WELCOME TO AN HOUR OF SHARING AND CONVERSATION

OUR ABILITY TO GIVE GRACE IS ALL THAT MATTERS
KIRSTEN POWERS’ NEW BOOK, ‘SAVING GRACE,’ IS NOT A THEOLOGICAL STUDY BUT INSTEAD A PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROPOSAL ON HOW TO TAKE GRACE INTO THE DIVISIVE PUBLIC SQUARE. THOSE CLAIMING TO BE CHRISTIANS HAVE NOT PLAYED THE PART WHEN IT COMES TO POLITICS. RANCOR AND SNARK DOMINATE TWITTER AND FACEBOOK AND NOT A LITTLE OF IT BY CHRISTIANS.

PASTORS HAVE PLEADED FROM PULPITS FOR CHRISTIAN CIVILITY BUT SOCIAL MEDIA HAS A WAY OF DISPLAYING THE UGLINESS LURKING IN OUR HEARTS. NAME YOUR ISSUE: POLITICS UNDER BARACK OBAMA, DONALD TRUMP OR JOE BIDEN; SOCIAL MORALITY DEBATES ABOUT POVERTY OR RACISM OR LBGTQIA OR IMMIGRATION; REPARATIONS; BLACK LIVES MATTER AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY. WHATEVER THE TOPIC, SPEND 30 MINUTES ON SOCIAL MEDIA, AND YOU WILL FIND THOSE CALLING THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS ACTING LIKE THEY’VE NEVER FOLLOWED JESUS ONE STEP.
ONE OF THE IRONIES OF OUR DAY AND AGE IS THAT SOME WHO CLAIM THE GRACE OF GOD HAVE BECOME THE LEAST GRACIOUS IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE.

LET IT BE SAID THAT GRACE HAS THE POWER TO TRANSFORM — SO GRACE THAT IS NOT TRANSFORMING A PERSON INTO A GRACE-GIVING PERSON ABORTS THE POWER OF GRACE.

THE BOOK CENTERS ON THE QUESTION: WHAT DOES THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GRACE LOOK LIKE WHEN IT COMES TO POLITICAL CONVERSATION AND DEBATE AND TO LEADING POLITICIANS?
WHAT IS GRACE:

EVERY THRIVING THING IN HISTORY – BETWEEN FRIENDS, FAMILY, COMMUNITIES AND COUNTRIES- HAS BEEN SATURATED WITH GRACE.

> GRACE IS WHAT LETS US STUMBLE, FALL, GET BACK UP, AND TRY AGAIN.

> GRACE IS WHAT WELCOMES YOU BACK AFTER YOU HAVE FAILED SOMEONE OR FAILED YOURSELF.

> GRACE IS WHAT RICHARD ROHR CALLS ‘THE X FACTOR’ IT KNITS FAMILIES, FRIENDSHIPS, AND COUNTRIES BACK TOGETHER AFTER BETRAYAL, HURT, AND EVEN VIOLENCE.

> IT IS THE FATHER RUNNING TO EMBRACE THE PRODIGAL SON WHEN HE’S STARVING, PENNILESS, AND DRENCHED IN SHAME.
GRACE IS OTHERWORLDLY:

IT GOES AGAINST EVERY INSTINCT WE HAVE TO SEEK REVENGE FOR Wrongs OR TO SHAME AND HUMILIATE PEOPLE WHO HAVE ACTED IMMORALLY OR UNETHICALLY.

> GRACE IS WHAT THEOLOGIAN DOROTHEE SOLLE CALLED “BORROWING THE EYES OF GOD”

> IT ENABLES US TO SEE THE DIVINITY IN EVERY PERSON, NOT MATTER WHAT THEY HAVE DONE, WHAT THEY BELIEVE, OR WHO THEY VOTER FOR.

> GRACE IS GIVING OTHER PERSON SPACE TO NOT BE YOU.

> GRACE REMINDS YOU OF THE ‘LOVE YOURSELF’ PART OF JESUS’ COMMAND “LOVE OTHERS AS MUCH AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF.”
PRACTICING GRACE CAN BE REALLY FREAKING HARD:

IT’S SOMETHING WE LOVE TO RECEIVE, BUT OFTEN THE LAST THING MOST OF US WANT TO OFFER.

> WE INCLINE OURSELVES TOWARD WHAT PHILIP YANCEY CALLS “UNGRACE” – WITHHOLDING THAT WHICH THE WORLD DESPERATELY NEEDS. EXAMPLE – PRODIGAL’S OLDER BROTHER

> “UNGRACE” HAS BECOME THE LINGUA FRANCA OF OUR DISCOURSE. IT IS THE LENS THROUGH WHICH WE VIEW PEOPLE WHO DON’T SHARE OUR RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, OR MORAL VALUES.

> OUR LACK AND MISUNDERSTANDING OF GRACE AND SHRUNKEN CAPACITY TO GIVE GRACE IS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT MAKES THE WORLD SUCH A BRUTAL PLACE.
GRACE IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A MATTER OF THE HEART:

NIETZSCHE WARNED: IF YOU ARE GOING TO FIGHT THE MONSTER, YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT IN THE PROCESS YOU DON’T BECOME THE MONSTER.

> GRACE CREATES A BUFFER ZONE BETWEEN YOU AND THE PEOPLE WHO ARE DRIVING YOU TO THE EDGE, AND EVEN CAUSING YOU SERIOUS HARM.

> PRACTICING GRACE PROTECTS YOUR ENERGY, SO YOU CAN PUT IT TOWARD SOMETHING MORE BENEFICIAL THAN ENGAGING IN MEAN TWEETS, RAGING AT A FAMILY MEMBER WITH A DISTORTED WORLDVIEW OR SCREAMING AT THE TV EVERY NIGHT.

> JESUS’ TEACHING- LOVE YOUR ENEMIES – MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DESCRIBED IT AS “REDEEMING THE GOOD WILL FOR ALL PEOPLE.” AGAPE IS SEEING THE DIVINE SPARK IN OTHER PEOPLE, NO MATTER HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THEM.
GRACE IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A MATTER OF THE HEART:

GRACE DOES NOT ASK YOU TO ACCEPT STATUS QUO. IT DOES NOT MEAN NEUTRALITY IN THE NAME OF PEACE.

> IT DOES NOT “TONE-POLICE” PEOPLE WHEN THEY EXPRESS OUTRAGE OVER INJUSTICE, ABUSE OR HARM, DEMANDING THAT THEIR COMPLAINTS BE EXPRESSED ONLY IN A WAY THAT DOES NOT MAKE ANYONE UNCOMFORTABLE.

> IT DOES NOT ENCOURAGE DISPASSION OR SILENCE IN THE FACE OF WRONGDOING.

IF YOU ARE EVER DEMANDING GRACE FROM ANOTHER PERSON, YOU’VE MISSED THE POINT. WE ALL NEED TO BE FOCUSED ON HOW WE CAN POUR MORE GRACE INTO THE WORLD, NOT HOW WE CAN WRING IT OUT OF OTHER PEOPLE.
PEOPLE OF GRACE – COMMON TRAITS:

- They are spiritually grounded humble.
- They were open hearted and didn’t engage in the kind of dualistic thinking - “good vs evil”.
- They didn’t ”other” people who held values with which they disagreed.

Albert Einstein said: “You can’t solve a problem with the same consciousness that created it.” What he meant is: “We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if humanity is to survive.”

The goal of grace is not to erase differences. Rather, grace helps us navigate those differences while honoring the humanity of others and ourselves.
SAVING GRACE OFFERS A TEMPLATE FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF AMERICA, ONE WHERE WE CAN ENGAGE WITH PEOPLE WHO HOLD OPPOSING VIEWS WITHOUT SACRIFICING OUR VALUES OR OUR PASSIONATE BELIEFS IN THE CAUSES WE CARE ABOUT. IT’S A CULTURE THAT EMBRACES REPENTANCE AND REPAIR, A PROCESS THROUGH WHICH THOSE WHO HAVE CAUSED HARM CAN TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND WORK TOWARD RIGHTING THE WRONGS IN WHICH THEY HAVE PARTICIPATED. IT’S A PLACE WHERE WE’RE EMPOWERED TO SEE THE POSSIBILITY IN OTHER PEOPLE, EVEN PEOPLE WHO ARE DRIVING US NUTS.

“IN THIS DEEPLY FELT, COMPASSIONATE, AND SENSIBLE BOOK, KIRSTEN POWERS MAKES A CASE FOR OPENING OURSELVES UP TO THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF GRACE AND OF GOODNESS. ROOTED IN HISTORY, THEOLOGY, AND THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF OUR FRAGMENTED TIME, POWERS' BOOK IS BRACING, ELEVATING, AND ESSENTIAL.”—JON MEACHAM, WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE, AUTHOR OF THE SOUL OF AMERICA