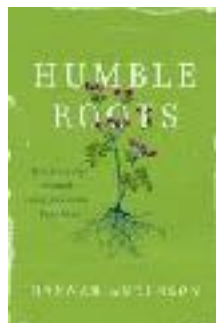


**Who do you  
say that I  
am?**

**March 20 & 21  
women's  
gathering**



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# GRACE BIBLE WOMEN'S NEWSLETTER



Hey there ladies! My name is Heather Ross, I am a Christ follower, a college student, and just recently became a wife! I'm sure most of you have met my crazy husband Brennan Ross, he has been a youth leader at Grace Bible for about 2 years now, but may not have met me! I have never actually written out my testimony so bear with me, I'll

just jump right into it! A little about me: I grew up in a very small town not far from Gunter called Whitewright. I grew up with 2 brothers and a sister, and just recently became an aunt! I graduated high school in 2017, and will be graduating from the University of North Texas with a Bachelors degree in Marketing this May. There have been a lot of changes in my life this past year, and even more are on the way. I would lying if I said it hasn't been stressful; change and uncertainty has always been scary for me. Needless to say though, God has been so faithful through all of it and He is teaching me as I go, showing me how to have an "open-hand" for every trial and opportunity.

**My life before I knew Christ** was full of insecurity and chasing after the wrong things just to find a shred of meaning. I found my identity in status, attention, boys, satisfaction, and so many more worldly things.

My attitude and actions were revolved around me, myself, and I. I was raised in a Baptist church my whole life, and always told everyone I was a Christian, but part of me just felt like a fraud. I looked at Christ like a safety net, He was something I didn't have to think or worry about because "I was good." I believed in him and went to church on Sundays, so I was good right? It wasn't until my Senior year that I started to feel how empty I was, and how fickle the things I valued were.

At the start of my freshman year of college, I knew I wanted a fresh start. I wanted to meet new friends, join organizations, and just get the heck out of Grayson county. I did all of these things, but I felt lonelier and more unfulfilled than ever. The more friends I made the more they seemed surface level, and the sorority I joined delivered false promises. I didn't understand how I could be surrounded by a crowd of people and still feel so out of place and alone. It was a tough year for me, but it would also be the place Christ would reveal himself to me.


The second semester, I moved into the sorority house and one night a girl that worked for a ministry called Campus Outreach came and knocked on the door. Jerrie had come to have to Bible study in the TV room for anyone that wanted to join. We immediately hit it off and just her presence put my spirit at ease, this was truly the first time I felt Christ's light being shown through someone. In the weeks and months to follow she became my mentor: holding me accountable, asking me the hard questions, and just simply being intention and present. God works through people in such mysterious ways, but without Jerrie, I would not have had the confidence to go and seek Christ-followers in my sorority, in my classes, and on campus...and I would not have this amazing community of women to run this race with.

**I received Christ** for the first time in my life my freshman year, and there was no way I was ever going back. Now, I didn't just recognize my **need** for Him, I also recognized my **want and longing** for Him. One passage that has always stuck with me is Ephesians 1: 4-8: "*even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love<sup>5</sup> he predestined us<sup>al</sup> for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight.*" How amazing is that reminder? He has shown me that He has set me apart, He

CHOSE me, even before I was born. That He is **THE** Beloved Father, that gave his one and only Son to die for my sins, so that I may be righteous and redeemed before him. He did all of this in transcending wisdom and insight. What a wonderful God we serve.

**My life since receiving Christ** has been so amazing... hard, but amazing nonetheless. I no longer have the crushing weight of shame and loneliness that I carried for so many years. Christ showed me what it truly means to deny oneself and pick up their cross. I am still learning as I go, especially with this whole marriage thing! Growing up, my dad wasn't around much, and I never saw a healthy, Christ centered marriage or relationship, so there was a bit of a learning curve. I recognize getting married at 20 is not an ideal thing for some people and trust me I heard all about it, but we knew God would prepare us and mold us...all we had to do was be faithful and pursue His holiness. Brennan has been the most amazing husband through all of our highs and lows, He is my most treasured blessing. Through marriage God has shown me how I struggle with being submissive and selfless, which have carried over in all aspects of my life. In every situation, He is pointing me back to his word, He is showing me the mirror of Christ again and again. This past year the main words that have popped into my mind during prayer and reading is "obedience and discipline." The Lord is sharpening me, all the while being patient and loving. He has changed my desires from the inside out, and I am so excited to continue this race. The learning, sharpening, and changing will continue, and I cannot wait to see where he takes us.

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GRACE BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

# Women's Gathering 2020

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

MARCH 20 6 - 10 PM

MARCH 21 8 - 2 PM

# 5 Things Forgiveness Is Not

by Brad Hambrick a counselor for the church.

This article is one post in a series entitled “**When Talking about Forgiveness.**”

From the first reflection to the second, we’re going to move from pain to fear. Initially, we paused to honor the pain that prompted the need to forgive. Now we’ll seek to articulate several of the fears that can cause us to brace against forgiving.

Sometimes the most loving way to engage a *subject* (that is, a topic like forgiveness) is to set *someone’s* (that is, a person who has been hurt) mind at ease. With children, this might sound like, “You’ve got a doctor’s appointment today, but don’t worry, you don’t have to get any shots.” It is reasonable to associate doctors with needles, but it easier to go to the doctor if you know there won’t be any needles this time (even for my children’s father).

Similarly, it can be helpful to set our mind at ease about a few things related to forgiveness. This reflection is all about, “We need to talk about forgiveness, but don’t worry, forgiveness doesn’t mean [blank].” We are going to talk about five common fears associated with forgiveness that can go in that blank.

If after reading this article you’re willing to say, “Well, if forgiveness isn’t the same thing as [blank], then I am willing to consider it,” then this reflection will have accomplished everything it set out to do.

## **1. Forgiveness Is Not Pretending We’re Not Hurt**

If we conceive of forgiveness as pretending, then forgiveness becomes a synonym for being fake. Forgiveness becomes a form of self-imposed silencing. This loss of voice only compounds the painful effect of whatever offense has already been committed against us. Forgiveness is not pretending.

Simply stated – but simpler to say than to live – *forgiveness is what allows us to express hurt as hurt rather than hurt as anger*. Even after we forgive, hurt still hurts. If the person who hurt us gets upset with us for still hurting, they haven’t really repented.

*Forgiveness is what allows us to express hurt as hurt rather than hurt as anger.*

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Too often we view forgiveness as the culmination of a journey. When I say, “I forgive you,” I am not saying, “Things are all better now.” I am saying, “I have decided I will relate to your offense towards me differently.” Forgiveness is the start of a new journey. Forgiveness doesn’t erase the past.

When you forgive, you are not making a commitment not to hurt. You are making a commitment about what you will do with hurt when it flares up.

## **2. Forgiveness Is Not Letting Someone Off the Hook**

## **2. Forgiveness Is Not Letting Someone Off the Hook**

When we let someone off the hook, we are saying that nothing else needs to be done. It's the equivalent of someone eating your lunch out of the office fridge, offering to buy you lunch, and you saying, "That's okay. I needed to diet anyway." That is letting someone off the hook.

But when God forgives us, he does not assume we are a "finished product." God remains active in our life to remove the sin he forgave. Forgiveness is meant to change us, not leave us as we were. Similarly, when we forgive someone it is right to expect that this grace will have an impact on them. If someone does not agree about the wrongness and weight of the sin we're forgiving, then the most forgiveness can do is set us free from bitterness and not create relational restoration.<sup>[1]</sup>

## **3. Forgiveness Is Not Making an Excuse for Someone**

Sometimes we resist forgiving because we do not want to ratify a perceived downgrade in the significance of the offense. Forgiveness is not a downgrade. Forgiveness does not reclassify an offense from a sin to a mistake. Mistakes are excused. Sins are forgiven.

Forgiveness inherently classifies an offense at the top level of wrongness. When we say, "I forgive you," we are saying, "The only thing that could make right what you did was Jesus's substitutionary death on the cross." For someone wanting to excuse their sin, real forgiveness is offensive (I Corinthians 1:18-31).

## **4. Forgiveness Is Not Forgetting**

We will devote an entire reflection in this series to the misguided notion of "forgive and forget." Here we will merely try to assuage the fear that you will be pressured in that direction during this series. Many of us wish it were possible to forget our most painful experiences. Spiritual dementia towards our pain sounds blissful.

Forgiveness doesn't unwrite history. Jesus both cried out "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), and inspired the recording of the events that led to his death. Forgiveness did not unwrite history or mitigate any of the benefits of learning from history. As we've all been told, "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Whatever vulnerability true forgiveness brings, it is not the vulnerability of

## **5. Forgiveness Is Not Necessarily Trust or Reconciliation**

You may remember geometry class in high school. You were taught "all squares are rectangles, but not all rectangles are squares." A similar relationship exists between forgiveness and trust or reconciliation; "All trust and reconciliation are rooted in forgiveness, but not all forgiveness results in trust and reconciliation."

When we don't realize this then saying, "I forgive you," implies things are "back to normal," and normal is what got us hurt. No thank you!

In future reflections, we will consider when reconciliation is wise and what trust development looks like after a major offense. For now, all you need to realize is that the decision to forgive and the decision to trust or resume a “normal” (i.e., as things were) relationship are two different decisions. The first does not necessitate the second. If you are being pressured to believe that forgiving requires trusting, this is reason to push pause on movement towards reconciliation of that relationship.

**Questions for Reflection**

1. What fears did this reflection help you most set aside? What experiences prompted these fears and made this reflection necessary?
2. What changes when you realize that accepting real forgiveness, which comes with an accurate assessment of the wrong done, is actually offensive to a non-repentant person?

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## Authenticity

*There is no authenticity apart from God.*

Authenticity is very important for a follower of Christ but we have to be clear on what it actually means to be authentic according to God's Word. The concept of authenticity has been hijacked by modern culture. It's now all the rage to be authentic. Simply google the word to find a myriad of articles on how to have authentic relationships, the importance of authenticity in the workplace, how to find your authentic self, and the like. Unfortunately, most will miss the mark.

The definition of *authentic* is '*undisputed origin; genuine.*' As Creator, God is our origin. He gives the first and final word on who we are. The worldly idea of authenticity encourages us, the created ones, to define ourselves in any way that we want to, as if we originated from ourselves, apart from any notion of what our Creator has said about us. Rather than defining our authentic selves by what God says, we are told to rely on our own innate desires and deceitful hearts as we "find ourselves."

So just who does God say that we are? We are his **workmanship** (Ephesians 2:10), his **treasured possession** (Deuteronomy. 7:6). We are **sinners** (Romans 3:23), and yet, **beloved by God** (John 3:16). We are His **adopted** children (Ephesians 1:5); we have been **purchased** by the blood of his son Jesus (Galatians 3:13). We are **free** (Romans 6:18) and **forgiven** from sin (1 John 1:9). We are a **new creation** in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). This new creation is the genuine, authentic us.

When you pay for something with a large bill, typically the cashier will mark it with a special marker or hold it up to the light to make sure it is authentic. For us, the Bible is the most important and powerful tool we



have to check for self-authenticity. If we have a desire that does not align with God's word, it is not a part of who we truly are in Christ. This is where faith comes in to play. We must believe that God's ways are the right ways, even if they are contrary to our own. We are never more authentic than when we are allowing the Spirit of Christ to rule in our hearts.

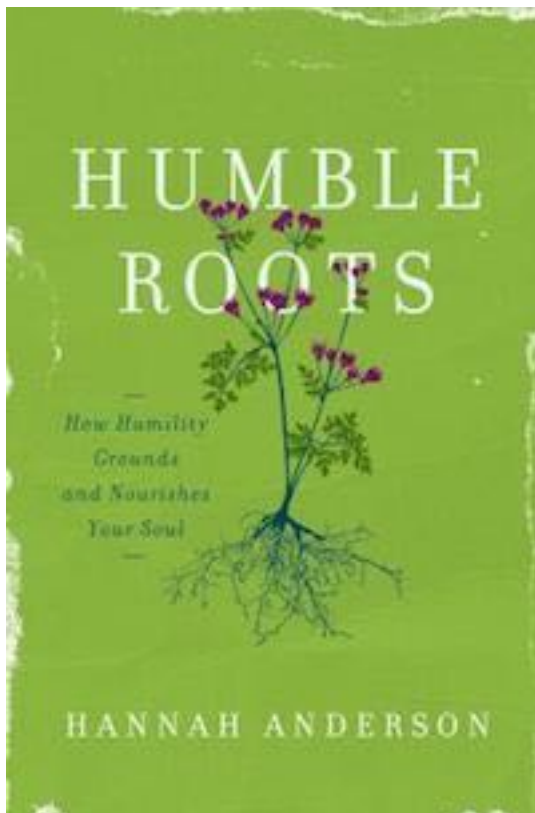
While sometimes there are parts of us that need to be sanctified or removed, it is possible that there are parts of us that we need to embrace in order to be authentic. These are the things about us that do not contradict God's Word, that are part of the unique way God has made us, but for whatever reason we have deemed them to be "not good". For example: various personality traits, our appearance, our gifts and talents. We may be tempted to to make ourselves into the image of what we think the world wants to see rather than allowing them to see us as God has made us. Within the boundaries of scripture, we should not be ashamed of the unique, one-of-a-kind individual God has created. To do so would be to call into question what God has said is good. To do so would be inauthentic.

A question we may find helpful to ask ourselves is *Why do we want to be authentic?* Is it so that people will view us as cool and relevant? So that we are more likable? More marketable? Because a book told us to be? A desire for authenticity apart from Christ will always be self-serving and ultimately meaningless.

A God-glorifying desire for authenticity will be to honor God's workmanship. It will be because we want to steward well the life that he has given us in order to bring glory to his name.

# ***Book of the month***

## **Humble Roots**



Over the years I have read quite a few books on the subject of humility. To be frank, this is an area in which I need all the help I can get (and I am quite certain that I am not alone in this need). As I read the latest, Hannah Anderson's *Humble Roots*, a thought occurred to me: All of the others have been written by men. I don't mean to read any

particular significance into this observation, but did find myself especially challenged and refreshed to read one that comes from a different perspective—a female perspective. This is just one of the many reasons I found [\*Humble Roots\*](#) a tremendously enjoyable read.

The book's starting point is anxiety, being overwhelmed, feeling "heavy laden." "For years," she says, "I've heard that the solution to such stress comes from setting up boundaries, finding ways to be more productive, cultivating gratitude, and scheduling 'me-time.' For years, I've believed that finding rest comes from both simultaneously learning to let go and keeping your act together. For years, I've thought that my sense of peace depends entirely on me." But then she found herself pondering Jesus as he presents himself in Matthew 11:28, a Savior who is gentle and lowly in heart and who offers rest for our souls. Pondering this, she realized that the better antidote for anxiety and being overwhelmed is humility. "The goal of *Humble Roots* is to understand how pride manifests itself in anxiety and restlessness, and

how humility frees us from the cycle of stress, performance, and competition.”

She explores theological truths and does it by considering the natural world. “We’ll explore the theological truths of incarnation, creaturehood, physical embodiment, and human limitation; and we’ll do this by considering the natural world around us, by lifting our eyes to the hills, the fields, and the heavens. But we’ll also consider more practical questions about how humility informs our daily choices—ones that generally take place in less idyllic settings. We’ll see how humility—how knowing ourselves as creatures—also helps us see the extent of our pride in our everyday choices, from how we use social media to how we give and receive compliments. But more than simply point out where we fail, humility also provides a way forward.”

Through eleven chapters she explores humility from its various angles. She looks at failure, rest, humanity, emotions, weakness, death, and more. She looks at the pride that so often fills our hearts and consumes our lives. She shows that humility is “not simply a disposition or set of phrases.

Humility is accurately understanding ourselves and our place in the world. Humility is knowing where we came from and who our people are. Humility is understanding what without God we are nothing. Without His care, without His provision, with His love, we would still be dust.”

Let me point out three of the book’s most appealing strengths.

First, *Humble Roots* is relentlessly biblical.

Anderson simply teaches what the Bible teaches about humility. Every chapter goes deep into a text or series of texts and shows how they call us to pursue humility by pursuing Christ, to “celebrate the goodness of our physical bodies, to embrace the complexity of our emotions, and to own our unique gifts without guilt or feeling like an imposter.” In other words, she calls us to flourish as human beings made in God’s image.

Second, *Humble Roots* is well-written. Anderson is a skilled writer and her book is a joy to read. It is a great length in an era in which far too many books are just a little too long and it is beautifully integrated with her own life and experiences. This gives it an enjoyable authenticity and a “rootsy”

feel. Each chapter is structured around something she has experienced in the natural world and this serves as a helpful and interesting “hook” to hold the book together.

Third, *Humble Roots* is practical. It is practical without being trite. Those who read the book will know about humility, to be sure, but they will also have ideas about what humility actually looks like in real life. They will receive wisdom on how to actually be humble.

I read [\*Humble Roots\*](#) because I had heard so many people praise it. I was delighted to find it is worthy of the recognition and worthy of both time and attention. It is a book I enjoyed thoroughly and recommend heartily.

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