

“A Grace Change or a Grace Test”

PDF Version of the eDevo Series

a grace change or a grace test- part 1



"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with Me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."
Matthew 11:28-30, Message

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Jesus wants to help us!

Thankfully, when we are walking in step with the Lord, He gives our hearts rest and helps us navigate all the season of life. He teaches us the "unforced rhythms of grace."

This week, we'll talk about His rhythms of grace. Specifically, we'll look at the importance of discerning between a "grace change" or a "grace test." As we get started, let's define our terms:

A "grace change" is that rewarding, yet awkward, challenging season of change. It's that transition time between what God has me doing now—my current life schedule and rhythms and where God is taking me next—and my new life schedule and rhythms. Sometimes a grace change is minor and at other times, it's a monumental shift!

A "grace test" is that important, yet difficult, maturing process of death. It's an opportunity to be humble, to die to myself, my ambitions and my desires. When we humble ourselves and pass this test, we tap into new rhythms of grace from the Lord and He empowers us in fresh ways.

Today, if you're tired, worn out or burned out on religion—help is on the way! Keep company with Jesus and trust Him to help you discern whether you're in the midst of a divine "grace change" or important "grace test."

We'll dig into this topic a little deeper tomorrow; so don't miss Part Two.

"Father, I am tired, worn out and burned out on religion. I know that's not Your fault. Jesus, I need You. I want to walk with You. I want to learn the unforced rhythms of Your grace. I want to discern the difference between the 'grace changes' in my life and the 'grace tests' You want me to pass. This week, as I keep company with You, I ask You for renewed strength, insight and answers. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Blessings,



Beth Jones

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"...But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'"
James 4: 6, NKJV

What's going on in your life? Is it a "grace change" or an opportunity to pass the "grace test"? In other words, are you facing a season of change orchestrated by God for your next season or are you facing a session of testing designed by God for your future success?

According to numerous Bible passages and commentators, God's grace can be defined as His divine influence on our hearts. When He graces us—we receive His divine ability, His power or enablement to do what He's called us to do and be.

When we are undergoing a grace change—we simply need to tap into more of His grace for the changing season and the next assignment in our lives.

When we are undergoing a grace test—we simply need to humble ourselves in His sight and receive more grace to stay in the current season and role He has assigned us.

Perhaps these things will help you to discern what's going on in your life...

How to Recognize a Grace Change: In certain seasons of our lives, we experience change and God graces us with His ability, power and strength to navigate and succeed in those seasons.

There are certain life events that require different aspects of God's grace; thankfully, He gives us more and more grace to navigate these changes! As you graduate, get married or have a baby, you experience a grace change. When your kids go back to school, graduate or head off to college, you may experience a grace change. If you experience an unexpected loss, painful divorce or heartbreak, you experience a grace change. If your company or organization downsizes or restructures, you may experience a grace change. If you receive a promotion and added responsibility, you experience a grace change. When you retire or come into the empty nest years, you may experience change.

There are certain spiritual events that require different aspects of God's grace as well. As you grow in your faith and spiritual maturity, the Lord will move you into another phase of His plan and purpose for your life; as a result, you'll experience a grace change.

When you're in the midst of a God-ordained grace change—you may feel an unexplained excitement or an uncomfortable "antsiness" that you've not been able to discern. You may experience a fresh anticipation or a bit of internal unrest. When God's grace is changing in our lives, He's lifting old graces so that the new graces of His ability and empowerment for a given task, season, responsibility or assignment can take hold in our lives.

In a grace change—when the Lord is at work kicking you out of your comfort zone, you often experience a divine dissatisfaction, boredom or frustration with your current situation. Perhaps you find yourself beginning to dislike the things you once loved. You're a bit frustrated and can't decide if it's a divine discontent or a test of your character. Sometimes you can't put your finger on it, but you don't love the job, career track, ministry or role you are in the way you once did. You may sense there is more for you to explore or do.

There are two big challenges during a grace change:

Obey—By definition, a grace change means change! Change requires obedience. In a grace change, don't shrink back. Don't allow circumstances, reason or your five physical senses to dominate being led by the Spirit. Listen to the Lord and obey. Don't allow fear of the unknown or your present security to rob you of the exciting unknown! If you don't obey the Lord during a grace change, you may miss a divine opportunity and be stuck doing the same-old, same-old, with less grace—for many years to come! When the grace is changing...obey the Lord!

Guard—The biggest challenge during a grace change is to guard your heart and mouth. When you don't feel as graced to fulfill a role you once loved and when you aren't completely sure where God's grace is going to land or take you, you can be tempted to become angry with God or to burn bridges with others. Since God is working a change in your life and since you aren't feeling the same grace you once had for a particular role, you can allow a critical spirit, disillusionment or your opinion to taint your walk with God or those in your current sphere. As a result, you may over-exaggerate things, say things that aren't true, or express yourself in ways that you'll regret. The best thing to do when you sense a grace change is to seek the Lord, walk in love, talk to those who can guide you, button your lips with others and humble yourself until you know exactly what type of grace change the Lord is working in your life.

Tomorrow, we'll talk about "How to Recognize a Grace Test."

"Father, I believe I am experiencing a grace change. Help me to properly discern this change and the timing involved. I choose to obey You in whatever You lead me to do and I choose to guard my heart and my mouth. I want to honor You throughout this whole transition and grace change. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Blessings,



Beth Jones

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"For God sets Himself against the proud (the insolent, the overbearing, the disdainful, the presumptuous, the boastful)—[and He opposes, frustrates, and defeats them], but gives grace (favor, blessing) to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty

hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you...."
1 Peter 5:5-6, AMP

Sometimes, we are going through a divine "grace change"—that is, God's direction, assignment and the grace required for our lives is changing. The Lord may have "graced" us in a particular way for a particular season, but we begin to sense His grace is changing and He's calling us to do new things in a new season. This can be both an exciting and challenging time. We talked about that in yesterday's edevo.

Today, let's talk about another dimension of our growth in grace: passing a "grace test."

How to recognize a Grace Test: Sometimes, when we are facing a grace test, we experience many of the exact same dynamics as we do in a grace change. This can make it difficult to properly discern whether we are in a grace test...or a grace change.

This is the distinction: a grace test is a test of our humility! It gives us the opportunity to yield to humility...or pride. If we humble ourselves, we pass the grace test and receive more grace—and God's promotion! If we yield to pride, we will flunk the grace test—and God will resist us.

Here are some signs you are taking—and flunking—a grace test: your ego is hurt because you want more attention from someone or anyone; you weren't recognized or you feel underutilized; you constantly reflect upon and inform listeners of your accomplishments, your skills, your degrees, your trophies, your brilliance and amazing prowess; you pout because you didn't get credit for a project you led or an idea you implemented; you get mad when you're corrected; you have a rebellious attitude towards those in authority; you justify self-pity.

Getting the idea? Here are some more indicators you're a grace test flunkee: you compare yourself to others and conclude you're the smartest, brightest, strongest and most gifted person in the room; you forget to give God the credit for any good thing you've accomplished. When your ego is humiliated, embarrassed—or you're extremely "self" conscious—you're flunking the grace test. When your title, the size, or location of your office defines you...you're failing a test! And...the list goes on.

What's the best way to pass God's grace test? Intentionally demote yourself! Make a decision to trust and agree with God. That is, without Him you are nothing, know nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing! Jesus said it: *"Apart from me You can do nothing."* (John 15:2)

We know we've passed the grace test when: we have no personal, self-promoting ambition or agenda; we are dead to our wants, desires or needs; we only desire to do what is pleasing to Him; we accept the fact that we've been bought with a price and we are not our own; we've counted the cost, died to our selves, and will gladly pay whatever price is required...for however long it's required.

The only way to pass the grace test is to empty ourselves of ourselves...to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand. When we pass the test, God gives us grace and more grace! So, are you being tested? Are you failing...or passing with flying colors?

Taking and passing the grace test is one of the most difficult—and most gratifying—things we will ever do. When we pass this test, God gives us more grace and He exalts us! Today and tomorrow—and the next day—may we live in a place of humility and pass the grace test!

"Father, I thank You for Your divine tests. I want to pass the grace test. I repent for my ugly pride. I choose to demote myself. I know for certain that without You I am nothing, I have nothing, I can do nothing, and I know nothing. Today, I humble myself under Your mighty Hand. I thank You that—as I live a life of humility in word and deed—You will give me more grace and promotion. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Blessings,



Beth Jones

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*"... but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."
2 Peter 3: 18, NKJV*

God wants us to grow in grace. Have you considered that? You can grow in more and more grace!

This week, we've been talking about ways to grow in grace—through recognizing a "grace change" or passing a "grace test." I have come to believe that the subject of God's grace is one of the least understood and most underutilized benefits the Lord has given us! Let's dig a little deeper.

God's grace is manifold. It's huge. It's tangible. It's a kiss from heaven! God's grace is His divine influence on our hearts; it's His inner strength, His favor and His ability. When we are lost, by His grace we can have faith to be found. When we are weak, by His grace we are made strong. When we feel inept, by His grace we can do all things through Christ. God's grace endows us with His ability to know, do, believe and say. Just about every letter in the New Testament begins and ends with a blessing and pronouncement of grace upon the reader! Grace is more than the well-known acronym: God's Riches At Christ's Expense—it's much more than a cliché!

The Bible describes three types of grace: saving grace, standing grace and serving grace.

Without *saving grace*, we cannot have faith to be saved! We need to receive God's saving grace, in order to have faith to believe in Jesus. (Eph. 2:8-9)

Without *standing grace*, we are weak and defeated. We need to access God's standing grace to be strong and victorious in our Christian life, as well as to endure trials, pressures, challenges, temptations and persecutions. (Rom. 5:2, 2 Cor. 12:9)

Without *serving grace* we operate in the flesh and become weary. We need to employ God's serving grace to do our part in fulfilling the callings, tasks, plans, purposes and assignments He has for our lives. (1 Peter 4:10, Rom. 12:6)

So, the question we must ask is this: are we accessing or frustrating God's grace in our lives? As we recognize His divine grace changes in our lives we are able to access more grace. If we flunk the grace tests that come our way, we frustrate the grace of God.

Don't Frustrate the Grace: *"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."* (Galatians 2:21, KJV) What has God graced you to do? Don't frustrate that grace! We need God's grace to do everything in this life. We cannot do anything without God's grace. God's grace empowers us. God gives grace to the humble; always stay low and remain little in your own eyes and God will give you more grace. (1 Peter 5:5-6)

Do Access the Grace: *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."* (Romans 5:1-2, NKJV) What has the Lord graced you to do? Access that grace! We need to access God's grace, by faith. By faith, we can approach His very throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help us! (Hebrews 4:16)

"Father, I thank You that I can grow in grace. I thank You for Your saving grace, Your standing grace and Your serving grace. Today, I don't want to frustrate Your grace through pride, but I want to access Your grace by faith. I come to Your very throne of grace and I ask You for more grace so that I can stand perfect and complete in all You've graced me to do! In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Blessings,



Beth Jones

a grace change or a grace test- part 5



"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

1 Corinthians 15: 10, NKJV

The Apostle Paul understood a huge, divine secret. The key to the fruitful, victorious, power-packed Christian life is living in and by His grace! We are not talking about a cliché type of living. Living in God's grace is powerful, gritty and tangible. God's grace is a strong spiritual force that goes beyond human capacity, effort and labor.

We know that Paul worked hard, preaching, teaching and proclaiming the gospel. He felt intense pressure and persecution and yet he prevailed in a victorious manner. How? Because he understood that it wasn't him, but the grace of God in and through him. He learned how to tap into God's supernatural spiritual power—His grace!

When confronted by the messenger of Satan and non-stop pressure and persecution—what he called "a thorn in the flesh"—he came to conclusion that God's grace was sufficient for him to overcome all the power of the enemy. It's true for us and it was for Paul; we are what we are by the grace of God!

If we want to enter into the life God intended for us—we must learn how to live by His grace. If we want to do mighty things in God—we must learn to recognize "grace changes" and pass "grace tests."

Tapping into God's grace will revolutionize your life! God's grace is sufficient for everything we need and everything we face.

The secret to living out this passage of Scripture is to be a doer of the things we've been talking about this week, that is, to properly discern the "grace changes" in your life and to pass all the "grace tests" that come your way. As we do those things, we will operate in higher degrees of grace. That is—God's divine influence in our lives, His empowerment, His inner strength and His gifts will go to work doing wonderful things in and through us!

May we be like the Apostle Paul in saying, *"...By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."* (1 Corinthians 15:10)

"Father, by Your grace I am what I am. Help me to recognize the grace changes in my life and to pass the grace tests that come my way so that I may operate in greater degrees of grace. I will work hard to do Your will; yet I know that it won't be my human effort that produces fruit—it will be the grace of God at work! In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Blessings,



Beth Jones