

God's Grace

The response of readers to my book Old Man New Man has been overwhelming. I've received hundreds of letters, e-mails and comments from men who say they have experienced the struggle I describe between the sinful nature and the "new creation in Christ" and have been helped by the book. In reading my story, they realize I understand what they are going through.

They can tell I know what it is to feel the pull of sin and have to consciously renew my mind when it seems every fiber of my being wants to give in. That's because during the 30 years in which I have followed the Lord, I have learned what it is to become a "new man" in Christ. As the Bible says, "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17, NKJV).

God knows I have not arrived. I am the first to admit I am a "sinner saved by grace." In fact, one of the struggles I have had to deal with as the Lord has opened doors of ministry for me is the difficulty of teaching others how to live for God when I am well aware of the weaknesses in my own life.

One evening last summer not long before my manuscript was ready for the printer, I sat and talked with my wife about our own problems of communication. I had been under some sort of cloud that week, so my time priorities were messed up, and I had not been focusing on our marriage at all.

"What kind of advice," Joy wanted to know, "are you going to give other men on how to have a good marriage?"

Ouch.

However, as I wrote, I found that the days I felt the most inadequate were the days the words flowed the most freely. Writing the book was like adding an exclamation point to the declaration of the apostle Paul, “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10, emphasis added).

I believe God is stirring the hearts of men in our nation. But many men struggle because they try and fail and live in constant shame as a result. One successful businessman I ministered to told me he felt God was “disappointed in him” because of the areas of his life in which he still struggled.

There is hope, I assured him. It’s the areas of struggle that cause you to realize how desperately you need God. You come to understand you cannot make it on your own.

Acknowledging our weaknesses destroys our pride and allows us to humble ourselves and receive God’s grace—His empowerment to change. This is what the Bible calls dying to self. It is like the death a seed undergoes when it falls into the ground—afterward, new life begins.

In *Old Man New Man* I emphasize the need for accountability and discipleship. Yet as important as these things are, they won’t change a man unless his heart is changed and he understands the grace of God, which is—as author Gerald May writes so eloquently—the “active expression of God’s love.” May writes, “God’s love is the root of grace; grace itself is the dynamic flowering of this love; and the good things that result in life are the fruit of this dying process.”

I'm only beginning to understand grace. But I know from personal experience that God is real. He has changed me—and is continuing to transform me “from glory to glory,” as the Scriptures promise (2 Cor. 3:18).

Though Satan comes “to steal and kill and destroy,” Jesus has come “to give life in all its fullness” (John 10:10, NLT). This is a fact I have seen played out in my own life.

Like a man in the desert who has only one cup of water, I offer that to you if you are thirsty for a drink. This is what we offer the men who attend our New Man events, such as the one to be held in Orlando Aug. 17-18. There are no easy fixes or guarantees, but the events are places to get a drink if you are thirsty for more of God.

The good news of the gospel is that God, through His grace, makes us new men in Christ. When temptation comes—and we all know it is ever present—there is a way of escape. It is possible to overcome whatever is in our past—hurt, sins, guilt, wrong choices, damaged relationships—to become new men (or women) in Christ.

Stephen Strang is publisher of Charisma. He invites men to click on to learn more about the New Man 2001 event in Orlando, Florida, Aug. 17-18.