

The Scandalous Grace of God

by RON SMITH

King David prayed in Psalm 4:1, "Be gracious to me, O Lord and hear my prayer." David prayed this way over fifteen times in the Psalms. A while back, I meditated through this passage for several days.

Grace is when God does something for us that is totally unprovoked – *un-prayed for* – *un-obeyed for* – *un-interceded for*. This is when God does something for us that is truly *undeserved*.

So David asked God to do things for him that were truly undeserved. He prayed this *grace-filled* prayer and God recorded it over and over in His word as a model for us.

The big question is: Do we believe the same things about God that David did? Do we really believe that God actually delights and desires to treat us better than we deserve, pray for, or obey for?

I asked some former YWAMers what I should say to others like them, about the topic of God's grace. They told me first to apologize for the fact that *they* had not been taught about grace while in YWAM. As a

20-year YWAMer, I ask forgiveness of you if you never heard anything about grace while in our mission. Having done that, I must add my own understanding about the teaching of God's grace in the church.

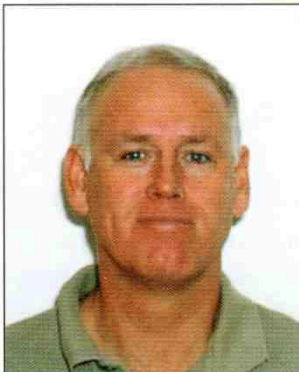
In my opinion, grace is really not adequately taught *anywhere* in the church. There are many reasons for this, but let's leave it at pride in the human heart; we in the church really do believe that there is something we can do to *somehow* earn God's favor or blessing; at least to catch His attention. Over and over in the Bible we are all painted as people who really deserve only one thing – the wrath of God. Yes, even as Christians we still deserve to go to Hell, right now. You deserve it as you read this and I deserve it as I write this.

Christians at times, make obedience into an idol. We do this by exalting our obedience over the fact that God ever saved us in the first place – *while we were His enemies*. The fact that God puts up with the hundreds of times we have disobeyed – as Christians – should keep us from ever exalting *our* obedience, more than we exalt God's great goodness to us at Calvary. Think of King David, hundreds of years after he was dead and gone – God said that David had done *all of His will*. What a scandalous statement! Think about that, knowing what kind of a lying, adulterous, murderer David was. Yet, he was the *man after God's own heart*.

The Bible says, "God gives grace to the humble." This verse relates to Christians

putting up with hardship, and God helping them through it. Very true, God also shows grace to the proud; consider the apostle Paul's conversion story – I would hardly consider him a humble Jew before his conversion! What about the obedient, spiritually arrogant YWAMer (or any other Christian), to whom God continues to show His amazing grace? Again, we make an idol of obedience any time we exalt humility – yes, even humility – over what Jesus did in obedience, by dying on the cross. We need to obey God – humbly – remembering His grace.

Some people have left YWAM and gone home only to find non-interceding, non-evangelizing and non-motivated church situations. They have found it very difficult to fit back in. Again, part of this is our fault because we have placed such high premiums on these activities and at times have worn them around like spiritual merit badges. Unfortunately, we have disciplined many into believing that they are somehow more obedient, more spiritual – basically more with it, if people *intercede, hear God's voice and trust him for the finances*. Spirituality is not determined by any of these things. Spirituality is determined by only one thing – What Jesus has done for us at the cross, not what we have done for him. Grace is scandalous, there is no question about it. God treats bad people *good*. We don't like that.



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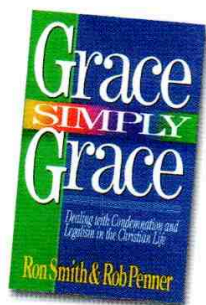
Twelve years ago, my wife and I were working in a Korean youth camp on the East Coast of the USA. During this camp, one girl had gone to ten sessions and was ready to go home as unsaved as when she arrived. Back in her dorm room early and alone, as she lay back in her bed, Jesus Christ appeared to her. He walked across the room and said to her in an audible voice, "The reason I forgive you your sins is because I love you." Jesus put his hand on this girl's head and not only was she saved but she was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.

God's grace is there *even* for those who don't ask for it; it is there *even* for those who don't pray; and it is there *even* for those who don't obey! Scandalous thoughts about God's scandalous grace.

Wouldn't you agree?

*Ed's Note: I am so pleased that Ron has brought us this emphasis on grace. One of the things the body of Christ so desperately needs is balance – the emphasizing of **all** of truth from Scripture, along with the varied and God-given ministries that are available to us **through** each other.*

RON IS FOUNDER & INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR OF YWAM'S SCHOOLS OF BIBLICAL STUDIES (SBS), OF WHICH THERE ARE NOW 35 SCATTERED ALL OVER THE WORLD. THEY ARE OFFERED IN 20 LANGUAGES. TOGETHER WITH JUDY HIS WIFE, THEY TRAVEL WORLD-WIDE, TEACHING AND ENCOURAGING, IN AND OUT OF YWAM. THE SMITHS LIVE IN MONTANA, AND HAVE JUST MOVED INTO A HOUSE BUILT WITH RON'S OWN HANDS. ALONG WITH ROB PENNER, HE HAS AUTHORED **GRACE, SIMPLY GRACE**, A BOOK YOU MAY ORDER. SEE INSERT ENCLOSED, OR CONTACT US.



What a timely issue for me personally! Thank you! Profound & Pithy's *Are you a human being or a human doing*, hit me like a bullet. It reminds me to check each of my activities carefully. I don't know if I am having the Post-YWAM Blues or if the Lord is truly calling me back to the Philippines.

– Barb Kaper

In the last InTouch we asked for examples of how you have been able to integrate your YWAM training into life at home, at work, at school and so on. Several wrote in and I wish there was more space to include them all. The following, much-reduced version is from Margie (Westlund) Limberg, who served in Asia & the Pacific in the 80's...

I guess I feel like I have continued to live the principles I learned (in YWAM), out here, since Jesus is the same everywhere.

1) The leadership principles imparted to me... were used when I worked for the Army in Germany supervising two laboratory sections comprised of ten technicians, each supervised by three NCOs and two civilian supervisors. (I supervised supervisors). Chain of command, lines of responsibility, treating each person with respect as made in the image of God, trying to find a just solution, and servant leadership for example, were part of my goals as a leader.

2) I also learned to be content with not being in command. I learned that leadership is seeking out responsibility to accomplish the things needed to be done, not looking to tell others what to do. As a result I am happy as a worker-bee now, not wishing I was *in charge* so things would run right. I learned in YWAM that God is in charge... even if human leadership is faulty. The trust in Him I learned in YWAM has helped me trust my bosses, or at least trust the Boss of my bosses.

3) The third area that comes to mind has to do with parenting. The God I learned to know in YWAM was a perfect parent to me, so sometimes I think about how He has responded to me and try to do the same to my kids. My son for example, was unhappy today because I wanted to be generous with chocolate to our baby-sitter. He thought if I had something to give, he ought to get it. He learned that his portion is not lessened by my giving to others. God's generosity to others, in no way lessens His generosity to me.

4) And I learned the principles of giving, and not just money. My husband and I have just come out of a very dark and difficult time this year. So in YWAM style, I invited 14 of our friends and family (none Christians), to a Thanksgiving dinner in gratefulness to God. We wanted to bless those who had given into our lives and demonstrate the generous heart of the Lord. In YWAM I learned what giving does to a group as opposed to buying and selling. God blesses us too, and through these few years of financial struggle (my husband has been out of work since November 1998), we have always had enough. And sometimes He has provided in the old YWAM miracle-style with an unexpected check in the mail or some timely coincidence. I still trust Him for our needs. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to write about His faithfulness out here.

– Margie Westlund Limberg, Germany

After reading my personal mail, *InTouch* is the first junk mail that I always read. Not just (simply) reading it but I sit through it – I take time out reading it, not only once but twice and sometimes three times... always when I'm alone 'cuz I've always thought it's meaty... it always is a timely publication for my spiritual need.

– Thezel Joy Macalaguang, Philippines

HomeSchooling

amid the routine of multiplication tables, backyard science experiments and carpooling to soccer games, homeschooling parents need to take time out to think about what's going on in the world around them, and how they interpret that world for their children.

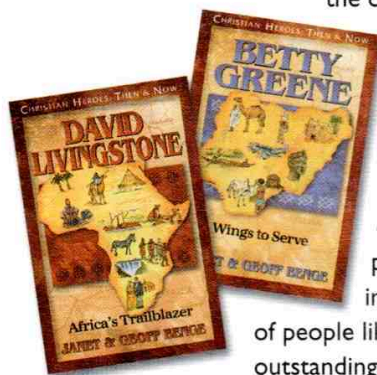
According to the media, the Columbine High School shooting has led to a flood of parents nationwide pulling their children out of public school and homeschooling them. While there are many wonderful educational reasons for doing this, one thing we need to avoid is sending the message to our children that God always wants them to be totally sheltered from the world around them.

Although we are not homeschooling our children right now, we have done so in the past. Currently our two daughters attend two good public schools. In sending them to public school, (and we had good reasons for doing so), we realized we needed to play an active role in rounding out their education and character development. Part of this process has involved exposing them to some of the daunting challenges facing missionaries around the world today.

We made a trip to Haiti so the girls could see poverty first hand and learn about some of the creative means missionaries are employing to address the spiritual and material needs of the Haitian people. It was an eye-opening and challenging experience for them.

One of the great joys of homeschooling our children through most of their formative years was watching them develop a love for reading. We provided them with books to read that reinforced the character values we wanted to instill in them. Indeed, books are still a powerful character-molding tool in our home, as they are in most homeschooling families. It is the power of the written word to influence developing minds that has led us to write a series of books for young people, and adults.

The Heroes Series is the outworking of a passion to see children reading quality, life-challenging books with a strong, positive Christian message embedded in them. It has been immensely fulfilling for us to delve into the fascinating lives of people like Eric Liddell, Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael and other outstanding Christian role models, bringing them alive for today's youth.



CLASSIFIEDS

FAREWELL & HELLO

After almost 4½ years of faithful & indispensable service, God has led Dan & Diane Dyck and their kids Judah & Radiance, back to the ministry of logging. (Yes, it is a ministry!) We will miss them sorely. Their loss will be lessened by the coming, from Singapore, of long-term YWAMer Janet Chan. More on her next time.

HELP WANTED

Update on the new 40-acre, tree-covered, stream-running-through-it property at Deroche, BC... After almost one year of prayer, spiritual foundation-laying and close-living in the one house, we are now moving into the site-planning, well-drilling, soil-testing, permit-approving, house-designing and building phase. And we will need help!

NAMES WANTED

Send us the names & addresses of friends who are former YWAMers, and we will send them – by first, second, third or fourth class mail – absolutely FREE! – the remarkable & amazing & award-winning, best-selling *InTouch* magazine (even though it's free).

Profound & Pithy

Faith is what you have in the absence of knowledge.

– Flannery O'Connor

The best way to show a stick is crooked is not to argue about it or spend time denouncing it, but to lay a straight stick alongside it.

– Archbishop Janani Luwum, Uganda

You'll find out if you have a servant heart, when someone treats you like a servant.

– Joe Ferrante

Fear is the darkroom where negatives are developed.

– Nancy Austin

I love going through customs ever since I found they're the only ones who'll listen very closely to every word I say.

Renewal Camps 2000!

Kona, Hawaii – March 12-18 with a variety of YWAM speakers

Restenas, Sweden – July 9-15 with Kel Steiner and Peter & Donna Jordan

Riggins, Idaho – August 5-11 with the Jordans, followed immediately by **Writers (& Aspiring Writers)**

Interactive Camp – August 12-18 with Geoff & Janet Benge, David Hazard and Hosts, Peter & Donna Jordan. Come to one or both camps.

Singapore/Malaysia – October 22-26 with Tamara Winslow.

Kona, Hawaii – November 12-18 with Dan Sneed.

Special Notice

- Come to YWAM's Worldwide Staff Conference in New Zealand Sept 1-5.
- It includes a day set aside for YWAM Associates International.
- Inauguration of Frank Naea as YWAM's next President - and lots more!
- Then since you're already Down Under, travel on to the Sydney Olympics Outreach. Write for details.



DONNA'S CORNER

I've been thinking a lot about *questions* lately.

Once I was asked if I used questions to manipulate people? That made me really examine my heart. Then I felt the Lord say to me, "I asked a lot of questions."

Questions can reveal truth, motives of the heart, or simply show that you care. It's amazing the questions Jesus asked His disciples. "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" and "Who do you say that I am?" *Matt. 16:13, 15*. "Could you men not keep watch with Me for one hour?" *Matt. 26:40*. Jesus asked lots of questions.

The first question in the Bible was asked by Satan, "Did God really say?" (He's still asking that question.)

The first question God asked was, "Where are you?" He knew exactly where Adam & Eve were, but He wanted to reveal their hearts; because of sin, they were hiding and no longer had that intimate relationship with their Maker. He's still asking that question of us... "Where are you?"

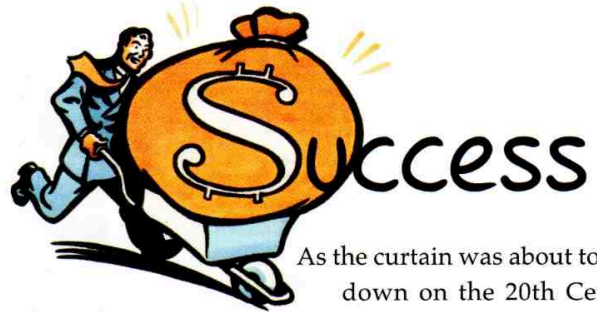
When the prodigal son returned – *Luke 15:20* – his father didn't ask any questions but embraced him. (I don't think he wanted to know what sin he had been into!) We too, need to know when to ask, what to ask and with what motive to ask. Have you ever questioned a loved one at the wrong time, instead of listening? Or isn't it great when your child or your spouse asks you a question because they truly want your input? That's the same with God. He loves us to ask Him questions; but we must listen and trust Him.

At the end of each year I ask the Lord, "Am I involved in any dead works?" (things not energized by His Spirit); and "What is on Your heart for the coming year?" I sensed Him reply, "I'm doing a new thing. It's a day of new beginnings for the church. The church will come alive – a revival within My body of those who have hearts after Me."

He then shared 15 things – too many to include here, but they are in my *Listening To God* booklet which you can get by writing to us. If you are able to send a donation to cover printing and postage for this 52-page booklet, that would be great. If you can't, ask for it anyway. I'm sure there are things that God has been speaking to you for this coming year. He doesn't reveal all truth to one person, we need each other. Keep listening and asking the right questions at the right time to the right person with the right heart motive.

Love and blessings,

Donna



As the curtain was about to come down on the 20th Century, Donna & I were with some of our family near Sydney, Australia.

After a choice meal (yes, we even threw a few shrimps on the BarB!), with the little ones tucked safely into bed, and while it was still early in the evening, Donna asked each of us to define the meaning of *success*. It was an engaging exercise, and we learned a lot about ourselves and each other.

The responses were revealing: "To be fulfilled"; "To obey God in detail"; "To be able to say that I love God with all my heart, and others as myself." One of our kids even asserted that she believes her life at this point, *is* a success. (In case you're wondering, she is a full-time mother of small children, who believes that caring for her family *is* success.)

In my Bible, I find only a few references to *success*. It is an Old Testament word, having little to do with today's concept of success (wealth, power or position).

I was especially drawn to the story of the search for a wife for Isaac (Gen 24). Abraham commissions his senior servant to travel back to the old homeland and find a bride for his son. He doesn't want Isaac to marry a heathen. The faithful servant travels the long way back, spots a beauty at a well, asks God for success, and sets out a 'fleece.' Read it yourself – it's a beautiful love story.

This is what I learned about success from the Isaac-bride-search:

1. The servant obeyed his master – in detail.
2. He asked God for success - not his own success, but success in carrying out Abraham's will.
3. He worshiped God for leading him through the whole process, giving Him all the glory.
4. He would not compromise the success of his mission.

The servant – who is not even named – was a successful man. In the world's eyes he was just a servant – no power, position or wealth. But in God's eyes, he was a successful man.

Success is fiercely sought after, yet remains elusive to most people. It can be that pot of gold; the greener grass or your boss's job. Are you striving for success, yet never quite there?

Do you have a sense of dissatisfaction with who you are, where you are, what you are or how much you have?

What does success mean to you?

For us on New Year's Eve, success simply came down to this: "being fulfilled in this life through loving and obeying God."

Peter