



*Grace goes beyond mercy. Mercy pardons us. Grace woos and weds us.*

## **Q&A FROM GRACE: MORE THAN WE DESERVE, GREATER THAN WE IMAGINE by Max Lucado**

### **Q: What better way to start than with your definition of grace?**

**A:** To put it very simply, grace is God's best idea—it's His decision to ravage a people by love, to rescue passionately, and to restore justly.

### **Q: This isn't the first time you've written about grace. What makes this book different from all that's already been printed?**

**A:** Most books on the topic—including ones I've written—focus on what grace is. While this book covers that, its focus is what grace *does*. How grace changes us. And I'm not just talking about what it means for us in terms of being forgiven and going to heaven, but also what it means for the changes in our hearts and attitudes. Grace is the voice that calls us to change, and then gives us the power to pull it off. Most books on grace miss the "power to pull it off" part. And that's the heart of this book.

### **Q: How does the concept of grace make Christianity different from other world religions?**

**A:** When grace happens, we receive not a nice compliment from God but a new heart. Give your heart to Christ, and he returns the favor. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you" (Ezek. 36:26). For many years I missed this truth. I believed all the other prepositions: Christ *for* me, *with* me, *ahead* of me. And I knew I was working *beside* Christ, *under* Christ, *with* Christ. But I never imagined that Christ was *in* me. No other religion or philosophy makes such a claim. No other movement implies the living presence of its founder *in* his followers. Muhammad does not indwell Muslims. Buddha does not inhabit Buddhists. The Christian is a person in whom Christ is happening.

### **Q: You describe grace as God aggressively moving toward us.**

**A:** Yes. Rather than tell us to change, he creates the change. Do we clean up so he can accept us? No, he accepts us and begins cleaning us up. Grace is God as heart surgeon, cracking open your chest, removing your heart—poisoned as it is with pride and pain—and replacing it with his own. His dream isn't just to get you into heaven but to get heaven into you.

### **Q: You say grace brings rest. Why is this not the case for many believers?**

**A:** We find it easier to trust the miracle of resurrection than the miracle of grace. We so fear failure that we create the image of perfection, lest heaven be even more disappointed in us than we are. The result? The weariest people on earth. Attempts at self-salvation guarantee nothing but exhaustion. We scamper and scurry, trying to please God, collecting merit badges and brownie points, and scowling at anyone who questions our accomplishments. Call us the church of hound-dog faces and slumped shoulders. God's promise has no hidden language. Let grace happen, for heaven's sake. No more performance for God, no more clamoring after God. Of all the things you must earn in life, God's unending affection is not one of them. You have it. Stretch yourself out in the hammock of grace. You can rest now.

### **Q: What's the difference between grace and mercy?**

**A:** Grace goes beyond mercy. Mercy gave the prodigal son a second chance. Grace threw him a party. Mercy prompted the Samaritan to bandage the wounds of the victim. Grace prompted him to leave his credit card as payment for the victim's care. Mercy forgave the thief on the cross. Grace escorted him into paradise. Mercy pardons us. Grace woos and weds us.

### **Q: The concept of saving grace is familiar to many people. What do you mean when you write about sustaining grace?**

**A:** Saving grace saves us from our sins. Sustaining grace meets us at our point of need and equips us with courage, wisdom, and strength. It surprises us in the middle of our difficulties with ample resources of faith. Sustaining grace does not promise the absence of struggle but the presence of God. And according to Paul, God has *sufficient* sustaining grace to meet every single challenge of our lives. Sufficient. *Grace* is simply another word



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for his tumbling, rumbling reservoir of strength and protection. It comes at us not occasionally or miserly but constantly and aggressively, wave upon wave. We've barely regained our balance from one breaker, and then, *bam*, here comes another. God's grace dethrones your fears. Anxiety still comes, for certain. The globe still heats up; wars still flare up; the economy acts up. Disease, calamity, and trouble populate your world. But they don't control it! Grace does.

**Q: You say that grace is God's answer to the question everyone asks: *Do I matter?* Which ultimately sounds like a question of identity.**

**A:** Absolutely. We validate our existence with a flurry of activity. We do more, buy more, and achieve more. Like Jacob, we wrestle. All our wrestlings, I suppose, are merely asking this question: "Do I matter?" All of grace, I believe, is God's definitive reply. "Be blessed, my child. I accept you. I have adopted you into my family." Adopted children are chosen children. To accept God's grace is to accept God's offer to be adopted into his family. Your identity is not in your possessions, talents, tattoos, kudos, or accomplishments. Nor are you defined by your divorce, deformity, debt, or dumb choices. You are God's child. You get to call him "Papa." You "may approach God with freedom and confidence" (Eph. 3:12 NIIV). You receive the blessings of his special love (1 John 4:9-11) and provision (Luke 11:11-13). And you will inherit the riches of Christ and reign with him forever (Rom. 8:17).

**Q: As a result of this powerful grace, we can trust God's love for us is unending.**

**A:** Yes, which means that rather than conjure up reasons to feel good about yourself, trust God's verdict. If God loves you, you must be worth loving. If he wants to have you in his kingdom, then you must be worth having. God's grace invites you—*no, requires* you—to change your attitude about yourself and take sides with God against your feelings of rejection. To live as God's child is to know, at this very instant, that you are loved by your Maker not because you try to please him and succeed, or fail to please him and apologize, but because he wants to be your Father. Nothing more. All your efforts to win his affection are unnecessary. All your fears of losing his affection are needless. You can no more make him want you than you can convince him to abandon you. The adoption is irreversible. You have a place at his table.

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February 28, 2012

**GRACE: More Than We Deserve, Greater Than We Imagine  
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RELIGION / CHRISTIAN LIFE / GENERAL

ISBN: 9780849920707 • Jacketed Hardcover: \$24.99 • 6.12" x 9.25", 240 pp.

Publication Date: September 18, 2012 • [www.thomasonline.com](http://www.thomasonline.com)

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