



Grace on a Sugar Cone

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Some people say having kids changes you. But I say that having kids *unveils the real you*. Before I had kids I was patient, kind, magnanimous and upright. After kids I discovered I was selfish, petty and downright ugly. My generous spirit grew weary of well-doing when I actually had to do it well. In fact, I now believe that the concept of *parenting* is God's idea of a good joke. He lets us think we're in the position of guiding vulnerable little beings into all knowledge and wisdom, when in reality he is using them to meticulously unfold the truth of our own brokenness. Without my kids, I might still be under the illusion that I was a *good* person. With them, I recognize how desperately I need God's grace.

But before moving too quickly into my lesson on grace, I would like to first address the law. The law demands penalties, and one of the penalties for impertinence in the Reedy household is "losing dessert." A tragedy on any given day, but made worse one fine Saturday afternoon due to the fact that we were planning a family bike ride to Baskin Robins for a taste of heaven on a cone.

DJ, my youngest and most recently impertinent child, rode somberly to the store and stood by the door while Dan, Rachel and I taste tested everything from Perfectly Peachy to Jamocha Almond Fudge. It hurt my Mommy heart to watch DJ gazing down at the floor, sliding the toe of his tennis shoe along the valley of grout between the tiles.

The law stinks, I thought. *Maybe today we should have grace.*

So, I bought my ice-cream cone, sat across from DJ and took a few long licks. I finally asked, "DJ, do you know what grace is?" Before he could answer, my vociferous seven-year-old, Rachel, blurted out, "It's when you get love when you shouldn't." DJ nodded in agreement, and I launched into an eloquent speech on how God's grace makes us right with him, taking away the punishment we deserve and offering us a new, blame-free,

shame-free life. As the dramatic conclusion to my monologue, I handed over my cone.

DJ barely even glanced at me. His grubby little paws reached out for that cone, and before I could blink an eye, he was gobbling it up with a look of utmost serenity and satisfaction. I felt resentment surge up like hot lava. Apparently, he had not received grace in what I deemed an appropriate fashion. Yet, what did I expect? For him to reject the offer? Say he didn't deserve it? Maybe I expected him to well up with tears, trembling as he took the cone, pausing after each lick to stare at me with saintly reverence—too ashamed to freely consume this unspeakable gift.

As I sat in judgmental resentment, ice-creamless and dejected, God showed up. He patiently asked if I thought grace came with contingencies. I replied, *Of course not. Grace is a free gift.* Yet, here I was expecting obsequious belly-crawling. I resented DJ gobbling up that ice-cream cone because he didn't receive it in a posture of supreme unworthiness. God, however, found nothing wrong with DJ's receiving. DJ saw grace for what it was—a good thing worth grabbing. So he took it. But the story doesn't end there.

The next morning—a "hurry-up-and-get-in-the-car-for-church" morning—found DJ dressed and ready and buckled in his seatbelt before I could even begin to holler at him. Shocked at this drastic turn of events, I poked my head in the back door of the van, looked into those beautiful brown eyes and said, "Hey buddy, what's up? You were so helpful this morning. What's gotten into you?" He looked up at me seriously and said, "Well, Mommy, you gave me your ice-cream." Tears welled up in my eyes as I nodded in agreement, "Of course. I gave you my ice-cream."

That's how the story ends and begins anew. The story of grace turning lives upside down. So, grab hold of the grace God offers, enjoy the sweet flavor of forgiveness and love him right back in complete surrender. □

—Susan Reedy