MARK & FRIENDS

God Unwrapped, Part 1: Receiving the Love and Grace of God

Tuesday, November 17, 2026 | Ministry Package V5.1
Host: Mark Burns | Speaker: Michelle Hollomon

Program Summary

Mark Burns welcomes counselor, coach, and author Michelle Hollomon for the first part of a conversation about God Unwrapped: God Is Love… But Not the Kind You Are Used To. Michelle describes growing up in a Christian home yet struggling with shame, anxious striving, and the belief that she could never measure up. Her own counseling journey helped her recognize harmful assumptions about God and begin receiving His grace. A scuba-diving story pictures the relief of accepting a helping hand rather than having to hold everything together. The conversation explores how parents and authority figures can shape a person's view of God, how Scripture and encouraging relationships communicate His love, and how receiving grace equips a person to share it. Mark and Michelle also discuss her book's treatment of God's anger and healthy growth. The program closes with an invitation to receive God's love and a preview of Part 2.

Key Takeaways

- My experiences with imperfect people can influence how I imagine God; those assumptions need to be examined in light of Scripture.
- Shame and constant striving can make it difficult to approach God with confidence and receive His grace.
- Michelle's testimony describes healing and freedom as she came to know God's goodness more deeply.
- Receiving help is not a failure; her scuba-diving story illustrates grace, dependence, and companionship.
- Scripture offers a place to begin learning what God's love means for my identity and daily life.
- Encouraging relationships within the body of Christ can model affirmation and help challenge harsh assumptions.
- Receiving grace helps me extend grace to someone else.
- The interview presents God's correction as rooted in love and concern for His children rather than selfish irritation.

Scripture References

- Psalm 34:3 - The opening invitation to magnify the Lord and exalt His name together.
- 1 John 4:18 - Explicitly referenced in the conversation about affirmation and receiving God's love.
- 1 John 4:9-10 - Companion reading: God's love revealed through His Son.
- Ephesians 2:8-9 - Companion reading: salvation by grace rather than personal achievement.

- Romans 8:1 - Companion reading: no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.
- Hebrews 4:15-16 - Companion reading: Jesus understands human weakness and invites confidence in approaching the throne of grace.
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 - Companion reading: receiving God’s comfort and sharing it with others.

Quote of the Day

“As I experienced His grace and applied it to my own life, started giving myself grace, started applying God’s love to the parts of myself that I felt most ashamed about, then I started healing.” — Michelle Hollomon

Broadcast Notes

Host: Mark Burns. Guest: Michelle Hollomon, author of God Unwrapped: God Is Love… But Not the Kind You Are Used To. This is Part 1 of a two-part conversation, presented for Tuesday, November 17, 2026; the closing introduces Part 2 for the following day. The interview includes Michelle’s personal testimony, a scuba-diving illustration, a counseling story about affirmation, discussion of parental and authority influences, and excerpts from her book. Statements about God’s anger and the pace of growth are presented as the author’s discussion and interpretation. The complete supplied spoken transcript is preserved with clear name corrections. Original references to a morning program, a new book, and GodUnwrapped.com remain part of the recorded conversation; the Additional Ministry Resources section includes Michelle’s current author website.

Practical Applications

- Read 1 John 4:18 in its surrounding passage and consider what God’s love reveals about fear.
- Write down one assumption I carry about God, then examine whether it reflects Scripture or an imperfect human relationship.
- Bring an area of shame honestly to God in prayer rather than withdrawing from Him.
- Practice receiving an appropriate offer of help with gratitude.
- Spend time with an encouraging, trustworthy believer who points me toward Jesus and biblical truth.
- Offer a sincere word of affirmation to someone, recognizing God’s work and that person’s value.
- Make room for patient growth instead of treating mistakes as proof that I am beyond God’s care.
- Ask how the grace I receive from God can shape the way I respond to another person today.

Today's Challenge

Choose one area where you feel you must earn God’s approval. Read 1 John 4:9-18, bring that burden to Him in prayer, and write one sentence of biblical truth to return to this week. Then encourage someone else with the kindness and grace you are learning to receive.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing Your love through Jesus. Help me recognize the assumptions I carry about You and bring them honestly into the light of Your Word. When shame makes me want to hide, draw me near through Your grace. Teach me to receive Your help, to trust Your goodness, and to grow with patience. Surround me with people who point me toward Your truth, and help me offer that same encouragement to someone else. Let the love I receive from You shape my thoughts, my words, and my actions. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Michelle Hollomon

Counselor, certified professional coach, and author

Michelle Hollomon is a counselor, certified professional coach, and author of God Unwrapped: God Is Love… But Not the Kind You Are Used To. Her counseling, coaching, and writing explore relationships, identity, and personal growth. In this interview, she shares how receiving God's grace helped her move beyond shame and anxious striving toward greater freedom in Christ.

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About Today's Host

Mark Burns

Host of Mark & Friends

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLUJ Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. With decades of experience in Christian radio and ministry, he presents Scripture-centered programs intended to educate, edify, and evangelize.

Additional Ministry Resources

- Mark & Friends Program Resource Library
- Great News Radio
- WLUJ
- 1 John 4 - read the chapter
- Michelle Hollomon - author website
- About Michelle - author biography

Complete Proofread Transcript

Oh, magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together. You are in for such a blessing and treat today and tomorrow as you'll get to listen in on my conversation with Michelle Hollomon, author of the book titled God Unwrapped, God is Love but Not the Kind You Are Used to. Michelle is a licensed counselor and certified professional coach with thousands of hours of helping people achieve their personal and professional goals.

You're absolutely going to love what she has to say and share, so stay listening today and tomorrow on this edition of Mark and Friends, and if you miss a portion of our conversation, it's archived at GreatNewsRadio.org under the Archived Programs link. Listen and learn about God Unwrapped. So Michelle, can you tie in for our listeners your background story which may be helped give roots to this book or prepared you for writing God Unwrapped? Yeah, thank you, Mark.

I think I was first thinking about writing this book and started journaling and started writing when I first began experiencing freedom maybe for the first time to know who I am in Christ, know Christ in a deeper way, and then start exploring some of the things that I liked and what I was good at. So I was raised in a good Christian home. I got saved, I think, when I was five and went to church every Sunday, but came into young adulthood thinking that I really needed to get things right, needed to try hard to be a good Christian, but I really kind of wanted to have a lot of fun, too, and I couldn't seem to really go together, and then I would have shame because I would mess up, and I would hide from God, and, gee, it seems like the expectations that God wanted from me were too much, and I would never be able to measure up, and so it was a lot of kind of just the works-based thinking, but I just thought that it was, that's what Christianity was about.

So once I started into my own counseling, I was talking to a friend one day, and she said, well, gee, Michelle, these issues keep coming back for you because we've talked about these same issues for a long time with you, and I thought, well, maybe it's worth getting into some counseling and figuring out, and by that time I was already a counselor, and so I knew that counseling was helpful. I got myself back into counseling and worked out some of these issues that a lot of ideas that I had about God were just false, and they were harmful to me because I was disconnected from God because of the shame that I felt about my own ability to live a good Christian life, and I was pretty tense and anxious about having a good marriage or raising my kids good enough or being a good enough mother and just not experiencing peace or freedom at all. So again, after I got into counseling myself and I started exploring who God really was to me, He was much better than I ever thought that He was.

He was much more full of grace, and as I experienced His grace and applied it to my own life, started giving myself grace, started applying God's love to the parts of myself that I felt most ashamed about, then I started healing, and after healing comes freedom. And then I was just full and overflowing this good stuff I was experiencing in God, and I had to write it down. Well, this book that you've written, Michelle, God Unwrapped, God is Love, but not the kind you are used to.

I would hope and wish every single one of our listeners would not just buy one copy and read it for themselves, but would buy many copies to hand out to their friends and neighbors because the way you've written this book, I mean, it's humorous, it's poignant, it's insightful, touching, it's helpful and written very creatively that kind of encourages you to draw near to God and recognize how He loves you and values you. And I love how you begin most all the chapters with a specific scripture verse that then lends itself to what you're going to write about, and then how each of your chapters end with a question for self-reflection, and then intention statements, and then extra study with other various scripture verses, and it's just so, I mean, it's delightful, and I'm thinking to myself, I think there's 31 excellent chapters, and it's like, Michelle, can you be on

31 morning programs? Because I think there's enough content and things to talk about in each and every one of the chapters, and I have Post-it notes throughout this whole book, I've colored it all up and highlighted it, and I thought, how can I put this even into one program? There's so much. I'm thinking just like chapters 9, 10, and 11, actually, each and every chapter's worth the cost of the book, but like 9, 10, and 11, I highlighted it, and I love how you illustrate things with personal stories or illustrations from your own life or from those that you've counseled, and I just, I mean, it's just so worthwhile, so I want to give our listeners time at the end of the program to make sure they can write down your website address the purchase of the copy, so I'll say this a few times, but godunwrapped.com, www.godunwrapped.com, and with me on the morning program here is Michelle Hollomon, and as I introduced her, she's just very talented and creative, and I just love how you've shared personal illustrations, like about how you got to connect with God when you were scuba diving some years ago.

Oh, yes. Well, I've experienced God's grace many times, but sometimes I didn't connect it, that this was really God's heart for me, and I had been scuba diving before, and then I'd had children, and once a mother has children, it changes her perspective a bit, and I was all of a sudden so fearful that I wouldn't make it back to the top or maybe I was taking too many risks, and I just got seethed by panic, so I dropped down 30 feet under the water, and that's when I decided that I can't do this because I'm just freaking out, and so I forget which button makes the vest blow up and which button makes the vest deflate, so I'm running through my scenarios in that kind of split-second panic, and thinking, well, if I push the wrong button, surely I'll sink to my death. So, thankfully, there was a scuba diving master that came down with us, and she could see the panic look on my face, and I was motioning to her that I wanted to go back up, and she was so full of grace.

It was God's picture to me that I don't have to get everything right. I don't have to be calm, cool, and collected. I don't have to have everything together.

I don't have to have all my poop in a group in order to experience His grace, so she extended a hand to me, and she held my hand with one of her hands, and then with the other hand, she motioned to me to calm myself down, which, as soon as I grabbed her hand, I knew I was going to be fine because she wasn't going to let me sink to the bottom of the ocean floor, so I knew I was going to be fine. I could calm myself down, and then she dove with me for the next 30 minutes hand in hand, and it was just a gift. Now, I was thinking in my head, oh, she thinks that I was misguided and that I shouldn't have even come down here in the first place if I was not prepared, but really, she was just so full of grace.

She dove with me for the 30 minutes. I got to see green sea turtles. I got to see amazing things, and later, she tipped me up to the top, and I apologized for freaking out, and she said, oh, I totally get it.

I just couldn't let you leave the reef without seeing everything that's down there, and I think that's God's message to us. He says, I totally get it. I get what it's like to be human, and it's not the easiest thing in the world, and so I just couldn't leave you there to suffer by yourself.

I had to show you the things of life that I wanted you to see, and so let's do it together, and he reinforces our dependency on him. And I love throughout the book, you reference different stories from your own life or from others that sometimes because of maybe our fathers or we, in a sense, indict God the father, how we saw leaders or those that influenced our life in a negative way, and we project onto God these examples from our earthly dads or from others, and it's not the correct view of this loving God that's out for our good, that desires to care and be a part of our lives and to help us flourish and to be all that we can be in him. And I call those God figures because they leave any kind of caregiver, authoritarian type figure or parent, coach in our life and our past experiences, leave the biggest imprint of who we project onto God.

And so we have some sometimes relearning to do and some learning to do as we grow into adulthood and we own our own faith and not just receive it maybe from the past God figures in our life, but we own it and make it ours. And some of that relearning, for many of us, we have to relearn that God is not displeased, disapproving, or distant. And those three things we get because maybe we never could get our parents' approval or we never could feel like we were good enough or we just felt like, oh, maybe my parents are kind of interested in me, but really they don't know who I really am and they don't care who I really am.

Now, those are difficult things to think or admit, but oftentimes we will say, and on a very intellectual level, say that God is good, but somewhere underneath we don't react to him as being good. And that's when we have to go back and really look at how our parents raised us and the different caregiving people in our life and really decide, well, how did they react to us and how did they treat us? And maybe it will make an impact on how I see God. I'm going to read a portion from page 20.

Don't let the pain of the past stop you from growing into your bright future as the dearly loved child of a good, good God. Mm-hmm. Well, Michelle, I love so many of your chapter titles.

I'm going to read them for our radio listening family just to give them kind of a snapshot into your table of contents. But God isn't who you think he is. That's chapter one.

Seeing the old God in a brand new way. God is love but not the kind you're used to. Does God get mad? A knock off the old block, and I love your illustration about your grandmother.

Maybe we'll talk about that in a little while. Refrigerator God. Fantastic chapter.

The inmate inside. I love that chapter. The masterpiece and his master.

The smeagol inside. Since you're not dead, grow. My mom used to always say, Lord, keep me green so I know I'm growing.

Chapter 21. What a cute little idol. Does it have a name? And I love your humor throughout and just your illustrations.

The crotchety old neighbor. Mission possible. The more excellent way.

There's just so many wonderful things. But in chapter three, you talk about Jordan's story and the power of affirming words from others and the affirming words that God expressed to us, for instance, like in 1 John 4, 18. Talk about the importance of affirmation and recognizing or taking hold or connecting with the love letter that God has penned to us through his holy scriptures.

Oh, that's a great question. The Bible itself is so full of affirmation about God's heart toward us. And that is a great place to start.

And as we accept those things to be true, that God really loves us like a good father, then he gives us those words and he gives us. I'm sorry. Can you hear my dog barking in the back? Yeah, but I have a golden retriever next to my feet and everyone is used to dogs and barking and birds out the window.

So no, I can hear it in my headphones, but I don't think they're distracted at all. OK, so words of affirmation that come through the scripture all over the place. And it's really a great place to start for us to start applying what the thoughts that God has toward us.

And that, like I said, that's a great place to start. And it's a place that we can start using affirmation to talk to ourselves as well. That is almost like God's reaching down with all this wonderful dripping love from his

fingertips.

And it's us reaching up to grab it. Like some of it will probably just sort of plop on our heads because he's good and he knows how to aim all of his good stuff toward us. But a lot of God's love is received as we reach up and take it, which just means that we apply it to ourselves and we start giving ourselves some grace.

Now, sometimes we feel either inept to do that. We don't know how to do that to ourselves. It seems so foreign or it seems too self-indulgent to apply grace to ourselves.

And so in that way, the body of Christ really comes into play and they model it for us. If we can find some other affirming individuals, they can model that for us. And we maybe need to seek some of those people out, some of the more encouraging, positive people and put ourselves around them so that we can receive some of that from them.

Yeah, I think of that term, bucket fillers. You need to have a number of bucket fillers in your life that can pour into you, that can encourage you. Because as we all know, and we are those people, sometimes those bucket emptiers where we're drainers on people too.

And the thought is, and really how God has designed it, is I can't draw anything out of an empty well. So as God infuses His love into me, and He does that both through Scripture and through the body of Christ, other people around us, and I heal, then I'm better able to pour out His grace on other people. To the extent that I can receive it in myself, I am then able to give it away to others.

And actually, Mark, there's a story that you mentioned in that chapter, the story of Jordan. He was a 30-something man who was really pretty hard on himself, hard driving, but never felt like he was able to measure up. And he was a client of mine.

And he, kind of like how I was talking about, he started speaking out to people that would be a positive influence in his life. There was an older gentleman in his church that he respected, he was another businessman. And the older gentleman asked him to go golfing, and so every Saturday morning they'd golf.

And through that experience, and in the context of the relationship with that older gentleman, Jordan started applying his philosophy of love. The older guy started saying, oh yeah, you know, that's happened to me at work before, and I remember this happened. And he, number one, identified with Jordan's story, but then he also validated Jordan.

And then this older gentleman really kind of became another God figure, but in a way that pushed Jordan toward God and showed him a good picture of who God was and his feelings, God's feelings about Jordan. Yeah, kind of a healthy God figure. And all of us can influence others and be that healthy God figure, whether we're men or women, boys or girls, we can influence others by encouraging them, by blessing them, by pointing them to God, by affirming them, by encouraging them, praying for them.

I mean, there's so many different ways. There are. And the closer we are to God's heart, meaning we are completely dependent and desperate on him from a day-to-day, moment-by-moment, we are able to give that to other people without it being exhausting.

Yes. In case you just tuned in, I have Michelle Hollomon, author of a new book, God Unwrapped, God Is Love, But Not The Kind You Are Used To. And I want to read a little excerpt from another favorite chapter.

As I mentioned, if you've been tuned in, there's 31 excellent chapters, and I think they all became my favorite. But chapter five is entitled, Does God Get Mad?, which is really interesting. And I love what you write.

Since God doesn't need us for anything, he does not get embarrassed by us, and he never gets disappointed in us. God does not get angry with his children because they are messing up his plans, his life, or his stuff. He gets angry when they are messing up their lives.

Godly anger is born out of love, love for us. He is not mad or hurt because our rebellion or rejection affects him. He is angry because our rebellion and rejection affect us.

In fact, God is rightly ticked off when we destroy ourselves and others at the altar of false gods and empty promises. Talk a little about that. God is totally people-focused.

He is completely focused on his children. He gives out all that he can, which is infinite, so that we will be rescued into and unto himself. So a lot of times I'm a parent, and I know that I'll get irritated mostly because of somehow my children are affecting me in a negative way.

You know, maybe what they're doing is annoying, or maybe what they're doing is embarrassing, or something, and I'll get irritated with them. So that's me and my human limitations. But God doesn't have any of those human limitations.

And as we are raised by imperfect people, we have an idea that God is an imperfect God, and we misread how God's anger is portrayed in the Bible. And so as we really get to know who God is, and he's completely, what I'd say, he's a differentiated God, which means that he doesn't rely on us for his happiness, well-being, peace of mind. And sometimes we'll do that to our kids.

We'll be like, oh, you know, my kid is messing up, and so I get irritated or mad. But God doesn't rely on us. His feelings are not dependent on our behavior.

Well, I want to talk a little about healthy growth. And I like your chapter, Three Miles Per Hour. And tell your husband, Brian, hey, I'm like you.

I can just about watch anything on TV and be totally entertained. But you write, healthy growth never comes out of being coerced, shamed, or forced. What do you mean by that? Yes, so I use a story in that chapter about how I thought my daughter, my eldest daughter, who was four at the time, needed to learn how to swim.

And so just short of throwing her in and letting her figure it out, I had put her into some swimming lessons that she was really afraid of. She really had developed a fear of getting her face in the water and actually putting her nose and everything else that she knew into the water. Now, I could have forced it and maybe told her she had to or maybe got mad and that kind of thing.

But I decided to follow her lead and not tell her that she had to do something that she was so physically opposed to. And I think a lot of times we feel like God might be guilting us or controlling us or forcing us into things that we don't want. I hear people say things like, oh, God really hammered me on that.

Or, well, God must not want me to get married because He hasn't brought the right one along. Those are ways to see God that just aren't accurate or biblical. And as I started to let my daughter lead the way and just sort of play with the water over the course of the next year or two, she really started to love the water.

And had I forced her earlier, I think it would have probably caused some resentment toward me. But also, her budding sense of self would have been damaged. And I don't want to do that.

And God is never wanting to force us into something that we're not ready to do. He waits until we're ready and surrendered. Sometimes life forces us into things that we don't want to do or that are painful.

But that's not the way that God parents His children. Amen, Michelle. I'm going to pause here.

Part 2 will air in its entirety tomorrow. God loves you. God will never force Himself on you.

God cares for you. God wants to bring healing, hope, and restoration to you. God is love, but not the kind you are used to.

Purchase copies of God Unwrapped by Michelle Hollomon at GodUnwrapped.com. Thanks for listening, everyone. Thanks for being a part of this radio listening family. This is Mark Burns with the Ministry of Great News Radio.

God bless you. And have a great day and night.