

The Many Faces of Grace



“Now is the time to know that all that you do is sacred... Now is the time for you to deeply compute the impossibility that there is anything but Grace.”

~ Hafiz

An eBook by Dr. Dennis Merritt Jones

*I have always been drawn to the word
“Grace” because it can be defined and,
thus, experienced in a vast number of ways.
What does the face of grace look like to
you?*

As we mature chronologically and spiritually, our understanding of what grace is and how it applies to our lives evolves. For many of us we need look no further than the dinner table for our original understanding and experience of grace. I recall as an eight-year old child, sitting around the dinner table with my family, eyes closed, holding hands, saying “grace” in perfect unison. At the time, this action seemed little more than a perfunctory, memorized, incantation, thanking an invisible sky God for the meal we were about to ingest.

In hindsight, however, I can see my parents were really quite brilliant--they knew exactly what they were doing; they fully understood that grace was far more than a perfunctory ritual—it was about grooming a consciousness of “conscious connection.” Dinner was the only time of the day when our family of six could all be together at the same time and that time for connection was the glue in our home that bonded us with one another—and it is a bond which still holds to this day. As I matured and found my own spiritual path, grace took on a new face—a different form—and its meaning deepened, becoming the portal for a different kind of connection; a sacred connection. I grew to learn that grace is more than uttering certain words that connect us *to* God—it’s something that, with unclouded perception, we can feel moving within and all around us in

real time, unmistakably knowing it as the presence *of* God. This is when the word Grace becomes a proper noun because it is another name for God; whether we can see it with our physical eyes at the time or not, when we are fully conscious, Grace is what we *experience* when all perceived separation from God has fallen away —and this can and does happen in a heartbeat.

As odd as it may seem, it is often in the most dire of circumstances that people report feeling the Grace of God moving through them without their expecting or praying for it to happen.

It can be a humbling experience when we open to the idea that Grace is given to us regardless of whether we expect it or believe we deserve it. God's Grace cannot be earned--if it could, that would imply it could also be taken away, which is an impossibility; the gift of God's Grace is irrevocable because by Its very nature God, as a universal principle, is omnipresent, nonjudgemental and unconditionally giving. It is when we assign a personality to God which is sometimes gentle, loving, and giving, and other times judgmental and punitive, that we mistake God's Grace as a favor for which we must compete, petition, grovel, or win by means of ornately pious behavior. This is clearly not the kind of God Ernest Holmes wrote about in his definition of Grace in *The Science of Mind*:

"Grace is the givingness of Spirit to Its Creation...but we need to recognize it. It is not something God imposed upon us, but the logical result of the correct acceptance of life and a correct relationship to the Spirit. We are saved by Grace to the extent we believe in, accept, and seek to embody, the Law of Good."

Few of us may have ever thought of Grace as the "Law of Good" in action but that is an empowering idea to wrap our minds around. Along with being a proper noun, this is when Grace becomes a verb as well. The point Dr. Holmes is making is we don't have to beg, bargain, or grovel for the Grace of the Beloved because God is constantly *giving* all of Itself to Its Creation *all the time*; the only caveat is that we must be willing and able to identify and align with this Law of Good, by opening to and *accepting* the gift that Grace brings—and *therein lies the rub*: Sometimes it can be extremely difficult to see what Holmes refers to as the Law of Good in the middle of what appears to be nothing less than something really bad. Often our faith, or lack of faith, in God's presence is too easily seduced by appearances because most of us have been conditioned to believe that Grace only comes gift wrapped as love and light, clouds miraculously parting, and angels singing on high in three-part harmony. The deeper spiritual truth is that the faces of Grace are numerous--it can come upon us wearing many different disguises--some of which may not always look the way we might prefer.

Such was the case for spiritual teacher Ram Dass, who, in February 1997, suffered a devastating stroke. In a video documentary titled *Fierce Grace*, filmed a few years later, he remarks, “This isn’t who I expected to be; stroke, Grace, stroke, Grace, stroke, Grace--this has been my major spiritual exercise; bringing these two things together.” He goes on to say, “I felt this was a terrible, terrible thing...the stroke caused me to lose my faith—and it was a cold, cold place—and I suddenly realized it was fierce Grace because it was one Grace that turned my life around.” At another point in the interview, crediting the Grace he found in being “stroked,” he states, “...there are qualities in me that would have never come out.” My sense is Ram Dass was humbly, consciously, and courageously reconciling his humanity with this divinity and, in so doing, found himself entering the sacred portal to a redefining moment. This was when he realized that the Grace which opened the door to his transformation truly was fierce because the door wasn’t gently opened—it was brutally kicked open in an extremely painful and completely unexpected way--and yet, it was, nonetheless, by his own admission, the Grace needed to serve him in his continued evolution as a human being and a spiritual being. Suffice it to say, when we can see and *accept* it as a blessing, fierce Grace imbues us with the courage to stand face-to-face with “what is” and dance with it. Again, it’s about conscious connection: When we enter this dance consciously and embrace Grace with the tenacity to not let go until we receive its blessing, we invariably draw something good from it.

*To bless anyone or anything is to confirm
the presence of God at the center of that
which is being blessed.*

Regardless of the different ways in which Grace reveals Itself to us, when we can consciously see, welcome, and embrace It, we may rest well in knowing we are receiving God's blessings. This is what it means, not only to "say" grace but to *witness* Grace activated in every area of our daily lives—in our homes, meals, bodies, relationships, careers, on our planet, and beyond. This is why it is important to develop a mindfulness practice of blessing everyone and everything in our lives: Grace is showering Its gifts upon us 24/7 but, as Dr. Holmes reminds us, Grace is not something that is imposed upon us; *we must enter into Its presence* wherein It patiently awaits our arrival and acceptance. The practice is to mindfully accept life as it is in the moment, while continually *moving toward a deeper relationship with Spirit*, even when, on the surface, God's Grace appears to be awkwardly missing. As an example, in the following excerpt from poet David Whyte's beautiful book, "*Crossing the Unknown Sea*"—the metaphor is obvious: "You are like Rilke's Swan in his awkward waddling across the ground...moving toward the elemental water, where he belongs. It is the simple contact with the water that gives him grace and presence." Likewise, it is by the simple contact with our elemental Spirit, where we belong, that the Grace and presence of God reveals Itself, and our lives are transformed. Again, conscious connection is the conduit through which Grace flows into our lives in a multitude of ways—the faces of Grace are many.

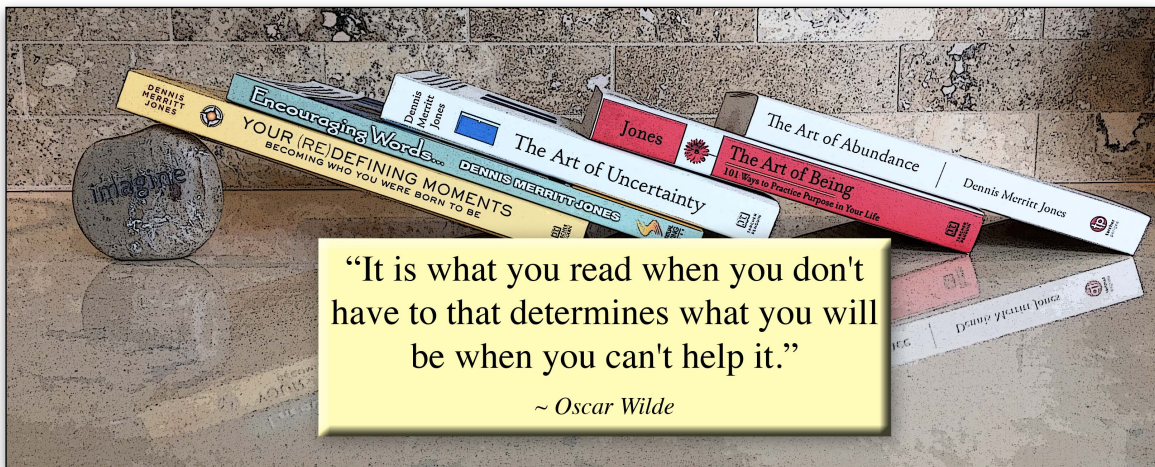
***“A mystic is one who senses
the Divine Presence.”***

~ Ernest Holmes, *The Science of Mind*

Have you ever thought of yourself as a mystic? If you are working at consciously living in the flow of God’s Grace you might just be a mystic in training, and therefore, you could consider this your clarion call to mindful living—the practice is to be present in the moment with “what is” by realizing you are *already* swimming in the spiritual element in which you belong; Divine Presence. When we merge with God’s presence in the present moment we lose ourselves in a flow of energy that tends to dissolve the imaginary line between where we end and God begins—this *is* Grace wrapping Itself around us as it does all living things: To see a hawk soar effortlessly on the thermals overhead without ever moving his wings is to witness Grace in flight. To watch a dancer glide with abandon and such fluidity that she seems to defy gravity is to witness the seamless energy of Grace in motion. It is fierce Grace that sustains a butterfly as it struggles to free itself from the cocoon of its own making, giving it the strength needed to express a new found life with wings. Grace is the eternality of life forever flowing—Grace is what we see in the eyes of an infant as she draws her very first breath or an elder’s eyes as he releases his very last breath—And it is that same Grace that spans the sacred continuum between those two events which blesses and sustains us always, in all ways; we simply need to awaken to Its presence and accept the gift that has already been given.

Life gets no more mystical than when we consciously live in Grace. This is when the words of Haifz ring ever more true; “*Now is the time*

to know that all that you do is sacred...*Now* is the time for you to deeply compute the impossibility that there is anything other than Grace.” No doubt, there are many, many faces of Grace: From the simple meals we mindfully share with others, to the Divine Impulse that animates all of life, Grace happens—the only question is, will we notice it happening? If we remember the practice of conscious connection it will be hard to miss.



“It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it.”

~ Oscar Wilde

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