

GOD'S GIFT OF GRACE: AMAZING

"Grace" has always been such a mysterious word for me. I understand love and joy and gratitude. That's relatively straight forward. But, though I've been a Christian for twenty-five years, I always have to think hard about what grace exactly means. I wish I could feel more at home with the concept. Maybe by talking with you about it, it will come easier to me in the future.

Often I have to go back to a time when I heard a friend explain it to a group of Sunday School children. Yes, I need to hear it in a way a child would understand. My friend told the children that grace is when someone does something kind for you, even though you didn't do anything to deserve it. That's what God gives us. Grace is an undeserved gift of love.

I explored the meaning of grace on the internet and found this at <http://www.explorefaith.org/grace.html>

"... how do we understand, how do we experience grace today? I often think of it in terms of a statement I once heard: "You are accepted." You and I are accepted, fully and totally accepted by God, now, always, without condition, without deserving, without question. To be accepted in this way means to be cherished, to be loved, to be guarded from ultimate evil. It means that who we basically are is valued, honored and respected. It means that we don't have to earn or deserve such care; it is simply there for us, ours as a gift outright. The grace of God is given to us at God's initiative. It is an expression of God's love for us, of God's desire, of God's unconditional acceptance, an expression of the very nature of God's being."

The author Frederick Buechner, in his book *Wishful Thinking*, puts it this way: "The grace of God means something like: Here is your life. You might never have been, but you are because the party wouldn't have been complete without you. Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us. It's for you I created the universe. I love you. There's only one catch. Like any other gift, the gift of grace can be yours only if you'll reach out and take it. Maybe being able to reach out and take it is a gift too."

To reach out and take God's gift of grace takes a certain amount of courage, doesn't it? It means letting go of depending on yourself and trusting God.

- What does all this mean to you? Have you been able to reach out and accept God's gift of grace?
- How have you experienced God's grace in your lives?
- What has God's gift of grace meant to you in terms of living with your mood disorder?

- How did Christ's life illustrate grace?

AN INTERESTING LOOK ABOUT JUSTICE, MERCY AND GRACE I FOUND AT
<http://www.bibletimelines.org/framedgrace.html>)

God's mercy can be compared to the pardon that a governor of a state can give to a guilty prisoner who is facing execution (the punishment of death) for something that he or she actually did. JUSTICE will be served and they will be killed unless the governor has MERCY and pardons the prisoner. But if the governor goes on and gives that guilty prisoner not only a pardon, but also total freedom, a huge mansion to live in, and unlimited resources he has then given that person both MERCY & GRACE.

If we only received JUSTICE from God we all would be dead because all of us have sinned Romans 3:23, 6:23, and the "*wages of sin is death*", yet God offers us a pardon (MERCY). Jesus died for us so that we could live, but His death can be our "salvation" only if we accept it. Just like the prisoner above, we can turn it down or we can accept this pardon that God offers.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

We only need to accept this gift that God gives us through Jesus.

If we accept the pardon that Jesus offers us, we will not die. But it gets better! Jesus not only forgives us and gives us a life that will never end, He continues by giving us a heavenly home, unlimited resources, and total freedom. That is God's GRACE.

God's Grace is "the power of God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves". And the fact is, we cannot do anything for ourselves. Jesus says, "*...without me ye can do nothing.*" John 15:5

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)