

When You Believe You Must Earn God's Approval

Understanding the Difference Between Living for Acceptance and Living From Grace

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."
Ephesians 2:8

THE REAL-LIFE STRUGGLE

It's easy to measure our spiritual worth by how well we perform – through prayer, Bible reading, good behaviour or helping others. When we struggle, we may feel less acceptable to God. But this way of thinking can leave us exhausted and uncertain, especially when we genuinely want to honour Him.



We do not earn God's acceptance through our performance. Through Jesus Christ, we receive His grace, and our obedience becomes a response to His love.

DISCOVER THE TRUTH

Scripture reveals that salvation is God's gift, not our achievement. Good works are the result of grace, not the price of it. We can approach God with confidence through Jesus Christ, who has accomplished what we could never accomplish for ourselves.

- Ephesians 2:8–10
Grace is God's gift
- Romans 5:1–2
We have peace with God
- Hebrews 4:14–16
We can approach God with confidence
- 1 John 1:8–2:2
Confession and forgiveness
- Hebrews 10:11–14
Jesus has done what we could not

THREE STEPS TO BRING A BELIEF INTO THE LIGHT

1

NOTICE THE PATTERN

Identify when you find yourself measuring your acceptance by your performance.

2

RETURN TO WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE

Consider the relevant biblical truth and distinguish between genuine conviction and performance-based condemnation.

3

CHOOSE A GRACE-FILLED RESPONSE

Take one practical step that flows from the grace you have received in Christ, rather than an attempt to earn approval.

A RENEWED UNDERSTANDING

Old thought:
I must do enough to be accepted.

Renewed understanding:
My acceptance before God rests upon Jesus Christ, not my performance. I can pursue obedience because of His grace, not to earn it.
Ephesians 2:8–10

PAUSE AND REFLECT

- 1 Do I find it easier to approach God on good days than difficult ones?
- 2 Have I been treating spiritual practices as a way to earn approval?
- 3 How do I respond when I recognise sin or failure?
- 4 Have past experiences influenced how I imagine the Father's attitude towards me?
- 5 What is one practical way I can begin living from grace rather than trying to prove that I deserve it?

A PRAYER OF RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the extraordinary grace You have shown through Jesus Christ. Help me to receive Your grace with humility, to respond to conviction with repentance and to grow in obedience because of Your love. Where I have tried to earn Your approval, renew my thinking. May my confidence rest upon Christ alone, and may my life be an expression of grateful faith. Continue transforming me through Your Word.
In Jesus' name,
Amen.

NEXT STEP

Continue exploring *The Garden Study* and discover more articles to encourage a life increasingly shaped by God's truth.