

I was taking required classes in order to graduate from college with a degree in teaching when very unexpectedly God gave me an example of his grace and his eternal salvation. I had to take a required class called "Psychology of the Adolescent." I was at Cal State University Long Beach in my third year of college. The professor was a professional psychologist and had an office down town. He looked as different as the class was. He was an old man, skinny, with white hair. He wore his skinny reading glasses down on his nose. He had about a four inch goatee and a long handlebar mustache. He smoked cigarettes in class but he smoked them from the end of a cigarette holder that was about 18 inches long. This was very unusual even in the days of smoking cigarettes. What was even more unusual was that he would suck in on the cigarette holder and blow the smoke out his two nostrils. This made two yellow streaks through his white mustache directly below his two nostrils. If you were to try to imagine what a psychologist should look like in 1973, this guy fits the description perfectly.

Our first day in class didn't start on time. He just let us keep on talking for about 25 minutes. Then he started talking in a normal voice and those in the front quieted down. Slowly that quiet moved toward the back of the classroom. He explained the class rules and his grading system. He stated that his class was going to be different. Grading is going to be backwards, instead of starting with nothing, everyone starts with an "A" and gets graded down from there depending on how good or bad their work is. He had very high standards for grading. He hadn't seen much work that was really exceptional and only gave "A"s to work that he felt was perfect.

We could work individually or in groups. We had the freedom to attend class or go to the library instead of attending class and read and study there. He also had a suggested book list. Because we had the freedom to do what we wanted, he put us on the honor system and actually stated that there were no requirements to turn anything in to be graded.

His style was to lecture for about half of the class time and then do questions and answers with his students. I still remember the main point of the class: Students are labeled and graded based on the teacher's limited ability to determine the student's progress. This progress is based on different forms of communication which are not perfect. A student may get an "F" and be labeled as a failure simply because he is not a very good communicator. Maybe he doesn't take tests well; maybe he doesn't like to talk out loud or in front of anyone. His point was that there are many factors that can play into a teacher incorrectly assessing a student and labeling that student as a poor student. This label can go with him all through his schooling and even into his career.

The whole class had a great time studying anything we wanted in this field. I decided to attend class and read "Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hill. My buddy decided to read "Black Like Me." We were going to report to each other what we learned.

When it came time for mid-terms some of the students asked again what was required. The professor stated that nothing was required but if you want to do them they are due in two weeks. All of the students got together and talked over the grading system again. They could not believe that their professor could get away with letting students just sign up for his

class and turn in nothing and get an "A." I was suspicious because I had professors who lied to me before about my grade. One professor willfully lied to me about what she was going to count for grades so that she could give me a lower grade. I wondered if I could trust the words of this weird looking professor. About half the class decided to create a skit and present it to the class. The skit was to showcase a student who was not able to perform well in the standard classroom setting and how he was treated by the teacher and his classmates. They asked me if I would join in with them. I told them that I was not going to turn in anything for a mid-term project. They still wanted me to participate so I consulted the professor. He stated that I could participate for no grade if I notified him ahead of time of my intentions. That is what I did. I decided to have faith in the words of my professor. I participated in the play for no grade. My buddy didn't participate at all. We were the only two who chose not to get a mid-term grade. When the finals came due, there was a rush to decide what to do for a grade by all the students but two. Again the majority of the class decided to unite as a group and do skits to receive grades. Again, only two of us refused to get graded. On the last day, after the grading had been completed, the professor allowed everyone in class to come up and preview their grades. One by one each student went up and looked at their grade in his grade book. Everyone was upset and most of the girls cried. No one got an "A" and there were few "B"s, lots of "C"s and quite a few "D"s and "F"s. After everyone but us two went up and checked on their grade I decided to check on mine. When I asked the professor to see my grade, he said, "Ok, but if I show it to you

I will have to change it. I said, "What? You have to change it?" He said, "Yah, if you want to look at it I have to change it. You already know what it is anyway, why do you need to look at it? But if you want to look at it I will show you but I will have to change it." I said, "No thanks. That's Ok. I don't need to look at it." I went back to my seat without actually seeing my grade. A little later the professor waved his hand to me to come up to his desk. When I got back up there, he told me in a very quiet, low voice, "Marshall, this is the dumbest class I have ever had. Most classes I give 50% A's. In this class I only gave two A's. He repeated again, "This is the dumbest class I have ever taught."

About a month later I received my report card for that semester and sure enough I received an A. I had successfully passed my class with the highest grade without turning anything in! How weird is that? For a University, that is unique; never again. So what did I learn?

I learned that I could trust the words of the University Professor! Others had lied to me but he did not. When I trusted him solely by faith in his words, I received the prize of the best grade I could earn and I didn't even have to earn it. It was a free gift that I chose to receive at the beginning of the class. I couldn't get the best grade through my own efforts no matter how hard I tried. My faith in the professor's words was tested throughout the duration of the class and in the end, my faith proved to be true faith. I received the prize. There were only two of us that received the prize on that last day of class. Our faith was in receiving something we had been promised but had not seen. Only two of us received our grade by faith because we trusted

in the one who offered it. The professor offered the grade to everyone through faith in his word but most rejected his words. God gives Eternal Life to those who believe Jesus died in their place for their sins. They must trust the words of Jesus as he claims to be the only way to Heaven.

Here are some Bible Verses:

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace (free gift) you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Matthew 7:13, 14 "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

I Timothy 1:15, 16 "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life."

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Unintentionally Learning About God's Grace

From a Psychologist at
Cal State University
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