



Yes!

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Dr Michael Green

C.S. Lewis was a distinguished Fellow at Oxford University and convinced atheist who changed his mind and converted to Christianity. One day he came into a room where a lively debate was going on. He asked what it was about, and was told that they were discussing what belief, if any, among the religions of the world was unique to Christianity. He immediately replied, 'The answer to that one is easy. I can put it in one word Grace'.

Grace is not a word we use much these days – perhaps because there is not a lot of it around. It means 'sheer undeserved generosity'. Here are two true stories which may help us understand what Lewis meant.

In the grim days of apartheid in South Africa, terrible acts of oppression and cruelty were inflicted on the black population. After black majority rule was established, it was crucial to bring reconciliation to a hurting and divided country. So the Justice and Reconciliation Commission was set up. All

charges would be dropped if those guilty of atrocities would meet their victims and ask for pardon.

One woman faced the white officer who had tortured her son to death. He cried out for forgiveness. She not only forgave him, but welcomed him into her home in the place of her son. That is grace!

The other true story was this. A man rushed, unannounced, into the tent of a Bedouin chieftain. He admitted he had killed a man and begged for sanctuary. Hospitality is something very sacred in Arab culture, and the chieftain accepted him. Then in ran a servant who shouted, 'The man he killed was your son!'

After a long pause the chieftain gave his decision:

'I forgive this man. He shall stay with me and serve in the place of my son.'

That is grace!

That gives us some idea of what God is like. But we find it hard to believe because we are so estranged from God that we have very twisted ideas about Him. Some think of God as far off, and not interested in us at all.

Some think of Him as a hard taskmaster, determined to make us pay for the smallest of our failures and misdoings. Some think of Him as an old man in the sky, checking out to see if we are enjoying ourselves and then stopping us. But the God we find in the Bible is not like that at all. He is full of grace. Let's think about some important questions:

Does God care about
you and me? **yes!**
Can we be sure of that?

Yes! He came to find us when we were thoroughly out of touch with Him. That's what Christmas means. It reminds us that God cared about us so much that He

came to be one of us. And that is not a fairy story like Father Christmas. It is solid history, so sure and certain that it split the calendar in two. Everything is dated before or after when God came to visit us in the person of Jesus.

Can I know God would accept me? There are some pretty **dark** areas in my life...

Yes! Not because we deserve it, any more than those two murderers did. But because God is so gracious. *'God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'*

That's one of the most famous verses in the Bible (John 3.16). He does not want us to perish in the self-destructiveness which cuts us off from Him and from others. So Jesus, who shared God's nature as well as ours, took

personal responsibility for the guilt of the whole world when He died on the cross. That's why we call it Good Friday. Incredibly costly and horrible for Him. But unbelievably good and gracious for us.

I have problems in my life where I could use some help. Can God provide that?

Yes! Because on the first Easter Day Jesus came back from the dead, smashed the power of death, and is alive for evermore.

So because He's alive:

- He can hear and answer prayer.
- He can be with us throughout our lives.
- He can guide us through our problems.
- He can give us moral strength.
- He can welcome us home to heaven after this life is over.

You see, against all
expectation, God's attitude
to us is **Yes!**

The trouble is, our attitude to God is
often **No!**

We have kept well away from Him – that's
a **No!**

We have sworn He doesn't exist – that's a **No!**

We have reckoned we can save ourselves –
that's a **No!**

God longs for us to say **yes!** to Him. For
He is the great Lover, and all lovers long for
a response.



Have you reached the
point in your life where
you could say **Yes!** to Him,
starting today?

Yes! I regret the bad stuff that has been
rotting my life, and am ready for God to
help me change it.

Yes! I see that Jesus died to put me right
with God, and is alive to help me change.

Yes! I am prepared to let it be known that
I want to be a follower of Christ.

Yes! Here and now I am going to ask Jesus
to come and share my life.

The offer of Jesus

The truly amazing thing is that Jesus does not merely want to be the example for us to try to follow, but the spiritual power inside us. He says 'I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in' (Revelation 3.20).

Of course Jesus does not physically enter our lives, but his unseen self, his Holy Spirit does... when we invite him, and not before.

An offer like that calls for a wholehearted response.

So do I need to do anything? **Yes!**

My response

Talk to Him. Tell Him something like this: 'I am sorry for having kept You out so long. Thank You so much for dying for me and being alive to help me. Please come into my life and empower me to follow You.'

Real Christianity starts with a prayer like that.

I prayed that prayer for
CHRIST to come and share
my life. But can I know
HE has really come?

yes! Because He promised He would - and He never breaks His word. And gradually you will see your prayers answered. You will experience a new strength to break your old bad habits. You will find you really want to please God. And you will discover a new joy and peace in life.

So you see, real Christianity is not so much a *religion* as a *revelation* of what God is like, a *rescue* offered to you and me, and a *relationship* with Jesus that lasts to death and beyond. It all springs from His grace – not from what we deserve! It's a gift – and you can't receive a gift if your hands are full of parcels!

Can you suggest what I should do next? *yes!*

1. Thank Him for coming into your life. Then tell someone.
2. Find a Christian group to help you, and join a lively church.
3. Get baptised if you never have been – it's the badge of belonging.
4. Keep in touch with God. The Bible is like His Blackberry. Prayer is like our mobile phone. Buy a modern, easy-to-read translation of the Bible and start with reading a bit of the Acts of the Apostles daily, then talk things over with God in prayer.
5. Find one close Christian friend to help you get started and grow.
6. Remember God wants to change you so that you can be a positive influence for good in a broken world.

In **Jesus** every
one of God's
promises is a
Yes!

2 Corinthians 1:20

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