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February 2014  
Metro Lutheran  
Positive Parenting  
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## GRACE

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:7b

Her name was Grace. That's what her name tag said. Just Grace. And that she was. She was the employee who checked me out with REI gift cards before Christmas. But Grace was so much more than her name. What delighted and engaged me immediately was the grace that suffused her whole person. She seemed genuinely delighted to wait on me, to find out about how my day was going, to connect with me, person-to-person. Yes, it was that crazy busy season, replete with impatient shoppers and overwhelmed retail employees, but Grace paused in the midst of that to be a real, respectful person, engaging with another human being. It stands out as my favorite shopping experience last December.

It took me back 18 years, when my husband and I made a visit to our daughter, who was spending her junior year at a university in Aix-en-Provence in southeastern France. As we headed to the shops, our daughter coached us on how the French greet one another. "First, you greet the employee as a person, by name if you know it, with interest in or concern about how they are doing. Only then do you ask if they have time to help you with their merchandise." We did it, awkwardly at first, since my French was rusty from long disuse. But it was wonderful. We found we connected as real human beings, one to another. It utterly transformed every business transaction. Even better, we packed it up and brought it home ... and it makes a difference here, too.

Think about your latest interchange at the drug store, grocery, big box store, or gas station. Was it efficient and quick? Were you irritated if it wasn't? Was the whole point of your trip to get a prescription, a gallon of milk, inexpensive chips, or the gas tank filled up? Do you remember any of the faces or names of those who waited on you?

There are so many opportunities in our everyday lives to connect with others, to make their day ... or to be rude and impatient and diminish their sense of value and importance. So, obviously, it matters to those who wait on us. But never ever forget that children are watching and learning how to treat others by what they see the adults they love do to others.

When our kids were young, I watched them cringe when I asked to speak to a manager or supervisor if we had received good service at McDonalds. "M-o-m, please don't do this!" they'd plead. When the supervisor arrived, I described the excellent service we had received, used the employee's name, and affirmed the training they had received. I don't know who was more astonished, the employee or the manager, who thought this was just one more dissatisfied customer ready to complain.

Our adult kids are now very quick to thank others for good service and to let others know. It works!

Isn't this what God was up to with Jesus? "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son ..." not just for a short visit, but to dwell among us and to promise to be with us always. Now, that is the grace and peace God intends for each of us to experience and for each of us to share with one another.

How can you share that with the children you love?

1. Be quick to compliment and affirm those kids you love. Catch them doing well and let them know. Catch them being kind and point it out to them.
2. With other children, let their parents know what you have observed them doing well. If you can, do it in front of the kids, too.
3. Thank the school bus driver for the careful driving and kindness with which he treats the kids.
4. Thank the lunch lady at school for providing nourishing food and encouragement to the kids.
5. Get to know those who check you out at the grocery store. Call them by name. Thank them for their service to you.
6. Thank your postal delivery person, your trash handler, your sidewalk shoveler ... and not just at Christmas time.

Make sure each day that someone in your life is thankful for the grace with which you have treated them.

Thank you, Grace! This one's for you!

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES



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Valentines Day, write and deliver valentines to the people who serve you all year long, thanking them for their service and telling them you are glad to have them in your life. Who else might your kids do a valentine for that isn't their classmate or teacher?

2. Catch your kids being appreciative of others.
3. Affirm your kid's kindness to the kids who aren't always kind.
4. Read stories from the newspaper to your kids about people who cared for others when they didn't need to do that.
5. Pray for grace and peace in the lives of those who make life hard for others.