

Grace Is



A practical guide to God's love

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To Amanda

Thanks for walking with me on this journey.

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Part I: The Brokenness

Rebel.

Addict.

Fallen.

Depraved.

Guilty.

Words that describe everyone of us.

Sinners.

Does this sound too harsh?

To some degree we all know it's true.

There is a **brokenness** in the world, and we are all part of it.

Our families are broken.

Our marriages are broken.

Our heroes are broken.

Our churches are broken.

We are broken.

But sinner's have a manifesto.

A creed.

A hope.

The sinner's manifesto can be summed up in one word.

Grace.

Part II: What is Grace?

The word is used all of the time.

Ever borrow money to buy new furniture? You probably had a “*grace period*” built into the repayment plan.

We say *grace* before we eat.

We describe individuals that are generous and caring as being *gracious*.

Those who have lost favor with someone, such as a credit card company, are said to have *“fallen from grace.”*

Amazing Grace has been sung at every funeral I have ever been to.

The rallying cry of our faith is that we are *“saved by grace through faith.”*

Some of us (me) name our daughters *Grace.*

But what do we really mean by the word *grace*?

What does it actually do?

Does it play any significant role in our lives?

How do we respond to it?

Understanding *grace* is critical to understanding the Christian faith.

Everything we believe,

Everything we *hope* for,

Everything that we become,

Hinges on this one idea.

Unfortunately most of us don't think about it that much.

We go to church. We sing. We pray.

We go home.

We know a “**churchy**” definition we learned in Sunday School that is easy to recite, but once we leave the pew it means very little.

Some of us never even make it to church.

Either way, grace is forgotten.

But grace is so much more.

It is real. It is practical.

We need it. Every day.

And when we peel off the “churchy” definitions and the religious undertones, then we can actually experience what

“Grace Is.”

Part III: Grace Is

Grace is Love

By definition *grace* is the unmerited, unchanging love that God shows toward us.

Us as in everyone. You included.

I know that I said I would avoid sounding like a theology textbook, but bear with me.

We have to define this kind of love because we have never experienced anything like it.

We write *love stories* and recite poems.

We date.

We marry.

But we also file for divorce.

Our experience of love is distorted by **the brokenness**. It is dependent on two people to make it work.

We do not comprehend the unconditional love of grace.

God's love is so different that John tells us that *God is love.*

It is who he is.

And he is perfect. Without sin. Without **brokenness.**

And when he loves in a way that is without sin, *grace happens.*

God loves us.

We do not deserve it.

We have not earned it.

He chooses to love us not because we are lovable or religious, but because *he is good.*

Grace is our true hope for a relationship *with God*.

Without this love, we have no hope. We might as well give up now.

Living in grace will change our perspective.

When we experience this love, we can begin to love others in the same way. We can love those who do not deserve it.

Without condition. Without merit.

Grace will teach us to love our enemies.

It will teach us to love ourselves.

Grace is free

In a world where there is no such thing as a free meal, I don't blame you for being skeptical. Why would anyone give us a gift that **we do not deserve?**

The reason is simple.

This is the only way we can hope to receive it.

There is a part of us that hates this idea.

The idea that we aren't lovable. That we are unable to be good enough for God. That we are unable to earn his affection.

So we make up rules and work hard to keep them in an effort to get God to like us.

It's really just a **smoke screen** to cover up what we really are. The rules are an attempt to make us look good so we can hide the true extent of our **brokenness**.

We have to accept that our **brokenness** is so pervasive that even the good we do is tainted with sin.

We find forgiveness not because of something we say. Not because of something we believe. And certainly not because of something we do.

It is only because *God is good*. And because God is love.

And he chooses to forgive us.

We are loved because he chooses to love us.

So quit trying to earn God's favor.

Stop trying to clean yourself up.

It is time to take off the costume you are using to hide your shame and sin and brokenness.

It is time to accept his *love and forgiveness* with empty hands.

Grace is open

Some confuse grace with religion. The two are very different. **Religion** is like a country club.

Exclusive.

Closed.

For members only.

You have to know someone to get in.

Grace is the exact opposite.

There are no memberships dues.

You don't need to fill out an application.

There are no interviews to lie your way through.

Worried that you might not fit in? Don't. Grace is only given to people like you.

Sinners.

Grace does not care who your parents are. It does not care about what part of town you live in. It has no interest in the color of your skin.

Grace is for every single person on the planet.

Everyone.

Especially *you.*

Grace is categorical

When you meet people for the first time do you size them up in the first 30 seconds of your interaction?

Acceptable and **not acceptable.**

Smart and **Stupid.**

Attractive and **ugly.**

Mac user and **PC** user.

Righteous and **sinner.**

Grace has two categories as well.

Sinners who have *received it* and sinners who still **need it**.

The sinner part is the same for *all of us*.

Some of us think we fit into a third category, **the righteous**.

Grace refuses to acknowledge this group because it only exists in our own minds. It is a product of our religious pride.

It's really just another smoke screen.

No one can earn God's approval. Not even those who are religious. Not even those who are good.

The sooner you get over the idea that you deserve grace, the *sooner* you will be able to receive and enjoy it.

Grace is a second chance

Ever feel like you really blew it?

Maybe you **promised God** that your life would be different.

Maybe you promised your spouse or your kids or your friends that you would change.

Maybe you promised yourself.

The world is littered with **unkept promises** and broken resolutions.

You hoped it might be different this time, but you find yourself back in the same **brokenness**. The same patterns.

Worried that you blew it?

You did.

Again.

This is why you need *grace*.

The IRS only gives you one chance to get it right.

An umpire sends you back to the dugout after 3 strikes.

Your boss at work is probably ruthless.

But God is gracious.

Grace is all about second, and third, and fourth, and fifth, and sixth, and ... I think you get the idea.

Grace is dependable

Ever travel to Europe and visit a 1000 year old cathedral?
The building seems to be beyond time itself.

Large.

Constant.

Unchangeable.

But we all know that the building is **rotting**. It experiences decay. One day it will be no more.

Not so with Grace.

It never changes.

Regardless of what we do.

No matter how many times we turn our backs on God.

Despite how little we love him back.

God's grace is *always there*. There is nothing we can do to make him stop loving us.

He will never grow impatient.

He will never turn his back.

He will never give up on you.

Have you ever been afraid that you can't go to God just because he may not be there?

Go.

Grace will always be there.

Grace is liberating

We take pride in our sense of freedom. In many ways we are free, but in many ways we are **slaves**.

As long as there is sin, as long as we take out “low interest loans,” we are held captive.

We are slaves to those that we have a **debt** to.

What are we enslaved to?

Credit card companies.

Mortgages.

Lust.

Ourselves.

Our self-righteous, religious, good deeds.

Our brokenness.

With grace we are completely and totally forgiven our debt. Our sin is taken off the record.

Our hearts are changed.

And then we become *truly free*.

Free from **guilt**.

Free from the **demands of the law**.

Free from having to try to earn favor from God.

We experience a love that demands nothing from us in return.

We are free to *love others* as we have been loved.

Are you ready to be free?

For the first time in your life, truly free?

Then *surrender* yourself completely to God's love.

Grace is patient

Our mistakes and sins and failures come at a cost. We hurt ourselves and those around us when we fall short.

Sometimes we get off track.

Even when we **lose sight** of where we should go and who we should be.

Even when when it seems that **the brokenness** is too much to ever overcome.

Grace will wait patiently *for us*.

When we return, just as the prodigal son did, grace asks no questions of us.

It demands no explanation.

God stands there with his *arms wide open* waiting patiently for us to come home.

I think its time to run to him, don't you?

Grace is costly

How can it be both free and costly?

It is free to us, but someone had to pay for it. In order for God to offer us grace, Jesus had to step in.

In John 1:14 we are told “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, *full of grace and truth.*”

For us to receive this free gift, God the Son *became man*.
He was tempted just as we are, but he did what we could not.

He lived **without sin**.

And then he took our punishment for us. He accepted the responsibility for our brokenness. Because of his love.

Because of grace, he took our place.

And *grace became free*.

Grace is transforming

Grace takes that which is **ugly** and makes it *beautiful*.

Grace takes **selfish** people and makes them *selfless*.

Grace takes **the brokenness** and makes all things *new*.

Jesus told us that, “He who has forgiven much *loves much.*”

We cannot stare at our God who offers us a love such as this and walk away unchanged.

How can we not love back? How can we not tell others of what we have received? How can we not be willing to go anywhere and do anything for him?

How can we be given so many second chances and not *love him more?*

It might take days or months or years, but there will be *change*. In time we will be like him because we will love him.

We will want to be with him because he wants to be with us.

Grace will make us new and we will know him and *he will know us*.

He will be our God and we will be his people.

Because *Grace Is*, we become:

Loyal.

Free.

Forgiven.

Redeemed.

Righteous.

The *beloved* of God.

Conclusion

I hope that these words met you wherever you are in life.

Grace is for all of us and we all need it.

We all need a love that is unconditional and never fails.

If you hate God and want nothing to do with him, he loves you and wants you to come home.

If you do not believe in his existence, he believes in you, enough that his son would die for you.

If you have made a mess out of your life and cannot fathom that God could ever love you, believe it. He does.

If you have gone to church your whole life and keep all sorts of rules, don't worry. He loves you just as much as he does sinners and offers grace to you as well.

I hope that you benefitted from this practical guide to grace.

As you read it, maybe someone who needs a reminder of God's love came to mind. Consider sharing it with them.

And since everyone feels the brokenness, *please share* this book with everyone.

It's free.

Not just grace, but the book too.

Here are three easy ways for you to share this story of grace.

Twitter

Facebook

Comment at the website

Acknowledgements

A special thanks to those whose words of grace helped me along the way.

Amanda Statton

Tom Pussel

Jeff Goins

Joe Bunting

Andy Barlow

Sarah Cunningham

Bob Goff

Derrick Pullen

About the Author



Jeremy with his daughter,
Grace

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