

AG Megachurch Pastor: Why So Many Christians Have Fallen for This Lie About Grace

The subject of the grace of God is central to the gospel. Many of us grew up hearing, talking and singing about grace in church, but how many of us actually experience biblical grace? It can be a controversial and easily misunderstood topic, as some advocate for what others call “hypergrace.”

But Pastor John Lindell—founder of James River Church in Springfield, Missouri—says experiencing grace is the key to a vibrant relationship with Jesus. That’s why he wrote *Soul Set Free: Why Grace Is More Liberating Than You Believe*, which Charisma House published and is now available in stores.

Lindell’s book impacted me so much that I invited the pastor onto my “In Depth With Stephen Strang” podcast to talk about how God revealed these truths to him. [Click here](#) to listen to the interview or click on the podcast icon in this article.

Lindell says the revelation started about five years ago.

“It really became apparent to me, just in evaluating my life, that I didn’t understand grace,” he says. “And by that, I don’t mean I couldn’t define it theologically. I could point you to the Scriptures. But there’s a difference between being able to give grace a definition and articulate a definition and really experiencing grace in your soul.”

As he preached through Romans in a deeper way than ever before, he discovered aspects of God’s grace he had never before considered.

“I can remember one time just studying,” he says. “I was in a Starbucks on vacation, and I was out in my car reading and

just studying [Romans.] And I began to weep. I cried out and just said, 'God, why has nobody ever told me this before?' I believe it's the best news people have never heard."

Part of the reason Lindell had never fully grasped grace before is because of the Christian influences in his life. He grew up a Presbyterian, but he got saved in the Assemblies of God denomination as a young man. He went to college at Oral Roberts University.

"Anybody who's familiar with that tradition knows that it really comes out of a holiness movement," Lindell says. "So invariably, what happens a lot—and praise God for people who live a holy and righteous life. But if we're not careful, what can happen is we can begin to take things that are tools to help us grow in Christ—things like reading our Bibles or praying or being part of a fellowship and serving the Lord—and we can take those tools and make them rules. ... And that can become legalism."

Lindell points out that many Christians have a mentality that says, "Now that God saved me by grace, I have to work out my own righteousness." But Paul rebukes that mindset in Galatians 3:3, where he says, "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

Looking back, Lindell says he preached a works-based righteousness for about two-thirds of his ministry. By calling people to good deeds, he says, he put them back under the law instead of teaching them to let God produce sanctification in their lives.

"When you understand grace and you understand your position in Christ, you're presenting yourself to the Lord," he says. "And the fruit of that, Paul says in Romans 6, is that it produces sanctification, which leads to eternal life. So as we understand who we are in Christ, where we are in Christ, what He's done for us, and we yield ourselves to Him, God produces

sanctification in our lives. And the result, for me, has been an incredible joy and liberation in Him.”

Lindell confesses that while he’s a disciplined person, he’s also a competitive person. So when others taught him the specific things he had to do to be holy—such as fasting once a week or evangelizing twice a week—he turned them into a standard he had to maintain to feel good about himself.

But for Lindell, disappointing himself was much easier to handle than feeling as though he had disappointed God. And he doesn’t think he’s the only Christian to feel this way.

“I think there are a lot of people—a lot of Christians—who go through life really wondering, *Does God really love me? Or is God just flat-out disappointed in me?*” he says. “And that’s because they don’t understand grace.”

Grace, Lindell explains, liberates a person from the self-imposed burden of legalism and self-righteousness. It allows believers to finally realize just how deeply the Father loves and delights in them. In fact, because many grew up with harsh or unloving earthly fathers, they see their heavenly Father in the same light.

“[A lot of people] are open to the moving of the Holy Spirit, but the Father—they don’t quite know what to do with Him,” he says. “They leave Him over on the side and say, ‘Well, you know, that’s just a mystery,’ and they never really think it through. But grace understands that God initiated this long before in eternity. Before time began, the Father was planning, not just for your creation, but for your salvation, for your glorification, for eternity, after time is no more with you.”

If only every single Christian understood grace the way the Bible plainly explains it! I know Lindell’s book opened my eyes to see grace in a fresh and biblical way—and I think it will do the same for you. You can purchase your own copy at ,

where you can also download a free chapter.

Be sure to listen to my full interview with Lindell here or at the top of this article. You won't want to miss our compelling discussion on how grace has revolutionized his life—and how it can revolutionize yours.