

## Respond to Grace

Dr Francis Collins is an eminent scientist in the U.S.A. He led the Human Genome Project (to do with DNA). He was also one of the lead scientists responding to COVID, advising Barack Obama. He was at the bedside of one of his dying patients. She shared her faith in Jesus and the resurrection. She asked him, "what do you think?" He was an atheist. He said, in that moment, he was stumped. He arrived at a conclusion about the meaning of life, and if there was a God, without ever having looked at the evidence. He said, "and I was supposed to be a scientist!" He started questioning his beliefs, read C.S. Lewis's Mere Christianity and engaged seriously with the gospel. Based on evidence, he surrendered his life to Jesus. Fr Francis Collins **responded to Grace**. In the same way, the bible readings tell us how we **respond to Grace**.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> reading says: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' Jesus destroyed death for you and me, and us. This is Grace. You don't have to do anything. You can't merit, or earn it. The resurrection is free of charge! This is Grace!

And yet, we have to **respond to grace**. We respond by using our **reason, will,** and **heart**.

**Reason** - Sirach: "Do not praise a man before you hear him **reason**." Faith is reasonable. As Dr Francis Collins showed, Faith is based on reason, evidence, intellect. Jesus is historically proven to have lived, and died on the cross. There is good evidence from eye witnesses to his resurrection. The bible is one of the most trustworthy sources on historical record, compared to other historical texts. Science answers 'how' the universe was created. Faith answers 'who' made the universe, and 'why'? Science can't. Faith is based on good evidence, reason, intellect.

**Will** – 1 Cor.: “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...” There is no such thing as an accidental saint. You have to continuously choose, decide, use your will, to follow Jesus. It’s a bit like a marriage: you don’t just say “well, we’re married now, so I don’t have to try to love you anymore.” It’s because you’re married that you have to commit to love more. Similarly, don’t drift in faith. Choose. Use your free will.

**Heart** – Luke 6: “out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” Emotions and feelings aren’t everything. However, when you’re in a relationship, it’s important to show some affection and feelings. The same is true with God. God loves you. You can feel God’s love. Romans 5:5 says “the love of God has been poured into our hearts.” I want everyone to be able to say that they have felt, experienced, and know, God’s love. Similarly, it’s important to show feelings and affection with God. The psalms are 150 songs of praise about God’s love. It’s important to share love by our words and deeds to others. We speak out of the abundance of God’s love in our hearts.

Friends, people in your life need to **respond to God’s grace**. Tell them that Jesus died for them free of charge, and had destroyed death for ever and for everyone.

Tell them that faith is **reasonable**; that Jesus is historically proven by non-Christians to have lived and died; that science and faith are not opposed but complementary.

Tell them that they can use their free **will** to follow Jesus. They don’t need to be perfect to be in a personal relationship with him. They can choose, whatever stage they are at in life.

Tell them that they can feel and know God’s love in their **hearts**. The Holy Spirit can cause their heart to overflow with love, for God, self, and others.

**Prayer**

Jesus, thank you that by your grace, you defeated death for me free of charge.

I respond to grace now. Jesus, (if you're real) come into my heart.

Thank you that faith in you is **reasonable**.

I use my free **will** to change my life and follow you.

Come Holy Spirit, I open my **emotions**, feelings, my heart, to experience your love, and share it with others.

For the salvation of the world and renewal of the church. Amen.