

Grace Will Be There

Katie Kelly on Daily Grace, Hard Things, Community, and Trusting God for the Next Step

Katie Kelly

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Program Summary

In this Thursday edition of Mark & Friends, host Donna Leland talks with author Katie Kelly about grace - not merely as a soft religious word, but as God's sustaining presence for real life. Katie shares how raising a son with severe nonverbal autism, walking through the end of her marriage, and suddenly single-parenting six children stripped away self-sufficiency and taught her to depend on God one day at a time. A friend's words became a lifeline: 'Grace will be there when you get there.' Katie explains that God does not necessarily give tomorrow's grace today; He gives what is needed for this moment, like daily manna. Through stories from her book *Grace Will Be There*, including a nerve-racking trip to a tire shop with six children and the friends who formed her 'Sunday Crew,' Katie shows how grace arrives through the Holy Spirit, courage for the next step, honest community, practical help, and the freedom to say what is actually helpful in a season of crisis.

Key Takeaways

- Grace is not only kindness or a comforting idea; it is God's sustaining provision for life and godliness when circumstances fall apart.
- Katie's hardest seasons exposed the limits of self-sufficiency and taught her that dependence on God is how believers are meant to live.
- I do not need tomorrow's grace today; God promises to meet me with what I need when I get there.
- Faith sometimes looks less like feeling strong and more like taking the next step while trusting that God is present.
- Feelings and circumstances do not always match what I know intellectually about God's faithfulness, but that does not mean He has left.
- Stories help people recognize the threads of grace in their own lives and remind hurting people that they are not alone.
- Small acts of courage can become evidence of God's faithfulness for the next larger challenge.
- Community is grace, but effective help should respond to what a hurting person actually needs rather than what helpers assume would be useful.
- It is healthy to tell trusted people what would truly help, even when saying so feels uncomfortable or ungrateful.
- God's grace often appears through ordinary people doing practical things - cleaning a house, sending a meal gift card, helping with children, laughing together, and showing up consistently.

Scripture References

2 Peter 1:3, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Lamentations 3:22-23, Exodus 16:4-21, Hebrews 13:5, John 14:16-18, Isaiah 41:10, Galatians 6:2, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Matthew 6:34

Quote of the Day

"Grace will be there when you get there."

Broadcast Notes

Donna Leland introduces Katie Kelly and asks what grace means. Katie describes grace as 'everything you need for life and godliness' and explains how that understanding deepened through suffering. Her son, born in 2014, was eventually diagnosed with severe nonverbal autism, requiring patience and strength beyond what Katie felt capable of producing herself. Later, her husband's struggle with addiction contributed to the end of their marriage in 2023, leaving Katie suddenly single-parenting six children. A friend told her, 'Grace will be there when you get there,' helping Katie understand God's provision as daily manna rather than a stockpile of strength for every future crisis. Katie explains that her book uses storytelling because stories engage people deeply and allow readers to trace grace in their own lives. She illustrates this with a trip to a tire shop shortly after her divorce. With six children, two without shoes, and no partner available to call, Katie prayed, took the next step, and discovered that the family could do the hard thing together. The conversation then turns to community. Katie describes how her best friend encouraged her to say what help would actually be useful. Instead of another meal train, Katie needed trusted friends to help clean her house. A rotating 'Sunday Crew' came for twelve weeks, giving her practical support, adult conversation, laughter, and a ready home for the coming week.

Practical Applications

- When tomorrow feels overwhelming, stop trying to manufacture tomorrow's strength and ask God for the grace needed for today.
- Name one situation where self-sufficiency is exhausting me and deliberately invite the Holy Spirit into that need.
- When feelings say God is absent, remind myself of what Scripture says about His presence and faithfulness.
- Keep a short 'threads of grace' journal and record ordinary moments when God provides courage, help, patience, people, or provision.
- Use a recent small victory as evidence that God can meet me in the next hard thing too.
- If I am hurting, practice telling one trusted person what kind of help would actually be useful.
- If I am helping someone in crisis, ask, 'What would genuinely help you right now?' rather than assuming I know.
- Look for practical ways to become grace to another person - cleaning, childcare, transportation, a gift card, errands, or quiet companionship.
- Receive community without believing I must repay every act of kindness immediately.
- Before facing a difficult task, pray simply: 'Lord, give me the grace for this moment and the next faithful step.'

Today's Challenge

For the next seven days, begin each morning with the sentence, 'Grace will be there when I get there.' Name one thing you are tempted to worry about in advance, surrender it to God, and ask only for today's grace. At night, write down one place where you noticed God's provision - through strength, patience, courage, another person, or an unexpected kindness.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that Your grace is not merely an idea but Your sustaining presence in my real life. When I look ahead and feel overwhelmed, keep me from demanding tomorrow's grace today. Teach me to receive the manna You provide for this moment and trust that You will still be there when I reach the next one. When my feelings do not match what I know about Your goodness, anchor me in Your character and Your promises. Give me courage for the next faithful step, even when I feel afraid or alone. Help me recognize the threads of grace You have already woven through my story. Make me humble enough to receive practical help and honest enough to tell trusted people what I truly need. Open my eyes to opportunities to become grace to someone else through simple acts of service and faithful presence. Holy Spirit, give me everything I need for life and godliness today. I trust You with tomorrow. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Katie Kelly is an author, teacher, and speaker whose writing explores God's grace through honest stories of family, faith, hardship, and hope. A teacher by training and a storyteller at heart, she uses narrative to help readers recognize the threads of grace in their own lives. Her book *Grace Will Be There* grew out of deeply personal seasons that included raising a son with severe nonverbal autism, walking through the end of her marriage, and single-parenting six children. Through those experiences, Katie has learned to speak about grace not as an abstract idea, but as God's sustaining presence and provision for the next faithful step.

About Today's Host

Donna Leland is a longtime member of the Great News Media radio family and regularly serves as guest host of the Thursday edition of *Mark & Friends*. With a warm, conversational interviewing style, Donna welcomes authors, ministry leaders, teachers, and guests whose stories and resources can encourage listeners in their walk with Jesus. Her Thursday conversations are an important part of the *Mark & Friends* weekly lineup and Great News Media's mission to educate, edify, and evangelize.

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.

It's so good to see you. We hope that it's clear. Everyone loves you.

You're good, my guy. Welcome to *Mark & Friends*. I'm your host, Donna Leland.

Today, we're going to talk about grace. That is one of my absolute favorite topics. And to help us is Katie Kelly, and she has written a book about grace, helping us to unpack some of that beautiful truth that's there for us.

Thanks for joining us here on *Mark & Friends*. I am so humbled to be here. Thank you for having me.

So let's start off with if someone were to ask you, Katie, what does grace mean? How do you explain that? Yeah, it's such a great question because that word is used in a variety of connotations, isn't it? But I have begun to say that grace, it's everything you need for life and godliness. And I know that that maybe feels like I punted on that question, like what is grace? By saying it's everything you need and nothing you don't. And I mean that in the sense that my life has really taught me in the past decade.

You know, I grew up believing that grace was kind of a, you know, the grace of God is kindness and it's love. And it's this word that we put on coffee cups and kind of this soft, flowery image that that's what grace is. And it is those things.

We are in desperate need of God's grace. But I have learned after living through a lot of things that I would not have chosen, is that grace is also what sustains you when your life absolutely falls apart. Basically, Katie, it sounds like the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Because that really is the grace of God. The Holy Spirit is God's grace to us.

Yeah. So anytime we hear the word grace, we can just know that's the Holy Spirit. Yeah.

Because like you said, we have everything we need for life and godliness. Well, how do we have everything we need for life and godliness? It's the Holy Spirit. I love celebrating that.

Yeah. So what was it that happened that made you want to write about this grace? Because you had experienced it, you know, the Holy Spirit in such a deep way. Mm hmm.

Yeah, it started, you know, I always was fascinated with what grace means, because, you know, growing up in the church and in a Christian home, that word was a regular part of our vocabulary, certainly a regular part of attending church and youth groups and all of that. But in 2014, my second child was born. And by his first birthday, it was pretty apparent that he was developmentally on a different trajectory than his older sister.

But what that came down to in the years that followed was a diagnosis of a severe nonverbal autism. And so raising a child who can't really express himself much and who he's 12 years old now, but for the last 12 years, the kind of mother I thought I would always be and the kind of family I've always imagined having, you know, you follow all the rules and you do all the right things and you believe in Jesus and life will be good, right? Like, you'll be just fine. But having a child with a severe disability has made me so very aware that I actually am not capable without God's grace, that I am not able to do this.

This parenting thing, this living thing, this staying patient when your child is hurting himself, hurting others, and unable to tell you why. To be able to sit with my son's pain and just hold it and absorb it has taken a Holy Spirit-inspired amount of patience and grace. And then in the years that followed, one is not necessarily related to the other, but, you know, when life brings challenges, people cope differently.

And my ex-husband really began to struggle with addiction profoundly and over about a five-year period, that slowly stripped away at our marriage. And in 2023, my marriage ended. And so I was very suddenly single-parenting six children, one adopted, one with severe autism.

And Donna, to say that I couldn't even get out of bed the next day without believing that God will be there when my feet hit the ground, that is an understatement. And so really, that is... I started writing this book about grace before I was divorced. But then it became so much more real to me when this story was unfolding that I didn't want and didn't know how I would make it through.

And I had a friend tell me, Katie, grace will be there when you get there. You don't have the grace that you need for tomorrow, today. It will be there when you get there, though.

You'll have everything you need when you get there. And Donna, I can tell you three years later, that is the truest thing I know. And I'm somebody who wants to prepare for the future.

I want everything to be set out in advance. And sometimes that's not how God works. It's manna for today, right? He'll be there when you get there.

And so I relearned all of these things about God's character and about my faith. And as somebody who grew up pretty self-sufficient, I have realized that dependence on him is really how we're meant to live. And that idea of grace will be there when you need it.

Grace will be there because it's here now. Because I'm living on the grace of God. Every breath I take, even when life is going well, I'm here by the Holy Spirit's power.

So I think, of course, it's going to be there. Because it's here now, and he's never going to leave me. He's never going to forsake me.

It's not like I get little extra packets dropping down from the sky when other hard things happen. It's seamless. It's just this one beautiful, flowy river with the Holy Spirit inside.

And I love that guiding and teaching and showing us that next step. He's not going to leave us, is he, Katie? No, he's not. And the thing is that that gets difficult.

We know that intellectually, if we've been walking with the Lord especially. People will preach that to us. We can preach it to ourselves.

But part of the reason I wrote this book and kept writing this book, even when my life kind of hit the ground and shattered into a lot of pieces, was because I had to remind myself of that. Because your feelings don't always match what you know, intellectually. And your life circumstances don't always seem to line up with the abundant life that God promised.

But that doesn't mean he isn't there. And a lot of times, faith is just taking that next step. And like you said, trusting the flow of the river.

Because the Holy Spirit, he is always there. He's always there. And sometimes it takes a little more discipline than others to talk to him and remember how the grace I need for this moment, for this circumstance, for this meltdown with a child, for tomorrow's struggles as a single mother, for next month, he's here today, just like you said.

So he will be there tomorrow, and I can bank on that. And that's what *Grace Will Be There*, my book, is a collection of stories of just living that out. Yeah, I love that.

You kind of used exclusively storytelling to do the teaching in your writing. Can you tell us more about that, and just maybe give us a couple stories, just a little taste? Sure thing. Yes, I have always considered myself as a writer much more of an essayist than an expositor.

I'm a teacher by trade, so I love teaching, and I love direct teaching, and I certainly love digging into scripture and understanding original Greek and Hebrew words and context and cultural importance and all of that. But when it comes to my writing, where I have found that I do my best thinking and where the Lord meets me is in story and in narrative nonfiction. And storytelling is really, it's the only medium that really activates both the left and right sides of the brain when it comes to learning, and so people attend to stories differently, and they remember stories differently.

They do just kind of reading an exposition of a scripture or an exposition of a topic, and so I'm sure some of your listeners can think about maybe their most impactful teacher or maybe one of the favorite sermons they've ever listened to, and oftentimes when you ask people that question, what they remember is the illustration. Yes. They remember the story because that's what our brains, we're storytelling people.

And I wanted to invite people in by doing that, by almost like we're gathering around a coffee table or a campfire and we're telling each other stories, and Frederick Buechner has this beautiful quote that says the story of one of us is in some measure the story of all of us, and that I think when we share, people put themselves in your story by relating it to their own life, and you feel a little bit less alone without feeling like you've been lectured to. And that was my goal with all of these essays was here's the story, here's kind of these universal themes I hope I unpacked for you, and I hope that because you read these stories, you were able to trace the threads of grace in your own life too. I love that, trace the threads of grace in your own life.

It does help so much to hear another person's story, and we can lock in to parts of our story, find ourselves in that story. So yeah, delight us with one of yours. So one of the stories that I share in this book is about the tire shop, and I had recently been divorced, and in the weeks and months after divorce, it's really such a disorienting time, kind of you're almost waking up every day saying, is this really my life? Like am I really all alone here? And I wasn't alone.

I had really wonderful community, and my parents were amazing, but just in my house with six children, largely doing everything alone, and one day we went to pick up my son from his therapy, his applied behavior analysis therapy, and we walked out to the car, and my four-year-old said, what's that noise? And I kind of leaned toward the tire, and I could hear like a very faint hissing sound, and I was in denial, Donna. I went, no, no, no, no. That's not a leaking tire.

We're okay. Got in the car, went to therapy, and on our way home, the tire light comes on, and slowly but surely that tire is leaking, and I know by morning it's going to be flat, and so I have all of my children in the car, two of them

I had just thrown in the car because we were not ever getting out. We were just going to drive by therapy, grab my son, and come home, and so they didn't even have socks or shoes on.

They were just buckled in the seat, but I knew I had a choice to make. I could either go home and know that I was going to have to call AAA in the morning because of a flat tire, or I could get really brave, and I could say, we're going to figure this out, you guys. Grandma and Grandpa are on an airplane to a vacation spot.

There's nobody else we can call. We've got 30 minutes until the tire shop closes. We're going to do it.

We're going to go to the tire shop. I'm going to hold the two toddlers that don't have shoes on. Big sister's going to let you sit on your lap, and we're going to get this tire fixed, and it may seem like a small thing, but it was the first time.

It's really difficult to take six kids under the age of 10 anywhere. Add a child with a disability into that mix, and it's even more challenging, and just the sadness that there was no... I didn't have a husband to call to help me, a partner to call and help me with this flat tire. I just had to do it, and I was terrified, but the Holy Spirit, the grace I needed for that moment, took over, and we showed up at the tire shop 30 minutes before it closed, and I said, I need a tire quick, and this crew of seven, we're going to take over your whole waiting room, and we prayed as a family, Lord, help everybody be calm.

Help my son to not have any behaviors. Help us to make it through, and Donna, it's such a small thing, but the kids had the best time in that lobby. We filled 27 paper cups with water.

We read every poster in the lobby. We came home smelling like rubber, but we did it. It was just this moment of like, I was really scared to do this.

I thought my son would freak out. Two kids didn't have shoes. I didn't know that we could do this, but we did it.

We did a hard thing together. We got this car fixed, me and you, you guys, to my kids, and the whole way home, I just kept telling them, we're a team, and we did it, and I needed all of your help, and I needed the big sister to take the little kids to the bathroom so I could stay with the other. We did it.

We did it. Grace was there, even in this small thing, and how much more will it be here in the next big thing that we have to do as well? It just gives you so much confidence and courage going, Lord, you got me through a tire shop, and I know you're going to get me through the next thing. You'll get me through the next thing, yep.

A big theme in your book, it's friendship and community, and you had to have all those people surrounding you as you walk through that valley. Can you tell us a little bit more about that? What did you truly find helpful as you were beginning to rebuild? Yes, it's such a great question. I would not be standing without the friends and community and church family that came around me, but one of the things I learned through this process, you know, I've already said I have six children, and so I think I had spent several years the blessed and grateful recipient of what a good church folk love, a meal train, right? Something happens, we start a meal train, and feeding people is a ministry, and I am so thankful for it, but because I had had all those children and also had been just through a difficult time in my marriage where my ex-husband had gone away to rehab for several months and then come home while we were trying to repair things, Donna, I think I had probably had 10 meal trains in three years, which I'm so grateful for, but something kind of came over me when I got divorced and my friends were starting to surround me, and I just knew I was not in a place where I could come to the door when people dropped food off and talk to them.

I was too fragile, and my friends said, the people can leave food at the door, and I said, I know, that's a great idea, but here's the problem. The dog's going to bark, and then all the kids are going to run to the door and see who it is, and it's going to be this moment of chaos. You just know your family and you know yourself enough to know this is how it goes, and so my best friend said, Katie, I need you to practice something with me.

I need you to practice saying what would really be helpful, and so I did. I said, you know what would be the most helpful? I don't think we need a meal train right now. I think if people want to bless us, they can send a DoorDash gift card so that we can order something if we need it.

I think what would be really helpful is if just a couple of really trusted friends were willing to come help me clean my house every Sunday night once I get the kids to bed, and that's what we did. We called it the Sunday Crew, and for three months, my friend helped me organize two friends, trusted friends, people like when you're in a real acute season of crisis, you don't necessarily need the whole world coming in to visit you. You just need your people that you feel safest with, and those 12 friends rotated for 12 weeks, and we cleaned my house top to bottom from 8 to 10 p.m. on Sunday night, and then my house was ready for the week, and it was such a gift.

I got to talk to other adults. We laughed. I got my house cleaned.

The kids got excited like, who's coming to help us this Sunday? And so, you know, a friend of mine once said, like, nobody gets to tell you what's helpful except for you, so it's okay when people, when you're hurting and people want to offer help, you can gratefully say, thank you for offering. That's not totally what I need right now, and you're allowed to say that, and that's hard for a people pleaser like me, but I'm so grateful that my friend helped me say that because we didn't need a lot of casseroles. What we needed was, as a single mom of six, I needed help around my house, and that's what my friends did for me.

It was such a grace, and I'll forever be thankful for that season, even though it was acutely hard. The love and the kindness that God sprinkled in as we started to rebuild is evident in a thousand ways, and the Sunday crew is one of them. All the time you've healed so much in me And I am living proof That although my darkest hour come Your light could still shine through And though at times it's just enough To cast a shadow on the wall I am grateful that you shine A light on me at all Who am I? You love me so gently Who am I? That you would recognize my name Lord, who am I? That you would speak to me so softly Conversation with the love most high Who am I? Who am I? Well, amazing grace, how sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me I once was lost, but now I'm found Was blind, but now I see And the more I sing that sweet old song The more I understand That I do not come breaking And this love that's coming from your hand Who am I? You love me so gently Who am I? That you would recognize my name Lord, who am I? That you would speak to me so softly Conversation with the love most high Who am I? Grace, grace, God's grace Grace that will pardon all kinds of sin Grace, grace, God's grace Grace that is greater than all I've seen Oh, who am I? You love me so gently Who am I? That you would recognize my name Lord, who am I? That you would speak to me so softly Conversation with the love most high Who am I? Amazing grace, how sweet the sound Amazing love, now flowing down From hands and feet that were near to the tree As grace falls down and covers me Amazing grace, how sweet the sound Amazing love, now flowing down From hands and feet that were near to the tree As grace falls down and covers me Covers me Grace, grace, God's grace Covers me Grace, grace, God's grace Covers me Grace, grace, God's grace Covers me Yeah It covers me Grace, grace, God's grace Covers me Grace, grace, God's grace Covers me Grace, grace, God's grace It covers me Yeah Who am I? That you would love me so gently, who am I? That you would recognize my name, Lord who am I? That you would speak to me so softly Conversation with the love most high, who am I? Lord who am I? Thanks for listening and have a great day!