

The Real Meaning of Favor

In order to grow in favor, you must first have favor. So what exactly *is* favor? I think we are most familiar with the idea that favor is preferential treatment shown to somebody. It denotes acceptance, approval and pleasure.

God gives us His grace to empower us to become like Christ. While the Greek and Hebrew words translated *favor* in Scripture include these definitions, there is a deeper dimension to the Greek word for favor: *charis*. Almost everywhere in the New Testament, this word is translated “grace.” Grace (and favor) is essentially a gift. If we gain favor with people—or, as we might say, get into their “good graces”—we have special access to them and we receive something from them.

The same thing is true about gaining favor with God, although the *charis* we receive from God is obviously different from the favor we receive from men. At our conversion, we learn that God’s grace is His unmerited favor toward men through the blood of His Son. This unmerited favor includes not only being forgiven of sin but also receiving access to the very presence of God in the same way Jesus has access to Him.

Every believer receives this favor from God, but we don’t all recognize the additional dimensions of the *charis* we receive. God’s grace is also His operational power, the force of His nature. He gives us this grace to empower us to become like Christ.

These two aspects of God’s grace—access and power—set us up to understand what it means to grow in favor with God. At the heart of growing in favor are two aspects: 1) the pursuit of God, the practice of coming before God through the “new and living way” (Heb. 10:20) that Christ has made available to us, and 2) receiving, in God’s presence, measures of His own

nature that empower us to be conformed into the image of the Son He loves.

Considering the fact that it takes favor to get more favor and that we have all been given a measure of favor with God through our conversion, the issue of growing in favor is an issue of stewardship. The real question is, *What have I done with the favor God has given to me?*

I believe the failure to understand and pursue the journey of stewarding the favor of God has led so many people to die in the unnecessary tragedy of never having their God-given dreams and desires fulfilled.

Often those same individuals blame others around them for not supporting them in the pursuit of their dreams. The sober reality is that most dreams go unfulfilled because of a lack of favor with God and man. Where favor is increasing, we witness the power of exponential increase that comes through agreement. That is the byproduct of favor.

Our authentic dreams from God cannot be accomplished on our own. That is a sure sign that a dream is too small. We must dream so big that without the support that comes through favor with God and man, we could never accomplish what is in our hearts.

While God loves everyone the same, not everyone has the same measure of favor. Yet everyone is positioned to increase in favor if each one of us effectively stewards what we have. In other words, when we seek His face with the favor we have, we increase in favor itself.

Bill Johnson is senior pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, Calif. He is the author of numerous books, including *When Heaven Invades Earth*, *Face to Face With God* and his newest, *Center of the Universe*, all of which reflect his conviction that a gospel without spiritual power is not the gospel Jesus preached. This article was excerpted from *Face to*

Face With God.