

Seven Strategies of Grace

Throughout the Scriptures, we see glimpses of the strategies of how grace works. I didn't really understand that very much until I went on my weight-loss transformation journey. Then I began to see the many facets of grace.

God's grace is so vast that we really don't understand it all because it is what God is made of. It cannot be explained in a few words but I see at least seven ways grace strategically operates in our lives. Each one seems to build on the other.

Grace Saves Us

Salvation began when I surrendered my life to Christ at age 7. At that age, I couldn't understand the vastness of grace. I only knew that I accepted Jesus because of it and that meant I wouldn't go to hell.

Whether we are 7 or 107, without God's grace we are bound for an eternity separated from Him. When we realize we are sinners, it's His grace that draws us to accept Jesus by faith. Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) explains it this way: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

In the book of Romans, Paul explains that those who had faith in God instead of the rules and regulations were the ones God blessed. "So too then, at the present time there has come to be a remnant [a small believing minority] according to God's gracious choice. But if it is by grace [God's unmerited favor], it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace [it would not be a gift but a reward for works]" (Rom. 11:5-6, AMP). Grace is the reason for salvation, not our self-effort.

Grace Sustains Us

The sustaining power of grace keeps us as God's own, even after we have accepted His Son's sacrifice. It doesn't matter what we have done. Why would God do this? Because He knows we aren't perfect and never will be. Without our relationship with Jesus, we cannot come into Father God's presence.

As a Christ-follower, the goal should be to become perfect like Jesus. That word "perfect" trips us up many times. It is defined this way in Matthew 5:48 (AMP): "You, therefore, will be perfect [growing into spiritual maturity both in mind and character, actively integrating godly values into your daily life], as your heavenly Father is perfect."

God wants us to be learning, growing and always moving forward. His sustaining grace keeps us on that track. Even when we make a mistake, His grace covers us because He knows we learn best from our mistakes.

Grace Surrounds Us

It's in our ongoing covenant relationship with God that we discover His surrounding presence as a part of the tender-loving aspect of His grace.

Psalms 3:3-5 (TPT) says, "You take me and surround me with Yourself. Your glory covers me continually. You lift high my head. I have cried out to You, Yahweh, from Your holy presence. You send me a Father's help. So now I'll lie down and sleep like a baby— then I'll awake in safety, for You surround me with Your glory."

When we feel alone, we just need to remember God surrounds us. His grace covers us.

Grace Searches Us

Grace also searches us. It is so perfect, so accepting, that when we know we have failed to do something God wants us to do, we feel that searching eye of grace.

When we are His, God keeps searching us because He knows us and He knows if we come back to Him, our joy will return. He does this not to make us feel bad but to help us repent so He can forgive us.

He especially loves it when we ask Him to search us. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends You, and lead me along the path of everlasting life," (Ps. 139:23-24, NLT).

Grace Stretches Us

When we look at whatever task we feel God is calling us to complete, we feel stretched beyond our capability. This is a grace thing too. Grace always points us to our need for God. We are inadequate in our humanity but God has everything we need to accomplish any task He calls us to.

Jesus said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God," (Luke 18:27, NIV). When we are stretched by God, it is always to remind us that He is our Source.

God certainly stretched me and called me to do what I felt was impossible on my weight-loss journey. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt I was able to do that because He stretched me to go beyond my comfort zone.

Grace Strengthens Us

It was God's grace strength that helped me lose 250 pounds. On my own, it was impossible. His grace strength was the missing ingredient I didn't even realize already existed inside me.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV), God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." When I admitted my weakness, He gave me His strength; not a mamby-pamby kind of strength but a strength to do the impossible.

When I gave God my weakness for sugar, He gave me His power to

say no, His power to resist and His power to understand the dangers to my life if I continued. When I am trying in my own self-effort, I will always fail. But when I look to Him for His supernatural grace strength, everything changes.

Grace Stands Us

Finally, I must stand in faith united with God. By His grace, we have been placed in position as part of a mighty wall or fortress. We have our places to stand. It may be with our family, our profession, our city, our avocation, our calling or all of the above.

He gives us weapons to fight the battle, engage the enemy, defend our territory. We can “stand firm” because we have put on the full armor of God and are ready. Ephesians 6:13 (NIV) reminds us, “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

There have been many times I felt I was on mission for God. I knew I accomplished good things by His grace. These were like minor skirmishes until I knew, without a doubt, He had stood me in my assigned, called and appointed place.

Grace Never Stops Working With Us

Having weighed 430 pounds is always a humbling reminder of how far I fell away from God and how gracious He has been to lead me back to where I can stand in His anointing. He led me to lose 250 pounds so that I would finally do what He designed me to do – teach women how to work with God to transform their lifestyles, lose weight and live healthy.

All of my life, He had been graciously waiting for me to allow Him to lead me to lose the weight so that I could finally step into my destiny. I am firm in my resolve to do whatever He leads me to do.

God's grace will never stop working with any of us and won't leave us. "When God chooses someone and graciously imparts gifts to him (or her), they are never rescinded," (Rom. 11:29, TPT).

His grace is strategic. We can't do what He's called us to do without it. We can't do anything of value without Him.

For more, check out *Sweet Grace for Your Journey* podcast episode 99: Grace Is Amazing. {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker is the author of six books and two study guides, including her No. 1 bestseller, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds*. Her sixth book, *Sweet Surrender: Breaking Strongholds*, is live on Amazon. She blogs at . She is also a Christian weight-loss coach (check out her coaching group at *Overcomers Academy*) and speaker. Don't miss her podcast, *Sweet Grace for Your Journey*, available on CPN.

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.