

Graceful Living **Today**

a daily devotional

Experience a life of freedom
& joy!

Spend the next 150 days discovering who Christ is, what He has done for you on the cross, what His resurrection means for you, and how those truths give you a new identity and way of living in Him.

Melanie Newton

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Tim Stevenson who created the original T.E.A.M. Training course on which the core of this devotional is based. We also extend an extra special thank you to Michelle Burns for serving as an editor for this devotional.

Copyright 2017 © Melanie Newton

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher, except as permitted by U.S. copyright law.

For questions about the use of this devotional book, please visit www.melanienewton.com to contact us.

Study layout by Melanie Newton. Cover design by Melanie Newton. Cover graphic adapted from public domain image sunset-585334.jpg accessed pixabay.com

Published by Joyful Walk Ministries.

Scripture quotations unless otherwise noted are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version ®, NIV ®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

Melanie Newton is a Lifestyle Disciplemaking speaker, author, and trainer with Joyful Walk Ministries. She is the author of *Graceful Beginnings* books for anyone new to the Bible and *Joyful Walk Bible Studies* for growing Christians. Melanie can be contacted at melanienewton.com.

We pray that you will find *Graceful Living Today* a resource that God will use to strengthen you in your faith walk with God.





Melanie Newton

Melanie Newton is a Louisiana girl who made the choice to follow Jesus while attending LSU. She and her husband Ron married and moved to Texas for him to attend Dallas Theological Seminary. They stayed in Texas where Ron led a wilderness camping ministry for troubled youth for many years. Ron now helps corporations with their challenging employees and is the author of the top-rated business book, *No Jerks on the Job*.

Melanie jumped into raising three Texas-born children and serving in ministry to women at her church. Through the years, the Lord has given her opportunity to do Bible teaching and to write grace-based Bible studies for women that are now available from her website (melanienewton.com) and on Bible.org. *Graceful Beginnings* books are for anyone new to the Bible. *Joyful Walk Bible Studies* are for maturing Christians.

Melanie is currently a disciplemaking trainer with Joyful Walk Ministries. She equips and encourages Christian women everywhere to pursue a lifestyle of disciplemaking. Her heart's desire is to encourage you to have a joyful relationship with Jesus Christ so you are willing to share that experience with others around you.

"Jesus took hold of me in 1972, and I've been on this great adventure ever since. My life is a gift of God, full of blessings in the midst of difficult challenges. The more I've learned and experienced God's absolutely amazing grace, the more I've discovered my faith walk to be a joyful one. I'm still seeking that joyful walk every day..."

Melanie

Other Bible Studies by Melanie Newton

GRACEFUL BEGINNINGS BOOKS FOR ANYONE NEW TO THE BIBLE:

A Fresh Start: basics for new Christians

Painting the Portrait of Jesus: The "I Am's" from John

The God You Can Know: Attributes of God

Grace Overflowing: Paul's letters

The Walk from Fear to Faith: Old Testament women

Satisfied by His Love: New Testament women

JOYFUL WALK BIBLE STUDIES FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS:

Graceful Living: The Essentials of Living a Grace-Based Christian Life

7 Cs of a Firm Foundation: A Study Based on Genesis 1-11

Everyday Women, Ever Faithful God: Old Testament Women

Profiles of Perseverance: Old Testament Men

Live Out His Love: New Testament Women

Radical Acts: Adventure with the Spirit from the Book of Acts

Knowing Jesus, Knowing Joy: A Study of Philippians

Healthy Living: A Study of Colossians

Adorn Yourself with Godliness: A Study of 1 Timothy and Titus

Perspective: A Study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians

To Be Found Faithful: A Study of 2 Timothy

Find these and more resources for your spiritual growth at melanienewton.com.

Contents

Part 1: A Life of Freedom and Joy	3
Part 2: Christ, the Grace-Gift	8
Part 3: Grace-Covered Sin	56
Part 4: Grace Triumphant	92
Part 5: Grace-Given Life to You.....	139
Part 6: Grace-Created Identity	169
Part 7: Grace-Based Freedom.....	195
Part 8: Grace-Centered Living	248
Part 9: Grace-Motivated Obedience	291
Part 10: Grace Calls for You to Follow ..	327
Part 11: Become a Grace-Giver	363

Graceful Living Today

*Jesus Christ said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (JOHN 10:10) He said on another occasion, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls.** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (MATTHEW 11:28-30)*

Jesus Christ presented Himself as the answer to every need of the human heart. The New Testament writers unanimously taught the same. Multitudes of people throughout the centuries since have witnessed that He does indeed do what He promised for those who trust and follow him.

I have been a Jesus follower for more than 40 years now. Not once have I regretted that decision. I am a lifelong learner, a student of God's Word and my Lord's life. He teaches me in many ways. Recently, someone asked me, "How has Jesus disciplined you? What has made the most impact on my life?" When it comes to knowing who I am and where I stand with my God, without a doubt, the best teaching I have had was that which effectively covered the foundational principles of Christianity—who Christ is, what He accomplished on the cross for us, what the resurrection means for us, and our identity in Him. It communicated clearly and succinctly to me what I needed to know to live dependently on Christ and rest in my assurance of life **in** Him and **through** Him. I learned more about the purpose for the cross and the resurrection than I had ever heard before. I learned how to recognize the poison of legalism in a Christian's life. It was through this teaching that I became aware that my flesh is not getting better the longer I know Christ. I need to depend 100% on Him now as I ever did as a young believer in the 1970s.

These timeless truths are essential for every believer to enjoy the life God has planned for them. So, I've adapted the original teaching I received (given as a series of lectures) into a Bible

study called *Graceful Living*. This devotional *Graceful Living Today* teaches the same content but in small daily portions.

The heart of *Graceful Living Today* is the message of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ and the reality of "Christ alive and living in me." This devotional will help you build a foundation for successful, enjoyable Christian living based on God's "**grace**" to you and for you. As you apply these truths in your life, you will experience a life of freedom and joy!

IMPORTANCE OF THE THEOLOGY OF GRACE

It is critically important for those who know Christ to have sound theology (rational, systematic understanding of God). Theology is inescapable. Any thoughts you have about God or information you receive about God is theology. We live according to our theology. Our theology can be based on truth or error. Truth and error lead to dramatically different results. Jesus told those who believed in him,

"...If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

If truth sets you free, then the opposite is also true: it is error that binds you.

Jesus Christ invites you to follow Him in discipleship—not to imprison you, but to give you abundant life and rest for your soul. What Jesus offers to His followers is life **full of His grace**.

What is God's grace? Grace is commonly defined as unmerited favor...an undeserved gift. It is God's gift to an undeserving mankind. God gives His grace because of His great love and mercy. Understanding God's grace given to you is essential to enjoying the life that God has planned for you.

May our "Grace-giving" God completely fill your heart with His grace so that you become a "Grace-giver" in your life. "Graceful living" is life overflowing with His grace—a **life of freedom and joy!**

Melanie Newton



Part 1

GOD'S INVITATION—A LIFE OF FREEDOM AND JOY

To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

Day 1

God's Invitation to a Life of Freedom and Joy

READ THE TRUTH

*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they [His followers] may have life, and have it to the full."
(John 10:10)*

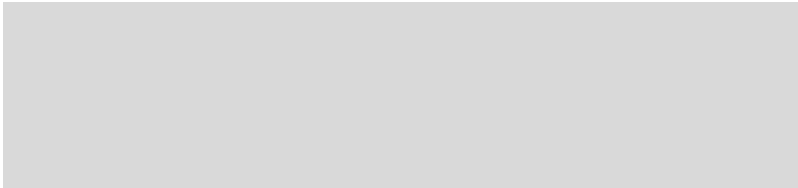
Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

CONFIRM THE TRUTH

What does Jesus promise to you in John 10:10?



What does Jesus promise to you in Matthew 11:28-30?



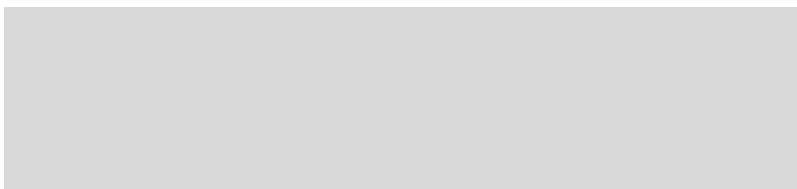
UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

Jesus Christ presented Himself as the answer to every need of the human heart. The New Testament writers confirmed that truth in their teaching. Multitudes of people throughout the centuries since have witnessed that Jesus does indeed do what He promised for those who trust and follow Him. He will do this for you.

Jesus offers us “full” life (John 10:10). Full is not empty. Full means to have purpose and meaning. Full does not mean easy, though. Fullness means that even when we are weary and burdened (Matthew 28:28-30), we can go to Him with open hands and receive the rest and guidance that He readily gives. Jesus’s invitation says, “Come to me. Connect to me. Learn from me. Rest with me.” That sounds pretty wonderful.

Jesus Christ invites you to a life of fullness, freedom and joy. Are you interested?

REFLECT & RESPOND



Day 2

God's Invitation to a Life of Freedom and Joy

READ THE TRUTH

To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

CONFIRM THE TRUTH

What does Jesus promise to you in John 8:31-32?

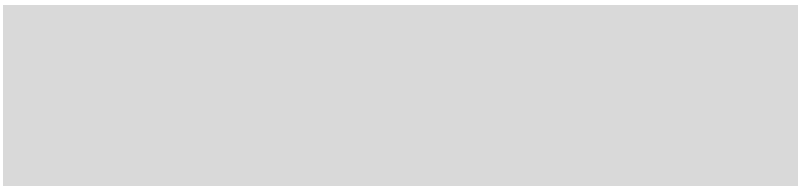


UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

It is critically important for anyone who knows Christ to have sound theology (rational, systematic understanding of God). Theology is inescapable. Any thoughts you have about God or information you receive about God is theology. We live according to our theology.

Our theology can be based on truth or error. Truth and error lead to dramatically different results. If truth sets you free, then the opposite is also true. It is error that binds you. When you know the truth that is revealed to you in the Bible, you will experience freedom. With freedom comes a life of joy. Do you want a life of joy? Stand firmly on God's truth revealed to you in His Word, the Bible.

REFLECT & RESPOND



Day 3

God's Invitation to a Life of Freedom and Joy

READ THE TRUTH

From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:16-17)

CONFIRM THE TRUTH

What have you received from God?

UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

Jesus Christ invites you to follow Him in discipleship—not to imprison you but to give you abundant life and rest for your soul. What Jesus offers to his followers is life **full of grace**. What is grace? In particular, what is God's grace?

Grace is commonly defined as unmerited favor...an undeserved gift. It is God's gift to an undeserving mankind. Understanding God's grace given to you is essential to enjoying the life that God has planned for you.

May our "Grace-giving" God completely fill your heart with His grace so that you become a "Grace-giver" in your life. "Graceful living" is life overflowing with His grace—**a life of freedom and joy!**

REFLECT & RESPOND



Part 2

CHRIST, THE GRACE-GIFT

From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

(John 1:16-17)

Day 4

Christianity Is Christ!

The New Testament opens with the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. About 30 years later, John challenged the Jews to indicate their repentance (turning from sin and toward God) by submitting to water baptism—a familiar Old Testament practice used for repentance. It was also used when a non-Jew (usually called Gentile) converted to Judaism (to be washed clean of idolatry).

Jesus is God's Son, fully God and fully man. Jesus publicly showed the world what God is like and taught God's perfect ways for 3–3½ years. After preparing 12 disciples to continue His earthly work, He died voluntarily on a cross for mankind's sin, rose from the dead, and returned to Heaven. The account of His earthly life is recorded in 4 books known as the Gospels, the biblical books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John named after the compiler of each account.

Each Gospel presents Jesus as “the Christ.” This title is from the Greek word *christos*, a translation of the Hebrew term “Messiah” meaning “anointed one.” The Old Testament prophets promised that the Messiah, as the anointed one of God, would come and do many wonderful things for God's people, including restoring God's Kingdom on earth. Christians are followers of Jesus, who is the Christ.

READ THE TRUTH

“That power is the same as the mighty strength He exerted when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way. (Ephesians 1:19b-23)

CONFIRM THE TRUTH

Where is Christ now?

What authority does He have?

What is His relationship to the Church?

UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

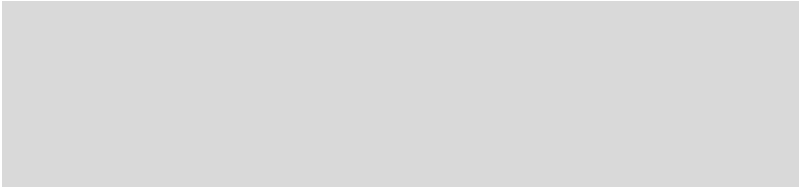
If you have heard the good news of the gospel and believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who gave Himself for your sins, you have eternal life just by believing in Him as the Savior. But more than salvation, Jesus Christ calls you into a relationship with Himself. Christianity is Christ! It is not a lifestyle, rules of conduct, or a society whose members were initiated by the sprinkling or covering of water. Christ calls us into a close relationship with Him as brothers, sisters, and friends.

Yet, He is also our Lord, the one who sits at the right hand of His Father God as head over everything else in heaven and on earth. As Lord, Jesus Christ is our *master*—the one to whom we

should willingly give our obedience. He is our *model* of how to live as humans in a dependent relationship with God, and He is our *mentor* in walking with us in that dependent relationship.

Jesus' disciples 2000 years ago were no different than we are except they physically beheld the risen Christ. We must see Him through eyes of faith and allow the Gospels to leap off the page revealing our Lord so that we may know this God-man who changed our lives as we received the Good News. We need to frequently read the Gospels, watch movies based on them, and tell the stories about Jesus as often as needed to know His life well because ...**Christianity is Christ!** Christ is the ultimate grace-gift to us.

REFLECT & RESPOND



Day 5

Who Is Jesus?

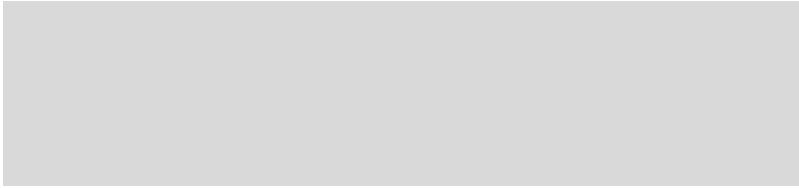
READ THE TRUTH

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God, the LORD is one! Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

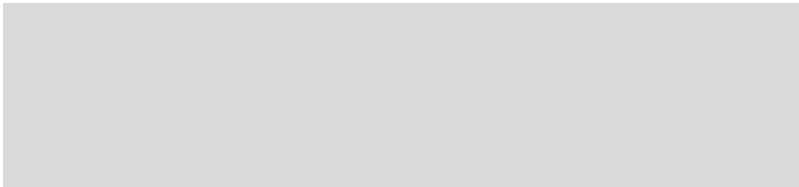
"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior." (Isaiah 43:10-11)

CONFIRM THE TRUTH

What does God declare about Himself in Deuteronomy 6:4-5?



What does God declare about Himself in Isaiah 43:10-11?



UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

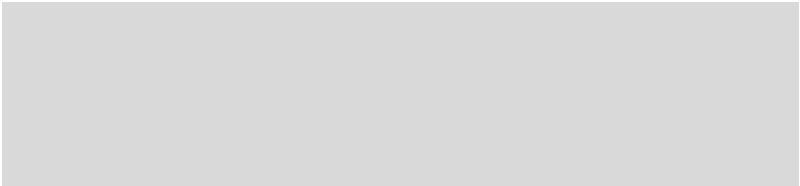
According to the Bible, God chose to reveal Himself to the nation of Israel and, through Israel, to the world. Many truths about God (His "attributes") are taught in the Bible. From both the Old Testament and the New Testament, we discover these truths about God. He is...

<i>Creator</i>	<i>Righteous</i>	<i>Merciful</i>
<i>Just</i>	<i>Faithful</i>	<i>Wise</i>
<i>Gracious</i>	<i>Holy</i>	<i>Omnipresent</i>
<i>Good</i>	<i>Love</i>	<i>All-powerful</i>
<i>Patient</i>	<i>Forgiving</i>	<i>All-knowing</i>
<i>Unchangeable</i>	<i>Compassionate</i>	<i>Sovereign</i>

But, the one thing that is clearly and relentlessly asserted about God in the Old Testament is that there is only one true and living God. God desires man to worship Him alone.

Jesus of Nazareth appeared and issued His challenge to the people living in a very religious culture. When He came on the scene, Jesus called people to a spiritual relationship with Himself and God the Father (John 17:3; Matthew 11:28-30). He claimed to be the answer to the needs of the human heart. Of all the world's religions, Jesus is the only "founder" who claimed to be equal with God. For the next few days, we will see what the scripture says about who Jesus Christ is.

REFLECT & RESPOND



Day 6

What Jesus Claimed about Himself

READ THE TRUTH

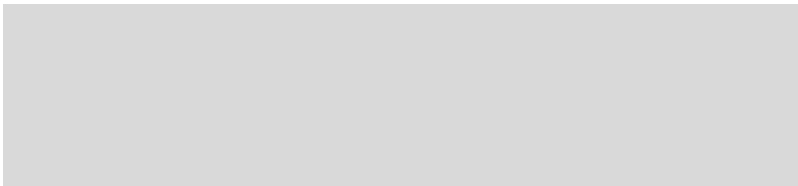
So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute Him. In His defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I too am working." For this reason, they tried all the more to kill Him; not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. (John 5:16-18)

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does. Yes, and He will show Him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom He is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent Him. (John 5:19-23)

"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself. And He has given Him authority to judge because He is the Son of Man. (John 5:24-27)

CONFIRM THE TRUTH

What does Jesus claim about Himself in John 5:16-18?



What does Jesus claim about Himself in John 5:19-23?

What does Jesus claim about Himself in John 5:24-27?

UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

John chapter 5 is a long dialogue between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. In it, Jesus states many truths about Himself that are clues to His being not only the promised Messiah, but also God in the flesh (human body). Did you notice that Jesus called God His Father, claiming He was equal with God as God's Son? He also claims to give life to whomever He is pleased to give it. Only God gives life. All judgment has been entrusted to Him. Only God is the judge of human destiny. And, Jesus says that He deserves the honor that belongs to God, including worship, which He accepted without restraint.

REFLECT & RESPOND

Day 7

What Jesus Claimed about Himself

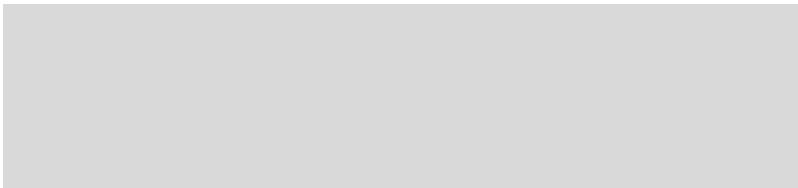
READ THE TRUTH

“I have testimony weightier than that of John [the Baptist]. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has Himself testified concerning me. You have never heard His voice nor seen His form, nor does His word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one He sent. You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (John 5:36-40)

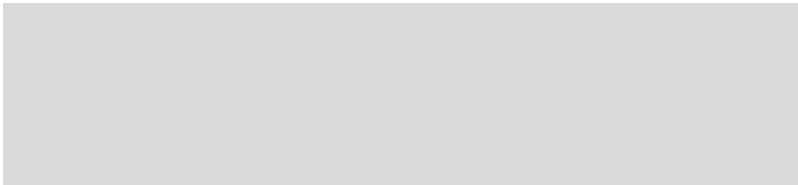
“But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.” (John 5:45-46)

CONFIRM THE TRUTH

What does Jesus claim about Himself in John 5:36-40?



What does Jesus claim about Himself in John 5:45-46?



UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

In this part of John chapter 5, Jesus continues His dialogue with the Jewish leaders and everyone else who was listening to this “sermon.” He has called God His Father, equates Himself with someone who can give life, declares His right to judge, and accepts worship and honor. Now, He appeals to the audience to view the work He’s been doing as evidence that He has been sent by the Father. The Scriptures testify about Him, and Moses Himself wrote about Him. Like a lawyer trying a case, Jesus presents undeniable evidence that He is Messiah and the Son of God.

REFLECT & RESPOND

