



#4 In the Family Foundations Series

A Family of Grace

Forest Park Church

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During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith.

They began eliminating possibilities.

- Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods' appearing in human form.
- Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death.

The debate went on for some time until C. S. Lewis wandered into the room. "What's the rumpus about?" he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. **Lewis responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace."**

After some discussion, the conferees had to agree.

- The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, **seems to go against every instinct of humanity.**
- The Buddhist eight-fold path,
- the Hindu doctrine of karma,
- the Jewish covenant,
- and the Muslim code of law

Each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional.

Aware of our inbuilt resistance to grace, Jesus talked about it often. He described a world covered in God's grace:

- where the sun shines on people good and bad;
- where birds gather seeds gratis, neither plowing nor harvesting to earn them;

- where untended wildflowers burst into bloom on the rocky hillsides.

Like a visitor from a foreign country who notices what the natives overlook, Jesus saw grace everywhere.

Yet he never analyzed or defined grace, and almost never used the word. Instead, he communicated grace through actions and stories.

God's grace truly is amazing.

- Instead of giving us the punishment we deserve, Jesus laid down His life for our sins.
- Instead of condemning us, He freed us from sin's grip on our lives.
- We absolutely don't deserve that.

As Christian parents, we are so grateful for the grace of God, and we want our kids to understand it, too.

- Explaining grace to a child is one of the biggest things you will do as a parent.
- We want them to accept the salvation Christ freely offers.

Paul talks about what draws people to Jesus.

Romans 2:4

"Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?"

A live demonstration of grace.

It's not the message of salvation that inclines people toward repentance. That's just information.

- **It's God's kindness that changes hearts and lives.**

If we want our kids to understand and respond to God's grace, they need more than information.

- We need to treat our kids the way God treats His kids
— with unmerited kindness.



- We need to create a living example of grace in our homes which in turn helps explain grace to a child.

Contrary to our assumptions God's grace is THE source of true freedom.

Homes built on a foundation of Grace give their children four freedoms to create an environment of grace:

1. The Freedom to be Real

Children in safe homes built on Grace don't feel the need to guard their feelings and emotions.

- They allow their feelings to come to the surface without fear they'll be attacked or pushed aside.

Let's say a second-grade boy becomes suddenly down.

- His dad asks, "What's gotten into you?"
- "Well," the boy replies, "there's this girl at school, and I like her a lot, but this guy, Johnny . . . she said that she likes him."
- The dad says, "Excuse me, son, you're in the second grade. You don't know anything about love. I mean, this isn't even in the puppy love category."
- I want you to toughen up right now."

This is not the way to start demonstrating grace to a child.

- Do you think that kid will ever bare his heart to his dad again?
- Probably not.
- Kids need to know that what they are dealing with matters to us,
- That we'll listen to them and honor their feelings.
- And **then** provide wisdom and guidance

Allowing vulnerability in the home shows children the grace we get from the Lord when we share our thoughts with Him.

2. The Freedom to be Open

In grace-based homes, children can talk openly with their parents.

What do kids need to be able to be candid about?

A: For starters, spiritual doubts.

- Maybe they question whether Jesus is God or whether the Bible is true.
- Maybe they think there's more than one way to God (not just through a relationship with Jesus).
- This isn't the time to put them in long-term mentoring sessions with some guy you hired from the seminary.

Many solid Christian people have doubted their faith at some point, and God has pulled them through.

- Don't panic, and don't jam theology down your kids' throats.
- A foundation of Grace doesn't panic, the Lord is with you in these candid conversations.

B. Kids also need to be able to be candid when they're angry or frustrated with you.

They need to be able to say,

- That really hurt.
- You embarrassed me.
- You humiliated me.

We make mistakes as parents. We humiliate; we embarrass.

Hebrews 12:15

"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

When we don't allow kids to respectfully vocalize their frustration, anger or hurt, we allow bitterness to grow.

3. The Freedom to Pursue Holiness

All kids will struggle in life at times.

- They'll make mistakes in judgment, and their timing will be off.
- They'll say inappropriate things.
- And they will sin.

Grace-based homes give children the freedom to make those mistakes.

But just because they have the freedom to make mistakes doesn't mean there aren't consequences.

- Grace is never a lower standard.
- Grace does not abandon the standards of God's truth.
- But it does say, "Let's talk about how we can do this better"

You can be an ally to your kids and help them gain victory over their struggles through the power of Jesus Christ.

Sometimes it seems like we model something like a Nike Christianity: "Just do it."

- You just **hunker down and try harder** and do what God says here."
- We are inspired to look like Jesus but find **ourselves incapable**.

This is the power of explaining grace to your children, it is an outpouring of what Jesus has done in your life.

- **If Mom or Dad** is letting the kids get away with stuff under the guise of being nice, that's not grace.
- **If Dad or mom** is enforcing the law in a heavy-handed, guilt-inflicting way, that's not grace.

Grace offers discipline and correction but does so with respect for the **child's dignity and concern for his restoration** and growth.

Hebrews 12:6: *“The Lord disciplines the one he loves.”*

This describes a process that at times

“seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:11).

Romans 5:21 says that grace is supposed to reign over our hearts in the same way sin once reigned.

Grace is not a doormat we can casually use to wipe sin off our feet; it rules as a monarch over us in two ways.

- By instructing and disciplining and admonishing us *“to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives”* (**Titus 2:12**),
- but also by empowering us to that end. *“God . . . works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure”* (**Phil. 2:13**).

Holiness is willingly being set apart to engage in a process of fighting for the full joy of being like Jesus, and not selling out for a cheap substitute along the way.

Titus 2:11-13 outlines this explicitly:

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

4. The Freedom to be Different

Many kids go through a phase where they are just a little strange and it’s often a source of embarrassment for parents.

- Maybe they aren't into things that the parents want them to be (band, sports, academics, 4-H, college etc.)
- Maybe they are into things the parents struggle to appreciate. (Art, hunting, music, college, work after high school...)

As Parents, it's very important that we separate Moral from non-moral issues,”

- When we unintentionally moralized a nonmoral issue we are in a sense playing God,
- We've also shoved a wedge between our child and ourselves
- And potentially between our child and God.

God gives us the freedom to be different. In fact, God wired some of that weirdness into us. That's just the way we are. When demonstrating grace to your children, it is important to keep this in mind.

Conclusion:

As we give our kids these four freedoms, we show them a picture of the freedom we have in Christ. As we create homes where they are treated with kindness, we give them a glimpse of the grace of God toward all who sin and miss the mark. We help them to understand — with their hearts and not just their minds — just how amazing God's grace truly is.

The Religion Shop is Closed

It's not hard to see that for many religion is no longer needed. While many panic, there is good news for Christ Followers.

The church is not in the religion business....

- It never has been and it never will be,
- In spite of all the Church leaders through two thousand years who have acted as if religion was their stock in trade.

The church is in the Gospel business.

- It is not here to bring the world the bad news that God may think kindly about us only after we have gone through certain creedal, liturgical and ethical wickets;



- It is here to bring the world the Good News that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.”
- And that we have been given the unlikely opportunity to be forgiven and to live as His child in this world
- To experience life the way God intended it without sin.
- And to attract others to a heavenly father that loves us more completely than we might ever imagine.