

The Messenger

The Atlanta Church of Christ

in Guinnett

Elders

Steve Galbreath
Alan Rouse

Evangelist

Richard Alawaye

Teacher

Gary Roberson

Women's Ministry & Welfare

Sarah Alawaye
Roxanne Galbreath
Sherry Rouse

Teens

John and Marisabel
Becker

Deacons

Peter Berry
Steve Collier
Danny Doble
Danny Emmett
Audie Flowers
Bill Francis
Patrick Freeman
Glenn Hayes
Kendall Knight
Karl Lynn
Russ McGarr
Alvin Modest
Jeff Mueller
Todd Reynolds
Dan Stehr

A Better Understanding of God's Grace

By Jeff Mueller

Recently I have been considering God's grace and how it affects my relationship with our heavenly Father. This journey of consideration began for me at the Marriage Retreat last September when our guest speaker, Jim Lefler, talked about the role of grace in our marriages. He defined grace in a way that I had not considered in my many years as a Christian. In the New Testament, the Greek word which we translate as the English word grace is *charis*, which means favor.

When asked to define grace, my response was three fold: 1. God's mercy, 2. God's forgiveness, and 3. God's unmerited favor. While all three of my attempted descriptions of grace are true aspects of God's love, they had missed the essence of God's grace. In the New Testament, mercy is a different word, *eleos*. The word used for forgiveness, *aphesis*, is also different from the word used for grace. I dare say I had "religiosized" the word grace, so that I had lost the true meaning that God wanted me to understand. And what was that meaning? That God's grace is God's favor. It is nothing more, nothing less than the simple fact that I am a favored son of His. Not only does he love me, but he also genuinely **LIKES** me, he is on my side and is working for my good.

Even my description of grace as "unmerited favor" does not do God justice in how He regards me. When I give one of my children a blessing, a gift, I do not say "I really want to give this to you, but please realize that you do not deserve it." Even more so God, when He gives me a blessing does not want me to occupy my thoughts with the notion that I do not deserve it. The fact that he does not give me what I deserve can fall under the category of "His Mercy." But I will let "His Grace" fall in the category of those blessings that He gives me simply because he likes me.

God was telling me something new, something different. Where all those passages refer to grace, God is saying not only do I love you, but I **LIKE** you, and I am on your side. I have found favor with you. "Wow – you have found favor with me?" Yes, God likes me, like a son he delights in. This seems so personal – how can it be this personal for every human being? There are obviously some people who do not realize this, or believe this or accept this view of God. Then I remembered Hebrews 11:6 –

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

God's favor is there for everyone to accept, but does every one have a faith that can see God's favor and let that define their relationship with Him?

The scriptures on grace throughout the New Testament took on a new, and more powerful, dimension of understanding and motivation in my life when I considered them. There is the discussion of being saved in Ephesians 2, the love of God to

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 12-14, 2010: Festival of Faith
(Athens, GA)

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A Better Understanding of God's Grace

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save me from my sins because of his favor toward me. But there is also the chastening passage in 2 Corinthians 12, when God refuses to remove the thorn from Paul's side because "My grace is sufficient for you." When I face "thorns" in my life that I wish my heavenly Father would remove, He likewise tells me, "The fact that you are a favored son of mine is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Or consider Titus 2:11, where my belief that God not only loves me, but likes me as a favored son teaches me to say "NO!" to sin and live an upright life.

In 1 Corinthians 15:10, God's favor serves as the inspiration to work hard in serving the ministry. In 2 Corinthians 4:15, Paul let God's favor multiply through many lives – he obviously shared his joy in his relationship with God with others, and that joy resulted in many others being saved. We all need to work hard at saving the lost. Another result of grace I learned from 2 Corinthians 8:1 is that I should overflow in generosity to others, specifically with the money and wealth God has allowed me to possess.

May I be so bold to state that God's got Favorites – and you by faith could be one of them? For me, I'm claiming my role as a favored son by faith. Have you ever been a favorite? In your family, you may be a favorite child of your parents or grandparents. At your office, you may enjoy the status as favorite employee of your boss. If you have never considered yourself to be "favored," please claim by faith your place as a favored son or daughter of your heavenly Father and let it produce greater joy and obedience in your life.

Focusing on the Next Generation

By John Becker

Time flies when you are having fun! That is a famous saying that refers to the way time seems to move at a more rapid pace when we are doing the things that we enjoy doing. Time seems to lag as we toil and labor, as if we were working out in the hot, sweltering sun. Parties are over before they start, while homework seems to never end. An action-packed movie leaves us wanting more, but a sappy love story couldn't be over quick enough (at least in my opinion). Our perception of time seems to control what we do and the activities that define us. If you truly want to know a person, find out how they spend their time. We invest in things that we value. I believe now is the time to focus on the next generation.



The youth and family ministry is a place where time is of the essence. In all practical purposes, we have four years, the high school years to help our teens put into practice all the lessons they have learned when they were children. Many of these young adults were taught from infancy what the Holy Scriptures have to say about our Lord Jesus. Many Kingdom Kids classes laid the all-important foundation of faith for our children. I thank God my own physical children have had the blessing to be taught by godly men and women who know who God is. To know that they have seen Jesus walking and talking through the disciples that teach them has added to my faith and has taught me that I too must live in such a way as to teach. I believe we all realize if we are to win the next generation to Jesus, it begins at home.



Many times I hear people say that the teens are the next leaders in the church. I agree with that statement, and because I not only agree with it, I have decided to invest my life in working with teens to prepare them to live a godly and holy life.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

What a task! What a responsibility! It is a good thing that it is not mine alone... It is first the Lord that does the work, then we as a church must nurture our teens.

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Focusing on the Next Generation

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1 Corinthians 11:1

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

I love this Scripture because it is simple, direct, and to the point. We are at a time in history where people are afraid to simply teach the truth. I can understand the need for us not to communicate in a harsh manner, but I love the way God wrote the Bible. Paul communicates to a whole church in Corinth for them to follow his example as he followed the example of Jesus. One area I feel we need to address is the need to mentor and disciple the next generation of disciples. In order to do this, we must be living in a way that they can learn this lesson from watching the older people in the congregation being in these kinds of relationships. We need to teach the youth in our church how we all need each other to make it to heaven. If we do not, we will raise-up kids who rely on self and a generation that will not know Christ.



As the body of Christ matures here in Gwinnett County, I am excited to see God raise-up future leaders from among our children. When I look at David Collier, I feel a sense of safety knowing that he will not allow God's standard to fall once he grows into more roles of responsibility. His older brother Art is doing very well at UGA, and I can see zeal for the Word of God in Allison, their younger sister. While they are fine examples of God-loving children, we would be missing it totally if we did not recognize that it is not by some coincidence that they all seem to be this way. Steve and Barbara Collier have invested in them as parents and have been an example in that area for years. I believe that their children also have great relationships outside of their parents...spiritual relationships with other spiritually-minded adults that love and care



about them. This is crucial. ALL of our teens need this sort of help in their spiritual journey. They all need to be loved in a mentoring relationship with someone who is willing to teach them what they know about Christ. They need someone who is willing to love them enough to have the hard talks and to point them in the right direction. It would be impossible to think that the ministry staff could handle this task alone. It is not practical, and it is not biblical. We as a family need to love our young adults enough and be a part of their lives.

I mentioned David, but I have to tell you that we have several other teens that love God very much as well. These teens are true disciples that have their faith tested on a daily basis in the halls of our high schools. They face many trials and opponents. We need to be examples for them to follow, and even more, we need to become mentors and confidants for them as they wrestle through these tough years. God is amazing, and I thank all the leaders we have who are willing to get together with teens when they can. I hope more of the congregation would give some time to these teens and encourage them. They are our future, and as we invest in them, we invest in the future of our church.

I O U

As the wife of one of the benevolence deacons, I hear a fair amount of finance-related conversations. One of the things Peter hates is debt. He frequently cites Romans 13:8, "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." Clearly, God is against financial debt. But He makes it clear here that we owe one another love, and that got me thinking: What else does God say we owe?

I looked up "owe," and found that the Greek word for debt is opheiō (ὀφείλω). Looking up all the uses of that Greek word, I found that we owe God and one another several debts:

- **Forgiveness** (Luke 11:4) – *As we ask Him to forgive us, we owe it to Him to forgive one another.*
- **Obedience** (Luke 17:10) – *When we've done what He commands, we need to have the perspective that we've only done what we were obligated to do. All my service can't repay what I owe Him for all He did through Jesus to save me by His grace! Obeying commands that result in good for me and for others is no hardship in comparison to the benefits of life in Him.*
- **Service** (John 13:14) – *Continuing the same way of thinking, since He has served us so tremendously (symbolized by washing of feet), I owe it to Him to serve those around me as I have been served, with humility, holding nothing back.*

- **Being selfless** (Romans 15:1) – *We have an obligation to look out for the weak among us, to live not to please ourselves but with an eye to building one another up.*
- **Thanks for one another** (2 Thessalonians 1:3 and 2:13) – *When we see one another's faith and love increase, when we realize that God has chosen each of us to be saved, we owe it to God to be thankful for one another, and to rejoice in one another's growth!*
- **Walking in Jesus' steps** (1 John 2:6) – *The Greek indicates that whoever claims to live in Jesus owes it to Jesus to walk as He walked—not just "I should," but "I must"!*
- **Our lives** (1 John 3:16) – *"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers." We owe our lives to one another!*
- **Love** (1 John 4:11) – *"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."*

In every case, our debt comes from how much God has given us already in Jesus and in one another. Financial debt comes from getting things before we can pay for them, but all those things will perish; what God has already given us will be ours forever, and as we daily pay the debt we owe—love, forgiveness, obedience to God, unselfish service, gratitude, our lives in Christ—we grow stronger and better. So enjoy paying your IOU today!

Deacon's Directory

Karl Lynn	New Members	770-979-4292
Peter Berry	Benevolence	678-376-1878
Danny Doble	Spanish Translation	770-931-0601
Audie Flowers	Visitation	770-277-5749
Patrick Freeman	Kingdom Kids	770-921-1811
Glenn Hayes	Kingdom Kids	770-985-6921
Dan Stehr	Visitation	770-925-2943
Bill Francis	Visitation	770-806-8645
Todd Reynolds	High School	770-682-0027
Russ McGarr	Middle School	770-381-5045
Alvin Modest	Worship	678-344-0061
Steve Collier	Teens-Parents	770-717-5784
Danny Emmett	Hope, Events	770-985-4542
Jeff Mueller	Benevolence	770-492-0544
Kendall Knight	Music Service	770-972-6887

Contribution

12/06/09 - \$8844.40

12/13/09 - \$7281.00

12/20/09 - \$7002.00

12/27/09 - \$3968.00

1/3/10 - \$14058.00

1/10/10 - \$8441.25

1/17/10 - \$6959.00

Family Group Leaders

Young Marrieds

Kyle & Sharon Ross L'ville 770-513-6224
John and Meemua Yang Lilburn 770-380-1865

Middle School Parents

Joseph & Lisa Washington L'ville 678-407-0306
Teen Parents

Derrick & Michelle Brewer L'ville 770-962-8070
Leslie & Danie Cadet Dacula 678-651-0912

Singles

Jim & Chandra Dew L'ville 770-330-3479

Spanish Ministry

Danny & Cynthia Doble Lilburn 770-931-0601

Prime Time

Glenn & Sheila Hayes Loganville 770-985-6921