

Josh Allen | Grace Story

Grace by definition is the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinner and the bestowal of blessings.

Grace should be an obvious, easily identifiable thing. The grace of God is so abundant it should be simple to point it out and have something useful to talk to you about this morning. It should be easy, I thought. When Daryn asked me to talk, I immediately found that this is not the case. I genuinely struggled to come up with the *right* thing. I typed out and deleted no less than 10,000 words over the past 2 weeks. The grace of God in my life is so deep and so constant that it's been hard for me to identify a specific example to talk to you about that feels like it's worth the Church's time this morning.

Grace is being born to a pastor to kickstart a life of faith. Grace is living in 60° weather right now instead of -10° because that pastor took a job in Florida, moving down from Ohio. Grace is Sunday School teachers helping me believe at an early age that the stories in the Bible made sense. Grace is being kept from drugs even though my best friend in 5th grade was a dealer. Grace was being protected from despair when my parents divorced at an early age. Grace was drawing me back to church through an ex-girlfriend. Grace was the Lord bringing me to the altar when the youth pastor just wouldn't stop playing "Open the Eyes of My Heart" because he could see the Lord drawing me in. Grace was allowing me to move back in with my mom for the third time. Grace was meeting Brooke.

Grace is a friend handing me *Mere Christianity* by CS Lewis. Grace is reading the bible for the first time. Grace is friends highlighting scriptures in my Bible that I wouldn't have appreciated on my own. Grace was going to an overpriced college so that I might get connected with a mission trip to the slums of the Dominican Republic so that my eyes might be opened to how the rest of the world lives. Grace was an absence from Brooke so that I could get my head right and then realize *how much* I loved her and *how* to love her when the time came. Grace was Brooke's dad giving me his blessing even though I was about to change everything that influenced his decision. Grace was getting engaged in the snowy mountains of California. Grace is three amazing children.

Grace is being led to a Bible teaching church. Grace is the Lord bringing mentors into my life. Grace is my father-in-law. Grace is Ryan Carver. Grace is Sebastian Dortch. Grace is Jon Piper. Grace is Matt Chandler. Grace is CJ Mahaney. Grace is realizing, "Oh, this is the church Ryan has been talking about for two years..." Grace is being led to a reformed bible teaching church. Grace is meeting Jerry and Daryn my first Sunday at said church and realizing some pastors do talk to their congregation. Grace is recognizing discipleship does happen – it's not just a theory.

Grace is allowing me to wallow in my sin long enough to finally, **FINALLY**, become disgusted by it. Grace is Psalm 32. Grace is Psalm 23. Grace is Genesis 50. Grace is John 1 and 6 and Romans and James and the Revelation. Grace is finally seeing the Bible as the whole story of God's joy and delight in his people and his ferocious consumption with saving us from ourselves. Grace is God changing my perspective and showing me a little bit of what he sees.

Grace is a sovereign king who says he delights in his people. A God who in Isaiah 63 is in red apparel because he has fought off all of his enemies that he might carry us as his prize, his crown. Grace is living in a kingdom under a king who has saved me and delights in me and calls me to worship him and enjoy him while we stand around the throne together. Grace is the weight of guilt and shame and death being lifted from your shoulders.