



# Is forgiveness really free?

And other questions about grace, the law and being saved

by Michael Jensen

## Introduction

1. Can you relate to the experience of Juliet?
2. What questions do you have about grace, law and forgiveness that you are hoping this book will answer?

## Chapter 1: *A precious word*

1. How have you heard the word “grace” used in general conversation? Does this use differ from, or distort, the biblical meaning of the word?
2. Can you think of any other Biblical examples of God showing his grace to Israel (other than the Exodus)?
3. How can God be just and righteous, and yet justify ungodly people? Try and give an answer to this question that someone who is not a Christian and has little Bible knowledge could understand.
4. Is grace simply unjust?
5. Why does Paul say “if it were, grace would be no longer grace” in Romans 11:6? Check the passage for the context.
6. What would you say to a Christian person who continually felt guilty?

## Chapter 2: *Is forgiveness really free?*

1. Why do you think that people find grace so hard to understand? Have you found it to be hard to grasp in your personal experience? What other parts of our culture make grace difficult to understand at a personal level?
2. How does grace differ from karma?
3. If God’s grace makes the last first and the first last, then is it in fact simply unfair and even immoral?
4. What is the greater temptation for you: to presume on grace, or to think it is simply impossible for you?
5. “God’s economy is the economy not of the wage, but of the gift.” What does this mean? Is it true? Don’t his gifts come with strings attached?

## Chapter 3: *If grace is free, is it worth anything?*

1. What is the most valuable thing you own? What is the most precious to you?
2. “God’s grace comes for free, but it costs everything you have to get it”. How does this make sense? Doesn’t this undo the idea of free grace?
3. What are the things we do that cheapen grace? How should we receive free grace as if it were precious?
4. How is wanting the kingdom of God not just another kind of selfish greed? What makes it not selfish?
5. How can we learn to make the kingdom of God something we truly value?
6. Why can’t God just forgive us? Why was the cross of Christ necessary?

## Chapter 4: *Why does God give grace to some and not to others?*

1. What is the apparent “dark side” to grace?
2. Is saying “we don’t know the mind of God” simply a cop out, or is it a necessary conclusion to draw? Is it biblical?
3. Is God then unjust? Is he unfair? Are the two the same?
4. How would you explain to someone the Bible’s teaching about whether Christians can fall away and lose their salvation or not?

## Chapter 5: *What place does Old Testament law have in the life of grace?*

1. If the ten commandments are still relevant to Christians today, then why are the other laws—about food and ceremonies—not? Has God changed his mind?
2. When Paul says “you are not under law but under grace” what does he mean? (Romans 6 v 14)
3. What does it mean to say “you can’t read the laws without the story”?

4. What is the ongoing relevance of the Old Testament law for Christians today?
5. What stops “love” being a pretext for doing what we really want to do?

#### **Chapter 6: *Is grace a licence to sin?***

1. Many critics of grace have argued that grace allows people to do what they like. Is that fair? How is it not the case?
2. Why do Christians do good?
3. What did Bonhoeffer mean by cheap and costly grace? Can you see examples in the contemporary church?
4. Does the idea of “costly grace” undermine the idea of free grace?
5. What do we do with ongoing sin in our lives?

#### **Chapter 7: *How does grace change me?***

1. What makes the human will so mysterious? Why do we find it so hard to do even the things we intend to do, or want to do?
2. Why do “try harder” solutions not work? Is that your experience?
3. How is grace the source and driver of the kind of life the Christian lives?
4. What does grace tell us about ourselves?
5. Which of the four strategies on page 63-64 could you work on? Which do you think is the most effective for you?

#### **Chapter 8: *How does grace change us?***

1. What does it mean for the constitution of the people of God to be grace and faith?
2. Have a look at Ephesians 2. How does Paul’s teaching about grace work itself out in the message about who is invited into the people of God?
3. Does your church have any ways in which it (perhaps subconsciously) excludes people of a different background? How could these be challenged or changed?
4. What are spiritual gifts, and how are they to be used? How can you be playing your part in building up the people of God?
5. Why is important that “*spiritual gifts are not about self-expression*”?

#### **Chapter 9: *How bad are human beings really?***

1. Are all human beings bad? Are there different levels of bad?
2. What was Pelagius on about? Why was his message so convincing?
3. Are even little babies sinful?
4. Can we do anything about our sinful state?
5. Is faith something we do for which God rewards us? Why/ why not?

#### **Summary**

1. What has struck you most deeply as you have read this book?
2. If someone asked you the question that titles the book—*Is forgiveness really free?*—how would you answer them?
3. Having read the whole book how do you feel about the central question it poses and the answer to it: confused, joyful, relieved or something else?

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