

Grace & Gratitude

**Their meaning
for our lives.**



**Booklet #1 of a Four-Part Deacon
Project called "Tell It Like It Is,"
Highlighting the Wisdom of
WPC Members & Friends**

How/When have you experienced grace?

What are you thankful for?

How might you answer those questions?

How did others answer those same questions?

Welcome to our humble collection of wisdom from the folks of Westminster Presbyterian Church. We wanted to hear all about those moments when grace showed up, and what keeps everyone feeling grateful, so we asked everyone to share their personal encounters with grace and what they hold dear in gratitude. The following anonymous responses are the genuine goods, ranging from the extraordinary moments to the everyday blessings that make life sweet. So take a moment and let this collection of wisdom serve as a gentle reminder that there's always something to be grateful for, no matter the twists and turns of life's journey. May these heartfelt accounts bring you comfort and a renewed sense of appreciation for the small miracles and kindness that grace our lives every day.

The Deacons of
Westminster Presbyterian Church

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How & When Have You Experienced Grace?

Some years ago, I don't exactly know when, I began to question my beliefs and faith. I had negative thoughts about the "words of the Bible". I soon realized this was wrong but did not know exactly how to change it. I didn't pray a lot, I just asked God to show me some sign. By the grace of God this happened and my beliefs and faith restored. The negatives became positives.

I experience grace every time I remember that God loves me and forgives me always through Christ.

I experienced grace when I miraculously found my car keys in the last place I looked, which, of course, was in the first place I should have checked.

During moments of despair, the sermons and teachings at my church provided me with a sense of spiritual guidance and hope, helping me find solace in my faith.

I felt the embrace of grace when I witnessed the power of reconciliation and forgiveness between individuals who had been estranged for years, showing me the transformative nature of compassion.

I have been a life-long member of WPC and my faith has been nurtured by several excellent pastors.

WPC has always served the needs of my family with baptisms, weddings, and a funeral.

Through the love and support of my church community, I realized the importance of belonging and spiritual fellowship, finding comfort in the shared values and beliefs that unite us.

After our first son was born to us we hoped for more children, but they did not come. We decided to apply for adoption. The case study was in depth. We wondered if we would pass. We experienced grace. We would be blessed with our second son, then our third son, and then our daughter followed.

When my wife died, I was comforted by our pastor and extended family at WPC. I rarely feel alone since my wife died because of my large family and extended family at WPC.

Grace becomes evident when my off-key hymn singing blends into the church choir's beautiful harmonies, making me feel like I actually belong in the choir loft with them!

During my lifetime there were several times I could have been injured or killed but the Lord always protected me.

I find that if I take a couple hours a day and "lay and pray" with my eyes closed it's easy to experience the Grace of God.

Grace became apparent when I discovered a newfound sense of purpose and fulfillment through serving others in my community, realizing the joy that comes from selfless giving.

Each time I go for my walk I look up to the never-ending sky and immediately feel the grace of God. Knowing I am but a spec on this earth does not diminish my feeling of greatness through God's unconditional grace!

I had a recurring dream that bothered/worried me for several years. When I came to a point of asking God to take control of my life, there was no big, obvious change and no obvious affirmation that God had heard me. A few months later, I realized that I had not had that dream again. (Not even once to this day.) God's grace freed me from that worry and assured me He'd heard my prayer.

I experience grace every Sunday after we confess our sins during the Prayer of Humility. It's refreshing to be reminded that our "God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" loves us and forgives us!

One time that sticks out in my mind was in the summer of my 8th birthday. My sister and I were outside playing when a man came to our front door. He said to my mother that he had traveled a long way, was tired, and hadn't eaten in days. He wondered if she had any jobs he could do in exchange for a meal. My mother said she didn't have any jobs, but she would fix him a plate of food.

He sat on the back porch with my sister and I and fell asleep. Mom came out with the food, and I never saw anyone eat so fast in my life. He gave the empty plate back to my mother, and said, "God bless you." Then, he was on his way.

After he left, my mother told us we should never turn away someone who is hungry, remembering that Jesus once walked this earth as a man.

After he left, my sister and I ran up the driveway to see where he was going, but he was already gone. To this day I feel like that man was an angel, and that left a big impression on me. I am thankful for angels that walk among us and remind us that God is always near.

Grace was evident when I found the courage to confront my fears and pursue a new path in life, despite the uncertainties and challenges ahead.

Throughout my life God has always made sure I have just enough. Like the Lord's Prayer says, "Give us this day our daily bread." God always seems to give me just enough daily bread to make it through the day. Because of God's grace, I can relax knowing God will make sure I have everything I need, not the things I want.

I experienced grace when a stranger showed me unexpected kindness during a time of personal struggle, reminding me of the inherent goodness in people.

I experienced grace when I found the strength to overcome addiction and destructive habits, recognizing the power of faith and resilience in the journey of recovery.

I witnessed grace in the stories of individuals who had experienced profound loss and tragedy but still found the courage to live with gratitude and compassion, inspiring me to embrace a more positive outlook on life.

Grace touched my life when I discovered the strength to forgive myself for past mistakes, allowing me to move forward with a renewed sense of self-acceptance and inner peace.

Through the moments of joy and laughter shared with loved ones, I found grace in the simple pleasures of life and the bonds of friendship that enrich our experiences.

Grace became apparent when I found the courage to confront and heal from past trauma, allowing me to cultivate a sense of inner strength and resilience that empowered me to move forward with renewed purpose and determination.

I have always been a member of a church. At times in my life I have attended more, sometimes less. I would say I have been a faithful follower but I consider myself a late bloomer (in all aspects of my life). I have grown in my faith journey more over the last few years and am grateful for the love and support of my church family and for the patience of the Lord our God that brought me to point that I feel like I am moving in the right direction. So, I guess grace would include patience. Patience in waiting for a person to find their place in this world, to find what they are called to do.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus in order to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

I have always told my kids to let their light shine. Maybe I should have been practicing what I was preaching all those years and let my light shine sooner.

Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
(Matthew 5:16)

*So as Pastor Adam said in the October 27th Table Talk....
"Journeying with Jesus and endeavoring to live as He lived while here on earth is our best way of uncovering just what God has planned for us. It is through following Jesus Christ that we become the people God has always intended for us to be. We have gifts to share and lives to change here on earth in the here and now. In the name of the one who loved us enough to make this world home."*

That Pastors note really spoke to me. I have read it over and over. I'm going to try not wasting any more time!!!!

What does experiencing grace mean? I experience grace in a baby's smile, seeing children play joyfully and with abandon. I experience grace on the beach at sunrise. I experience grace when I can find rest and sleep. God is always with me.

What Are You Thankful For?

I am thankful God extends his Grace even when we do not deserve it.

I loved and married my high school sweetheart for 50 years.

*There is always something to be thankful for...many things to be thankful for, but I will try to list a few in this small space...thankful for living in the USA...having had loving parents...grand-parents...for my children, grand kids and great grandkids...have always had food on the table and family to share it with...a roof over my head and for my many friends...longtime friends, new friends...church friends...being able and the desire to do for others...and thankful for feeling and knowing God's presence is with me.
I am thankful, grateful and Blessed!*

Thankful for family and friends, my church, my minister, my freedom, and my country!

Having good health and being successful in two careers for 50 years.

I am thankful for my wonderful friends and family who support me, cheer me up when I am down, provide me joy, and provide me opportunities to love and give myself to them. I am thankful that we can laugh together, cry with and for each other, sing together, pray together, and just "be there" for each other.

I'm thankful for the invention of coffee, without which I'm pretty sure I wouldn't be able to function.

I am thankful for the people both in the past and in the present who have guided me in life to know and love God and to live my life as Christ would want me to. I am thankful for my church family.

I am grateful for the laughter and joy that my children bring into my life, as they remind me of the innocence and wonder of the world and the importance of embracing every moment with childlike curiosity and enthusiasm.

Having a large family with children who have successful careers and many grandchildren.

The years of our life have passed with ups and downs, and now our children are adults. Our adopted children don't have the same biological mother or father, but we are a family. We have experienced birthdays, graduations, college and marriages. We have many grandchildren. The children have shown us much of the world. Our decades together have been blessed by our family. We are thankful.

Having a good state retirement pension and the funds available to help my family and church when needed.

I'm grateful for the invention of stretchy pants, which have graciously accommodated my love for dessert.

*Having the opportunity to serve the church and congregation
in a leadership role.*

I'm thankful for our Book Sale Team!

*I'm so grateful every morning I wake up and am given the right
to be alive and able to thank God for my peace of mind. I'm
grateful throughout the day to take "spot check inventories" of
my day, to be kind to others and to be grateful for my life. I'm
grateful at night that I've had a full and loving day, and I thank
God for another day.*

*I'm grateful for the cartoons at the end of the church's weekly
e-newsletter, because sometimes a good laugh is all you need
to brighten even the gloomiest of days.*

*I am most thankful for Pastor Adam's calling to WPC. Having
him here with his wife and sons is a blessing. Pastor Adam
brings a renewed vision through his leadership, knowledge,
compassion, encouragement and excitement. He has brought
me closer to my church, faith, and God.*

*I'm grateful for the invention of cozy blankets, and I'm thankful
for the caring WPC folks who crocheted a blanket and gifted it
to me when I wasn't feeling well. It's now my faithful
companion on my couch when I watch our worship services
online.*

*I am grateful for the opportunity to witness the beauty of
nature and the wonders of creation, which constantly remind
me of the presence of a divine and loving Creator.*

I'm thankful for the invention of sticky notes, without which my entire life would be just a chaotic jumble of forgotten tasks and missed appointments.

I am thankful for the simple joys of everyday life, like laughter, good food, and the warmth of a loving community, which bring lightness and happiness to my days.

I am grateful for the freedom to pursue my passions and interests, as it allows me to explore my creativity and express myself in ways that bring fulfillment and purpose to my life.

I'm thankful for the kind stranger who returned my lost wallet, making me believe that there's still goodness and honesty in the world.

I'm thankful for the generous people of our church who always step up and give of their time, talents, and money every time a situation calls for it.

I'm grateful for the unexpected compliments that brighten my day and remind me that a small gesture of kindness can have a big impact.

I'm thankful for the never-ending number of amazing places in our area where you can get good pizza and good coffee, just usually not at the same time!

I'm grateful for the joy of spontaneous adventures and road trips with friends, where the best memories are made from unexpected detours and quirky roadside attractions.

Several years ago, we downsized our home. It was impossible at that time to continue with my hobby which I loved so much. Recently, with God's grace and the help of prayer and friends, I found a way to resume my hobby. I am a happy camper again! To God be the glory. Amen.

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise Him, all creatures here below
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
Amen!*

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

READ: *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)*

PRAY: Thank you, God, for the gift of your presence with us throughout the year. Thank you for your love that never leaves us. As we think about this past year, help us to remember people and moments for which we are grateful. We thank you for (pause to list areas in your life where you are grateful). Continue to help us to be just, kind, and humble towards others and ourselves.

In Jesus' name, amen.