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The Way
to a New Life

Insights



“IT TAKES
BOLD FAITH
TO BELIEVE
GOD WILL
BLESS US
EVEN AFTER
WE MAKE
MISTAKES.”

Vikki
Burke

Learn
how to
BELIEVE IN
GOD'S LOVE

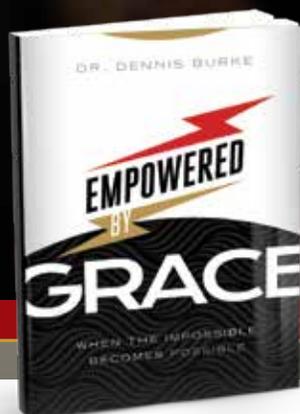
Dr. Dennis Burke

by Dr. Dennis Burke

The ROYAL LAW of LOVE

I don't know if you think of yourself as royalty, but as a born again believer you absolutely are. You're a child of Almighty God and a member of His Royal Family. You're a joint-heir with the King of Kings, and according to the Bible, He's made you a king, too. WHICH MEANS THE LAST LAW OF GRACE WE'RE GOING TO DISCUSS IS ESPECIALLY RELEVANT TO YOU.

This article is an excerpt from Dr. Burke's new book, *Empowered by Grace*.



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It's referred to in James 2:8 as "the royal law according to the Scripture," and it's the governing principle behind the spiritual system God designed. It's also the law He has commanded us as His regal sons and daughters to live by. Repeated again and again throughout the New Testament, it's both supremely powerful and so simple any child can remember it.

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

In our relationships with other people, we're to "be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us" (Ephesians 5:1-2).

Most Christians I know are actually quite eager to do this. We're all very hungry to give to others the God-kind of love. There's just one problem: In our own human strength we can't. It's impossible. In ourselves, we don't have that kind of love. Since we can't give to others what we don't have, the first thing we must do is go to God and receive from Him what we're lacking.

As 1 John 4:19 says, "We love each other as a result of his loving us first" (NLT). So we can only love as God loves when we've settled the core issue that we ourselves are loved by Him.

How do we get that issue settled? We put our faith in what the Bible

says about it. We believe, for instance, what's written in John 17 where Jesus prayed for us, as believers, and said to the Father:

The glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me... I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:22-23, 26)

It's no stretch for us to grasp the idea that God loves Jesus. After all, He and the Father are one. There's no separation, friction, or struggle between them, so there's nothing to get in the way of their great love for each other. But to think we're included in that union and are recipients of the same love? That's something else altogether!

To believe that, we must dismiss all the reasons we think we're not worthy of such love. We must set aside all the ugly things we know about ourselves and receive God's agape by faith, trusting that anything in our lives that might have hindered or interrupted it was dealt with by Jesus when He went to the cross.

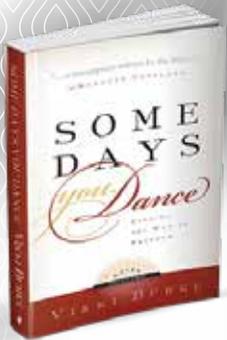
...AND FROM JESUS CHRIST, THE FAITHFUL WITNESS, THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD, AND THE RULER OVER THE KINGS OF THE EARTH. TO HIM WHO LOVED US AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD, AND HAS MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS TO HIS GOD AND FATHER, TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.

REVELATION 1:5-6

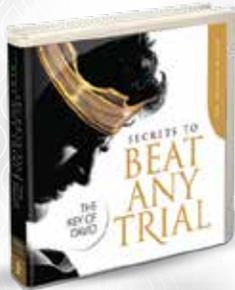


Many Christians spend their entire lives being uncertain about His love for them.

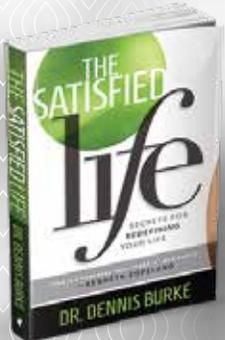
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Sadly, many Christians never take this step of faith. Although they love the Lord, they spend their entire lives being uncertain about His love for them. As a result, they're unable to live a truly victorious life. They can see in the Bible such a life is available, but their faith to lay hold of it remains weak because they've never "believed the love that God has for us" as believers (1 John 4:16).

The Greatest Happiness in Life

Not long before I began writing this book, I sat at the bedside of such a woman. She was in the last stages of cancer. She'd struggled to receive healing for years and experienced some real miracles but, having gotten discouraged along the way, she'd surrendered the fight and had only a few days left to live. Vikki and I had been close to her for many years, so I knew she was born again and that her walk with the Lord had been less than she'd hoped.

Her life had been tough for a lot of different reasons. So as I took her fragile hand, I began to reaffirm to her the love and goodness of God. She listened for a while, and then in the midst of our conversation she asked me this question. "Do you think I'm going to Heaven?"

"Yes, I do," I answered. "I know you are, and I'll tell you why. I've heard you say that Jesus is your Lord and Savior. That's true, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," she answered. "He is the Lord of my life."

"Well, the Bible says if we believe Jesus is Lord and we say so, we are saved. And one of the

many benefits of being saved is Heaven becomes our eternal home."

"But Dennis, I've sinned!" she protested. "I've done some bad things. I've lied. I've stolen..."

Sensing she needed to unburden her heart, I tried to wait quietly for her to finish her long list of trespasses (most of which had been committed decades ago). But eventually, I interrupted her. "I know you did those things," I said, "but here's what you need to know: God isn't looking at any of them. He's washed them away in the blood of Jesus and He doesn't even remember them anymore.

"When He looks at you now, He sees you through the lens of the sacrificial offering made by His Son. He sees you as worthy of His best blessings. Because of what Jesus has done, God has forgiven you and He loves you! So just believe and receive that love. Let it saturate your thinking so that you're not tormented by these things anymore."

Over the years I've met many other believers who needed to hear those same words of comfort. Maybe, right now, you need to hear them, too. Maybe you're thoroughly saved and completely forgiven but still carrying the shame, blame, guilt and torment of past sins you've committed. You're wondering, How could God love me, a sinner, who would do such bad things?

I'll tell you how God could love you: the same way He loves all the rest of us who've ever done anything wrong.

In God's eyes, there are no levels of evil. There are no tiny sins or little white lies. To Him all sin is the same so, apart from Jesus, we're all equally guilty. But by the same token, once we receive Him, we're all equally righteous and perfectly loved!

For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:22-24)

Knowing that God loves us is the foundation of our walk with Him. It's the only way we can really live by faith.



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not

WHAT WE DESERVE

by
Vikki
Burke



The beauty of the Gospel is that when our performance isn't perfect, **God's grace covers us.** The truth is, we all make mistakes and bad decisions that can cause us to feel disqualified. Sometimes when we cause our own problems, we think we don't deserve God's help. Yet thankfully, He doesn't refuse to help us out of the messes we make.



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In fact, God will not only help us turn our mistakes around, but in many cases, He'll cause something good to come out of them. Either way, one thing is certain: God does not want us to feel guilty because of the times we did it wrong in the past.

It takes bold faith to believe God will bless us even after we make mistakes. It's the accuser who tells us that God won't listen if we are at fault for the mess-up. The enemy will whisper, "Who do you think you are, asking for God's help when this problem is YOUR fault?" When accusations

One thing is certain: God does not want us to feel guilty because of the times we did it wrong in the past.

like that taunt us, we can boldly answer, "I am the redeemed. I am loved. I am a child of God covered by grace!"

Consider how God delivered Jonah even though he messed things up pretty badly. God gave Jonah an assignment to go to Nineveh and deliver a message, but instead, Jonah got on board a boat going the opposite direction. He wanted to get as far away from Nineveh as possible! But when a terrible storm developed at sea, Jonah confessed to the crew that he had caused their trouble. The crew members were merciless toward Jonah and threw him overboard to save themselves. Jonah not only thought that this was the end of his life, but also that he was getting exactly what he deserved. But in spite of Jonah's disobedience, God had mercy on him. Why? Because "...the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting..."¹

No matter what happens, God is willing to clean up the messes we make. The psalmist said, "He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve, nor pay us back in full for our wrongs. As high as heaven is over the earth, so strong is his love to those who fear him. And as far as sunrise is from sunset, he has separated us from our sins."² Jonah thought that because he disobeyed God, deliverance was impossible. But God can make a way where there seems to be no way. He knows how to deliver us out of our situation and make our lives better.

Just when Jonah thought things couldn't get any worse, a fish swallowed him. He thought because he disobeyed God that he deserved just what had happened, but then Jonah began to pray: "I cried out to the Lord in my great trouble, and he answered me."³ Things didn't look any different for a while. He was still in the belly of a fish, but he put his faith in God's deliverance. "...But you, O Lord

my God, snatched me from the jaw of death!... For my salvation comes from the Lord alone.”⁴

Jonah prayed that God would rescue him in spite of his disobedience. It takes bold faith to believe that God will rescue us when we are the ones who caused the problem. Most of the time when we disobey God, we are overcome with guilt, but faith says, “Even though I blew it, I still believe if I repent, God will forgive me.”

God will do no less for us than what He did for Jonah. After Jonah prayed, God caused the fish to swim to the shore and spit him out. Jonah was right back where God wanted him. It was the mercy of God that turned Jonah’s situation around.

God wants us to shake off the guilt so He can take us to where we are supposed to be. And should we take a detour like Jonah did, it doesn’t mean we will miss our destiny. It’s important to know the Lord spoke to Jonah a second time and God told Jonah the same thing He told him the first time.⁵

God is a God of second chances! He can redirect our detour in a split second. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us the Word is good for resetting the direction of our lives.⁶ God has a divine GPS system that can recalculate the route to our destiny, no matter how far off we’ve detoured. Whenever we start to honor God right where we are in life, that’s when things will begin to change. Jonah obeyed God the second time He spoke. Although Jonah had made a serious detour, his destiny remained intact.

When we take a detour like Jonah, it’s easy to allow guilt to make us feel disqualified and think we must sit on the sidelines. But we have to act like Jonah who prayed for God to deliver him even when he didn’t deserve it. We have to believe that God can turn our situation around and

It’s easy to allow guilt to make us feel disqualified and think we must sit on the sidelines. WE HAVE TO BELIEVE THAT HE WILL GIVE US ANOTHER CHANCE.

help us return to the path that leads us to our destiny. We have to believe that He will give us another chance and that He still wants to use us to accomplish the dreams He has planted in our hearts.

Too often we look at others and think they’ve never made mistakes in their lives. But the truth is, we’ve all made mistakes that have taken us on a detour. Yet God in His mercy works it out for each one of us if we’ll only believe.

Years ago Dennis and I nearly took a major detour when a businessman made us an offer that looked too good to be true — because it was! He had a very large frame business and wanted to retire, but he didn’t have an heir to take over the business. He told us that he’d been watching us and knew we were hard workers, so he offered to train us and then turn the business over to us once we had learned it.

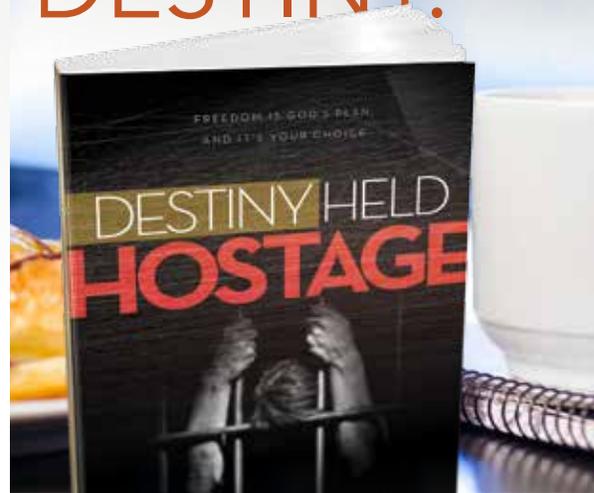
Dennis and I were very excited — except the more we thought about it, the more we felt it wasn’t what it seemed. We finally woke up when we realized that this had nothing to do with the destiny God had revealed to us. We chose to believe the destiny God had for us and to follow His path — which, at the moment, looked like a less promising opportunity. But because we chose to believe the destiny God had for us, we took the right path.

If we had taken the opportunity that man offered us, we would have strayed way off God’s assignment for our lives. But even then — even if we had made that mistake — we still served the God of the second chance! We could have repented for our disobedience, and God would have used His heavenly GPS system to recalculate the most direct route to our destiny!

We have to shake off the guilt, repent, and get back on the right path, because God has an



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continued from pg. 7

assignment for each of us to fulfill. Contrary to what many believe, God doesn't show us mercy only when we do everything right. Even when we make foolish mistakes, He will have mercy on us because that's who He is. The scripture says, "For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn..."⁷ — not even when we do something wrong.

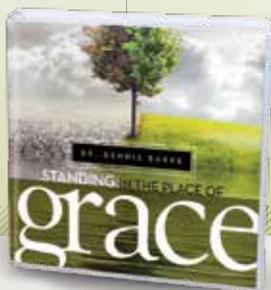
I'm not suggesting we live any ol' way we want and expect to waltz right into our destiny. Although God's love isn't based on our performance, we certainly shouldn't be trying to see how much we can get away with and still remain in His favor. When we maintain a true relationship with God, we want to please Him and He promises that goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our lives.⁸ His goodness and mercy protect and guide us even when we aren't aware of it.

Our poor choices can't

stop the assignment God has for us. We aren't that powerful! God is greater than our poor choices. Even though God promised Abram that he would have a child, years passed and he remained childless. Sarah got tired of waiting and devised a plan of her own. She had her maid sleep with Abram, and Ishmael was born. But even though Sarah's plan caused all kinds of trouble in their lives, it didn't stop the promise of God from coming to pass. God gave Abram a son just like He had promised. God not only fixed their mistake, but He gave them a miracle.

We should allow Sarah's poor decision to encourage us. No matter how bad our choices, nothing can disqualify us from God's love. We have to shake off the guilt when we take detours, quit listening to

the accuser, and get back on with fulfilling our God-given destiny!



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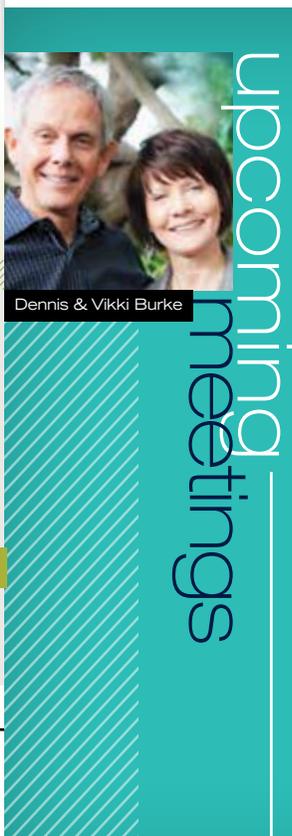
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⁷ Romans 11:29 NLT | ⁸ Psalm 23:6

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