

Grace at the Grocery Store

All the checkout lines at the grocery store were long, so I pulled my cart into one that looked like it might move a bit quicker. As often seems to happen, though, my line seemed to barely move while those on either side of me were getting people through faster. I calmed my impatience and waited.

When I was close enough to glimpse our petite cashier, I could see her beaming gentle smiles, nodding often, and speaking engagingly as she checked an elderly man's groceries. I wondered what was taking so long, though, and what she was saying to him.

By the time the person in front of me was putting her groceries on the conveyer belt, it became apparent our young cashier had physical challenges. Her spirit, though, was expansive and strong. Encouraging and filled with joy.

"I am so glad you are here today!" she greeted the woman in front of me. "I love to see happy customers! How has your day been?" She continued speaking to the woman in front of me while she checked the groceries, and as so often happens when people are lavished with Grace, the customer began sharing things that were heavy on her that day. The checker listened carefully and patted the lady's hand as she bagged the last item. I did not hear all of what she said, but I did catch, "I will be praying for you this evening."

The woman looked intently at the cashier and breathed deeply. "I was here to get a few things, but you have lightened my load today. Thank you, Thank you."

I smiled as I unloaded my groceries onto the belt. I looked at my watch and thought I needed to hurry. "Good morning!" she greeted me. "And it is a good morning, isn't it?" She looked me in the eye to check my response as she began ringing up my purchases. I breathed a prayer to God. I get it, Lord, I get it, but can You please make this go quickly? She doesn't need to spend time giving me Grace like she did the others because I need to hurry.

And as the girl who will always be Grace to me (even though that is not her real name) engaged me sincerely, I sensed the Lord direct me to something profound.

In order to be a Grace giver, which I long to be, I have to first be a Grace receiver.

So friends, I pray that not only will your eyes be opened to all the Grace that is in your path today, but that you will take the time to receive it.

In the middle session of *LifeChangers*, Graham Cooke said, "When God's Grace is not yet glorious to us, it is a sign that we have something immense and precious still to discover in our relationship with God because His Grace overwhelms us. It overwhelms everything in its path... God has given us an outcome for every situation and circumstance. Every battle is winnable and everywhere out there, as you walk in newness of life, you will find the Presence of God going before you, going with you, coming behind you, and that you will be covered in all things by the Grace of His Presence."

Practical Application

Another question Graham Cooke asked Aglow early on is, did God pour out ALL His wrath, anger, and indignation upon Jesus on the Cross? Honestly, some of us kept our heads down and didn't meet Graham's eyes, because our religious mindsets wanted to reserve a little wrath for those still sinning today.

You may be wondering why we are asking you this question today. It matters how you answer that question, because when you are standing in the gap for your community, your family, people groups within your community, drug addicts, sex traffickers, those who are not like you, you must see them through God's Grace and Mercy. You MUST know that God poured out all His anger upon Christ and all He has left for the world and those in your community is love. Jesus took all sin, all sickness – really all the stuff that was in opposition to God's nature and took it upon Himself on the Cross.

It matters how you answer the question for yourself; otherwise you will always live under the false shadow of God's anger. He isn't angry at your behavior because He placed you in Christ at the Cross. When He looks at you, He doesn't see your mess up, He sees you IN CHRIST! And that is now He sees the people in your community, in your family. He sees them in Christ. Now, they simply need to ask Christ to come live inside them.

1. In order to give Grace, you must see yourself as worthy of Grace – the empowering Presence of God that enables you to become the person God sees every time He looks at you. Beloved, He isn't mad at you! He LOVES you. Let yourself off the hook!

Take as long as needed to have group discussion. Who thinks God is mad at them? Who knows that their life is hidden with God in Christ?

2. Discuss how group members view those who haven't accepted Christ yet? Do they see pre-Christians as people who deserve judgement? Do they want God to punish them? Hard questions perhaps, but in order to freely give the gift of Grace to others, each person must be able to receive the Grace given by God through Christ.
3. Again, in order to give Grace, we must understand that God prefers Mercy always over judgement. (James 2:3) When we stand in the gap in our community, we must see 'sinners' as loved by God BEFORE they are saved. We must be able to pray without asking God to judge people. As we are His hands, feet, and voice on earth, we must be able to say to the lost, come see a Man who knows all the wrong you have done, and loves you anyway. No one wants to receive someone who might be angry at them. It matters what we think in our hearts as we present the Gospel to others in our community. We must have our story straight. For more information, see the conference message transcripts from 2012 when Graham spoke on Getting Our Story Straight. Find it under the resource tab on aglow.org.