

7-2012

The Gift of Transforming Grace

Robert Overstreet
Andrews Academy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs>

Recommended Citation

Overstreet, Robert, "The Gift of Transforming Grace" (2012). *Lake Union Herald*. 269.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/269>

This Faculty Stories is brought to you for free and open access by the Lake Union Herald at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Lake Union Herald by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

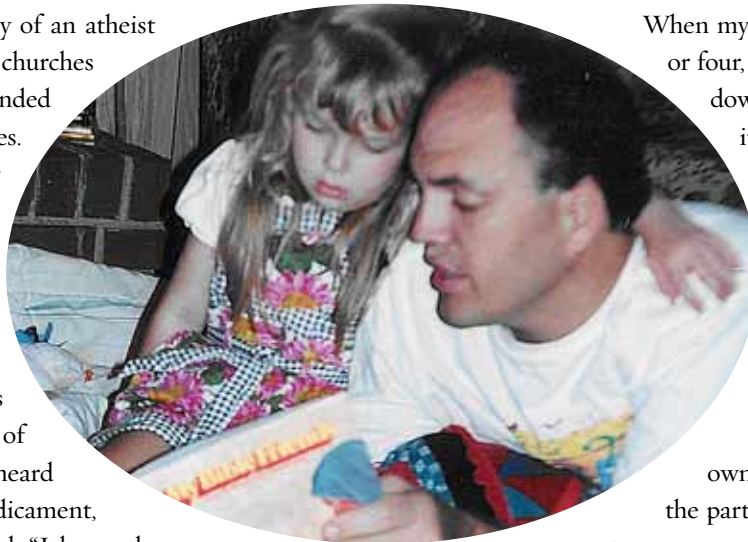


The Gift of Transforming Grace

BY ROBERT OVERSTREET

I love to give gifts. I'm okay with receiving them, but I *love* to give them. A gift is something acquired without compensation. The Bible is full of gifts. One of my favorites is God's gift of grace. Referring to Proverbs 3:34, James asks, "Or do you think the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?' But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'" (James 4:5, 6 NKJV).

I recently read a story of an atheist who sued the pastors of churches in his town. He was offended by their nativity scenes. When it came time for his day in court, it was announced that the suit was dropped. The man who brought the suit was losing his sight and needed all his funds to pay for surgery. One of the church members heard about this man's predicament, called her pastor, and said, "I know the man dropped the lawsuit, but would it be okay if we helped him with his medical bills?" The churches banded together to provide assistance to the man who had wanted to sue them. He was humbled to receive a gift of transforming grace. Have you received the gift of transforming grace in your life?



When my oldest daughter was three or four, she ran to the shelf, pulled down the book with her favorite story, and said, "Daddy, read the story about Jesus and the storm!" She climbed up into my lap, opened the pages to the pictures of Jesus and the storm, and said, "Hurry, hurry! Read the story!"

I'd tell the story in my own words; and when I got to the part where I said, "And then a storm came up..." her eyes got real big.

"But, Laura, this wasn't just a regular storm..."

She'd grab my arm and ask, "Daddy, what kind of storm?"

"This was a scary storm. The wind was blowing, the waves were high, and the boat was rocking back and forth." The more I described the storm, the tighter her little hands tried to grip my arm, and the closer she snuggled in.

"Go ahead and say it, Daddy. Say it!" she would plead. "Please say it!"

"Then, Jesus stood up and said, 'Peace, be still.'" As I said, "Peace," the frantic look on her face melted, and she'd lay her head on my shoulder. She experienced the gift of peace. Have you?

A few years ago at the end of a very difficult school year, my wife, Tammy, encouraged me to get a hobby. I liked to golf, but it was too expensive. So, I thought, *Maybe a model airplane...* It was close to Father's Day when we walked into a toy store, and my eyes saw this huge box. I walked over and stood there imagining the fun I would have with the model airplane inside, then tapped the box with my foot and gave my wife the wink. Sure enough, on Father's Day, my girls presented me with the gift. They were so excited.

"Daddy, do you like it?"

"Oh, yes!" I exclaimed as we opened the box and tossed it and the directions aside. We had the plane put together in 45 minutes, and then carried it out to our long driveway that ran through the large horse farm where we rented. I set the plane on the "runway" and said, "Laura, hold the plane while I test the throttle."

So, Laura held the plane. At the moment I pulled back on the throttle, the motor began to make some noise as the propeller blew wind in her face. Laura looked back at me with those "scary-storm" eyes, and I said reassuringly, "It will be okay, just hold the plane."

Moments later, we set the plane down in the middle of the driveway and stepped back. I let Laura guide my hand as we pulled back on the joystick and watched the airplane scream down the long runway. As the plane took off, I stood up — amazed. I was in control of my gift! I don't know how much time passed until I noticed my daughter had left my side. I was mesmerized by the control I had of my gift. My thoughts were interrupted by Tammy's call from the house, "Are you ready?"

I looked up to see Tammy and our little girls standing on the porch. Gifts. "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3 NKJV). What incredible gifts are our children!

As a 14-year-old teenager, full of anger and total disrespect for most adults, I began my journey at Georgia-Cumberland Academy. It was there where I met teachers like Wally Fox and LeClaire Litchfield. These teachers went out of their way to love me, in spite of who I was and what I said. For most of my freshman, sophomore and junior years, I chose to be angry and disrespect anyone with authority. I had no problem "telling off" any adult who crossed my path; that is, until one Friday night when LeClaire Litchfield, one who I probably disrespected the most, stood before the student body at an agape feast.

"Do you like who you are?" he asked. "Do you like what you see when you look in the mirror? If you don't, you can change it now. Just ask Jesus into your heart, and He will make the change." Right then I chose to change. I no longer wanted to be the angry, disrespectful, belligerent teenager anymore, and I asked Jesus to come into my life and make the change. And He did!

"I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them" (Ezekiel 11:19, 20 NKJV).

The gift of a new heart and a new spirit comes as the result of receiving the best gift of all — Jesus Christ. "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift" (II Corinthians 9:15 NIV).

So, I'm standing there on the "runway," thinking, *I have time for one more loop around the pasture.* I decided to take it higher and make the loop wider before bringing it in for a landing. When I pushed the joystick to the left to bring it back home, nothing happened. I shook the remote. I banged it on my leg and tried it again. Nothing. I tried walking forward to get closer. No response. I watched as the plane continued on a path toward the highest tree at the other end of the pasture.

When I arrived at the base of the tree, I could see just a glimpse of the wing at the top of the tree. I could hear the motor still buzzing and the propeller beating against the leaves.

As I stood there, helpless to do anything, I thought, *What did I do wrong?* I was so disappointed. I walked back to the house. In the living room, I saw the box, the Styrofoam mold and the directions. I picked up the directions and read the notice: "Charge the plane at least two hours prior to use."

Each and every young person in your churches and schools is a gift God has given to you as parents, grandparents and church members. And they have come with directions, an instruction manual — God's Word. We are to be the examples Jesus called us to be, and the Bible is where we learn how to be better parents, better church members, better pastors and teachers. That's where we learn how to teach them, educate them and prepare them for life. I am where I am today because of my experience with Adventist teachers; people like my academy chaplain, LeClaire Litchfield, who extended to me the gift of transforming grace.

Robert Overstreet is the principal of Andrews Academy in Berrien Springs, Michigan.