This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. You’re listening to episode \_\_\_60\_\_\_. We were made for relationship, but so often our relationships are broken. And when our relationships are broken, we are broken. One of our deepest human desires is to be known, but we often have lost ourselves along the way. This is a podcast to help you get your relationships back to a place of wholeness. A place of authentic connection, where you feel truly known.

So come on in and sit a while. Let’s exchange fear for love and finally see what good relationships are made of. And let’s see what kind of healing happens here.

I’ve named myself the “grace hippie” at work. Yes, I know. It sounds like I’m smoking something weird, but I promise I’m not. I really am a grace-hippie! And all my coworkers and fellow counselors feel it’s a fitting name. I’m the one who can live in the grey, who doesn’t believe there is always a black and white (though sometimes there is). I’m the one who teaches all my clients to show themselves grace, that it’s okay they are human. That they will make mistakes, and they will disappoint others and themselves, and that’s okay, too. I teach boundaries, as well, but always in a gracious way.

I say, “There’s grace here. There’s no judgment here.”

I wasn’t always this way. Honestly, I used to be the opposite. I used to be super judgmental and not gracious at all. I used to think in only black and white.

But I can’t swing all the way over to the other side on this. *We* can’t.

Way too many times, I sit and hear someone tell me how their partner keeps emotionally or physically abusing them, but they are called to forgive so it keeps happening.

I hear parents of adult addicts continue to try to ‘save’ them or rescue them. They keep paying their debts and bailing them out of jail and letting them live with them with no consequences. Guess what? The addict doesn’t change or get any better.

I hear people who are becoming invisible in their friendships with people who take advantage of them. And they never stand up for themselves. Because they feel they are supposed to die to self and consider others as more important than them.

You know I believe in grace. I wouldn’t be here without it.

But here’s what happens when people give *too* much grace (yes, there is such a thing): they begin to enable abusive, toxic, unhealthy behavior in others (and maybe even in themselves).

*There is a distinct difference between grace and enabling*.

But it is a line that gets blurred too often.

People give too many chances.

And they get hurt in the process.

When we allow another person to keep hurting us, others, or themselves, we are doing nothing to help them.

We are only hurting them.

Mirriam-Webster gives many definitions of the word *grace*. The main definitions that line up with what I mean today are:

*Mercy, pardon*

*And instance of courtesy or kindness*

When we talk about the word *enable* in the world of counseling and psychology, we mean misguided support of someone who is struggling. It has traditionally been used to describe those in codependent relationships with addicts, but it can be used in more general ways, too. We try to take away the consequences of someone’s poor decisions or we ignore the unhealthy behaviors. We take responsibility for things that aren’t ours to hold.

We allow people to act in ways that hurt.

And that’s not grace.

Sure, grace is making room for people to make mistakes and be human. Grace is a second chance and choosing to forgive. Grace is remembering no one is perfect.

But even Jesus allows us to experience the consequences of our actions. His grace gives us eternity and it covers our sin so we don’t have to live with the eternal consequences of it. But it doesn’t take all our *earthly* consequences away. We speed, we get a speeding ticket. We cheat on our partner, our relationship ends. We lose our temper and hurt someone, we get in trouble. God allows us to still experience the consequences of our behaviors on this earth so we can learn and grow.

He does not enable us.

In fact, we are discouraged from taking advantage of his grace. We shouldn’t keep sinning so grace may abound, right? He doesn’t want to enable our unhealthy behaviors. He wants to empower us to change.

And we don’t need to enable others, either. Because that would hinder them from changing, too.

Some behaviors that are often enabled are things like:

- addiction or problematic drug use

- sex addiction and problematic porn use

- abuse in any form

- behavior that dominates, manipulates, and controls

- gambling

- mental health issues

- trouble with the law

So what would it mean to show grace to someone with any of these issues without enabling them?

How can we remain balanced here?

Obviously, it’s going to depend on your situation, but here are some thoughts to help you have wisdom.

1. Remember forgiveness doesn’t mean forgetting or pretending nothing happened.

We enable when we forgive over and over and “forget” or ignore what the other person is doing. We forget easily, and then nothing changes. The person does it again, and the we forgive again because that’s just what Christians do.

In light of “keeping no record of wrongs,” we act like nothing happened. No. This is not healthy. We can try to forgive a person and allow them to be human and make mistakes, but we don’t need to pretend they did nothing wrong. Many times you’ll see someone covering up what another person did. I’m not sure if this is meant to protect the person or the one covering it up, but it happens a lot. People will do this by lying for a person in some way. No, let’s allow it to be brought to the light and named for what it is. Grace is exposing.

2. And remember forgiveness between humans doesn’t mean justification.

When we forgive, we are simply choosing to let go of the anger and hurt we feel toward another person to be able to move forward. It doesn’t mean what they did was okay. It wasn’t. Grace is acknowledging hurt.

3. Set appropriate boundaries.

When we choose to show grace or forgive a person for whatever they’ve done, we must set healthy boundaries with them. Without boundaries, enabling will happen every. single. time. What issue (s) is problematic? And what boundary needs to be in place? Stop giving money to your addict friend. Tell someone they need to move out. Require a person to get counseling. Call the police if he hits you. What are the lines? And how can you honor the lines? Grace is setting appropriate boundaries.

4. Don’t assume responsibility for something that isn’t yours.

Ever. Remember we need to forgive like Jesus forgave us, but that doesn’t mean our forgiveness will *do* what his did. He assumed the responsibility for our sin, but that’s not what our forgiveness will look like. If the person is blaming you for their actions or consequences to their actions, you don’t have to accept that as truth. Their actions, their beliefs and thoughts and feelings, their values, their decisions, and their consequences are all on them, not you. If they are blaming you a lot, maybe it’s time to consider more boundaries, to speak up for yourself, or get out of the relationship. Grace is not taking the blame.

5. Don’t try to rescue someone from the consequences of their own choices.

Here’s where a lot of enabling comes in. We are quick to bail them out. We pay a bill they owe but can’t pay because they gambled their money away. We pick them up from the bar every time they get drunk. We protect them when conversations come up about them. We take their forgotten backpack to school for the third morning in a row. We try to make them feel better after they’ve made us feel small. We want to rescue.

But we aren’t the rescuers. Jesus already did that. It’s not our job.

6. Don’t be silent.

People may try to control, manipulate, and deceive. They may speak over you and about you and down to you. They will act like they are right and you are wrong. They will blame you and neglect to take responsibility. And they will keep doing these things if you remain quiet. These aren’t the kinds of situations where we need to remain silent, unless you fear for your life. Speak up. Use your voice to tell the person how their actions are hurting you. Speak up with your boundaries.

7. Don’t play the victim and let them be your savior.

Because you are nothing without them. You can’t survive without them. You need them. So you must do whatever it takes to keep them. If you know, you know.

Enter music—

Grace is allowing someone to be human. Showing them you aren’t perfect either. Giving them a chance to change. But it’s not helping them become worse versions of themselves. It’s making space for them to grow in areas of weakness. It’s being patient in their process. It’s remembering they aren’t you or this person or that. It’s good boundaries and allowing both people in the relationship a voice.

It’s kindness and compassion and understanding. But it isn’t enabling.

Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that knowing the difference between grace and enabling will help you take a step toward wholeness so you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

To finish up, the transcript for this episode is on the podcast page on my website, [kerrahfabacher.com](http://kerrahfabacher.com), as well as other resources.

Come follow me on Instagram @kerrahfabacher.

A big thanks to my friend Robert Hargrove for creating the music for the show, and fellow hope\*writer, Alana Dawson, for being a great editor.

Until next time friend, I’ll see you soon.