

The Homecoming

My first daughter, Jamie Jo, was seven years old when she first thumbtacked a picture of a Cambodian orphan child in the middle of her bedroom bulletin board in our cliff side Ozark Mountain home.



Gabby

Those trusting brown eyes of that baby burned an image in my daughter's heart that branded her with compassion for every "broken winged" animal and person she would ever encounter. Adopting baby deer, raccoons, ducks, geese, squirrels and even one tiny opossum was her way of life until she left home for college.

As an adult and mother of three, one glimpse of the tiny abandoned Rwandan child from "Chantel's orphanage" was all Jamie needed to begin her long heroic trek to Kigali, Rwanda, still reeling from the 1994 genocide that claimed the lives of 800,000 helpless citizens and left 95,000 orphaned children fighting the elements of intense poverty for survival.

"Little Gabby's" feet have hardly touched the ground since she arrived in our neighborhood where my grown children, my wife and I now enjoy hosting 22,000 kids each summer in our twelve summer sports camps surrounding scenic Table Rock and Taneycomo Lakes in southwest Missouri. Our neighborhood is literally

filled with nurturing homes and kid-loving people. Gabriella is “The Homecoming Queen” of our community and treated with all the amenities of an heiress to a royal throne.

From abandoned to adored, from orphaned to adopted, from unwanted to undenied, from intense poverty to intentionally pampered, little Gabriella’s dark ebony eyes will never have to see the plight she might have endured, but will never have to know.

Grace, simply put, is unmerited favor. Gabriella did no more to merit the lavishing grace she enjoys today than you or I did to inherit the grace of our loving Creator and the life of fulfillment and eternal rewards He promises to His adopted children of faith. All of us, like Gabriella, were born into spiritual poverty without even a hint of hope on our own ability to gain anything better than a life of futility and eternal desperation. But God saw your picture and His Father’s heart was moved like Jamie’s to travel from Heaven to Earth, and from a throne to a cross to extend His hand of grace to give you access to His Royal Family and His endless relinquishment of favor far beyond our ability to comprehend or describe.

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” (Ephesians 1:18)

It is with that very prayer that this book is written and with just such hope that each page you turn will render to your mind, heart, body and soul.

Mark these Key Words: grace Lord Jesus

Old Testament Viewpoint

2 Samuel 11:1-4, 11:14-15, 12:13

2 Samuel 11:1-4 Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house.

2 Samuel 11:14-15 Now in the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. He had written in the letter saying, "Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down to die."
(After a realization of extreme anguish and repentance)

2 Samuel 12:13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die."

New Testament Viewpoint

Acts 9:17-22; Galatians 1:11-16(a)

Acts 9:17-22 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Galatians 1:11-16(a) For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) What theme do the two Testaments have in common in these passages?

2) Lovingkindness means love that is completely based upon what the giver of love (God) has done for the one receiving the love (us!). What has God done for us that makes us love Him so?

3) How does grace compensate for our sin?

4) Even though both David and Paul endure much pain and suffering, describe the extent of God's grace and mercy they were granted.

5) How does God's example of grace with Paul and David encourage you?

6) Why can we not earn God's love?



PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in these passages of scripture?*



APPLICATION: *How do these passages relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*



LOCKER ROOM:
How should realizing God's grace towards you affect the way you treat other significant people in your life?



MEMORY VERSE: Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast



My Prayers



Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...



Confession: Father, please forgive me for...



Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...



Supplication: Father, the people and things that I wish to pray for today are...