

Grace with No Reservations

I've experienced it several times – the miracle in the Starbucks' drive-thru line. That thrilling experience when you order your drink, pull around to the window, and the barista announces that the person in front of you paid for your coffee.

My first reaction is always “Wow! That’s awesome!” Then almost as quickly I think, “Man, I should have ordered a venti!” (That means “extra large” in Starbuckese!)

My gratitude initially fosters a desire to buy the coffee for the person behind me. But before I pull out my wallet, I check out the vehicle behind me to make sure it's not a 12-passenger van carrying a high school basketball team. I mean, I want to pass along the blessing, but there are limits.

Sometimes we feel that way about sharing God's grace. We want to actively love others and submit to them out of reverence for Christ. But some people don't deserve it. And others can't do anything for me. Oh, wait... that's the point of grace.

By definition, “grace” means being kind to those who don't deserve it. To give and do without any expectation that the other person will reciprocate. To show kindness to those who have hurt us and meet the needs of those who will never be able to help us in return.

Yet sometimes we are stingy or choosy with the kindness God has freely given us. As believers, we have an abundant supply of His grace. God has given us more than we need; yet sometimes we hoard it. Sometimes we are stingy or choosy with God's lavish grace, withholding it from those who desperately need it.

We may withhold kind words or actions from someone who has hurt us. Or we may take a meal to a sick friend hoping they will do the same for us in our time of need. While that expectation of reciprocation may not be our primary motivation, it is often still there, lurking in the back of our minds. Our sinful nature qualifies our grace.

Jesus constantly extended grace to those who could give Him nothing in return - the orphan, the prisoner, the widow, the homeless, the invalid, the dying, the sinner. He healed, He touched, He gave. The One “who came from the Father full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) extended grace with no expectations. And Jesus calls us, His followers, to do the same.

Who are the “needy” people right around you – neighbors, friends, family members, church members? In what ways are you extending grace with no expectation of return?

This post is adapted from Kathy Howard's new Bible study Lavish Grace: Poured Out, Poured Through, and Overflowing. Lavish Grace is a 9-week journey with the apostle

Paul that helps readers discover God's abundant grace for their daily lives and relationships. You can find out more about Kathy, her speaking and writing, and find free resources at www.KathyHoward.org.