

Grace

Grace That Defies Logic

What do you do?

I know, you're a Veterinarian, (except when you're on a long flight and you just want to read your book, then you have an alias to keep strangers from badgering you with pet questions.)

I mean what do you really *do*. What is your purpose? What are you doing with eternal value?

"But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God." -Acts 20:24

Yesterday, I sat between my two sons on a 10-hour road trip. Along the way, my 4-year-old hit me hard on the knee with a cell phone, kicked me repeatedly, and bit my arm leaving an indentation that the police could have used to identify him. Justice, or the Old Covenant Law, would have dropped him off at the first rest stop, but grace (the gift he did not deserve) stuck it out and hugged him goodnight when we finally made it home, telling him that I love him almost as much as God loves him.

Grace is the unconditional love that God models perfectly, parents replicate irrationally, and all other religions are lacking entirely.

"So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding." – Ephesians 1:6-8

When my children weren't attacking me, I used the car ride to do some homeschooling. One story I shared with them was one of my very favorites, one you may well know, but one of grace so amazing we really can't hear it enough:

In 1955, five missionary men, Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Pete Fleming, Roger Youderian, and Ed McCully began to plan "Operation Auca" a strategy to reach a fierce tribe of people in the jungle of Ecuador who had little to no contact with outsiders.

Nate, a pilot, found a sandbar near a river that could be used as a landing strip. For weeks, the team dropped gifts and pictures of themselves from their airplane. When the natives reciprocated with gifts, the men were overjoyed and took it as a sign that they were welcomed. Feeling encouraged, they landed on the sandbar and spent several days shouting a few friendly phrases they had learned in the native tongue. Eventually, two women and a man from the tribe wandered into their camp. The missionaries fed them hamburgers, took their pictures, and even took the man on a flight in Nate's plane. The men recorded their understandable excitement about this first encounter in their journals. But then the radios went silent...

Several days later, when their families had not heard from the men, a search party was sent into the jungle. All five men were found speared to death. I've known this story for over 20

Grace

Grace That Defies Logic

years, but I still tear up when writing that, as if it were the end. But it's not. It's just the beginning, of one of the most incredible stories of grace I've ever heard.

A year after the men's death, Jim's wife, Elisabeth, and Nate's wife, Rachel, went back to the tribe and moved in with them! Rachel spent the rest of her life there. Steve Saint was just a boy when he waited for news of his father, Nate, over the radio, but then he grew up in that jungle with the Auca tribe and became best friends with the man who murdered his father, Mincaye.

The grace that Elisabeth, Rachel, and Steve showed to Mincaye through their supernatural forgiveness led him to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. As an adult, Steve, with Mincaye toured the world telling their story of Jesus' redeeming love to anyone who would listen, including me.

I've had the privilege of meeting Steve and Mincaye multiple times. Steve's wisdom about short-term missions has been very influential in my ministry. Elisabeth Elliot's book *"Through the Gates of Splendor"* played a huge role in my inspiration toward serving long-term in South America myself.

Last year, when Mincaye passed on into glory, I wrote, "Can't help but think of the reunion in heaven yesterday between Mincaye and the five missionaries he murdered. I imagine Nate Saint, Jim Elliot, and the others welcomed Mincaye with a joyful embrace, just as Jesus did. Grace is the beautiful, transforming force that was at the center of his life's story and now his death. Truly amazing grace."

Years before his death, Jim Elliot wrote in his journal, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." Now, *that* is a purpose worth living for.

- **Share a story of grace that has impacted your life and makes you want to extend grace to others.**
- **How can you use your calling as a veterinarian to share the Good News of God's Wonderful Grace?**
- **How can you show grace in the little things to your classmates, clients, and staff that will lead to an opportunity to share about God's Wonderful Grace?**



Dr. Lauren Charles is a graduate of Auburn, CVM, class of 2005. She grew up in Louisville, KY and lives there again now. After a number of short-term mission trips to Latin American countries she lived and served in Bolivia from 2009-2012, working primarily with veterinary students. Lauren adopted her daughter Angie, and her dog Ruby in Bolivia, and then married her husband Jon. They now also have 3 biological children as well, Isaiah, Paul, and Aphia. She serves as CVM's U.S. Ministry Director and Southeast Region Rep. Email: lcharles@cvm.org