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Lavish Grace

“The riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us” (Ephesians 1:7–8, NIV).

It has been said that hindsight is 20/20. As I look back over the details of my life, there have been key periods of time when my faith grew by leaps and bounds. In fact, I would say that several of the “bad times” were really the “good times”! Let me explain.

Faith requires the believer to rely upon the grace and mercy of the Lord and to follow Him closely (see Psalm 32:8). Most of the time, we are tempted to think that as we walk through life we can go it alone. But when we lose a job or experience a financial setback or have a health issue that we know is beyond our control, suddenly we are unable to see around the corners in our life walk. Faith grows when we yield our will to the Lord’s (Romans 12:1–2). We walk by faith. When we cannot see from A to B down our path of life, we choose to walk with God.

For Christmas 1999 I received a treasured gift from a dear friend, Dr. Henry Smith, president of Indiana Wesleyan University. His gift to me was a Bible—a *One Year Bible*. With the Bible came a card, which read:

Dear Brian:

When I saw you wave your tattered *One Year Bible* at the ACSI convention, I knew I wanted to give you a new one to remember IWU! Thank you for your service to IWU and for your strong and enduring friendship!

Cordially, Henry

I enjoy reading through this special Bible every year. This morning in my quiet time with the Lord I read Hebrews 11. Following a passage from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament is a passage from Psalms and a passage from Proverbs. The passage from Psalm 111:1 this morning read, “I will thank the Lord with all my heart” (NLT).

As I thought back over the details of my life, I thought of periods of time when Bonnie and I struggled while raising our children. I thought about the death of my father, and I thought about the career transition I went through as the Lord led me from K–12 Christian education to Christian higher education.

Our pastor, Matt Heard, has just completed a series on extravagant grace. As a congregation we have been on a journey together exploring, experiencing, and expressing God’s grace.

The mission of Woodman Valley Chapel, where Bonnie and I attend, is to “launch and strengthen a fleet of Christ-following communities who are compassionately sailing through a turbulent culture toward a deeper amazement of God’s grace.” Matt writes, “Amazement over the grace God has exhibited toward us through Christ is what feeds our response and our submission to Him. He took the first step toward us and our response of amazement to His graciousness is what should fuel our lives, our relationships, our fulfillment, our obedience and our stewardship of everything He’s given us.... God’s grace could be summarized as Him giving us not what we deserve but what we need.” The trouble is that sometimes what we want and what we need do not align.

During many of the most difficult times in my life, when I could not see from A to B, by God’s grace and to His glory I chose to walk by faith. Times of trial drove me to my knees in dependence on God. And you know what? He proved Himself faithful in every one of the most difficult circumstances of my life!

Listen to Matt’s closing words on this point: “To extravagantly lavish us with His grace for His glory. That’s God’s posture toward us through the person and work of Jesus Christ. ‘Amazing,’ you say? Exactly.”



Brian S. Simmons, President ACSI

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