

Grace for Cullen



by Yolanda White Powell

I have this *new* incredible love for children! This became apparent in 1999 while I was a substitute teaching in a kindergarten class at a public school in our county.

During the overview of instructions for the day, the teacher warned me about a kindergartener named Cullen. “You will know him when he comes in,” she said with a smirk. “He will make sure you know him!” Moments later the children arrived. They formed a neat little line to pass in notes and assignments. Before long a tiny Caucasian kid, with gorgeous blue eyes came bursting pass the line and bolting straight for me. “Hey,” he said loudly. “Do you know my name?” With a big smile, I responded confidently, “Yes! You must be Cullen.”

Sure enough Cullen was more than a hand full. He was similar in size and stature to the ‘energizer bunny.’ During lunch, he disappeared from the table. I looked up to see him running circles around the lunch ladies. With the day half spent, it was playground time. The children reviewed with me the ‘rules of play.’ “If anyone pushes or shoves,” they said in sing-song unison, “they have to stand on the wall!” Before long, Cullen was skipping lines and wreaking havoc. “Cullen!” I screamed with a stern voice. “I should make you go to the wall right now. But I’m going to give you grace!” Everyone stopped, as if playing ‘red-light-green-light.’ “What’s grace?” asked little Amanda. “Grace is when you should be punished for breaking the rules, but you are given another chance to do good.” Cullen’s face lit up! “I’ve got grace! I’ve got grace!” He was chanting and playing with new sense of joy and orderliness.

Immediately, the rest of the children began asking, “Can I have grace, too?” I generously extended grace to everyone. Grace made Cullen a brand new kid! He basked in it with delight! Let’s give grace away *freely* to all who desperately need it!