

Timothy ... will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul - 1 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)

In Christ

Or don't you know that all of those who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death...burial...and resurrection.

Paul - Romans 6:3-5 (NIV)

David Kuykendall Ministries

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The "In Christ" Testimony of Scott Coleman of Dallas, Texas

Obey the five commands listed below and experience your life "in Christ." Experience the abundant life through living by grace. Notice that each command is either to believe something or to choose to do something.

THE FIVE COMMANDS

Believe

Romans 6:11

Reckon (believe) yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord

Choose

Romans 6:12

Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in its lusts

Choose

Romans 6:13a

Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin

Choose/Believe

Romans 6:13b

Present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead.

Choose

Romans 6:13c

[Present] your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

We can and should obey each of these commands because Romans 6:3-5 teaches that all believers have been baptized into Jesus and as a result all believers have been baptized into his death, burial, and resurrection.

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I've been dating David Kuykendall's daughter for over eighteen years. For almost fourteen of those, she's been my wife. I thank God and her often for the impact she has made and is making on my life

I'll admit that at first the idea of living by grace was unremarkable to me. I say "idea" because initially that is all it was to me. Like so many Christian books that simply restate old truths in new outlines or with new emphases, my first take on what Kristi told me was that it was just a "wording difference" from what I already knew and was trying to live.

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The depth of her feeling regarding it sparked a curiosity, though, and a sense that maybe I just wasn't "getting it."

I have been a believer since my father explained the Roman Road to me as a fourth grader. By the time I came to serve as youth minister in the church where David pastored I was a seminary student

Through all that time, I never had really "got" the difference in living life based on grace and whatever it was I'd been doing for years. I don't think many around me, leaders or peers, had either.

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I certainly understood the salvation part. That there

was nothing that we can do to earn forgiveness. That our future in heaven is a totally free, undeserved, unearnable gift from our Father. But in a way, that strong emphasis was part of the problem—I interpreted virtually all Scriptures about grace through the lens of eternity and salvation.

But in a way, that strong emphasis (on salvation by grace) was part of the problem—I interpreted virtually all Scriptures about grace through the lens of eternity and salvation.

I don't think it crossed my mind that grace had much to do with anything this side of death except for expressing gratitude for the gift of a secure future. I knew I was saved by grace but the living a good life and doing great things for God part I thought was my side of the deal.

Though I experienced failure after failure, I succeeded just enough in my own strength and smarts to trick me into thinking I was headed the right way. I just needed to do a better job at it.

While others might have thought I was doing okay, I realized how far short I was falling in the internal battles. Time and more hard work didn't ease that—though rationalizations did at times. I would feel guilty sometimes, but I began to reason that this just must be the way that the Christian life worked, and at least I was clearly doing better than many. (Pride.)

One day I was in David's office going over plans for a youth New Year's lock-in. When my talk turned to New Year's resolutions, David gently pointed out that a life in union with Christ might not include such an external rule-based activity. *I look to that as the first breakthrough for me.*

We don't decide on our own what we will do for God. In constant contact with Him, He guides us daily—moment by moment.

Continued on back page

Continued from first page

Just as some people come to salvation talking to a visitor on their front door step and others need weeks of Bible study to process and accept the Gospel, so it is with the message of grace. I'm a processor. The resolutions were a breakthrough, but it took time.

In fact, it was not until I was in the deepest crises of my life that I was at the point where I could hear and understand the implications of the "exchanged life."

Dealing with the same ol' problems in the same ol' ways of trying to work up faith, determination and commitment did not bring about the inner life change and transformed mind I needed to survive. The "trying harder" thing just wasn't working. In fact, it was making things worse. I would have denied it before but I was living a legalistic life—a life of law, rules and efforts.

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Then God provided space. (Does that rhyme with "grace"?) Incredibly, we were given almost a year break from what we had been doing—a huge "retreat." During that time, I experienced intense upheaval that helped shatter my reliance on myself and completely reframed my faith.

At the same time the forgiveness and faith of those closest to me supported me ... and God began to break through.

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I distinctly remember the shock it was to me to discover that "The righteous shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11) might actually mean they will live life based on faith. I had always read it, they will live eternally because of their faith, as opposed to die eternally as a result of no faith.

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I began to understand for the first time what the closing verses of Galatians 2 meant when saying such things as, "If I rebuild what was destroyed (i.e., my dependence on trying to be good); I prove that I am a lawbreaker." (18). And, "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing." (21). These gave real meaning—even an explanation of "how-to"—to a favorite verse, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." (20)

David's explanation of key verses in Romans 6 finally began to sink in. I learned and experienced that trying harder only gives more power to temptation and the law. I began to see that spiritually, I was already dead to sin, buried and resurrected—even though for years I had not been living like it.

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Before, I had seen God and Satan as two competing powers, virtually equal in strength—if not in the universe, at least inside of me. Not so! Because of the death to sin and resurrection into Christ's life all of that could be behind me, if I chose to believe that truth and act on it.

And furthermore, keeping my life in constant union with Christ could provide direction and meaning that all of the best thinking, planning and working on my own would never be able to realize.

My relationship with God is much more alive and dynamic. My life with the Father is more youthful and joy-filled now than it was in my youth group days of lots of emotion, lots of "recommitments" and lots of ardently trying.

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