



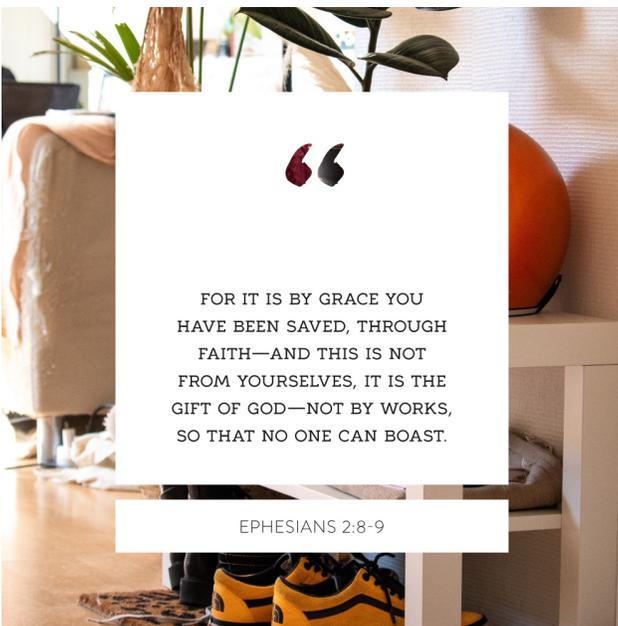
DAY 1



For some of us, it can be tempting to believe we're pretty self-sufficient and don't need other people in our lives to help us. For the most part though, that's simply not true. We need other people in our lives to live healthy, successful lives. We need intellectual support to accomplish big projects at work. We need relational support when making big life decisions. And we need emotional support when tough circumstances come our way. And the truth is, other people need US. God created us to live in community with one another—not isolated from one another. If one of us falls down, the other can help them up. If one goes down the wrong path, the other can help steer them in a new direction. Today, think about the people God has placed in your life to help you. Write their names down and thank God for putting them in your life. Then, think of the people

God has put in your life you can support. Today, reach out to them and remind them you're always there to help when they need it.

DAY 2



Grace, like the old hymn says, is truly amazing. Because of grace, we don't have to worry about being good enough, measuring up, or doing enough to earn our way into heaven. And that's great news, because the truth is, none of us are good enough, none of us can measure up to God's standard, and none of us can even hope to do enough good things to earn our way into heaven on our own. And you know what? Grace says that is okay—grace says that anyone can receive the gift of salvation and be assured that their past is no longer held against you. We must be careful not to cheapen this grace, however. Grace is not a license to do as we please or treat people however we want to. It might be a free gift to us, but it most certainly cost the Giver. And the way we show the Giver our gratitude for this gift

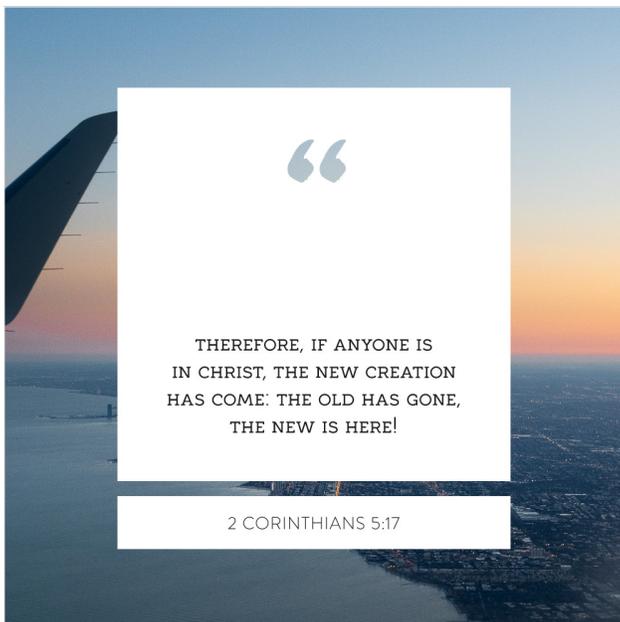
is by reflecting this same kind of grace to the people around us—grace to those who mess up, grace to those who don't measure up to our standards, and grace to those who think, believe, speak, and even vote differently from us.



DAY 3

Loving people the way this verse describes seems virtually impossible. After all, is it really possible to be truly patient and kind with EVERYONE? Is it possible to NOT keep a mental record of the ways someone has wronged us? No matter how good your self-control is, can you REALLY say that you keep your cool 100% of the time? If we're being honest, we'd probably all admit we fall short of doing these things a lot. So, what are we to do? If we're told to love like this, but it seems impossible, should we just give up? Believe it or not, realizing how often WE fall short of these standards is often the first step in showing MORE of these virtues to others. It's counter-intuitive, but it makes sense when you think about it. When we realize how often we fall short, we're increasing our capacity to extend grace to others when THEY fall short. In other words, once we realize that we don't have it all together, we'll

become better at showing patience, kindness, compassion, and grace to others when we see their flaws. Is there someone you're struggling to show patience, kindness, and grace to this week? How can you remind yourself to show them the same patience, kindness, and grace that God has shown you the next time you see them?



DAY 4

It's easy to forget that when we put our faith in Jesus, we become a new creation. After all, some of us still feel trapped in our old ways, even after we began following Jesus. But the good news is that when we accepted Christ by faith, He gave us a new life—whether we “feel” it every day or not—and, over time, God works in us to transform us so that we look more and more like Him. It's a process that takes time—like any good renovation project does. Day by day, month by month, and year by year, as we spend time following Him, God strips us of the old habits and old thoughts that hold us back, replacing the old with new. Though the echoes of our old life come calling, they don't have to have power over us any longer. Sometimes, we fear we haven't changed at all, but rest assured, if you're walking with God, you are not the same person you used to be! Today, thank God for making you a new creation, and ask God for the

strength to continue taking steps into the transformation He has for you.



DAY 5



We live in a time when everyone seems to have an opinion about—everything. Do cats or dogs make better pets? Does pineapple belong on a pizza or not? Most of us have an opinion. Which political party is the “right” political party? Again, most of us have an opinion! And with outlets like social media just begging for us to share our thoughts and opinions, it’s tempting to give our thoughts on just about every topic that crosses our path. If you think about it, in many ways the exact opposite of this verse is what’s normal in our world today: We’re slow to listen, quick to speak, and quick to become angry. And when we’re too quick to speak, we often neglect wisdom in the process. However, when we pause, take time to listen, and carefully consider our words, there we find wisdom—wisdom to know if what we’re about to say is beneficial or hurtful. There will always be times when what we hear sparks something in us to respond. But it’s what we do in that moment

that matters. Are we too quick to speak, leaving us with words we later regret? Or do we take the time to consider a thoughtful response that we’ll be proud of in the future? Today, make it your goal to count to 10 before offering your opinion on anything. You’ll be surprised at how such a small practice can impact the words, tone, and way you share your opinion going forward.

NOTES, PRAYERS, AND THOUGHTS FOR THIS WEEK. . . .

