to do what seems impossible. Help me to have the strength and grace of God to take me to the shore. I love You, Lord. Use me; today I choose to rest in Your grace.

Journal Directions:

1. Name two or three tasks or situations that are hard for you, and that you are trying to do in your own ability, knowledge, and energy.
2. Write a different prayer for each one, asking God for His grace in the places you can't fix or overcome.

1 Peter 5:10 (The Voice) After you have suffered for a little while, the God of grace who has called you [to His everlasting presence] through Jesus the Anointed will restore you, support you, strengthen you, and ground you.

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GRACE ABOUNDING

by Pastor Joel Alvarado

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.

2 Corinthians 9:8 (NASB)

When we think of God's abounding grace, we need to understand what grace means and how this grace abounds in our life—so much so that it spills over to abundance.

There are many definitions of the word *grace* in the Bible. So let's start with the word *grace* in Greek, χάρις or *charē*. It refers to good will, loving-kindness, favor, in particular to God's merciful grace.

J.H. Jowett summarizes grace as God's "holy love on the move." This means that God's loving-kindness is "love on the move." Our founding pastor, Jim Cobrae has included "on our behalf when we can't do it," in his definition of grace: "God's sovereign, divine ability to get the job done on your behalf when you can't do it."

When amidst any circumstance, our resources run dry, we have access through Christ and His abounding kindness (existing in or providing a great or plentiful quantity or supply), for grace to cover us.

In 2021, I was given a death notice from my doctor due to a bone marrow disease called MDS (Myelodysplastic Syndrome). This diagnosis meant I had a form of bone cancer in the bone marrow which has no cure. Then the Lord gave me a *rhema*

word: "Sickness is coming your way, but remember Jeremiah 30:17." That's where God says, "I'll come with healing—curing the incurable!" He also reminded me about Ezekiel 37:4-5, where God though His prophet spoke to the dead, dry bones and made them come to life!

Well, my friends, HE DID! The Lord has healed me, and His sustaining grace carried me all the way through the year-long journey to my miracle, and He can and will do the same for you.

So what is confronting you today that God's grace can't see you through? What sickness or what diagnosis given to you is so great that God's abounding grace can't heal you, or can't sustain you through your journey to divine health?

God's holy love is on the move for you today! Believe it and receive it.

The Apostle Paul put it this way:

The Lord said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you [My loving kindness and My mercy are more than enough—always available—regardless of the situation]; for [My] power is being perfected [and is completed and shows itself most effectively] in [your] weakness."

Therefore, I will more gladly boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ [may completely enfold me and] may dwell in me. 2 Corinthians 12:9 (AMP)

Let grace abound in and through you today.

Journal Directions:

1. What situation in your life can you think of that requires God's abundant grace right now?
2. Fill in the word or words to complete this sentence:
Lord, today I confess that Your holy love is on the move for_____.

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GRACE FOR EXTENDED FAMILY

by Pastor Steve Kobernik

I will pour upon the house of David the spirit of grace and of supplications.

Zechariah 12:10 (KJV)

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Acts 16:31 (KJV)

What does God want for your family? Probably much more than you think.

God changed Abram's name, which meant "exalted father," to Abraham, which means "father of nations" because He wanted to bless him and his descendants, and the world through them (Genesis 17:5 and 12:2). The sons and grandsons of Issachar were "valiant men of might in their generations" (1 Chronicles 7:1-2). His offspring, 200 of them, "understood the times and knew what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32). God promised that He would "establish a house" for David, and work with his descendants all the way to Jesus, whose throne would be eternal (2 Samuel 7:11-16). I know that these examples are "over the top." But God is "over the top," and hasn't changed.

Let's take a quick look at an extended family you probably haven't heard of. Recab's son Jehonadab joined hands with newly anointed King Jehu to fulfill Elijah the prophet's command to end the rule of wicked King Ahab and destroy Baal worship in Israel (2 Kings 10:15, 23-28). Two or three generations later

the Recabites, because they kept the commandments of Jehonadab, maintained their nomadic life and simply weren't there when the inhabitants of Jerusalem were brutally decimated and dragged away as exiles to Babylon. That Recabite generation also "passed the test" of family fidelity given by the prophet Jeremiah (read Jeremiah 25). And two more generations later, when the exiles returned, Malchiah, the Recabite ruler of one of the districts of Jerusalem, oversaw the rebuilding of the section of the city wall in his neighborhood (Nehemiah 3:14-15).

God's plan for your family is much bigger than yours. So isn't it time for you to pray for grace to exceed your current expectations, and raise your family goals up to something more worthy of your God? Where do you start? Right where you are. And how do you do it? One day at a time.

Pastor Deborah Cobrae's testimony is well-known by those who have been at the Rock Church And World Outreach Center for a while. Some of her and Pastor Jim's children "went AWOL," for a few years, rejecting their standards, and living carnal lives. One day when she was overwhelmed with weeping from her broken heart, the Holy Spirit spoke to her through Jeremiah 31:15-17 and told her, "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded...They shall come back from the land of the enemy. Your children shall come again to their own border." So they began making faith declarations, and treated them as if God was going to answer their prayers. And He did.

One of the biggest reasons that American culture has been overtaken by wicked practices is that parents have not been raising their children to adhere to Godly standards according to the Bible. Godly parents should raise their children to be the salt and light of Jesus in our educational, business, and governmental institutions. Linda and I are praying and working with the goal that all 3 of our daughters and their husbands, and all 9 of our grandchildren, and their spouses—now 13 to 23 years old, and not married yet—and their children, will be salt and light, laborers in the end-time harvest, even if it takes 100 years.

Journal Directions:

1. Linda and I decided when our children were small, that we wanted our family to be characterized by gratitude. Name a Christian characteristic or two that you would like your family to be known for, and write down a step or two that you can take now in that direction.
2. Ask your parents, uncles or aunts, or grandparents, "What are the best things that have come down from your family line?", and "How can I help develop that in my family?" Summarize your conclusions.
3. Set aside a time to pray (with your spouse if s/he will cooperate) for your siblings and your children, by name, one at a time, and in tongues if you are comfortable doing so, and listen. Journal any ideas that come that may be from the Lord, and ask the Holy Spirit how to share those ideas with them to encourage them.

[illegible]

GRACE FOR CAPACITY

by Jackie Moore

I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts.

Exodus 31:3 (NLT)

Years ago, as a young father I was faced with one of my biggest tests of faith. I had been laid off from my job a week before Christmas. Immediately it was time to find a new job. I was called into an interview for a tool and die company. I didn't know exactly what position was open, I just needed a job.

The interview was a bit informal as management was impressed by that fact that I even knew what a steel-rule-die was. Just as they were about to offer me a job as a delivery driver the supervisor from the laser department walked in to express his desperate need for a Laser Operator. They agreed that I would be the new Laser operator if I felt I could do it.

Well, I didn't even know what a laser cutting machine was, much less how to operate one. I just knew that I had a wife and seven children at home and I needed a job. That position would meet my financial needs. The supervisor took me into the laser room, introduced me to the current operator and said welcome to the company. I remember thinking to myself "there is no way I can learn this".

The agreement was that I would have a month of training during the day then I would be the night operator, but after the first week the volume was too

high and they needed me to start nights to keep up with the work load. That was on a Friday, end of shift. I got in my car to head home for the day and I said "Lord, please, give me the capacity to learn and retain the knowledge to operate all three machines to keep this job. Please help me".

The next morning Deuteronomy 8:18 came to mind, "Remember the Lord your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful..." I was reminded by the Holy Spirit that the Lord provides the skill and wisdom for every task. I was tasked with being a husband and father and called to provide for their spiritual and physical needs, and the capacity to grow in my ability to provide. As long as I remained in Christ, He would provide for me.

In Exodus 31 God gave instructions to Moses for His tabernacle He wanted built. In verse 3 God provided the wisdom and ability through Bezaleel to accomplish His will. Read Exodus 31:1-6.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I desire to do your will but at times I am concerned about my capacity, or lack of it. Please help me to see your limitless wisdom, and the abilities that You provide for Your call. Give me the capacity to learn and handle more than I thought possible for me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Journal Directions:

1. Name one of the things that God has asked you to do that you are not comfortable with.
2. What wisdom or skill do you lack for the task?
3. How will you begin to trust that God will provide for your success in His call?

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GRACE MULTIPLIED THROUGH KNOWING GOD

by Pastor Steve Kobernik

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

2 Peter 1:2 (NIV)

My Dad taught me to pursue the presence of God intentionally from my early teens, but I had no idea that God would multiply my application of that grace with the reward of an unusual visitation.

The first of several unforgettable encounters with God occurred when I was 20. But it took more than 50 years for me to recognize how it happened by the dynamic interaction revealed in this verse. God brought me to a situation where I had to use all the money, time, and energy I had to do a task that I didn't want to do. But I took hold of grace and the task. Then He multiplied that grace into a startling experience that was completely His doing, and its memory has motivated me for decades to pursue intimacy with Him.

It was December of 1966. That fall I had paid \$400 for a 1959 VW bug that had been built up from insurance wreckage. It looked good because it had a new paint job, but the engine was in bad need of repair, and I didn't have enough money. I was a young nerd who didn't want to be a grease monkey, and my dad was a pastor who had learned basic mechanic skills but didn't like to use them. He told me that I would have to make up for what I didn't have in cash, with time and energy. So we decided that I would drive the 360 miles home, and we would trust God for grace to do the repairs during Christmas

vacation. I bought the kit to replace the 4 cylinders on the '59 VW, to find that they had to be returned because the engine was made in 1955, another disappointment, and we lost a day in that process.

We replaced the 4 cylinders, but with long, trying hours of very dirty and uncomfortable labor. I didn't get back to my room in the dorm that day in January until after midnight. Physically exhausted, emotionally at the end of myself, and upset that I had missed the precious first day of classes, I just collapsed onto my bed and fell into a troubled sleep.

A couple hours later I was surprisingly awakened by a ball of fire. Somehow I knew that it was yellow, about four feet away, between me and the door, and at about the height of a man's head. This was not a vision or dream, but a real Presence. I could feel its heat. I was too terrified to open my eyes because I was sure that I would die if I looked at Him. But then I felt the smile of God, an amazing sense of peace and joy that God had manifested Himself to me. I slept soundly and awoke refreshed. This was grace gloriously multiplied after grace diligently applied.

Knowledge of God is not just about knowing about His character and attributes as an avid student of His word, as important as that is. At a deeper and much more satisfying level, it is the experience of intimacy with God. "Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived..." (Genesis 4:1 KJV). David wrote about Yahveh, When You said, "Seek My face," My heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek" (Psalm 27:8 NKJ). The Apostle Paul wrote from his prison in Rome after an incredibly fruitful missionary career, "I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8 NIV).

Costly Prayer:

Put your hand on your heart and say to God, "I want to know You, and the power of Your resurrection, and the fellowship of Your suffering, with a heart willing to die for intimacy with You." (See Philippians 3:10)

Journal Directions:

1. If you desire a supernatural manifestation of God's presence, write out a prayer asking Him for it, or copy the prayer above, and pray that prayer out loud daily for a week or a month.
2. Also ask Him for what it may cost you, and write down what price you may need to be willing to pay.
3. One time after a grace of worship in His presence in my quiet time, the Holy Spirit multiplied grace for me to write a worshipful song starting with, "I want to be with You, Jesus..." Write down a time or two that you have recognized the grace of God on you, and ask for and attach faith for, a multiplied grace that God would like to give you in response to your application of grace that was provided earlier..
4. Live this week watching for "normal" powerful graces in your life, but with faith for how God may want to multiply grace for you after that.

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GRACE TO ESCAPE TEMPTATION

by Adam Ewert

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)

Temptations can come in weak areas of your life, and they may even come when everything is going well. In any case the devil is always looking for a way to steal from, kill, and destroy you. The devil wants you to live beat up, broken, and in poverty—spiritually, physically, and financially. He wants to take away any good thing God has given you and get you disconnected from God.

The good news is that the devil's tricks are nothing new. God will give us the discernment, wisdom and strength to recognize and resist temptation so we can overcome it before falling into sin. God said He will show us a way out, but He's not going to do all the work for us. So, what are some ways that God has made a way out for us and given us the tools to endure temptation?

When I was a young adult, God showed me a way through His Word to fight temptation and overcome it. I was crying out to God one night asking Him for help to overcome evil thoughts I was battling in my head. I knew they were sinful thoughts, but no matter how hard I tried to block them out nothing worked. When I fell asleep that night, I woke up to a voice in

my head saying, “resist the devil and he will flee from you.” As soon as I heard those words I woke up and starting speaking them out over and over again. “I resist the devil. I resist the devil.”

At the time I had forgotten that those words were in the Bible, but God reminded me that I had memorized that verse when I was a teenager. I had just forgotten it. The Bible verse is James 4:7. It says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” I had been trying to resist the temptation, but it wasn’t until I submitted myself to God, when I cried out for His help, that God spoke to me and gave me a way out. When I started speaking the Word of God the evil thoughts went away!

The Word of God is the best weapon we have been given to fight the devil. “The Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12 NIV). The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit and we can use it to cut through the devil’s schemes. Through God’s grace and His Word, we can overcome temptation. We need to get God’s Word into our hearts and use it.

The next time the devil tries to tempt you, remind him of God’s Word and say, “I submit myself to God. I resist the devil!” Or, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). In other words, “I’m a dead man to sin and a dead man can’t do anything!” Remember you will have many opportunities in life to fall into temptation. Just don’t take any of them.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, I recognize that I need Your help in my life and I can't do life without You. I submit to You and Your Word; I resist the devil and he will flee from me. Thank You, that by Your grace I will overcome any obstacle and temptation that comes my way! In Jesus' name. Amen.

Journal Directions:

1. What temptations are you facing in life right now that you need God's grace to overcome and endure?
2. Knowing the Word of God will give you the power to overcome any temptation that comes your way, how will you use God's Word in your life going forward?

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GRACE TO GIVE GRACE

by Pastor Theresa Aguilar

Let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth, but if there is any good word for edification according to the need of the moment, say that, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Ephesians 4:29 (NASB20)

The Bible teaches us that we are saved by grace and empowered by grace to do and become all that God desires and has planned for us. Grace is a gift of God that we receive from Him in faith. But did you know you can do more than receive grace, you can also give grace?

My nephews run cross-country. One is in high school and the other in middle school. They are both first-year runners. If you've ever tried it, you know that running is extremely difficult when you have reached the end of your ability. The race isn't finished, but you are finished! I admire my nephews' running; every time they get out on the track they are racing against their best time and giving it all they've got, to do well and hopefully to beat their personal record. Living across the country from them means I can't be there to cheer them on when they are rounding that last bend, or climbing that last hill, or when it looks like they are going too slow and might get passed by other runners. I do, however, I get to watch the videos, and it is on those videos that I see the power to give grace. When my older nephew encourages his younger brother by cheering him on, all of a sudden exhaustion and survival turn into passion and

determination. The encouragement of a brother gives him the energy to push through the limitations. "Out of nowhere" power surges and he is able to finish!

The same is true in the race of life. When our brothers and sisters in Christ are discouraged, fatigued, and wavering in the journey of life, the grace they need can come from your words! From the beginning of creation until now, God's design is for the spoken word to release His power. It was true on the first day of creation, when God said, "Let there be light" and it was true when Jesus said "Lazarus come forth." It is still true today when the Church, the sons and daughters of God, open their mouths to speak truth, and encouragement, and grace to each other. The power of God is released to energize others for the road ahead.

Power to create, power to encourage, and power to give grace are in the words of your mouth. God empowers and energizes His church with His church. He has chosen to use your words to give grace to others so that they can stay the course, run the race, and win the prize!

As we read in Ephesians, let's make an extra effort to speak a good word appropriate for the moment, a word that edifies and builds others up. You have the gift of grace in your mouth and on your lips! Your words can be the strength others need to run their race well. You are gifted and called to be a grace giver! Go find someone who needs an injection of grace today!

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, help me to understand the power of my words in the lives of those around me. Where my words have been unwholesome or discouraging to others, I repent and receive your forgiveness. Thank you for giving me the grace to be a grace giver. Open my eyes to the opportunities to speak encouragement and life to those around me, and thank you for grace to speak words that give grace to all who hear my words. Amen.

Journal Directions:

1. Name someone you can encourage today, and two or three more during this next week.
2. Think through what you will say to each of them by asking God what is on His heart for them, and write down an idea or two for each one as you number them in your journal. Is there a scripture or a word that God wants to deliver through you?

[illegible]

GRACE FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

by Pastor Mike Bryan

Moses said to the Lord, "See, You say to me, 'Lead this people!' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You said, 'I have known you by name. You have found favor in My eyes.' So I pray to You, if I have found favor in Your eyes, let me know Your ways. Then I may know You and find favor in Your eyes. And keep in mind that this nation is Your people."

Exodus 33:12-13 (NLV)

A leader is someone who guides, leads, influences, or has authority over someone, something, or a group. In other words, we are all leaders, whether you are a parent, a teacher, a student, employer, hosting a small group, or just volunteering at church.

Let me ask you a question...Do you think you can be a leader without God's presence?

Moses was commissioned by God to lead His children out of Egypt's bondage. Miracle after miracle proved that the Almighty Himself was leading the way, that He loved His people, and that Moses was the leader receiving direction from Him. But that all changed when Moses was upon the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments and the children of Israel were below building a golden calf as their god to follow. A huge rift happened between God and His people as a result of their disrespect for Him. God was ready to pour out His wrath upon them.

Moses' relationship with God however, was

unchangeable, so Moses was able to reason with God about not wiping out the children of Israel with His wrath. For the safety of His people, God had refused to travel with them into the Promised land. He assigned a messenger angel to lead Moses instead. But Moses knew that he couldn't lead the people without God's miraculous presence. He reminded God of the covenant He had with them, and that he was only there because of His grace and the command given him to "Lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land!"

Let's look at verses 15-17 of the TLB Version: "And the Lord replied, 'I myself will go with you and give you success.'" For Moses had said, 'If You aren't going with us, don't let us move a step from this place. If You don't go with us, who will ever know that I and my people have found favor with You, and that we are different from any other people upon the face of the earth?' And the Lord had replied to Moses, 'Yes, I will do what you have asked, for you have certainly found favor with Me, and you are my friend.'"

Because the children of Israel were challenging and difficult at times, Moses knew he needed the presence of God with him at all times to carefully direct his steps. Once Moses was confident that he had the grace and favor of God, he was able to continue to lead them. If you want to be confident in your walk as well, pray this prayer...

Prayer:

Father, I realize that my life affects those around me. In Romans 14:7, I read "For no one of us lives to

himself, and no one dies to himself." Our lives affect other people. My life affects those around me; my mother, father, aunts, uncles, children, as well as the people I work and play with. My deeds do not go unnoticed.

When people see the decisions I make, I want them to be confident that those decisions are approved by You. Therefore, I need Your help...Your grace... to discern who and how to lead those around me. You have a specific job for me to do and a specific path to follow to be successful. Help me to learn how to allow Your presence to guide me in all I do and to all of those around me.

I need Your help...Your grace...Your presence in my life!

I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Journal Directions:

1. Reflecting upon your past, can you think of a time when you grew tired of waiting for God's direction, so you "did it your way"?
2. Can you think of a time when you wanted to "do it your way" but successfully waited for God's direction first?
3. What were the different outcomes and lessons learned as a result?
4. What are some areas of your life right now in which you are believing for the grace of God's presence to guide you?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

GRACE TO OVERCOME SIN

by Pastor Sue Bryan

*You are the temple of the living God. As God has said:
"I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people."*

*17 Therefore "Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.*

*18 I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters," says the
LORD Almighty.
2 Corinthians 6:16b-18 (NKJV)*

We need God's grace to overcome sin in our lives! Jesus died to set us free from the power of sin, but we must appropriate His strength (His grace) to actually experience that freedom. When the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see an area of our life that is less than His will according to the Word of God, our response must be, "Yes, Lord!", and determine to let it go. It can be "sins of the flesh" from appetites and behaviors that we yielded to before we were saved, or it can be attitudes of the heart that cause us to be lifted in pride or unloving to the people Jesus died to save. Without God's help (the help of the Holy Spirit), it is impossible to experience lasting change in these areas.

To separate ourselves from sinful behavior, is to be "sanctified." We are born again and on our way to Heaven, but we are still here on planet Earth to display

the beautiful work that God can do in our lives as a testimony of His power and goodness to others. When the devil brings thoughts to our minds telling us that we cannot change and be conformed to the image of God, I've learned that, that is the only time you can agree with him. I've said out loud before, "you're right, Devil; I can't change! But I'm glad that I'm not limited to my ability, for 'greater is He who is in me, than he (you, devil) who is in the world' and by His grace and the power of the Word of God, I can change and be a beautiful reflection of Jesus to the world!" (1 John 4:4).

The first part of our passage in 2 Corinthians 6, says that we are the temple of the living God; He resides on the inside of us! It says "I [God] will dwell in them and walk among them; I will be their God, and they shall be My people." He indwells us. And because of this God says, "...come out from among them [those influenced by the world] and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." Because He (the Greater One) lives inside us, we must separate ourselves from the influences of sin and sinners and we will be found pleasing to the Lord. We have the full power of the Holy Spirit and every resource available from Heaven to strengthen us and cause us to be able to overcome sin.

Romans 6:14 -says, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

The 10 Commandments and all of the traditions and laws that extended from them, could not give us strength to overcome sin, but the grace of God by the power of the Holy Spirit is more than enough!

Faith Declaration:

Say out loud and on purpose: "Sin shall not have dominion over me; for greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world!" (1 John 4:4) "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength!" (Philippians 2:13).

Journal Directions:

1. Name any outward sin that keeps ensnaring you or an attitude of the heart that does not exemplify the love of God, that the Holy Spirit has been bringing to your attention that needs to change. Write three verses that reveal what the Word of God says about those areas.
2. Think on those verses and allow the Holy Spirit to give you insights as to how you can apply them in the areas you are struggling with. Write down those insights.
3. Think back to the last time that you yielded to this sin or sinful attitude. Now imagine yourself responding differently to this temptation, doing things according to what God says your behavior or attitudes should be.

[illegible]

GRACE IN “GOD INVITATIONS”

by Pastor Steve Kobernik

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

Matthew. 4:19 (NIV)

Would you like to go on adventures with God, like Abraham, Moses, David, and Mary did? Take a moment to think about how they received grace in big, “God invitations.”

What if many of the good (see James 1:17) ideas that come into your head or heart are divine invitations, and God is speaking to you several times every day, about little things? Recognizing good thoughts as the voice of God, as Jesus calling, as words of wisdom from the Holy Spirit, will turn a bland, tasteless day, or decade, into an exciting journey with God as your companion. But there is a greater dynamic in play here. Because the invitation brings the grace of God to you to do something with Him, not merely an interesting distraction, how you respond is critical, determining whether you will qualify for more grace or backslide into less.

Linda and I were in sorrow one night because we believed that several of our relatives whose hearts used to be tender towards God had, over time, stopped believing a number of precious promises in God's Word. That day we believed they felt that we were trying to shove the Bible down their throats, when we thought we were simply encouraging them to develop friendship with Jesus. We fell asleep humbly

asking God how that happened and feeling dismayed that we didn't know what we could do about it.

Early the next morning I was waking up to the fuzzy idea that I could get up and spend some time alone with God. I looked at the clock; was 5:14. I sleepily prayed, "I'm tired, Lord. Will you help me go back to sleep?" Then this thought came strongly into my mind: "They turned away because they didn't accept divine invitations."

I suddenly woke up realizing that God had answered our prayer, got out of bed, went to my "war room," and repented for not recognizing his word of wisdom, or saying, "Yes, Lord," to God's invitation for me to get up and spend some time with Him. I knew that the Holy Spirit had sent me that clear word of knowledge (see 1 Corinthians 12:8) about divine invitations, and asked God to send those relatives more invitations to bring them back to intimacy with Him. And for me to represent better in the future, His love for each of them.

Wondering how someone is doing when you wake up in the middle of the night is probably an invitation to pray for them. It might "occur to you" to call your mother, or help a godly candidate get elected, or buy gas for someone out of money, or... Each idea is an invitation, or a *rhema*, a personal word from God to you. And sometimes they come through family or friends.

Saying, "Yes, Lord," brings His presence and grace, raises your friendship with God to a new level, and opens doors with faith for the supernatural in your future. And what if God is unwilling to give you your

next big assignment until He sees your faithfulness in fulfilling His smaller ones?

Is Jesus praying for you to hear His voice inviting you to do things with Him today?

Prayer:

Open my eyes and ears, Lord, to recognize the *rhemas*, invitations, and words of wisdom that you send me today. I want to say, "Yes, Lord!" every time.

And help me to schedule my time with attentive margins because I am expecting you to speak to me, and I want to listen and obey.

Journal Directions:

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you remember a God invitation in the last week or two, that you recognized and accepted, and write about it.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you remember a God invitation in the last week or two, that you didn't recognize or accept, and write about it.
3. Write a short prayer of repentance about that failure, and then pray it out loud.
4. Write a short prayer of commitment to God to recognize and accept any and every invitation He graciously extends to you, and then pray it out loud.

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GRACE FOR MIRACLES

by Pastor Tracie Ogando

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater [works] than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

John 14:12 (NKJV)

Mark 6:47-48a says, "Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them."

Jesus observed them from the mountain where He was praying. Why didn't He calm the storm as He had done before? Many of us would have immediately come to their rescue! But it seems He was observing them. How would they react to this crisis? That very day they had fed the 5,000 as the food multiplied in their hands while they handed it out at Jesus' command. They had just experienced the grace for miracles a few hours before!

How wonderful it would have been if they had stood up and shouted to the storm, "Peace! Be still!" They had already healed the sick and cast out demons in His name — authority for miracles was theirs, as well as the grace! (Luke 10:19) But ...they stuck to their oars.

It seems they needed to be impressed to a greater degree with the power of God ... so Jesus came to them walking on the water! And when Peter walked on water also, the message was clear: they could do the works of Jesus also, in His authority and by His

grace.

Afterward, the disciples were dumbfounded "for they had not understood about the loaves, because their hearts were hardened" (Mark 6:51-52).

Not understood what? That their hands, by God's grace, produced the miracle! Their experiences should have impacted their faith. Their testimony should have produced another testimony like it.

Sometime later another crowd of 4,000 had no food, and three days passed by with no one to the rescue. How wonderful if the disciples would have said early on, "Lord, all we need is a few loaves and fish! We did this before!" But when Jesus finally addressed the problem, that's not quite what they said...

Mark 8:4 says, "Then His disciples answered Him, 'How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?'"

Remember that Jesus wanted the disciples to feed them. This is what He had told them at the previous feeding. "You feed them," He had said. (Luke 9:13)

Notice the patience of our God: "He asked them, 'How many loaves do you have?'" (Mark 8:5) With the same solution as before, the thousands were fed again by the disciples' hands. Jesus showed them yet again that He had the power - the grace! - to alter the laws of nature ...through them!

Later, on another ministry trip by boat, the disciples were concerned that only one loaf of bread remained.

(Mark 8:17-21) "But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, 'Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?'"

Their experience with grace for miracles wasn't affecting their day-to-day life. They had seen so much, heard so much! And yet they were locked in to finding only natural solutions.

Action:

The last phrase is key to disrupting old ways of thinking: "Do you not remember?"...Let's ask ourselves, "Am I not remembering great miracles?" Let's rehearse them, apply them to our current situation and believe we will have grace to see miracles multiply!

Journal Directions:

1. Read Acts 3:6-12. Who did the miracle, the disciples or Jesus?
2. Read Revelations 19:10b. What is the connection between sharing a testimony of what Jesus has done and creating an atmosphere where it can happen again?
3. Read Mark 16:14. What can you say to people who haven't personally experienced very many miracles yet?
4. Jesus was often frustrated by his disciples' lack of initiative to believe for a supernatural solution. How did they finally access grace to do His works? (Acts 4:31-33)

[illegible]

GRACE TO OVERCOME OFFENSES

by Adam Ewert

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Colossians 3:13 (NLT)

There are many ways that we can take offense toward someone or something. You can get offended at someone that hurt you by something they said or did to you. You can get offended by something that someone is not doing, like following rules, laws or expectations that you have for them. Retaliating negatively, or holding on to an offense and not dealing with it can add fuel to the fire. It can lead to hatred, rage, anger, resentment, bitterness and cursing. How you react to offense in your life will show you what is in your heart.

Jesus said, "What you say flows from what is in your heart" (Luke 6:45 NLT). Have you done a heart check lately on yourself? I'm not talking about checking your pulse or your heart rate, but the condition of your inner heart, your inner man. What words do you use when someone gets under your skin, jabs at you with their words, or pulls into your parking spot that you were waiting so patiently for? Are you reacting by judging, complaining, fighting or cursing? Or, are you praying, blessing and being patient with them? Jesus says earlier in Luke 6, "Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you."

How in the world do we react the way Jesus is teaching us to react? We need the grace of God through His Word to guide us and lead us in every situation we face. If you follow Jesus' example when you get offended, then you will get the God results. Those results are righteousness, peace, and joy in your heart. Jesus says in Luke 6 to love your enemies, do good to them, pray for them, bless them, be kind to them. Then your reward from Heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High.

Just as God has shown you grace when you mess up, He is asking you to show the same grace to others when they mess up too. Receiving forgiveness will heal your heart from any hardness, bitterness or hate that has been built up from taking and holding on to an offense. Then you will be free to forgive others who have wronged you.

Forgiveness and grace can also put out a fire before it starts. As Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare." Try to be slow to speak, slow to react, and quick to listen to the Word of God. The Holy Spirit will remind you how to react by His Word that is in your heart. That is the grace of God flowing in your life!

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for forgiving me every time I mess up. Thank you that when I confess my wrong doings you are faithful to forgive me and purify me from all unrighteousness. Forgive me for any offense that I have taken against you and others. I choose to forgive everyone and everything just as

you have forgiven me. Help me to be patient with others and not take offense. Thank You for Your Word and Your grace that guides me in every situation in life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Journal Directions:

1. Do a "heart check" on yourself and take some time to reflect on any offenses that have recently come your way. How have you reacted to those offenses? What are the first words that came out of your mouth?
2. Are you holding on to any offenses that you have taken against others? How will you rely on the grace of God to overcome those offenses?
3. Jesus said that if you do not forgive others that you will not be forgiven. How does that change your perspective on how you will react to offenses in your life?

[illegible]

GRACE FOR FULFILLING YOUR PURPOSE

by Pastor Antonio Aguilar

By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them -- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

1 Corinthians 15:10 (NIV)

As we celebrate the grace-filled journey of life, we find joy and strength in the incomprehensible love of God. His grace is not just a concept but a strong force that empowers and propels us towards our true purpose in Christ. It's important to note that we don't strive to find our purpose but rather *His* purpose for our life. It's an important distinction because it takes the focus off of us and adjusts our posture towards Him.

Our purpose in Christ is not a mere happenstance but a deliberate design of God's grace. As we live in the realities of this grace, it is essential to recognize its transformative power. Grace doesn't just save us; it is a force that equips and empowers us for a purpose beyond our wildest dreams.

Consider the life of the Apostle Paul, a persecutor turned preacher. Please read again, slowly, the opening scripture. Paul's life exemplifies the dynamic partnership between human effort and divine grace. It is God's grace that propels us forward, and our response is to embrace our purpose with diligence and dedication.

Our purpose in Christ is intricately woven into the

fabric of God's grace. In Jeremiah 29:11, the Lord assures us, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." God's plans for us are not accidental; they are purposeful and filled with hope. Embracing this truth requires an understanding that our purpose is not self-constructed but rather God-ordained.

Grace not only forgives our past but empowers our present and secures our future. In 2 Timothy 1:9, Paul reminds Timothy, "He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time." Our purpose is not an afterthought; it is intricately tied to God's eternal plan and grace.

As we navigate the intricacies of life, it is crucial to recognize that our purpose in Christ is not a destination but a journey. Philippians 1:6 assures us, "And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." God's grace is the fuel that propels us forward, ensuring that we continue growing into the purpose He has prepared for us.

In conclusion, let us celebrate the grace that not only saves us but empowers us for a purpose beyond our comprehension. Ephesians 2:10 beautifully encapsulates this truth: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

As we kick off the year, let the grace of God inspire and challenge us to discover, embrace, and fulfill our

purpose in Christ. May we walk confidently, knowing that His grace is the wind beneath our wings, carrying us towards the divine destiny He has lovingly prepared for each of us.

Faith Declaration:

By God's grace I am going to prioritize and complete my current God-assignments, and discover His other assignments for me on this side of Heaven in His time.

Journal Directions:

1. What does it mean to you that your purpose in life is a journey rather than a destination?
2. How do you feel when you think about how your purpose in life is part of God's overarching plan for human history?
3. Write about one or two of the "good works which God prepared" for you to do.

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GRACE FOR OTHERS

by Rev. Stephanie Moore

Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man...the grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus...I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

1 Timothy 1:13-16

When I was first saved over 25 years ago, I was taught Ephesians 2:8, "It is by His grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." It was easy for me to receive God's gift and grace for my life. Why then was it hard for me to extend grace to others that needed grace just as much as I did? Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 10:8 "Freely you have received; freely give." It is God's grace that they need, so my love and grace for others should be a reflection of what God has done for me.

Extending grace—to the coworker that comes late and wastes the entire day on social media, the neighbor that always blocks your driveway with their trash cans, the family member that does not understand why you go to church and puts you down, or the extended family that wants to remind you of your rugged past—can be difficult. But God wants them all to experience His grace through us.

Extending grace to others takes faith and an understanding of God's grace for us. After all, God's grace for us will allow us to extend grace to others. It is through God's ability that we have the strength to offer grace to others.

There is hope in the gospel. Please read the opening scripture again, slowly. Paul explains that he was the worst of the worst and yet God poured out His grace upon him when he was undeserving so he would become an example of how to display that grace to others. Paul himself set out to tell the world about this overwhelming grace that was provided to him, and to them—sinners all.

Learning to forgive others is obtainable. When we receive God's forgiveness, we are forgiven. That's a fact. God does not remind us of our sins and shortcomings, in fact He washes us clean and we are made new. Receiving that forgiveness and grace comes with a requirement. Jesus says in Matt. 6:15 (NIV) "if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins," Just as Jesus forgives me and forgives you, we need to forgive others.

God's grace is displayed for the world to see when we forgive others and offer love to each other, just as in Christ God forgave you," With God's grace, "the sovereign, divine ability, to get the job done on my behalf when I can't do it," you will forgive others quickly and find the hope of the gospel to offer love and grace to those that need it. In the process of giving grace to others, we learn to be more dependent on God's grace and we are operating in the truth that His grace is sufficient in helping us to extend grace.

Prayer:

Spend some time in prayer asking God to reveal to you when you have not extended grace to others. Ask God to reveal the root of what causes you to withhold grace and to help you in those areas.

Journal Direction:

1. Is there someone you have a hard time forgiving? Journal out your frustration and then as you complete it, write in your journal the forgiveness you desire to give.
2. As you journal continuously, give thanks and praise for the forgiveness and grace God has freely given to you.
3. Find scriptures that encourage you to grow in God's grace for others.

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HOURLY GRACE IN SMALL THINGS

by Pastor Steve Kobernik

Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity[a] and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace.

2 Corinthians 1:12 (NIV)

How would you like to have a day in which, for a few moments, you are unreasonably optimistic? So much so that your quiet inner happiness bubbles up and overflows with rejoicing so that whoever is around you is startled by your exuberant outburst? "Of course we can do that! It will be great fun! Let's start planning now."

How would you like to go from wondering if you are doing any good for those you have relationships with, and feeling bad for some of the mean things you have said and done to them, to suddenly receiving a specific idea that you can say something encouraging, or do a little thing that will help someone else? And then you feel the ability to do it rising in you, so you drop your self-defenses, sincerely say it or do it, and you see that person's face change from a frown to smile, and it brings you the confidence that you have made a difference.

Or how about a time later today when you will recognize that you are beginning to feel down and depressed by some difficult circumstance? The fog lifts enough for you to suddenly see that you are about to spiral down through self-pity into a victim

slump. But instead, you identify it as the "smell of Hell", and something rises within you to laugh out loud and it feels so good to declare, "Hell, no! Not today, devil!" A praise chorus you sang last Sunday in church then comes to mind, and you start singing out loud about the goodness of God.

And what if uplifting moments like these, especially in relationships, are not just rare and occasional accidents but your daily bread, so that hope, faith, joy, and confidence become your characteristic and predictable way of life? Indeed, this is how God wants you to live every day!

Grace isn't just the power of God occasionally needed to finish a great task when we run out of strength. It's the everyday, hour-by-hour uplifts we need, to replace the doldrums and ho-hums of life with the insights and energy that supply the joy and confidence that the Holy Spirit holds for us and is waiting for us to access. Wow! Isn't God's love for us amazing?!

The main verb in this text literally means to turn here and there, but is used to mean conducting or behaving yourself, or simply, to live. But think about it... To live means to make hundreds of little decisions daily. How can we know whether to turn "here or there" each time? By grace. How can we recognize when we are caught in carnal cunning and need to get out of that trap? By grace. How can we even know what our options are, situation after situation, as King's kids? By the grace of God.

So what's the point? Rely on the grace of God moment by moment today. Believe for it, expect to be surprised by it often, turn "there" each time, and

have fun jumping in and splashing around in the pool of power that these wonderful drops of grace provide. Joy and confidence will be your reward. You may even surprise yourself with exuberant rejoicing!

Faith Declarations:

Today by God's grace, I choose to be unreasonably optimistic.

Today by God's grace, I will make decision after decision to please Him.

Today I will choose to jump into and splash around in the pool of grace with rejoicing and confidence.

Journal Directions:

1. When did You, Lord, drop some grace on me that I missed at some point in the last 24 hours, and what can I learn from that?
2. How can I keep myself paying attention so I don't miss the "droplets of grace" that You already have planned for me in the next 24 hours?
3. Whom would You like me to encourage today by sharing how they can rely on grace in small things, and enjoy the joy and confidence that brings?

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WASTED GRACE

by Pastor Theresa Aguilar

*And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain—
2 Corinthians 6:1 (NASB20)*

The multi-faceted grace of God can be mind-boggling. When we lump all the resources and provision of Heaven together, it can be hard to comprehend why so many believers are living ordinary lives. Where is the powerful grace of God? Why don't we see more evidence of it in our everyday lives?

My niece wanted a bike for Christmas. It was a bit out of my budget but riding a bike is important for kids. So I made the investment in a sparkly bike with all the frills a little girl would love. She was so excited. We biked at the university, we biked at the beach, she biked in her driveway, and then she biked no more. It was frustrating to see the gift not used to its potential and that gift experience impacted my willingness to invest in more expensive gifts for my nieces. Why? Because I gave her what she wanted - a gift with the potential for hours of fun, long rides of fun and short bursts of fun, family outings of fun, and solitary time of fun - but she didn't use it; so much wasted potential.

This event reminds me so much of the grace of God in our lives as believers. Look at what Paul writes, "we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain." How is this possible? By asking for it, then not using it! When we ask God for grace... we receive it! God's ability is right there with you in the trial, in the

need, in the mess of the moment to empower you to do what He asks you to do. God's grace is there for the difficult conversations and the bold evangelism, for the sacrifices required and the favor desired. When we ask, God answers! That's His part; He gives us grace.

Our part is to *do*, to step out in faith and take action! God's grace on us and in us without the corresponding action of putting the grace to work is dangerous. Why would God continue to supply grace when we refuse to use it? It is *wasted grace*, a gift given but not used. We must put the power and resources of Heaven made available to us to work or there could be negative consequences. Jesus told stories of those who did nothing with the provision given to them, and when the day of reckoning came, they had to give an account for what they did with the grace made available.

Why don't we see more evidence of grace in our everyday lives? Simple, we receive it in vain. We ask but don't put it to work. We accept the gift and talk ourselves out of the action. We doubt God has provided the grace needed. But "the just walk by faith and not sight!" (2 Corinthians 5:7) When you pray for grace, believe you have received it, then take a leap of faith! Watch as the grace of God empowers you to do what He has asked you to do.

Prayer:

Ask God to show you where you have asked for His grace and not acted on it. Where might there be wasted grace in your life? When He shows you, repent for not acting on the grace God provided. Receive His forgiveness. Now ask what He would have you to do now in that situation.

Journal Directions:

1. Write about a time when God gave you grace and you acted on it. What was the result?
2. Write about a time when God gave you grace that you wasted. What could have resulted instead of the outcome you had to live through?
3. Where do you need to ask for grace right now for today? What will you do with the grace you are receiving today?

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GRACE FOR RECONCILIATION

by Pastor Steve Kobernik

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)

43 years ago, a few days after our 13th Christmas, Linda took our three young daughters and moved out of the parsonage to end our marriage.

Without realizing it, success in ministry had become my god. The church which I pastored was growing and we had added a full-time minister of youth and evangelism. I had also taken on responsibilities which took me away from home, to climb the leadership ladder in my large denomination.

I was working another 60 to 70 hours each week when I was home, ignoring the needs of my wife and children. Linda appeared to be so efficient and effective as a mother that she could do everything needed in the home. After years of being a "single mom with a whirlwind husband", she realized that she was lonely, physically ill, and wearing herself out to help me succeed. She got sick of it and "pulled the plug."

I had been so self-engrossed that I was completely clueless of her pain, and suddenly fell from "ministerial success" to complete failure as a husband. For two weeks I was a blubbering mess. But while the devil was trying to destroy me, the Holy Spirit brought the *grace of hope*. As I approached the "throne of

grace" in complete brokenness, He showed me a promise, "Love (agapē) never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:8a); and a command, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). Somehow I knew that *through* was better than *out*.

The Holy Spirit then brought the *grace of godly sorrow* that broke my heart, worked deep repentance in me, and brought a willingness to humble myself before God, and before Linda in order to seek her forgiveness. But she wouldn't have it. I had wounded her too deeply, and she had reasons to believe I would never change. So, I needed to meet twice with her divorce attorney as the days of separation turned into weeks and months.

But rather than quitting, I pressed into God and received *grace to approach His throne of grace* with fearless confidence and cheerful courage for reconciliation. In that place I also found the *grace of faith* that each weekly meeting with our daughters would give me another opportunity to demonstrate to God and to myself that I was acting out of self-sacrificial love for Linda. Even though her defense mechanisms stayed strong week after week, I was encouraged to see myself changing and improving in the simplest and most important labor of agapē love.

Finally, she let God break her heart as He had broken mine, and my family moved back into the parsonage with me—not because she wanted to, but because she was genuinely looking for God's best plan for herself and our children.

I now had to approach God's throne for the *grace to*

persevere in the new energy I now needed for daily and hourly selfless love, knowing I was on “probation”, and God gave me grace after grace. We both made mistakes, of course, so it took another 6-8 months to actually become comfortable with each other, and walk out our “new norm” of godly attitudes and behavior patterns.

Last August we celebrated the power of agapē love and God's throne of grace, on our 55th wedding anniversary! We don't know any couple more deeply in love than we are.

Prayer:

God, help me to recognize that you designed marriage and other godly relationships so we could grow up before we grow old, and to take hold of Your grace to use our marriage and relational trials as opportunities to become more like You.

Journal Directions:

1. Identify and write about a discomfort in your marriage, or any significant relationship, that could become a crisis if you don't find hope and faith at God's throne of grace for the change(s) you need to make. Purpose to practice the five graces highlighted in italics in this article.
2. Do the same about any significant relationship you have that needs reconciliation. Don't try to “dig something up;” if this is a God assignment, you will easily know right away. If there is anything you have done wrong that you haven't sought forgiveness for, ask God to show you how

1. to confess your sin and ask forgiveness without implying blame on their part.
2. Expect the ideas of where God wants you to seek wisdom and help, to be words of wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Write them down and act on them.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit if there is someone you care about who needs grace for reconciliation in a bad relationship. Pray for them, the five graces highlighted in this article. Journal their names and that you are praying for them.

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GRACE FOR YOUR CALLING

by Pastor Bryan Schultze

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; 14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

1Timothy 1:12-14 (NASB)

I love how in verse 12, Paul is preparing the heart and mind of Timothy for the call that was placed on Timothy's life. In the natural, this job was too big. Timothy was too young and did not have the experience. But here Paul is telling him in effect, "Before we get into what God has called you to, Timothy, and you start to struggle with the weight of this call and you start to see this job as too big for you, I need you to know that in the natural, the call on my life is too big for me too. If it wasn't for His strength, His ability, His grace on my life, I would not be able to do it, nor was I deserving."

Let's start off with understanding that if we have received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are called. This goes back to the Great Commission (Mark 16:15). We are all called to be full-time ministers. And if we are called, then He has considered us faithful. We can all look back at our past lives and make up excuses on why we cannot be used by God. When I think about myself – former drug addict, been to jail, battles with anger and

depression— I did a really good job at messing up my life. However, He considered me faithful and put me into service. It wasn't because I was deserving, it was because of His mercy, He considered me.

So now that we know we are put into service, we need to realize that we are never placed into service without being equipped for the battle that's ahead. God is telling us, "Hey, I have called you, and now with My grace, I have equipped you, and the grace I equipped you with is more than abundant to get the job done." Remember, grace is His power in us, to do what His Word demands of us. It's His ability to get the job done on our behalf, when we can't do it. And we activate His grace with faith and love, which again are found in Christ. When we are doing what He said, we can know that His grace is sufficient to get the job done. All we have to do is trust Him, and keep on, keeping on.

In the book of Judges chapter 6, Gideon was told how he was going to be used by God to save Israel out of Midian's hand. And his response was, "My clan is the weakest, and not only that, I am the least in my family." So, what did the Lord answer? "I will be with you..." And in chapter 7, "Just for fun, your army will only be 300 men." He basically said, what we have to remember, is that it is never about our ability, but it's all about our obedience. When we are obedient, when we are in faith, when we are operating in love, His grace is activated.

Action:

Is there something God has asked you to do that you have not done because you didn't think you had the

ability to do it? Today, take the first step in faith, in love, and in obedience to do what God has asked us to do. Spend some time with God in repentance and move forward with what He has charged you to do.

Journal Directions:

1. List the assignments God has been placing on your heart that have seemed too big, or that you have yet to start.
2. Spend time with God, and come up with the practical things you can do to begin to move forward with the assignments He has given you and write those down.
3. Make a timeline of when to move forward with these assignments from God and keep yourself accountable.
4. Read Matthew 14:28-29, then step out of the boat.

[illegible]

THE WORD OF HIS GRACE

by Pastor Joseph Valcarcel

Now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
Acts 20:32 (NIV)

Now on his way to Jerusalem, having come to the end of his third missionary journey, Paul the apostle finds himself being warned by the Holy Spirit that chains and suffering await him. Paul himself had concluded that perhaps he would die in Jerusalem and so begins to bid farewell to his converts in Christ (Acts 20:25). In response, many who loved Paul began weeping and pleading that he stay away from Jerusalem. Paul however, was determined to go.

All of us can relate what a heart wrenching moment this must have been. But more importantly, Paul understood that if he was coming to the end of his life, it was imperative he leave those he loved with something that would guarantee their success when he was gone.

Up until that time Paul played a central role in the lives of the believers by helping them to flourish in their relationship with God, understand what God's will was for their lives, and overcome the challenges they faced. In Paul's absence, those same needs and challenges would persist (Acts 20:28-29). Where would these believers go? What would they do? Who would they turn to in their time of need? It's with this understanding we should read his words to them in Acts 20:32. Please read them again.

At the end of the day, it doesn't matter what challenges you face, what you may feel you don't understand, who may be against you, or what needs you have. God's grace is sufficient to ensure your survival and victory.

Paul learned earlier on, that it wasn't his own strength or weaknesses that determined the final outcome of his endeavors. God's grace would be the deciding factor and God's grace was more than enough to get the job done on his behalf.

"And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Hallelujah, that's great news!

All of this begs the question: "Where do I access this grace?" We read that God's Word isn't just God's word. Paul described it as the Word of His grace. In other words, it's the Word of God contained in the pages of Scripture that are full of grace and will deliver God's grace to your life. It is the Word of God that will build you up strong and cause you to lay hold of the possessions that rightly belong to you in Christ Jesus. It's the word of His grace that will ensure the outcome that you desire, and that God has for you.

"For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of the soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I thank You that Your Word has great power, and will bring me Your grace for every part of my life. I thank You that it will build me up strong so that I overcome each challenge I face. I commit myself to You and to Your Word in total surrender and submission. I ask that You would give me understanding as I read the pages of Scripture and that I would come to know You in a deeper and more intimate way.

Journal Directions:

1. Find a Bible devotional or choose a book of the Bible you can turn to each morning before starting your day and set aside that time as a sacred, non-negotiable time so God's grace is never limited or interrupted in your daily life.
2. Enter into your journal which devotional or book of the Bible you will be reading through, what time and place each day, and why you chose that time.

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GRACE THROUGH YOU

by Pastor Steve Kobernik

"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

John 1:17

Every committed follower of Jesus will do two things: get to know God intimately, and learn to live so God's grace comes through them. These are foundational for living a life like Jesus.

So, what do we know about the nature and character of God?

(Read Psalm 89:14)

The word 'lovingkindness,' or in some translations 'mercy,' is a Hebrew word that means 'loyal covenant keeping love'. It shows us that God is faithful to keep His promises no matter what obstacles stand in our way. God's love brings light to darkness, and His supernatural power is ready to overwhelm every enemy opposing His good and perfect will. God works this loyal covenant love in and through His covenant people; that's you and me!

The word 'grace' in John 1:17 also reflects the 'loyal covenant keeping love' of God that empowers us to live for Him because of Jesus! This means we live with loyalty to God, faithfully acting on God's word. This is the life that God desires for His children. If you're not there yet, don't worry, God is not done with you. His

grace is available to help you live like Jesus. It will take partnering your faith with your actions to get there.

Jesus gives us a pattern for the type of life He wants us to live. He showed us how grace and truth should be expressed through a person. When He started His ministry He read from the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 61 which states that the Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good news to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery to sight to the blind, set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Jesus went on to do all these things through His ministry.

It was always God's desire that Jesus' followers would do these same things. Jesus gave authority to the disciples, and eventually the church, to preach the gospel and do supernatural things - now it's our turn.

I hope you are excited about where you come into this remarkable storyline. God keeping His promises to heal, rebuild and offer forgiveness are graces that come through dedicated followers of Jesus and can come through you now!

"In the evening after His resurrection Jesus appeared to His disciples and told them, 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you'" (John. 20:21 NIV). It was important to Jesus that His grace come through all of His followers. So, in His last words to His 11 apostles, Jesus gave this command:

"Go and make disciples...baptizing them...and

teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV).

Prayer:

Thank You, Jesus, for trusting me to represent You and the Father by sending Your Holy Spirit to flow through me by the power of Your grace. Help me to forgive and love those around me the way You love and forgive. By Your power and authority I will do miracles in Your name. Amen.

Journal Directions:

1. How am I getting to know God intimately in this season of my life?
2. Write about one or two times you have allowed a grace of God to flow through to another person. If none, write a prayer letting God know you are ready to be a vessel of His grace.
3. Write about one or two of Jesus' graces that seldom or never come through you, but you would like them to, and ask Him for them.

[illegible]

GOD'S GRACE IN HIS PROVISION

by Adam Ewert

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV)

When I was single I knew I wanted to get married but it seemed impossible to find a good Christian woman that I liked. First of all I wasn't enthusiastic about socializing let alone talking to the opposite sex. I decided to take my desire and need to God, because I knew I couldn't do it on my own. I sat down with God and made a list of every characteristic and feature I wanted in my future wife. I asked big and didn't leave anything out.

God's grace comes in our asking. Why do we need to ask? Doesn't the Bible say that God already knows what we need before we even ask Him (Matthew 6:8 NIV)? When we ask it humbles our hearts to say, "God, I can't do it without you; I need your help." It focuses our thoughts on God's ability to come along side us and provide our need. God wants to do life with us. He wants to walk and talk with us daily. Asking gets us to communicate with God just as a child communicates with their father. Asking with childlike faith produces the Father's provision.

God's grace comes in our seeking. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33 NKJV).

When we diligently seek we are fixing our eyes on what we are looking for. When we seek His kingdom it gives us perspective of what truly matters in life. "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Colossians 3:2 NIV). Earthly things are temporary and will pass away, but Godly things are eternal. When we seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness, it magnifies God's glory and gets our attention on His Word, His promises, His grace and His provision in our lives.

God's grace comes in our knocking. Jesus gives us this example in Luke 11:5-8 (NLT), "Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.' And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.' But I tell you this—though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence."

Sometimes we need to keep knocking with our prayers. Consistently asking God what we need until we receive it.

Every day for 5 years I asked God to bless me with a wife. I diligently lifted my list of what I wanted in a wife up to Him, asking, seeking and knocking. God answered my prayers by connecting me with a beautiful girl from South Africa through online dating.

He supernaturally connected two people from across

the world and gave me everything I asked for and more. Today I have been married for 13 years to the most amazing Proverbs 31 woman I could have ever asked for! His grace is big enough to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think!

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You that You know what I need before I even ask.

Thank You that I can come to You with all my needs, wants and desires. Forgive me when I try and do it on my own and forget to put You first. I seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness and ask for your will to be done in my life. Thank You for providing all of my need according to Your riches in glory by Christ Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Journal Directions:

1. What have you been trying to do on your own that you need to ask God for help with?
2. What are your needs, wants, and desires spiritually, physically and financially? Write them down now, and take time to ask Him for each one.
3. Are there any prayers that you have given up asking God for because He didn't answer them yet? Will you continue to ask God until He answers?

[illegible]

GRACE TO FINISH

Pastor Joel Alvarado

From [Christ's] fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

John 1:16 (ESV & NASB)

When it comes to God's grace there is an abundance of scripture, as well as definitions in the Bible to understand God's grace. John 1:16 in the NIV says, "Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given." The Amplified Bible translates John 1:16 this way: "Out of His fullness [the superabundance of His grace and truth] we have all received grace upon grace [spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing, favor upon favor, and gift heaped upon gift]."

What's abundantly clear is that, when we come to Christ, He gives out grace in heaping, bountiful ways.

Something happened to me over the Christmas holiday, that wasn't that spiritual but helped me to understand this concept of "grace upon grace" a little more clearly. I decided to do some Christmas wrapping, even though I am far from the best at wrapping gifts. I am amazed at how the professionals at gift wrapping stations in the mall do their creative handiwork. With all the sharp folded corners and beautiful bows and ribbons—all done so effortlessly. I mess it up when I try to emulate those "professional wrappers," and I don't mean the kind you listen to on the radio. I mean a real professional gift wrapper, who has a "real job".

Back to my story... I decided to wrap some gifts, so I gathered all the things necessary for the job. I set the

tone with Christmas music in the background and grabbed all the gift-wrapping paper, name tags, and bows I could find from last year's left-over stock. I found scissors and did not forget the gift-wrapping tape. As I began, I found a broken tape dispenser with tape still on the roll. I said to myself, "Let me use this tape dispenser first and when I run out which should be soon, I will use the newer tape dispenser." The new one wouldn't require as much effort to use as the broken one because the old one required me to hand-cut piece by piece. And since it was used, how much tape could it have anyway? I thought that I would quickly run out of tape, for sure. To my amazement, with this broken tape dispenser, that at first glance was going to be tossed out because it was broken, I was able to wrap five gifts, and put bows and ribbons on another three more gifts! That got me thinking that this was a roll of tape that wouldn't run out. It kept on giving me enough tape to finish my gift-wrapping job, gift after gift.

So too is the "*grace upon grace*" in the scripture that you just read. We have all received, "*grace upon grace*" (John 1:16), and "*God's grace,*" and "*out of His fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given,*" which never runs out! As a matter of fact His grace completes what it starts, and finishes what it started in you.

Philippians 1:6 (NLT) states, "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."

Prayer:

Today Lord, please let your grace that is limitless and endless, help me to overcome any concern that I might have or any job or challenge where I am in need. Help me to remember Your grace and know that there is enough grace upon grace, of Your fullness that never runs out, to finish well. In Jesus' name, amen.

Journal Directions:

1. Where is an area that you need more of His abundant Grace?
2. What bountiful ways can you use to express God's grace to others?

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GRACE FOR SERVING

by Pastor Mike Bryan

Even before I was born, the Lord God chose me to serve him and to lead back the people of Israel. So, the Lord has honored me and made me strong.
Isaiah 59:5 (CEV)

Let me ask you a question... Do you know why you're here?

When it comes to God's will for your life, He decides it and you discover it. It's not something you can change, a topic for debate, or a plan you get to have a say in. You walk out the special grace He has placed within you to do what He has put you here to do! He's given you gifts and talents to use during your time on the earth. One way to help understand, in the language of today, is to think of your body as a computer containing a hard drive that has been programmed by God Himself before it was ever placed inside the computer. Each one of us has to discover (or decipher) how to access that hard drive, in order to make our computer work to its full potential and accomplish its purpose.

The truth is, you can miss God's will and be miserable, or you can do things His way and experience "glorious, inexpressible joy". The choice is yours. You may say, "But I don't know what God's will and purpose is for my life." To you I would say to pray this way:

Prayer:

Father, I'm tired of going through my life with no real purpose because it brings no glory to You. You created every living thing, including me, that they may bring you pleasure. I see in Revelation 4:11 that, "You made all things. They were made and have life because You wanted it that way." I know that you have a specific job for me to do. Your Word says You formed me in the womb to be your servant. I'm getting lots of input from other people, but I need to know the path You have chosen for me. Help me to stop ignoring and minimizing the gifts and talents You have invested in me; acting like they're of no significance. I know we are all called to serve, and that You give us the special grace we need to do so!

I need Your help, Your grace, to discern who, where, when, and how I should serve. I want to do what You have called me to do and not be sidetracked by wrong priorities, busywork, or other people's desires and demands. At the end of my life, I want to be able to look back and say like Jesus did, "I brought glory to you here on the earth by completing the work You told me to do." (See John 17:4 NLT).

I want to hear these words come from my Master's mouth:

"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." (See Matthew 25:21)

I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Journal Directions:

1. Reflecting upon your desire to serve, do you have a particular interest that you are naturally drawn to (i.e. music, teaching, building, art)? This could be what you are “graced” to do.
2. What areas of service are you definitely not graced to do?
3. If the Holy Spirit prompted you to do something that you don't feel naturally graced to do, would you be willing to step out in faith, trusting God to give the grace to do it? Is there something you are fearful to trust Him with?

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GRACE FOR STRENGTH

by Pastor Michelle Balderas

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

2 Corinthians 12:9a (NKJV)

This past October 2023, I had my first triathlon experience. The idea of competing in a triathlon had been a goal of mine for years. A dear friend of mine encouraged me to sign up so I figured, "why not, I'm not getting any younger."

I knew this would be quite the challenge since I wasn't a strong swimmer and had a healthy respect for the ocean. By respect, I mean fear. I trained steadily for four months when life suddenly became overwhelmingly busy for me, so much so that I had to place my training "on hold." That hold went from days, to weeks, and I eventually made the decision to drop out. It was a difficult decision as I had felt like I let both my friend and myself down.

With a week to go before the big race my wonderful and encouraging friend reached out to me and said, "I think you could do it!" I thought to myself, "there is no way!" I hadn't been training for the past six months. As I sought the Lord through prayer, I just couldn't kick the desire to finish what we had started. With days before the race, I challenged myself to complete a "trial run." To my surprise I did it, completely out of breath and much slower on my time, but I did it. The only thing that was missing was that I had yet to train in the ocean. Scared, intimidated, excited, yet nervous all at the same time I gave my friend my "yes."

As I stood that morning looking at the vast ocean, everything in me started to doubt myself. I wanted to give up, but my resolve was bigger than my fear. I took one look around and couldn't help but get emotional. To my right was my friend who didn't let me give up on my dream and in the crowd were my family and friends who believed in me.

Quietly I sought God and asked Him for His strength — strength to endure, strength to see this through, strength to overcome. Moments later the sound of the starting horn echoed through the air. This was it! We ran and plunged into the ocean. The reality of the ocean was a shock to my system. I was surrounded by a sea of splashing arms and legs and was taking in an insurmountable amount of salt water due to my lack of experience. The view of the vast ocean and the goal set before me left me feeling overwhelmed. Exasperated, a nearby lifeguard asked me, "are you okay?" I replied, "no." He asked, "do you need help?" Fighting back the tears I replied, "I can't quit, my family and friends are here!"

It was at that moment that I began to pray asking God to give me the strength to see this through. Rocked by the lapping waves of the ocean with quite a way to go I stopped relying on my own strength and found myself floating in God's grace. It was God's grace who carried me through the depths of the ocean when I couldn't and It was only by His grace that I crossed the finish line that day and became a Triathlete.

Prayer:

Lord, I thank You that in my weakness You are strong. Whether I'm in the depths of the sea and the wind and the waves surround me or the waters of my life are still and clear, Your grace is always sufficient. Thank you, Lord, for empowering me, for walking beside me, and working through me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Journal Directions:

1. Briefly share a situation in which you needed supernatural strength to help you overcome what seemed to be an impossible situation.
2. What are you believing God for that won't happen unless He gets involved in it?
3. Like my family and friends were to me, how can you be an extension of God's grace to someone else?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SHOUTS OF GRACE

by Senior Pastor Dan Roth

...This [is] the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, Says the LORD of hosts. 7 Who [are] you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel [you shall become] a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of, 'Grace! Grace!' to it."
Zechariah 4:6-7 (NKJV)

In this final day of our exciting journey in looking at the multifaceted grace of God, we are finishing where we started. The scripture says that Zerubbabel will accomplish God's design and desire with shouts of grace. But wait...we may have missed something. If you look back at the scripture it is not just shouts of 'grace,' but 'grace, grace...' There is a powerful truth hidden here. Any time we see something repeated in the Scripture we should pay attention. God is emphasizing something He wants us to see and experience.

Before we define what this means, let's think for a moment about how we talk in our present day. Have you ever heard people talking and they repeated a word in a sentence? Maybe they said something like, "It is so nice you have to say it twice!" Or you might have heard people talking about a movie where the couple kissed and someone said, "Was it just a kiss or was it a kiss, kiss?!"

It sounds silly but if you think back, you may have examples of this from your own life. Some people

would say "I didn't go *shopping, shopping...* just *shopping.*" To some that may be confusing, but really they are emphasizing what they are saying. On the one hand, in our last example, there is a shopping they really like. Clothes shopping or car shopping could be this way for some. But there is another type of shopping that people don't like; shopping for insurance and groceries could be this type of shopping.

In the same way that we emphasize what we are saying, God Himself repeats the word "grace" here to escalate it to an even higher level. He wants to catch our attention so we will picture what can happen when we humble ourselves, and His extraordinary power is released for us. Not only can we receive "ordinary" grace, as wonderful as that is, but there is "grace, grace" for especially challenging situations. God doubles down on the power that He releases into our lives. That means it is a *multiplied grace!*

Your future is as bright as your insight into the many different ways that God is prepared to release His multifaceted grace in your life. Find the promises in God's word that fit your circumstances. Meditate on them in His presence until you imagine them being fulfilled. Then thank and praise Him for His "grace, grace." The possibilities are as vast as God is strong. You can't do life on your own. Humble yourself in God's sight and call on Him for the grace you need.

Faith Declaration:

I have the grace of God. It is powerful and effective in my life and works in all areas. Whatever may come, I am not afraid. I have the Divine supply of the power I need. I speak shouts of "grace, grace!"

Journal Directions:

1. What could I do with multiplied grace?
2. How many people can I reach with the good news of the Gospel of Grace?
3. How will my home, job, or community look different as I believe for grace everywhere I go?
4. What will be the ongoing impact that I leave for generations, as "grace, grace" characterizes my daily life?

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