

Celebrating grace

What Does This Mean?

God loves people as they are, but he does not want them to stay as they are. Nor does God just give rules and tell people to accept it. The Christian life is about who we become as we are inspired, enabled, and changed by the person of Jesus (1 John 2:6). It is also about becoming part of all that our world could be, inspired by the vision of the new heaven and earth where God's peace, love, and justice reign (Revelation 21:4; Micah 4:3). Our vision of the future can be anticipated in the way we live now.

Truth lies in character. Christ did not simply speak the truth; he was truth; truth, through and through; for truth is a thing not of words, but of life and being. Frederick W. Robertson

Rules have their place. They are like the fence around a playground: they mark the boundaries, but God wants us to play on the swings not hang around the fence. Rules alone will not make people act ethically; rules may curb bad behavior, but they also uncover our inclination to rebel without necessarily changing our desires. Faith is about much more than that. Just keeping the rules will not make you a good athlete. Similarly, just keeping the rules does not make a person a good Christian.

Grace is the free and undeserved love, goodness, help, and favor of God. A champagne bottle being opened is a good image of grace, as is laughter. It is an outpouring of goodness that we did not earn or create. It is God's measure: full, patted down, and running over (Luke 6:38). It creates delight. Grace means living in remembrance that everything is a gift and that no one is good enough. Only with the help of the Holy Spirit can the Christian life be led and people changed. The Christian life is joyous grateful living—a very different attitude from just “keeping the rules.”

Once more, never think that you can live to God by your own power or strength; but always look to and rely on him for assistance, yea, for all strength and grace. David Brainerd

Laughter is the closest thing to the grace of God. Karl Barth

What Does This Mean in School?

Teachers can put rules in the proper place in their subject and highlight moments of grace.

- Point out that you can't produce a masterpiece in art just by following certain rules. The same applies to poetry and design. Sports, too, are more than rules. Discuss what this "more" might involve.
- Draw attention to lives that capture grace—lives that are overflowing and generous. Consider how people draw upon resources beyond themselves to live well.
- In civics or health class, talk in terms of students' visions for the future and what informs those visions and whether those sources are helpful. Work backward: What sort of people would we need to be to live that vision? What can we do now? What help would we need? Can we achieve our visions alone?
- Explore the role of vision and rules in English, history, and other subjects. What inspired people?
- Help students to consider how the common perception that Christianity is mainly about trying to be good differs from the core Christian emphasis on grace.
- Explore character in English and drama in relation to the question of how people change and when they experience grace.
- Create some moments of grace for students by the way you organize teaching and learning, such as an unexpected gift in terms of learning, fun, or time that will fit with the subject you are teaching.

Think of moments of grace in teaching, times when people have done far more than they were required to or maybe than you felt you deserved.



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