

Celebrating Grace

By the WGUSA Board of Directors



One of the joys of being an insider in the ministry of Women of Grace USA is getting to hear how God is calling and equipping women for the task of going into the world and making disciples. It has been a joy to meet some of you and hear your stories.

As we celebrate Christ's birth and the year draws to a close, our board is grateful for your prayers and encouragement. For some, this has been a very challenging year. However, we are focusing on making this season a celebration of grace, and wanted to share a few glimpses of what God's amazing grace has taught us this year.

Viki Rife—Executive Director

It hasn't always been easy to recognize God's grace in the challenges of this past year. When I focus on a Celebration of Grace, however, it's obvious that every cloud has been lined with shimmers of grace. A recent example was the day my dad, who doesn't always know who I am, looked me in the eye with a pleased smile and said, "God has been good to our family, hasn't He?" I celebrated the grace that even though Dad may not know me, he still has amazing clarity about who his God is. I have often found myself celebrating the wonderful friendships God has given me over the years, as well as the new friends I've been privileged to get to know this year. When I take time to celebrate grace, I see that it has been shining throughout the year.

Cindy Shuler—Director of Operations

In October I had the privilege of traveling to Uganda with a team from our church. We loved on the orphans, celebrated the staff who faithfully care for them and removed chiggers from the feet of children at a village school. We worked alongside the Sonrise Ministries staff whose vision and faith inspired us. Taxis and Bodas (motorcycles) laden with people and supplies monopolized the roadways. Posho, rice and beans were the staple at nearly every meal. Our white skin did not go unnoticed and swarms of children grasped for our hands everywhere we went. However, in contrast to the many cultural differences, one thing stood out. We are family. This Christmas I'm celebrating the grace that unites us as the body of Christ.

Nicole Miller—Director of Girls' Ministries

How has God gifted you and how can you use that to impact the lives of girls? I asked a group of women who were gathered to dream and pray about the Sisters Mentoring with a Mission organization. As we took a spiritual gift test I was blown away to see just how wide a spectrum of talents we had in the group. I shouldn't have been surprised. I have been praying for these ladies for at least 5 years! As I looked around this group I thought "this is what it's all about. These ladies right here and the numerous girls we will have the chance to impact; it is all about them." This past year the idea of legacy has resonated deep in my soul

Over the course of the year God brought me face to face with some pretty big "what ifs." One of those has been, "What if I never own a home of my own." It may seem like a small thing to most people but after spending years in undergraduate and graduate school only to go into ministry, the numbers in the bank don't look quite as good as they could. I thought purchasing a space of my own would never be possible. Throughout the last year God brought me to a place of contentment over this issue, for even the Son of God didn't have a home of His own once He began ministry. What was good enough for Jesus is more than good enough for me. This fall I was able to purchase a home, and am convinced this would not have happened but for the grace of God. It is such a small thing, owning a home, but for me it is huge. My own home means I can use my gift of hospitality and welcome people into my space. It means that I can invite ministry teams into my home. I have the chance to invite the girls to whom I minister over for movie night! Through His grace God brought me to a point of contentment and connection with Him in my circumstance, then moved me to a place of incredible blessing.

Cathy Simms—Recording Secretary

"And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you" 2 Corinthians 9:14 I love this verse that describes the surpassing grace we have that indwells every believer. It is unlimited and sufficient for every need. It is sufficient for *my* every need. Over this past year there have been things that I could plan, but other things that I had no control over. I walked through uncertainty as I watched my mother at the age of almost 90 go through hip surgery and weeks of recovery after falling in her nursing home. We prayed along with our son and his wife about moving to a new state to help with a church plant because they felt this was a step of faith God was asking them to make. We prayed along with our other son and his wife, who live in California, about a full-time job after seminary. God provided a great Bible teaching position at the Christian high school he had been subbing at. God also provided first homes for both families, which mean roots are being established in places not close to "me." I have to admit that I had selfish moments thinking of events and family time that will never happen, but I also have to admit that I am thankful God has led them where He wants them and I know that He will use them and their families to point others to Jesus! This Christmas I am thankful for God's grace...His indescribable gift to me!

Pat Ashcraft—Director of Advancement

The months between September 2016 and September 2017 were challenging ones for my husband and me. During that time we were in the hospital five times between us. We both had surgery and we both dealt with life-threatening illnesses. My husband, Ron, developed a saddle clot between his heart and lungs and was miraculously kept alive by the great team in the ICU. I will always be thankful for those who cared for Ron. Due to my compromised immune system from an autoimmune illness, I managed to get Legionnaires pneumonia. I was never so sick in my life. But with five days in the hospital and great care and lots antibiotics, I recovered rather quickly. Through all this, God's grace was greatly demonstrated. Family, neighbors and our beloved church family all came together to care for us. Our needs were supplied in various ways. Friends brought in meals. Neighbors took care of our grass in the summer and our sidewalks in the snowy winter. Family made sure I was cared for after my surgery while Ron was in the hospital. Some even came from other states to cover needs that we had. God pleasantly surprises me with the ways He graciously provides for our needs. I wish I could say that I never got upset or frustrated. But even in those times, I knew God was with us and would shower His grace on us.

Sue Knight—Director of Spiritual Life

Christmas -- what a joyful time to reflect on and celebrate God's grace to me throughout 2017. There is no beginning and truly no end to the way that He has seen me through a time in my life where I felt I was continually drowning in a sea of unasked-for pressure; a pressure that kept me from the freedom of service and spiritual depth I longed for. I wanted to retire, but anxiety over what the financial picture of that might look like held me captive with fear and apprehension. Looking back, I now see that at times I was my own worst enemy because I was so caught up in working out the details of my future. He was calling me to trust Him with my future and I still wanted to maintain control! I am so grateful that His grace has accorded me the understanding that He holds my very life in His hands and as I relinquish to His will, He will take care of the details. I celebrate His grace in that His love (and patience) never fails to sustain me.

Rosa Muñoz—Director of Ethnic Ministries

As this year is ending, I celebrate God's amazing grace and mercy in how God has been there for my family, friends and in my personal life. During this year I have learned to spend more time in Scripture, sensitive to the Holy Spirit's guidance; to be prepared in season and out of season. Prayer has been a greater spiritual discipline in my life, along with awareness that God is always attentive to my prayers. Twice this year my husband Jesus Munoz suffered a bloodstream infection due to a medical procedure and almost died. As you imagine, life is precious, and I did not want to lose my husband. It was the moment where my faith grew stronger and I saw God's grace and mercy in my husband's recovery. I celebrate this Christmas my husband's life and the birthday of My Savior Jesus Christ.

Jennifer Avey—Director of Leadership Development

My experience of grace has deepened this year as we've stepped into starting a church. God's grace poured out in my weakness. The schedule is constant, the disappointments can threaten to wash away the victories, and the feeling that I'm insufficient is suffocating at times. But day after day, encounter after encounter, God's grace is seen. HIS sufficiency is the anchor. HIS victory is the hope. HIS love and mercy are constant. HIS grace is more than enough and holds me every moment.

From the team at Women of Grace USA: May the Lord Jesus Christ bless your life and family this Christmas and in the coming year!