

# Abiding Grace



A Collection of Reflections,  
Stories, and Lessons from a  
Life Anchored in Christ



Bethel Grove Publications

*Abiding Grace: A Collection of Reflections, Stories, and Lessons from a Life Anchored in Christ (Sample)*

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Abiding Grace Ministries – <https://www.bethelgrove.com/blog>

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# INTRODUCTION



*"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." - John 15:5 ESV*

*"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." - 2 Corinthians 9:8 ESV*

These verses together paint the picture of why I use the name "Abiding Grace" to describe my work and to define my ministry. John 15:5 reminds us that apart from Christ, we can't accomplish anything, especially if we want to bring Him glory. 2 Corinthians 9:8 reminds that that when we trust God, He will make sure that we have everything we need to help us thrive in our work. I believe this collection of stories and reflections illustrate God's abiding grace at work in my life. I hope that by the end of this book, you will agree.

For a little bit of context, let me share the story of how these writings came to be. When I graduated from Ozark Christian College in 2014, I had no idea what the future held. One of the only things that I did know is that I wanted to work on creative projects that I didn't have much time to work on when I was in college. That fall, I did two things that became the starting point of everything I would do after. First, I recorded and uploaded my first spoken word poem to YouTube. Second, based on my dad's suggestion, I started a blog in December 2014. Over the next few years, I wrote/recorded spoken word poetry and I

wrote on my blog, either about past experiences I wanted to reflect on or sharing my perspective on relevant topics. After a few years, my blog transitioned to being almost exclusively for book reviews and mostly stopped sharing spoken word poetry. A few years after that, I self-published my first book.

Over the course of 10 years, my website and YouTube channel have gone through several name changes (Carpe Aeternatatum, Princess Worth Dying For, Abiding Grace Ministries, HPgirl0609, just to name a few). But as I look back over these older writings, I can't help but be grateful to see where the Lord has brought me. I never could have imagined how my blog posts, spoken word poems, or even my experience reviewing and launching books would eventually build into my career as an author and help me get to where I am today.

This collection is arranged in a different way that it is on my blog or YouTube channel. Because many of my posts were about past experiences, I have chosen to put most of the posts in chronological order of the events I am referencing and adding the spoken words as close as I can to that timeline. Some poems will be paired with the post where I shared the story behind how I came to write it. Some are paired with posts for thematic reasons (such as an Easter poem with an Easter-themed post). A few have notes beforehand to explain the context. My hope is that this will make these writings come together in a way that will paint a picture of the journey that the Lord has led me on over the last 10 years of my life, and inspire you to trust the Lord in any and every season of your life.

[Note: Some of this content has been modified from its original version, including the omission of some names, details, and

concepts for the sake of privacy, copyright concerns, or changes in relationships.

Also, take note that when it comes to the spoken word poems shared here, the formatting and spacing are left unchanged to reflect the way they are written in my original notes. This means that some lines and paragraphs will be split up to preserve the original formatting.]

# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

12/20/2014



So most of you are probably confused about the name of my blog [Carpe Aeternatatum]. After all, it's in Latin, which is a dead language, if that relieves those that thought you that were stressing about knowing what the word means. You are probably more familiar with the phrase "Carpe Deim." This phrase is translated as "seize the day." In other words, you are supposed to live in the moment to enjoy the moment, because you never know which one will be your last. While I do think that we should appreciate our time on this earth, that is not my life philosophy.

Instead, I try to live by the phrase "Carpe Aeternatatum." What does it mean? It means "seize eternity." This phrase carries with it the concept of living life in ways that will have eternal significance.

I am a Christian, and I believe that most important things that we should do on this earth is love God with everything we are and love one another above ourselves. Only the things that fit under those categories will matter in the end. This is illustrated by one of my favorite quotes:

***"Only one life, twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last."***

I once heard someone give a continuation of this quote:

*"You only get one pass at life. That's all. And the lasting measure of that life is Jesus Christ. What are you doing with the life he died to give you?"*

In light of this, my posts here are meant to point people to that purpose. If people truly believed this idea, I think that it would completely change the way we would approach life and how we interact with everyone around us. How, you may ask? That is the kind of thing I hope to talk about here.

# RETHINKING CARPE DEIM

12/21/2014



Those of you that may be checking out this blog and saw my last post might be thinking “What’s wrong with ‘seize the day’? Aren’t we supposed to enjoy life? Shouldn’t we take hold of every opportunity?” Well, I would answer both yes and no. I want to challenge the traditional view of this phrase from a Christian perspective, because I think it means more than we realize.

I heard the phrase “carpe deim” and “seize the day” a lot as a kid and thinking that it sounded like a reasonable idea. After all, we shouldn't waste our lives wishing and hoping but never doing. A lot of attention was brought to this phrase by the recent death of Robin Williams, because of his famous speech in the movie *Dead Poets Society*. Unfortunately, I believe both Williams and his character had the concept of “seize the day” from the wrong angle.

According to this scene, the reason we should make our lives extraordinary is so that people will remember us after we die, because our memory will be all that’s left of us. We will be fertilizer and nothing more. That is the sad reality for those that do not have the hope of salvation. “Living it up” merely because life is all we have is too small a thing to live for. “Let up eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die” is a reality of too many people today. Paul warns the Corinthians not to associate with people that live this way, because bad company corrupts

good character (1 Corinthians 15:33). This would imply that this is not the life philosophy that a Christian should adapt either, because we have hope in life after death. Although our bodies do decompose, our souls are bound to spend eternity with Him. We know that the things we do in this life will have consequences, either good or bad, that will follow us into eternity, so we can't just do whatever we want.

However, I do think there is a connection between “carpe deum” and “carpe aeternitatem.” Just because we should live our lives in light of what matters eternally does not mean that we should lose sight of the opportunities that this life will bring us. I think that there is a difference between living life the way you want and choosing to seize the opportunities life brings your way. The latter is the wiser way to live, especially for the Christian. We should be seeking every opportunity to bring glory to the Lord, and to serve everyone else. “Carpe deum” reminds us that our lives are short, and that's what makes the opportunities we have all the more important. It also reminds us that we have the ability to choose the way our lives go, and that we should be faithful stewards of the free will and talents He gave us.

I want to conclude by sharing a song that my sister sang in church when we were kids called “Seize the Day” [by Carolyn Arends]. This song has much more biblical approach to the idea of seizing the day. For myself, I personally pray that I am faithful with the gifts He has given me, and that I will be able to make the best of my short time on this earth, so that my eternity will be all the better. That's what it really means to seize the day.

# RETHINKING ENTERTAINMENT

1/23/2015



We loved to be entertained. I suppose it's part of human nature to desire to be amused and not be bored. People have been finding ways to entertain themselves for most of human history in some way, shape, or form, but our world today is more influenced by our entertainment choices than ever before. Movies, music, books, and even the internet have become the dominant forms of both amusement and knowledge. With more options than ever available to our immediate access, it can be difficult to discern what we should entertain ourselves with, and the things we should avoid. If we are trying to live our lives in light of eternity, then how do our entertainment choices fit into the equation?

I believe we have freedom to choose. God gave all of us free will, Christians and non-Christians alike. But with the privilege of this freedom comes great responsibility, a responsibility that we are made aware of as Christians. Just as Scripture points out: ***"Everything is permissible for me' – but not everything is beneficial."*** (1 Corinthians. 6:12a NIV) A lot of our entertainment options are simply not to our benefit, but my responsible to be sure that everything that I watch, read, or listen does three things: honors God, challenges me, and proclaims truth. These are the three main principles I'm going to explore.

## **1) Entertainment That Honors God**

Unfortunately, we are living in a world that as a whole is not usually in the business of honoring its Creator. In fact, many will do anything and everything they can to discredit Him.

Perhaps the greatest culprits are those in Hollywood. Songs with an excessive usage of the Lord's name in vain, movies that glorify things that the Bible is blatantly against, and books that intend to indoctrinate their audience with their beliefs are the realities we face when we are trying to select wholesome entertainment. This does not mean that we can't watch, read, or listen to any of these things, but it means that we have to use extreme caution and be aware of what we are doing. These are some questions to consider:

### **- Does this story honor God?**

Anything from continually using the Lord's name in vain to discrediting God by claiming He didn't create the world, these sort of things should be red flags to a Christian. Now, some media, even Christian media, will use characters that discredit God to illustrate a point. And there is a lot of media that falls neutral in this category (neither crediting nor discrediting God). You should learn how to tell these apart. But in the end, another way to think about this point is to ask this: if God was watching, listening, or reading with you, would He be honored, or would He be embarrassed and upset by what is (or isn't) being said about Him? If it is obvious that it is not honoring to the Lord, then you should probably reconsider it.

### **- Does the writer honor God?**

Screenplay writers, directors, producers, music artists, and authors all have personal beliefs that affect their work. They all

have messages they want to convey through their medium. If these people aren't Christians, we have to use extra caution when discerning what we agree and disagree with in the messages they send. If they don't believe in God, you should disagree with many of their personal beliefs, the same beliefs that permeates through the media you are consuming. Whether or not you realize it, you are allowing these messages into your minds and often doing nothing to filter them. Really think about if the messages they are trying to convey are true and noble. If you can tell it doesn't honor the Lord, then you should probably reconsider it.

## **2) Entertainment that Challenges Me**

This is the point where my views on this matter receive resistance. The main reason is that most people don't like to process their entertainment. Many people use entertainment as a way to escape from reality. They want to be pacified (like a baby with a pacifier) by their entertainment and not have to think about watching what they are putting things into their minds. However, that is when we open ourselves up for deception by corrupt views. Pretty soon, the line between what is right to watch and what is wrong to watch becomes blurred, and by the time we realize it, we are so hooked on the story that we don't want to give it up.

As Christians, we should not be that passive about anything. We need to be aware of the messages these entertainment choices are portraying and if we know they are wrong, we need to tell others that they do not know the truth.

***“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every***

***thought and make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV)***

As far as entertainment is concerned, I believe that when we watch a movie that tries to convince us that something is OK that isn't, we need to look at it and say “This isn't right! This is what's wrong and this is what's right.” We can't make that judgment if we are being passive about it, only judging it by how much it amused us.

I will never forget one of the classes I took my senior year of high school. The class was called “Worldviews” and was based off of David Noebel's “Understanding the Times” curriculum from Summit Ministries. I learned so much in that class about maintaining a biblical worldview, things that I will possibly share in other posts. But the point I want to share today was from a video lecture called “Entertainment and the Christian.” The lecturer, named John Stonestreet, told us so many things about discerning our entertainment choices that I still use today. One quote stood out from all the rest:

***“A good book, song, or movie will take you deeper into life. A bad book, song, or movie will distract you from life.”***

I believe this idea is a good gauge for this category. If the themes and storyline of your entertainment makes you think about something from a new perspective or challenges you to make a change, then it a good source of entertainment. However, if the themes and storylines influence you with deceitful views that aren't biblical or become a means to escape or reject reality, then it is bad entertainment and should be avoided.

What makes this interesting is that sometimes, the conviction of what is good or bad can fall in different places for different

people. Something that is challenging to me may be a distraction to someone else and vice versa. However, this is where we do have to remember the responsibilities we have with our freedom of our free will. Although we do have freedom in Christ, we also must remember not to allow our freedom to become a stumbling block to those who are weak (1 Cor. 8:9). If conviction of what is good or bad falls in different places for different people, especially in the case that they struggle with drawing the line, don't contradict them. Respect their conviction as your brother or sister in Christ.

### **3) Entertainment that Proclaims Truth**

This view also receives resistance, but it cannot be understated. The things that we choose to entertain ourselves with should proclaim the truth, especially the truth affirmed in God's word. But maybe more important in a world that doesn't know the Lord is making sure that the things we entertain ourselves with do not contradict the truth affirmed in God's word. Let me give an example.

1 Corinthians 6:18 tells us to flee from sexual immorality. If we are supposed to flee from sexual immorality, why should we entertain ourselves with media that portrays or glorifies sexually immoral behavior, especially if it shows or describes more than we should see or imagine? When we do see it, we should at least be thinking That's not God's plan for our sexuality!

Now there are times when a contradiction to truth is presented in such a way that it challenges us positively, but we have to learn to discern the difference between what challenges us and what merely pacifies us. We must take every thought the media gives us, examine it against Scripture, discern if it's right or wrong, and make our choices based on these examinations.

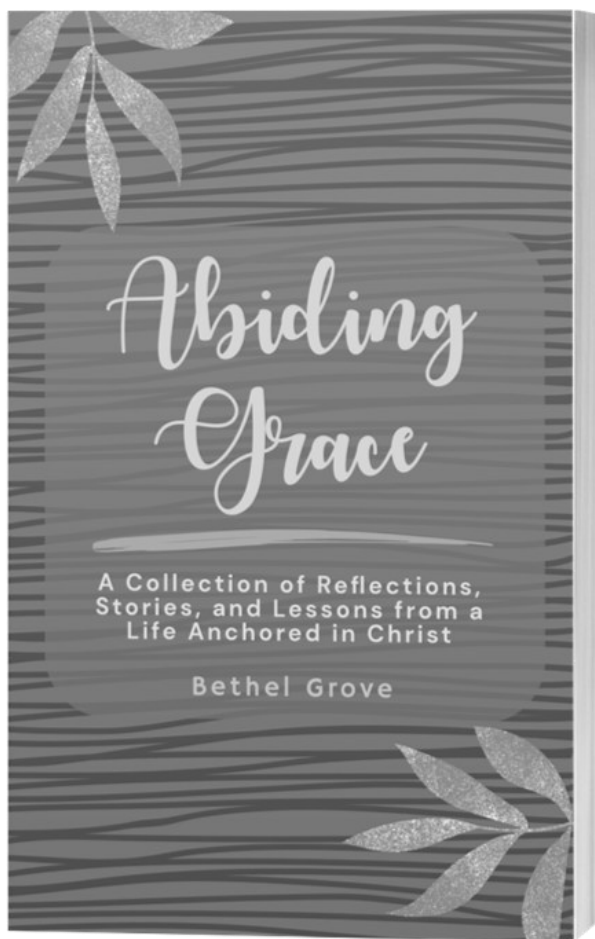
I believe that when the message and the purpose of a movie are in question it is wise to do research. Look up what the writers, director, and producers are saying about their movies. Read into the backstory behind the album you love. Learn about the biography of your favorite author to see what events in their life may be affecting their message. If what they say contradicts truth, then you may want to reconsider your entertainment choices.

## **Why Does This Matter?**

What does this have to do with eternity? A lot! The things we put into our minds influence our thoughts and our actions. The primary thing we should be putting into our minds is the truth of God's word. If the other things we put into our minds contradict that truth, it can influence us in negative ways, whether we realize it or not. Although movies and other media won't be with us in heaven, we will be held accountable for not using discernment in this life. Since we only have one life on this earth, I want to spend my entertainment choices on media that takes me deeper into life not distracts me from the life and person God wants me to be.

This has become a subject too many Christian are passive about, usually going to one extreme or the other: embracing all entertainment or completely rejecting what isn't "Christian." I don't think either path is a wise one. What we should be doing is engaging in the culture by searching for the truth and then proclaiming it to those that need to hear it. Part of my desire for this blog is to do this by writing media reviews. I want to review movies, music, books, and even some Broadway musicals. My hope is to make you aware of the presence of both the truth and the deception that is prevalent in the media today.

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