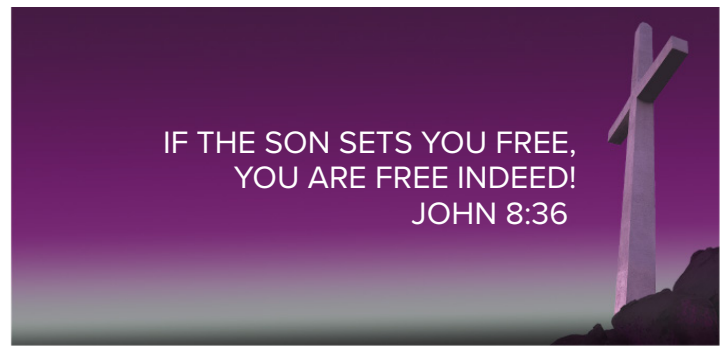


# Jesus IOI

## “Grace Thoughts”



A short devotional to help get you excited about Jesus!

*“The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem.” –Acts 6:7*

I am keenly aware of the need to understand the cultural anthropology and sociology reflected in the Bible. Background commentaries help us understand the customs and social history at play, and how various social groups interacted in the ancient Mediterranean world. For example, in the New Testament we see that during the infancy of the Christian church there were relational problems among groups, and how God provided timely resolutions.

Paul clearly points out that we are all equal at the foot of the cross: “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:27, 28). It seems so clear, yet Luke, who was Paul’s traveling companion, reports in the book of Acts that the apostles had to deal with claims of discrimination at the very start of the believing fellowship. The Christian community was growing, and a complaint arose the side of the believing Greeks that the widows from their group were being overlooked in the daily serving (Greek *diakonia*) of food (Acts 6:1). The apostles did not dismiss their claim, but instead sought a resolution. God provided wisdom to His disciples, who selected deacons to minister in this task. The first deacons were filled with the Spirit, and they were of Hellenistic (Greek) background (verse 5), which meant that God provided leaders with whom the complaining group could identify. Right after their selection, we find today’s devotional text, one of six such progress reports about how the word of God kept spreading and the numbers of believers increased. Conflicts often threatened the growth of the first century church (as in Acts 15), yet God provided wise leaders who prayed for heavenly guidance and whose priorities were the spreading of the good news, and the salvation of the people. Let’s pray for our leaders and communities, that no conflict may have the power to hinder the proclamation of the gospel.

Talbot, Elizabeth *Jesus Wins!*, p. 67.