

Grace Giver

The LORD is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love. (Psalm 103)

Each time God said, "My gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may work through me. (2 Corinthians 12)

Let your conversation be gracious and effective so that you will have the right answer for everyone. (Colossians 4)

Gracious moments. We can't live without them. When we extend grace to others, despite our flaws and weaknesses, we reflect something of the very nature and character of Christ. Grace believes the best of people and draws it out of them. Grace is the most courageous of all virtues. It alone enables a person to face up to ridicule, slander, unforgiveness, and hatred, and to do much more than just react. Grace empowers a person to see beyond the sin and faults of the enemy, to love the soul and see the needs. In the face of bitterness, the gracious person exhibits thoughtfulness; in the face of greed, generosity; in the face of anger, calmness of spirit; to words of wrath, she offers affirmation; and to hurt, a listening ear and a kind heart.

We all need grace, in virtually every relationship and event of life. We need grace for forgotten appointments, broken promises, abrupt words, and missed deadlines. How refreshing it is to be in the company of a gracious person. Gracious people love without condition, despite our differences, regardless of our taste in music, clothes, movies, or hobbies, and beyond all our faults and weaknesses. Perhaps we are never more like God than when we give grace to someone.

On the other hand, there are graceless moments. They have a way of sucking the life right out of us. Inconsiderate. Disrespectful. Out to hurt. They

snatch faith, hope, and love from us and replace them with doubt, suspicion, and anger.

At least three types of people can become grace-robbers in our lives. First of all, the **pessimist**. Negative words and attitudes can bury the hopes and dreams we carry. Just the opposite, a grace-giver gives people much-needed space to grow and room to change. Grace-givers choose to believe for the best in a person.

Another grace-robber is the **perfectionist**. Crossing every "t," dotting every "i," is of greater importance to such a person than building bridges or cultivating friendships. Grace-givers, however, know that everyone needs room not only to succeed, but to fail as well. Their realistic perspective acknowledges that every person has areas of weakness. Knowing themselves all too well, they view such without shock or surprise.

Finally, grace is seldom felt in the company of a **"know-it-all"**, a person who has everything to teach and nothing to learn. Such a person is typically so busy telling everyone what they should do that they fail to consider God's grace at work. Givers of grace understand that everyone needs space to express themselves, to talk and to be heard. Grace-givers are generally slow to speak and quick to listen.

So how can we become grace givers? Start by asking some questions: What am I living out of-- grace or anger? What is behind the words I use-- or the reflections and tones in them? Do I believe the best in people--or expect the worst? Do I expect too much of the people in my life? Do I look beyond the faults on the surface and see the desperate needs within? Do I endeavor to make people feel comfortable or uncomfortable?

Christ wants to use our lives to bring some of heaven to earth, into the lives of the people on this planet, in the real realms of our relationships, and in the form of a gift called grace.

Adapted from: *How to be a Grace-giver* by Robert C. Crosby
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