

Bill Johnson: Don't Apologize for God's Favor

I am a fifth-generation pastor on my dad's side of the family, and fourth on my mom's. My children are sixth- and fifth-generation, respectively, in our positions of ministry. We have an unusual family in that regard. Everyone I can think of is a follower of Jesus.

But lest I give the wrong idea of our tribe, we are blessed but very far from perfect. All that is right about us is thanks to God's grace, as God has no grandchildren. Each person must come to Him on his or her own and not think they can have a relationship with God because of who their family is.

I now look at the absolute grace of God upon us as a family and give thanks. I wish I could say this grace has enabled us to avoid problems, crises and failure. It hasn't. But in the midst of it all, there remains grace. Great grace.

The Responsibility of Favor

Many people around me are first-generation believers. They would do anything to have the momentum of grace in their family line that we do in ours. And while it is impossible to go back multiple generations and reset the direction of their families, it is possible through honor and humility to inherit this momentum of grace from a family who has it as their testimony.

Self-pity won't fix it. Accusing God won't help change the family line. But recognizing God's grace that rests upon another person is a big first step. In that place, we are more prone to give honor where it's due, which is obviously to our loving Father. He doesn't display favor on one person to create an awareness of lack in another. He does so to draw us

to Himself that we might more fully apprehend what He has given us through His Word. From there, we can learn to honor what God has done and learn from others' example.

I think it's even appropriate to receive prayer from them that God would impart to our family the grace that is on theirs. God is able to impact an entire family line through such a prayer, so that they can live as though they, too, had multiple generations of believers. Only God can do this. But He can and will.

My wife, Beni, and I have requested prayer when we recognized God's favor on people's lives in areas where we seemed to have little favor or breakthrough, and our lives were dramatically changed as a result. The point is, none of us need to lack. Ever. There is grace enough to reign in every part of all of our lives. But we must embrace the process of humility and with thankfulness learn from one another. Because we are family and because we are individually members of one body, a breakthrough for one is a breakthrough for all.

Anyone who has an increased measure of favor in an area of life is to live knowing it is a gift from God. It doesn't matter how hard they worked, how much they sacrificed or how much they obeyed God. The end result is entirely a gift of God's grace. When we realize this, it is much easier for us to give away our own insights, experiences and hopeful encouragement, so others may benefit in the same way we have benefited from the successes of those who imparted it to us.

Own It!

Many people seem to feel bad for God's blessings and favor on their lives. I remember a pastor who picked me up in his brand-new car. It was beautiful. I could tell he enjoyed it but that he also felt the need to explain how he got it. It was a gift from his congregation. Of course, I celebrated with him, but I also felt bad for him that he thought blessing

needed an explanation. Most of us live with a subconscious need to apologize for favor. It's sad. But until we have an adequate theology of blessing, we will probably continue to do this.

You never have to apologize for, explain or feel guilty for favor. If you do, you've limited how much God can entrust to you. We often feel the need for explanations because we, as the church, don't yet have a sound theology for blessing that doesn't undermine the gospel message of Jesus. Attempts have been made to develop one, but to my way of thinking they are merely attempts to legitimize materialism that have failed miserably. We now have another chance. It is essential that we get this figured out without celebrating materialism or legitimizing accusations, suspicion, and jealousies that have accompanied such journeys in the past.

Favor on a person is always to draw people to God. Blessings are to be the calling card of God for the lost.

"Yet He did not leave Himself without witness, for He did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17).

Blessings are to be a witness of God's heart for people. The favor of God on one person's life is there to make people hungry for more. Jealousy is a cheap counterfeit, and in the end, it undermines the invitation of God for more. When blessings rest upon another person's life, they should drive us to God. They should drive us to His Word that we might learn how to appropriate His promises more fully into our lives.

God is no respecter of persons. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. That means I qualify. By faith, I inherit the promises of God for myself in any given situation. {eoa}

This article was excerpted from Chapter 14 of Bill Johnson's book, Born for Significance (Charisma House 2020).