

Message Extras

a little something extra to keep you connected to Jesus this week

Message Extras accompany the [weekly message](#).

God's grace has many faces. His grace is the unmerited gift of salvation. His grace provides guidance and nudges us throughout our life. His grace is in His provision for those who love Him. His grace gives us perseverance and strength in times of suffering. By His grace and the work of the Holy Spirit, we are made to look more and more like Christ as we continue to walk with Him throughout our life. Grace is in God's unconditional love for all humankind, a gift to us who are willing to open it and accept it. Not one of us is holy enough to earn God's grace, but not one of us is unworthy of it. We are all God's children whether we are willing to call Him Dad or not.

If you've been in Christian circles for a while, you may have heard the phrase "extra grace required" used to describe those of us who are harder to love than others. I have always found this funny and ironic in the sense that we've all been given extra grace, exponential grace, HUGE grace. I-was-dead-in-my-sin-and-now-I-live kind of grace. God is so EXTRA! I want to live in a way that responds to this extra grace I am given daily. I want to live and remain in a posture of thanksgiving and praise. I am not who I used to be. I used to just want to live a life good enough to stay on His good side or not on His radar at all. I wanted to live independent of His grace and fully dependent on my ability to navigate and control my life and circumstances through the decisions I made for myself. Me, me, me. It worked for a long time. My childhood was tough and I depended on myself quite a bit. I was an achiever and I did well. I was a straight A student, put myself through college, married, had children, traveled, bought a house. I was a capable adult and didn't need God's grace. Your life was what you made of it.

In 2011, I was a critical care registered nurse in charge of a 24-bed ICU every weekend. I was utilized hospital-wide to identify and treat patients who needed a higher level of care. I attended all code blues house-wide and ran them until a physician was available to take over. I was big stuff. My youngest child was two months old when things started to change for me. I had been questioning the faith of my childhood for about a year. In the face of so much innocent suffering, it had become difficult to trust God, especially when I didn't trust

Him that much in the first place. One night we lost a 19-year-old patient on my watch. I became undone, enraged and ultimately rebellious. What God is this who either doesn't care and won't act or is impotent to act when His children are dying? What good is He if He doesn't show up when you need Him? I had no use for a security blanket called God (even now, as I write those thoughts down, it makes me want to weep).

What followed was a month of yelling at God and almost threatening Him to show up and punish me. I was done with my faith and had decided I would only attend church for my husband and my children. Looking back now, I realize I had never prayed as much as I did while in my anger toward Him. One day I was walking my daughter in her stroller and crying while yelling at God in my head. Suddenly, from somewhere deep within me, I heard my name. "Betzy." I stopped walking to listen. Did I just imagine that? "Do you love them more than I do?" No. "Can you protect them better than I can?" No. Then a peace and love washed over me and I wept. To this day, I wonder if anyone saw me crying and talking to myself in the streets of my neighborhood! If they did, they must have surely thought I was insane. Immediately I was so sorry for the tantrum I had been throwing and overwhelmed by His patience, gentleness, and love toward me. I was all in from that day forward and have never looked back. I dove into the Word. I couldn't get enough and I actually began to understand it. Grace upon grace was poured over me and He has never stopped. He has saved my marriage and held me during the hard times, provided during the pandemic, saved my loved ones, orchestrated a home sale and purchase, designed and led a mission trip that I had no intention of organizing, made me crave serving in church, gave me a church family/community that is one of my greatest treasures in this life. I am in complete awe of Him and I'm so grateful He rescued me. Funny thing about grace, it is immediately converted into testimony once you've received it. It becomes part of your God story and the more it happens, the more you recognize it and the bigger your story becomes.

There have been times in my life when I didn't recognize God's grace because it came through what I considered a hardship. Like Jonah plunging to his death into the ocean only to be swallowed by a fish – hardship or grace? Sometimes it's hard to tell in the moment. Only in hindsight was I able to truly appreciate it for what it was. We woke up to the sound of rushing water on my son's first Easter morning. One of the pipe connectors in the upstairs bathroom had come apart and pressurized water had been spraying for an undetermined amount of time all over the upstairs. By the time we were awakened at 3 am, the upstairs hallway had three inches of water and the downstairs looked like there was a rainshower coming from the ceilings. Our kitchen cabinets, light fixtures, carpet, and walls were all holding water. Did I mention I had just applied the third coat of tuscan red to

the kitchen walls? It was awful. We were young, inexperienced home owners with a 5-month-old son. We were completely overwhelmed. With the help of our insurance company, some handy friends, another friend with an interior design degree, and some sweat equity, we ended up with a custom kitchen that we installed ourselves. Since then, we have done three more kitchens and helped friends during their renovations. God made all of that possible through hardship. That is grace.

He has done so many things like this in my life that now when hardships come my way, and they always do, I stop and thank Him for what He will do with all of it. I live through hardships with an anticipation for what God is going to show me through it. It's completely ABSURD!

God's grace for us is ABSURD!
His love for us is ABSURD!
His plans for us are so EXTRA!
He is so EXTRA!

I just love Him to pieces. He's my favorite. My hope for everyone is that they would have a Dad like mine, a friend like my Jesus, a mentor like my Holy Spirit. Life is better with Him and His "extra" kind of grace.

- 1) When have you received grace when you least expected it?
- 2) Do you struggle to see God's grace in hardship or innocent suffering? Share with your small group or a trusted friend.
- 3) Were you ever like Jonah? Rebelling or running?
- 4) Were you ever like Saul? Or Paul? Do you have a conversion story? Or has God always been part of your life? Have you ever said it out loud? Have you written it down? *1 Peter 3:15 "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and respect;*
- 5) Challenge: Share your testimony or give a small account of the hope that is in you this week. Tell someone what God has done in your life.

