

HEALING GRACE
Good News About Grace - Part 4 of 10
Psalm 147:3 (NIV)
Rick Warren

"God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."
Ps. 147:3 (NIV)

How Does God Heal A Broken Heart?

BY CHANGING _____

*"Let God transform you into a new person by changing
the way you think." Romans 12:2 (NLT)*

HOW GOD SEES ME BECAUSE OF HIS GRACE

1. I AM _____

"... Christ has accepted you." Romans 15:7 (NIV)

"You have been chosen by God Himself." 1 Peter 2:9 (LB)

"Even if my mother and father forsake me, the Lord will receive me." Ps. 27:10 (INV)

2. I AM _____

"You belong to God..." 1 John 4:4

"You have been bought and paid for by Christ so you belong to Him..." 1 Cor. 7:23 (LB)

"God says, `You are precious to Me.'" Isa. 43:4 (GN)

3. I AM _____

"The mountains and hills may crumble but My love for you will never end; so says the Lord who loves you." Isa. 54:10 (GN)

4. I AM _____

"I am the God who forgives your sins, and I do this because of who I am. I will not hold your sins against you." Isa. 43:25 (GN)

"... Through what Christ would do for us, God decided to make us holy in His eyes, without a single fault -- we stand before Him covered with His love." Eph. 1:4 (LB)

5. I AM _____

"I have strength for all things in Christ who empowers me -- I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses inner strength into me, that is, I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency!" Phil. 4:13 (Amp)

"Once you were less than nothing; now you are God's own!" 2 Pet. 2:10 (LB)

"May the God of hope fill you with joy ... that by the power of the Holy Spirit, your whole life and outlook may be radiant with hope." Rom. 15:13 (Ph)

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One of the things I've learned in 28 years of ministry is that nobody sails through life. We all have problems. We all have hurts. You have some hidden wounds. You have some emotional scars that nobody else sees but they're there and they hurt. Another thing I've learned in life is that one of the deepest causes of those hurts is rejection. We all face it at different times in life. Rejection from parents or rejection from peers or rejection from partners, from an ex-spouse, from a so-called friend. Some of you can even remember things that were said to you on the playground 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago and they still hurt today. We don't let those things go lightly.

Today, I want us to look at God's Healing Grace and how He heals the hidden wounds of our life. We've been looking at Saving Grace, Sustaining Grace, Guilt and Grace. Today, I want us to look at Healing Grace. The Bible says in Psalm 147:3 *"God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."* Some of you say, "That's great! I can sure use that. I've got a broken heart. I've got some hidden wounds that need to be healed."

How does He do it? How does God heal hidden wounds? The Bible tells us by changing the way we think. By changing our minds. By changing how we see God, how we see the pain, and particularly how we see ourselves. The Bible says in Romans 12 *"Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."* If you want to change your life, if you want to get well, get over hurt, you've got to change the way you think.

The Bible says, *"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."* If you see yourself as a loser you're going to tend to be a loser in life. If you see yourself as a victim, you're going to tend to put yourself in situations where you're victimized. If you don't see yourself as a creative person, you think you're uncreative, you won't create much in life. If you see yourself as a failure, you're going to tend to reinforce what you feel about yourself and you're going to fail. It's very simple. The Bible says our beliefs determine our behaviors. The way we think determines the way that we act.

There's a problem with that. The problem is some of your beliefs are false, wrong, erroneous, mistaken. You picked up all kinds of beliefs growing up. Because some adult said it to you, you tended to accept it as gospel fact. You believed it and many of you are still acting on those beliefs even though they're not true. They're not right.

Today, I want us to look at what God says about you.

Remember when they used to have those fun zones and fun houses where they had these warped mirrors in them and you could look at yourself. When you look at a distorted mirror, it gives you a distorted picture of yourself -- bigger, skinnier, taller, parts of your body would be real big and other parts real small. If you look at a distorted mirror you get a distorted image of yourself.

Growing up, the adults around your life were mirrors. You tended to accept whatever they said as the truth. If they said things like, "You're never going to amount to anything" you filed that

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away and tended to believe it. Or if they said, "You're not good... You're dumb ... Can't you do anything right? ..." You filed all that data in your mind. Some of you today are still acting on that wrong material, on that incorrect data.

I want us to look at how God changes our mind and helps us not only see Him in a new light but see ourselves in a new light. I want us to look at God's view of You. God always tells you the truth.

When an adult was a mirror in your life, have you ever met a perfect adult. You have never met a perfect adult and as a result their image of you was incorrect. Even some of the good things they said about you were incorrect. But God never tells a lie, He always tells the truth.

Today I want us to look at five things that God says about you that are true because of His grace.

I know it took a little effort to get here this week end. We had a big El Nino storm. But I think when we finish today, you will be glad you came. If you grasp these five truths this could be one of the most important days in your life. This could be a life changing day if you'll not only understand these five things but begin to feel them and begin to act on this new data -- you'll be different, radically different. And you'll be free from some of those scars and hidden wounds that have been holding you up in life.

What does the Bible say? What does God say about me? Because of God's grace, the Bible says...

1. I AM ACCEPTABLE.

That's pretty good to start off with because most of us spend our entire lives trying to be accepted by others. We want to be acceptable to our parents, to our peers, to our enemies, to people we envy, by total strangers. Most of us do not realize that the drive to be accepted is behind many of the things you do in life. Your desire to be accepted influences the way you dress, the kind of car you drive, the kind of house you live in, the career you choose and many other things. People will do the craziest things in order to be accepted. People do all kinds of crazy things just to feel accepted by somebody.

Remember as a kid when you were dared to do something. It was stupid but you went ahead and did it anyway. Why? You wanted to fit in with the crowd. You wanted to be accepted. Some of you have got it in your mind, "If I could just be perfect, then everybody would love me. Then everybody would accept me." I'm sorry to tell you this, but that won't work either. Even if you were perfect, people are going to reject you. The Bible says Jesus was perfect, yet He was despised and rejected of men. He was rejected by His own people. The problem is not perfection, the problem was with them.

Jesus tells us that this issue is settled when we accept His grace. Romans 15:7 "*Christ has accepted you.*" Circle "accepted". Notice there is no condition. It doesn't say, "Christ will accept you if you go to church every week." It doesn't say, "Christ will accept you if you promise

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to be perfect... if you keep the Ten Commandments." No, it's unconditional because it's based on God's grace not your performance.

Most of you have accepted Jesus Christ into your heart and life. You've stepped across the line. You're on God's side. You've asked God to bring you into His family. You've accepted Christ. But have you ever realized that God has accepted you? God has accepted you just as you are without any conditions on it because of His grace. The Bible says God has chosen you. *"You have been chosen by God himself"* because of His grace.

Remember as a kid, how good it felt to be chosen, like being chosen on the right team. Remember at recess or after school and two popular kids are captains of the baseball team and you're really wanting to get chosen by the good team and not the bad team. And you're praying, "Oh, God! Don't let me be the last person to be chosen!" You know the bad feeling of "I'm the last one. I'm the reject. Everybody else got chosen except me."

Being chosen does self esteem a whole lot of good. I was chosen by Kay Warren. You have no idea what that means for me because you don't know the competition I beat out for her. It does you good to be chosen when you're chosen for an award, a promotion, special recognition. The Bible says you were chosen by God. You are acceptable by His grace, not because you deserve it but because of His grace toward you.

Some of you grew up with an unpleasable parent. No matter what you did, it was never good enough. If you got C's, they wanted B's. If you got B's on your report card, they wanted A's. If you got A's, they wanted straight A's. If you got straight A's they wanted you to take extra curricular activities and add that in too. No matter what you did, either they were unwilling or unable or something, they just did not give you the approval and the acceptance that you craved.

Some of you today are still trying to earn your parent's acceptance. They may be dead. They may live in another state. But in the back of your mind you're hearing, "You're never going to amount to anything." And you're thinking, "I'm going to prove them wrong. I'm going to prove it to them." You're still reacting toward your parents, rather than responding to God.

Let me be honest with you, very frank. If you did not get your parent's approval or acceptance as a child, in all likelihood you're never going to get it. It's their problem, not your's. In all likelihood, they're never going to say, "I approve of everything you do. I accept you unconditionally."

Let me say something else even more important: You don't need it. You don't need their approval to be happy in life.

There are nearly six billion people in this world. Is it ok that two people don't like you? There are plenty of other people who will accept you and love you and not judge you and not hold a standard that there's no way you're going to live up to. If God accepts you, then they've got a problem. It's not your problem.

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Psalm 27:10 *"Even if my mother and father forsake me, the Lord will receive me."* God says, "I accept you." If God accepts me and you don't, that's your problem.

But God doesn't leave it there.

2. God says I AM VALUABLE.

I am valuable because of His grace. I am valuable. I am worth something. How much do you think you're worth? I'm not talking about your net worth. I'm talking about your self worth. Net worth and self worth have no relationship whatsoever. Your value has no relationship to your valuables. The Bible says that a man's life does not consist of the abundance of things he possesses. I'm talking about how much are you valuable as a person?

You say, "I don't know. How do you judge the value of a person?" How do you judge the value of anything? There are two things that determine value in life. One, who owns it. Two, what is somebody willing to pay for it. Those two things create value.

First, the ownership determines the value of something. We all know that something that's owned by a celebrity is far more valuable than something that's owned by one of us. For instance, would a car owned by Elvis sell for more than your car? How about a pair of tennis shoes owned by Michael Jordan rather than a pair of your tennis shoes? Any difference? How about a bed owned by the President? The fact is, the owner of something adds value to something that is normally just common. Who do you belong to?

1 John 4:4 *"You belong to God."* Imagine your value. When you come to Christ and say, "Jesus Christ, I accept Your gift of salvation, I accept Your gift of grace," and you step across that line, God puts you in His family. All of a sudden you now belong to God. Everyone is created by God but everyone does not belong to God. Only those who belong to God are those who choose to say, "God put me in Your family" because of my faith in Christ. But if you've done that, you belong to God. That means you're priceless. You're valuable.

Remember a few years ago, one of the oil sheiks in the middle east had his daughter kidnapped? Big headlines around the world. They put out the sign that said, "Pay any price because she's the daughter of the king." You're a child of God. God says you're not only acceptable, you are valuable. He owns you. You belong to Him.

The other thing that determines value is what somebody's willing to pay for it. How much is your house worth? It's only worth whatever anybody's willing to pay for it. You may have paid \$250,000 for your house. But if somebody else is only willing to pay \$200,000, guess what it's worth? \$200,000. If I hold up a baseball card and I say, "How much is this card worth?" It may be worth five dollars or it may be worth five thousand, depending upon what you're willing to pay for it. If I hold up a piece of art and say, "How valuable is this piece of art?" It's worth whatever the market will pay for it.

How much was paid for you? 1 Corinthians 7 *"You have been bought and paid for by Christ [in other words, His own life He gave for you], so you belong to Him."* The greatest ransom ever

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paid was when Jesus Christ paid for your sins and you were bought with a price and God exchanged His own son for you. God said, "You are valuable enough that I will give My own Son to die for you." That's how valuable you are. If you want to know your value, look at the cross. Jesus with outstretched hands says, "This is how valuable you are." This much. This is how much you matter to Me. This is how much I care about you. You matter this much." When people say to you, "You're worthless. You don't amount to much," they're dead wrong. They're lying. God says you matter this much. Jesus did not die for junk. Jesus died for you because you are valuable to Him.

Isaiah 43:4 *"God says, 'You are precious to me.'"* Circle "precious". You're not only acceptable, you're valuable because of God's grace.

3. The Bible tells us because of God's healing grace I AM LOVABLE.

That one sure feels good when you've had a broken heart. When you've been rejected you don't feel too lovable. When somebody has rejected you -- a girlfriend/boyfriend/husband/wife/parent/whatever -- you don't feel lovable, you feel like a dufus. "Nobody loves me! I'm not worth anything! I'm not loved by anybody." You're wrong. The Bible says *"The mountains and hills may crumble but My love for you will never end," so says the Lord who loves you.* God's love will never end.

There are two characteristics that make God's love different from human love.

1. God's love is consistent. It's never going to end. God is not fickle. God is not changing His mind every moment saying, "I like you," today and "Get lost!" tomorrow. God doesn't have bad hair days. God is not unpredictable. Most of us have experienced inconsistent love because we live with human beings. We're all inconsistent. One lady said, "Growing up, from day to day, I never knew whether I'd be hugged or slugged. It depended on the mood that my mom was in." We grow up with inconsistent love. Inconsistent love produces insecure children. God says, "My love is never going to end for you."

2. God's love is unconditional. It's not based on performance. It's not based on you measuring up. As human beings, we try to give unconditional love to other people, to our children, to our spouses. But we can't do it all the time because we're imperfect. And we do give conditional love. We grow up with conditional love and we give it to others. When you say, "I love you if you love me" that's a condition -- conditional love. When you say, "I love you, if you'll marry me" that's conditional love. "I love you if you meet my needs" -- conditional love. Obviously when those needs stop being met, what happens? People divorce. People leave each other. Or when you say, "I love you because..." that's conditional love. "I love you because you make me feel good". What happens if they stop making you feel good? "I love you because you're good looking/you're beautiful." What happens when they lose their beauty? That's conditional love. "I love you because you're talented." What happens if tomorrow you meet somebody who's more talented? Do you leave them and go for somebody else? That's conditional love.

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But God says to you, "I love you period! No conditions. No qualifiers. Just in My grace." You don't ever have to ask, "I wonder if God's going to love me tomorrow? I wonder if God's going to love me today? I wonder if God's going to love me next week? Did I pray enough? Did I do enough right things? Is God going to love me now because I had a quiet time?" His love is not conditioned upon your performance. That's grace. And we always get into trouble when we doubt God's love.

God says, in Christ, I am acceptable, I am valuable, and I am lovable. Even when I don't feel very lovely, He still loves me. His love is consistent.

4. The Bible says because of His grace I AM FORGIVABLE.

That's a good one because I need that one a lot. I blow it. I make mistakes. I am forgivable.

Did you read about the guy going up to Big Bear to his cabin. On the way, driving up, he ran out of gas. He got out of his car but he forgot to put the brake on and so the car backed over the cliff. So he starts walking up to his cabin. On the way up the mountain, one of these El Nino storms came in. He got completely soaked and drenched. He's shivering to the bone and knows he's going to get pneumonia. He's feeling lower and lower. Finally he sees his cabin and as he saw it, lightning struck it and it caught on fire. He began to cry out, "Why me, God? Why me?" And all of a sudden he hears this voice from heaven, "Because some people just tick me off!"

I tell you that joke because some of you really feel that way about God. You're Christians, you're believers, yet anytime anything goes wrong in your life you think, "God's getting even with me. He knows that stupid thing that I did." And anything that goes wrong in your life you attribute it to God getting revenge.

Does God really do that with His children? No. Never. The Bible says in Isaiah 43:25 "*I am the God who forgives your sins and I do this because you deserve it.* No. That's not what it says. "*I do this because of who I am.* It's not based on your deserving it. It's based on God is a forgiving God. He says, "*I will not hold your sins against you.*" Write down next to that verse, "God doesn't carry grudges." God does not carry grudges. He says "I'm not going to hold your sins against you." If you have received the grace of Jesus Christ and made Him number one in your life He says, "I'm not going to hold your sins against you. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." God doesn't rehearse it. He releases it. Some people think God is mad at them all the time.

I've got a friend who's a pastor up in Fresno. He said there's a lady in his church and she's a whiner. She whines all the time, cranky. Every week she tells him about something she's felt guilty about. "This week pastor, God really convicted me about..." and she names whatever she feels bad about that week. She was doing this week after week, every Sunday after church. One day my friend said, "Does God ever say anything nice to you?"

I want to ask you that question. Does God ever say anything nice to you? Some of you all you hear is God saying, "Not good enough! You blew it again. Not good enough." That's not God.

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You're playing an old tape of an unpleasable parent who was saying, "You're not cutting it." You've taken an image of an imperfect parent and you've put it on God and you've made God an unpleasable parent. That's wrong. God says, "I wipe it out. You're forgiven. When you come to Christ, you're forgiven."

Ephesians 1:4 *"Through what Christ would do for us, God decided to make us holy in His eyes, without a single fault we stand before Him covered with His love."* If you don't accept the grace of God, you're not covered with His love. But when you say, "Jesus Christ, I accept what You did for me on the cross and I want You to be number one in my life," you are covered with His love.

What a verse that is! It says He decided to make us without a single fault. Before you were even born, God knew every stupid thing you were going to do. And He still made you and He still loves you and He still cares about you. He knew it. He's a gracious God.

The Bible says when we give our lives to Christ, He forgives our sin because Jesus paid for all our sins on the cross. When Jesus died on the cross, which sins did He die for? All of them. That not only means the sins you've already committed, but it also includes the ones you don't even know you're going to commit yet. The ones next week, next year, next decade. Ones you haven't even thought of yet. New sins. He's already paid for them all. They're covered. God doesn't go around trying to get even, trying to get revenge, trying to get back at His children because all that punishment was paid for on the cross. If Jesus paid your punishment, you don't have to pay for it yourself.

The good news is, when I receive Christ into my life, all my sins are wiped out -- including the ones for the rest of my life. And that's grace. I know some of you think when you get to heaven that God's got a movie of your entire life of all the bad things you've done and He's going to play it for everybody else to see -- all your secret sins you did on earth. That would not be heaven; that'd be hell. The Bible says for sure there is going to be a judgement day for those who have not accepted the grace of God, who have rejected and thumbed their nose to God and said, "No. I'm going to work my way to heaven. I'm not going to trust in Christ." There is going to be a judgement day for those who do not receive Christ.

But here's the good news. The Bible tells us that if you've accepted the grace of God into your life, you get a hall pass on that day. You get to skip that part of the judgment. Is that good news?!? The Bible says we're passed from death into life and we skip the judgment. So right now, take a deep breath and let it out and thank God you're not in on the judgment day. That, in itself, would be enough to become a believer in Christ, if there weren't anything else.

God says I'm not only acceptable and valuable and lovable, I'm forgivable.

5. God says with Christ in my life I AM CAPABLE.

It doesn't matter if other people say, "You'll never amount to anything," the Bible says with Christ I am capable. And that's the truth!

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Philippians 4:13 *"I have strength for all things in Christ who empowers me. I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses inner strength into me, that is, I am self sufficient in Christ's sufficiency."*

We read these magazine articles every week -- the moaning, the epidemic of low self esteem in our culture. Study after study has shown that the number one emotional need of women is low self esteem. That's no wonder. Look at the way we live. We try to live without God in our lives. We try to be our own god. We do whatever we want to do whether it's right or not. Of course we're going to have low self esteem. We put other things number one in our life that shouldn't be.

Any time any thing besides God is number one in your life, you're going to be plagued with insecurity. For genuine security in life, you have to have something that's number one in your life that cannot be taken away from you. If you base your security on how much money you've got, that can be taken away. If you base your security on your status and your image, that can be taken away. If you base your security in life on how good looking you are, I hate to tell you this, but you're going to lose your good looks. If you base your security on your husband or your children or anybody else in life except Christ, you can lose all those things. You must have security in something that can never be taken from you. There's only one thing that fits that bill. A relationship to your creator God, to His Son, Jesus Christ. That can never be taken from you. Then if you lose everything else, including your health, you still have your security.

I deal with a lot of successful people. Many of you are highly successful people. But I've noticed that even among highly successful people, there tends to be this gnawing inside that says you're not making it. There's this creeping insecurity, this gnawing sense no matter how much you've achieved. You live in this area, which means, by the world's standards you've got it made. You've got a house, a car, a family, a job. Yet inside you still feel insecure. Why? Because you're putting your security in the wrong thing and number two, you're still playing those old tapes. You're still listening to the voices of your past that say, "You're never going to amount to much. You really blew it. ... You're not very smart ... You're uncoordinated ... You're never going to amount to anything ... " and on and on. They're dead wrong!

How do you reverse a curse? When somebody's said something to you that's stuck with you all your life, how do you reverse a curse?

By listening to the truth. By filling your mind with what God says about you. There's a scale in your mind and you've heard all these negative things about yourself all this time. You've got to start putting pebbles on the other side. The more you put God's truth on the other side, pretty soon, the scales are going to balance and then they're going to tip in favor of the truth and the depression and the hurt and the pain and the scars are going to be removed.

God says this in 1 Peter 2:10 *"Once you were less than nothing; now you are God's own."* When you fill your mind with the truth of God, then Romans 15 will be true in your life, *"May the God of hope fill you with joy that by the power of the Holy Spirit, your whole life and outlook may be radiant with hope."* God wants to fill your life with the radiance of hope. In Christ, you are worthwhile.

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I want you to hear a story before I close of Eric Reece and how God has helped heal the hidden wounds in his life.

Eric:

I would like to share with you how Jesus has been healing the hurt, the pain and the scars of rejection that I've lived with all my life.

My scars started forming very early in my life. I remember growing up in a very troubled family. From the outside looking in, my family seemed ordinary but behind closed doors there was a lot of anger, a lot of conflict, and a lot of hurt. When I was eight years old my parents got divorced. I still remember the fear I felt the night my mother left my dad. I remember my brother and I hiding underneath the car in the driveway as we watched my father beating my mom to tears the night she left. After Mom left, my brother and I were forced to live with our father because Mom could not support us. Much of the time my dad just ignored us. My brother and I had to take care of each other. We got each other up for school, we made our own lunches and we made sure we were at the bus stop on time. Then after school we waited for each other and would come home to an empty, lonely home. We were latch key kids before anyone invented the term.

Growing up in a home completely without love caused me to look for other ways to ease my pain. By the time I was twelve, I had already experimented with drugs, watched pornographic movies daily and weighed over two hundred pounds. The kids at school made fun of me. Since I never received comfort at home, I can remember eating doughnuts for breakfast, candy for lunch, tv dinners for dinner and a lot of ice cream for desert so I could continue to hide behind my fat. I had few friends so I was lonely a lot of the time growing up. Since I never got any positive feedback, I was conditioning myself to accept negative criticism from the kids at school as my primary source of attention. Every child wants attention and I learned that by being fat at least got me some.

At home, physical and mental abuse from my dad was just a normal part of growing up. I deeply wanted my father's love and approval but he seemed unable or unwilling to give it. Not once did I hear him express love for me. Instead, almost every time my father came home from work, he would start drinking and start yelling. Each night, I was forced to sit in a certain chair and listen to him tell me I would never succeed in life, that I would never be able to read or write or do arithmetic. In order to prove my worth to my dad, I learned how to cheat in school so that my grades would be acceptable to him. I also learned to steal for my friends so they would accept me. I also learned to lie to my father so he wouldn't hit me for the things he disliked about me. One time, I lied about putting my fingers in some jello salad before dinner. My dad knew I was lying so he decided to shock me into admitting it. He cut the end off an extension cord so the wires were bare. He then plugged the other end of the cord into the wall outlet. When I saw that I was in sheer terror. I pleaded with my dad not to shock me. So right before the wires touched my skin, I admitted to putting my fingers in the jello salad.

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The physical pain of being whipped with a belt caused welts and bruises, but those welts and bruises healed pretty quickly. It was the emotional rejection I felt that caused the most pain. There's a verse in Proverbs that says, "*Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword.*" That is so true. Emotional scars don't heal fast. At the age of 16, I decided to move out of my home. I felt anything would be better than staying at home. Instead of being worried or upset, my dad even helped me pack my bags. I moved in with a friend at school to get away from the constant abuse.

That was the day I was given hope again. My friends parents gave me encouragement, trust, love and respect. They told me things I never heard from my dad. They said I was valuable and capable and no matter what happened in life to keep my chin up and go for my dreams. Up to that time I'd never thought about dreaming into the future. I was only concerned about making it through the day. Looking back I'm grateful to God that He used this loving family to show healing grace. It was a chance for me to have a fresh start in life. Proving my dad wrong, I graduated from both high school and college.

During my junior year in college I started dating the most beautiful young lady ever. I worked with her at the time. Her name was Stacy. Stacy grew up in a loving Christian home. She was able to show God's love and healing grace to me. She believed in me and my values and abilities. This helped me to start believing in myself. We started attending church together with her wonderful Christian parents. I didn't know it at the time but God was slowly healing the scars of rejection inside of me with the gift of grace. God's grace through Stacy changed my life. She's such a wonderful lady.

Since my deepest hurt has been my relationship to my father, I think it is amazing that it was on Father's Day 1993 that I gave my life to Christ and opened my heart to the grace of God. That day I stood up in front of the church that we were attending and said to my Heavenly Father, "Father, I want to come home." I was saved by the grace of God at that moment. Now every Father's Day I'm reminded that my loving Heavenly Father heals broken hearts and restores hope in people's lives. The following month I was baptized to publicly demonstrate my faith and the following month I married that wonderful young lady. I now call her my angel.

We've been married for four and a half years and have a beautiful one year old daughter. We just celebrated her birthday yesterday. My daughter, Shay, is another amazing gift of grace from God. I love her so much. Her smile makes me melt. When I look at her I pray that she will always feel loved by her daddy and that as she grows older she will come to understand and know the same loving Heavenly Father that helped heal daddy's wounds. God uses my daughter to remind me that He loves and values me unconditionally no matter what happens in my life. When my daughter started to walk at nine months, things changed around our house. We had to basically barricade the house so she would not fall and hurt herself when she fell down. Shay still falls a lot. But Stacy and I always pick her up, give her a big hug and encourage her to keep going -- the simplest way of showing grace to her even though she keeps falling.

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As an adult, I still fall and stumble in my daily walk. God doesn't yell at me and tell me I will never be able. As Pastor Rick says, Jesus doesn't rub it in, He rubs it out. He picks me up, brushes me off and provides me healing grace to keep going. I need that. It reminds me that I'm capable of fulfilling His purpose in my life. Four and a half years ago when I said, "Father, I want to come home" I had no idea the road God had been waiting for me to take would be so comforting. Of course there are still things that I struggle with and things that hurt me, but with God's healing grace, my wonderful wife, my small group and my church family my broken heart has been healed and my wounds of rejection are being replaced slowly with love, compassion, encouragement and forgiveness. One thing I do know is that I love God and He loves me. Although I never had a reliable earthly father, I have a relationship to an eternal Father who is completely reliable. Not only do I believe in Him, but He believes in me. His words tell me that I am acceptable and valuable and capable and forgivable.

This is such great news that I have dedicated the rest of my life to helping others find Christ so they can see themselves as God sees them. Nothing else is going to change this world. I want people to experience the feeling of my favorite verse which is Philippians 4:13 which says, *"I can do everything through Him who strengthens me."* Yes, even I, a failure in my Father's eyes can be restored and feel accepted, valued, forgiven and capable of being utilized for God's great purpose.

In closing, I'd like to share a long awaited answer to prayer with you. One of my goals has always been to save enough money to put my daughter through college. So every month Stacy and I put a little bit aside for Shay's college fund. A few months ago I was completely surprised to receive a check in the mail for Shay's college. The check was from my dad. I have prayed for my dad since I committed my life to Christ but I never really talk to him that much these days. So the idea of receiving money from him was completely unexpected. When I called my dad to thank him for the gift he ended the conversation by saying, "Son, one last thing. I love you." That, folks, was a miracle. The first time in 29 years I ever heard my dad tell me that he loved me. I answered back, "I love you, too, Dad." Only the healing grace of God can cause something like that.

Finally, I'd like to say something to those of you who possibly can relate to my story. If you've felt the pain of rejection from a parent, a spouse, or anyone else, I encourage you to open your life to the healing grace of Jesus because it works. Stop listening to those old voices from your past and start listening to the truth that God says about you. He loves you and has a plan for your life. And for those of you who show love and grace to your kids now, never stop loving them.

Some of you have had a major hurt in your life. You've carried scars, hidden wounds, the pain of rejection in your life from somebody you considered important. I'm sorry you hurt. I really am. I'm sorry for your pain. And God hurts with you. There's a church family called Saddleback that cares about it. If you don't have a church home, we invite you to become a part of us and find help, help in healing and hope and another chance to form some new tapes in your mind. You can be healed of a broken heart. Yes, you can. If you will open your life to the grace of God and the

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power of Jesus Christ and accept what He says about you and begin a relationship with Him. Then take the word of God and begin to fill your mind with it.

My homework for you this week: Take this outline and cut it up in five parts, five points. Put it on some cards and make them flash cards and keep them with you. Every day review what God says about you. Study after study has shown that your self esteem, your self worth, tends to be defined by what you think the most important person in your life thinks about you. To a large degree the way you see yourself and the way you feel about yourself is determined by what you think the most important person in your life thinks about you. If that's true, I want to suggest that you make Jesus Christ the most important person in your life. He says you are acceptable and valuable and lovable and forgivable and capable. The bottom line is, who are you going to believe? Somebody else or what God says. It's your choice. You can believe what other people say about you which are not true and imperfect and distorted mirrors or are you going to hold your life up to the mirror of God's word and His truth and say what He says about you by His grace.

True story: Fred Craddock was vacationing in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. He and his wife were seated at a table when an old man came up to them and asked, "How are you doing? Are you having a good time? Are you on vacation?" "Yes," said Professor Craddock. "We are on vacation and, yes, we're having a good time." "What do you do for a living?" the old man said. Professor Craddock wanted to get rid of the man so he said, "I'm a professor of preaching." Which is true. But he was sure that a title like that would drive off any unwelcome intruder but it didn't. "Oh, you're a preacher!" the old man said. "Let me tell you a preacher's story." Before he could object, the old man had drawn up a chair to the table and started to unwind his tail. He said, "I was born an illegitimate child. I never knew who my father was and that was very hard for me. The boys at my school had names they called me and they made fun of me all the time. When I walked down the main street of our little town, I always felt that people were staring at me and asking that terrible question, 'I wonder who's the father of that little boy.' So I spent a lot of time by myself. And I didn't have any friends. One day a new preacher came to town and everybody was talking about how good he was. I had never gone to church before. But one Sunday I thought I'd go hear him preach. He was a good preacher so I kept going back. Each time I would go late and I would leave early so I wouldn't have to talk to anyone else. Then one Sunday I got so caught up in the preacher's message that I forgot to leave. Before I knew what was happening he had said the closing prayer and the service was over. I tried to get out of the church but people had already filled all the aisles and I couldn't get past them. Suddenly I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder. When I turned around, that big tall preacher was looking down at me and asking, 'What's your name, boy? Whose family are you? Whose son are you?' When I heard that question I just shook. But before I could say anything, he said, 'Why, I know who your family is! I know whose son you are. There's a distinct family resemblance. You're the son of God.'" He said, "You know, mister, those simple words changed my life." The old man got up and left. A waitress came over and asked, "Do you know who that was?" "No," said Professor Craddock. The waitress said, "That's Ben Hooper, two term governor of Tennessee."

A man learned what God said about him. He learned that he was God's child and it changed his life. When you begin to see yourself as God really sees you, you will be liberated from the pain of

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rejection because it doesn't matter what anybody else thinks if God says I'm acceptable and valuable and lovable and forgivable and capable.

Prayer:

Thank you Father, that You can heal broken hearts and bitter memories and damaged self esteem. Thank You that patterns can be erased and reversed. Thank You dear Jesus that You can turn nobody's into somebodies. Jesus, today I ask You to touch hurting hearts and hurting minds with Your healing touch of love. Please save people today and help them to see themselves through Your eyes of grace.

Now you pray. Say, "Dear God, I've never understood this before but I thank You that You have accepted me totally by Your grace. Today, Jesus Christ, I accept You into my life. I want to know Your purpose, the purpose I was made for. And I want to fulfill it. I want to have a relationship to You. Help me to see myself not on the old tapes of the past but the way You see me. Thank You that in Your eyes, I am forgivable, because I do need Your forgiveness. Thank You that I am covered with Your love because of what You did on the cross. Thank You that to You I am acceptable and I am valuable enough to die for. And I'm lovable and I'm capable with Your power to handle whatever comes my way in the future. As much as I know how, Jesus Christ, I invite You to control every area of my life. I'm not going to worry about what other people think, but I'm going to focus on Your truth about me. In Your name I pray, Amen."