

Helping others find grace in times of need

In a world where people are struggling in various ways, and are often recipients of judgment and criticism, they need grace, not more harshness. We can pray for them, but sometimes they need people who will come alongside them practically to show them grace, and carry them to the ultimate grace giver where they'll find unlimited grace.

Matthew 9:1-8

Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. ² Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

³ At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!"

⁴ Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? ⁵ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ⁶ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home." ⁷ Then the man got up and went home. ⁸ When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

1) Being a channel of grace

- Mark 2:2-4 They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on.
- A paralyzed man needed grace, but couldn't get to Jesus to find grace in the time of need.
 - His friends were concerned about him, but they couldn't give him what he needed, i.e. to be healed.
- This doesn't mean that they left him to remain in his dire situation
 - They helped him find the grace that he needed
 - They put him on a stretcher and physically took him to Jesus who would be able to meet his need
 - They didn't give up when they saw the crowds and made a way to Jesus by making an opening in the roof and lowering him down to Jesus through the roof.
- People who are channels of grace:
 - Are sacrificial in their time and energy to help others receive the grace that they need
 - Don't allow obstacles to get in their way of allowing the person in need find grace
 - Show a determination to get the person to Jesus
 - Walk the road with the person in need until they receive the grace that they need to be set free from their situation
 - Don't want glory for themselves. They are more concerned about the wellbeing of the person in need and primarily the glory of God
- Are we aware of the needs of those around us?
 - The primary need of grace for unbelievers around us isn't healing, finances, fixing relationship problems, and so on. It's the grace of God given for the salvation of mankind on the cross
 - Matthew 16:26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?
 - Of course, if we see someone with a material need, we should also show grace and meet that need if we're able to.
 - James 2:15-17 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.
- Too many times we try to reason away why we shouldn't help someone find grace, but true grace givers give themselves to helping the person find true grace in Jesus

2) Grace understood and misunderstood

- Mark 2:5-7 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."
Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
- There are two responses to the way Jesus shows grace
 - Some receive it with joy and appreciation giving glory to God – they understand clearly that this is an act of grace.
 - Others criticize what happens as they have preconceived ideas of who God is and how he works, so they don't recognize the grace of God when they see it at work.
- There are some who misunderstand the grace of God to the extent that they even attribute the works of Jesus to the devil.
 - Matthew 12:22-24 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"
But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."
- When we're channels of grace we won't always be well received. There will be our critics.
 - We need to do what is right in the sight of God anyway
 - His heart is to give grace to all in need

3) Grace given

- Mark 2:8-12 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, ¹¹ "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"
- Jesus starts with spiritual grace by forgiving the man his sins, and ratifies that forgiveness by demonstrating physical grace by healing him
 - He practically demonstrates that He has the authority to show complete grace
 - He demonstrates that He is God, the only one who has the authority to forgive sins.
 - He demonstrates His love and compassion for the person in need, by giving him spiritual and physical grace
 - He didn't see the faith of the man in need, but the faith of his friends, the channels of grace
- Do we have faith for Jesus to do a work of grace in someone else's life even though their situation looks impossible from a human perspective?