

11-6-2023

Made to be Gracious

Anna Bennett

*“For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory.”
Psalm 84:11 KJV*

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When we reject the false and alternative identities given to us by this world, our enemy, or others in our lives and choose only to find our identity and value in Jesus then we are free to live as we were always intended to live: 1) in dependent relationship with God, 2) in loving communion with others, and 3) as stewards of the earth.

The concept of *imago dei*—God made us in His image—is rooted in the fact that God is so generous that His identity cannot be contained and spills out into us as His children. Unlike ancient gods, He does not restrict Himself or stand off at a distance disinterested in humankind. Instead, the word *grace* means that God inclines Himself, or leans toward us, to extend His favor to us.^[1] Therefore, for us to live our true identity, we must also generously lean towards one another with grace, generosity, and forgiveness. We are disconnected from our true identity when we withdraw and withhold grace from one another.

“When we do not extend grace to those around us—when we hold ourselves back because of fear or pain—we are really restricting *ourselves* from being what we were meant to be. When we respond in anger and bitterness, it only furthers the divide between us as image bearers; and after the initial rush of adrenaline, we plummet into hollow, empty places. This is why people who hold grudges seem so small. They are not existing in the largeness of God’s grace; they are not existing in the fullness of His nature. They are not existing as image bearers.”^[2]

This week, as you make The Main Thing, the main thing in your life, may you invite the baptism of the Holy Spirit to cause you to lean toward God and towards the relationships in your life through His generous grace!

Reflection

1. Read Romans 2:8-10 – What does this teach you about your identity in Christ?
2. Read Ephesians 4:32 – Who is God inviting you to lean towards in grace and forgiveness today?
3. Read Titus 2:11-12 – Grace gives us a vision of what can be. What present and future reality is God inviting you into?

News and Resources

- Join us this week for Vespers at 7:30pm in Iles PE Center (doors open at 7pm).
- Find a meaningful sense of belonging by joining a student or faculty/staff LifeGroup today: [click here](#).
- If you are feeling anxious or have recently experienced loss or grief, call 423.236.2782 to talk to a counselor on campus! (This is a free service for Southern students.)
- **Talk** with Chaplain [Anna Bennett](#) or [Joseph Khabbaz](#) if you need someone to pray with or have a desire to grow spiritually.

^[1] <https://biblehub.com/greek/5485.htm>.

^[2] Anderson, Hannah. 2014. *Made for More: An Invitation to Live in God's Image*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 91.

Blessings