

"Thank God, He does not measure grace out in teaspoons." —Amy Carmichael

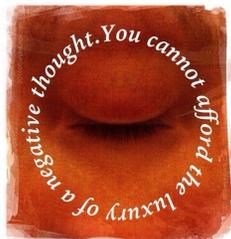
town. He saw a van that he really liked but since the older van at the previous auction went for



more than what he was willing to pay, he thought that he would not have a chance on this newer van with more and better luxury features. At that moment he became a doubting Thomas. When this nicer, sportier van came up on the platform, he waited to see if anyone would make an offer. No one made a bid so he called out, "\$10,000!" The auctioneer slammed down his hammer and my friend became the proud owner of an

upgraded van! What my friend didn't realize during this waiting period was that God's *favor factor* was in play and His gracious hand was on his dollars that day.

As you read this article you may be asking yourself: *Will I ever get out of debt? Will I be able to send my kids to a Christian college? Will I be able to reach my goal of owning my own home? Will my job still be here next year? Will I be able to break this addiction? Will my lab report show no abnormalities? Will my parents be willing to be placed in a nursing facility?* The list of negative, self-defeating thoughts and feelings could go on and on. Stop right now and positively say, "God's gracious hand is upon me and my family." Let God's *favor factor* smile on your life today!



References:

¹Obituaries, "The Pioneering Oceanographer Who Swam with Sharks," *The Week*, March 13, 2015, p. 35.

²Concepts from Joel Osteen book, *Break Out!* Faith Words 2013, pp. 93 & 94.

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The Stewpot

A potpourri of practical ideas to help you become a better steward.

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GOD'S FAVOR FACTOR

By Gordon Botting, DrPH, CHES, CFC

What a lady Dr. Eugenie Clark was! She was a fearless ichthyologist and oceanographer



who kept diving even into her nineties. She passed away in February at 92. During her stint as an underwater explorer for more than 50 years, she had close encounters with sea creatures such as a gigantic squid and a 500-pound giant clam. She swam with a school of man-eating barracudas and even hitched a ride on the back of a 50-foot whale shark. Dr. Clark wrote of these experiences in dozens of magazine articles, books, and documentaries, beginning with her first best-selling book in 1953 entitled, *Lady with a Spear*.

According to *The Washington Post*, Dr. Eugenie Clark's most important scientific contributions came in the late 1950s "when she proved that sharks could be trained to pick a target based on visual clues and could learn tasks as quickly as mammals." She also dispelled the belief that sharks need to be always in motion to breathe when she observed 'sleeping sharks' in the undersea caverns off the coast of Mexico. When the movie, *Jaws*, was filmed in 1975, she did her best to dismiss the image of sharks as ferocious killers. She eventually earned the nickname, "The Shark Lady."¹

One of her most interesting findings was a tiny fish called *Moses sole*, which lives in the Red Sea, sharing the same



Stewardship is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, *spirituality*, and finances.

habitat with the giant sharks. Dr. Clark and other



scientists discovered that our Creator has given this little fish a *favor factor* in the form of a unique defense system.

Whenever a shark opens its mouth to swallow a Moses sole, it secretes a poisonous toxin from its glands which literally causes the shark's jaws to freeze. The Moses sole doesn't call 911 when inside the shark's mouth, it doesn't get panic attacks or a raised blood pressure—it just relies on God's *favor factor* to paralyze its adversary.

This same *favor factor* is also found over and over again in the stories of Bible giants. One of the classic narratives is of Nehemiah, a simple cup-bearer to the king. God gave him a vision of returning to Jerusalem—the capital of his native land—a thousand miles away, to repair and rebuild its walls. Here was a man who had no influence or money. He was

not a governor, a political advisor, or an economic consultant—just a humble and faithful servant of the king. Yet, he didn't hesitate to ask for permission to return to Jerusalem and the king immediately granted his appeal.

However, God's *favor factor* didn't end on his first request. Nehemiah then asked, "Your Majesty, I also need you to write letters of my assignment so that the leaders of the lands I pass through will know that I am on a mission and that you have sent me. These letters will assure me of protection in the realms I pass through." Again, the king concurred.



But Nehemiah wasn't quite done. He continued saying, "King, I don't have any money or resources to restore the walls. Would you ask *Lowe's* and *Home*

Depot (italics supplied) to provide the materials needed when I reach my destination, and would you be willing to pay the cost out of the king's treasury?" You nearly want to say, "What a

cheek this man had!" Not only did he ask for permission to leave, but additionally asked for letters of protection and materials to complete his task. Nehemiah was inexperienced and was neither a building contractor nor a city organizer, yet he completed in just 52 days a job which should have taken a minimum of 12 months. When asked how he was able to accomplish this, he explained, "I told them how the gracious hand of God was on my life." (Nehemiah 2:18) He knew he had God's *favor factor*.²

My father, Ernie Botting, was a faithful member of a small church on the South Island of New Zealand. He worked as a salesman for a major brush company and his only 'claim to fame' was that at their annual national conference, he was for many years named the top salesperson in the entire country. His colleagues were baffled at how successful he was because he only worked from Mondays through Thursdays. The other reps often made most of their

sales on Saturdays—up to 50 percent of their weekly totals, because that's when women who work during the week were home and had the money to purchase their products. They didn't realize that when we are faithful to our Heavenly Father with our observance of the Sabbath, He affirms our loyalty and respect of His time with God's *favor factor*

and with abundant financial blessings.

A pastor friend shared his experience with me. His current van needed to be replaced so he attended a local city



vehicle auction hoping to find a newer model to purchase. He examined the available vans and found one that he thought would be suitable for his family. When the van he had his eye on was presented by the auctioneer, it went up for a much higher amount than he could afford. He didn't want to go into debt so he decided to stay within his budget. Naturally, he was disappointed and went home feeling discouraged. Two weeks later, he went to another auto auction in