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TRUTH Magazine

Winter 2019 Edition

Therefore, if anyone is in
Christ,
the new *creation* has come;
the old has gone,
the *new* is here!
2 Cor. 5:17 NIV

Working Together to Advance the Grace of God
and Impact the World for Christ



GRACE GOSPEL
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TRUTH Magazine

Endeavoring to set forth God's purpose and grace according to 2 Timothy 1:8-11

CONTENTS

Volume 68, Issue 4
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Editor's Note: An unintended theme seems to be running through the articles in this issue—each author in his or her own way brings to light the desire or purpose of God for us to step out of our comfort zones and reach the lost for Jesus Christ.

3 **Tourist or Lifeguard?**

Alonso is concerned for the church's emphasis on providing a nice place to worship at the expense of reaching the lost. He says that if you feel comfortable in a church, BEWARE! The church is not a hotel or a place to be "comfortable."

by *Alonso Cabezas*

6 **Put an End to It...To Allow God to Make New**

Ken stresses the importance of stopping those things that get in the way of carrying out God's plan. He says, "You cannot be fruitful without pruning that which is diverting energy or time preventing you from being healthy."

by *Ken Bruce Kemper*



9 **And How Shall They Hear Without a Preacher?**

This is a thought-provoking article that we need to read and be reminded of from time to time. Jeremy writes, "It might be that we live as the world does, as practical atheists rejecting Him in deed while teaching our neighbors to do the same."

by *Jeremy Clark*

13 **The Doctrine of Salvation—the Application**

We continue with this four-part series on salvation. This segment deals with the call to salvation and our part in it. Whenever we share the gospel we must always understand that no oratory skill or persuasive presentation will bring a person to salvation.

by *Samuel R. Vinton*

20 **The Next Step**

Pastor Records shares his thoughts and the impact a recent church planting conference had on him. While church planting comes right from the book of Acts, we tend to steer clear of it because it is difficult, scary, and only for those with a type A personality.

by *Karl Records*

21 **Church News**

PUBLISHER:
Matt Amundsen, GGF Executive Director

EDITORS:
Timothy & Sharon McGarvey

REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS
Ken Bruce Kemper, Jeremy Clark

THEOLOGICAL CONSULTANT:
Dr. Sam Vinton, Jr.

FEATURED CARTOONIST:
Bill Connolly

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phone: 616-245-0100
email: info@ggfusa.org
website: ggfusa.org

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TOURIST or LIFEGUARD ¿TURISTA o SALVAVIDAS?

by Pastor Alonso Cabezas
Costa Rica



NOTE: We are now bilingual! In the article below the English and Spanish versions run side by side.

On a very dangerous coast where ships frequently collided, there was a small and simple lifeguard station. The building was very basic and there was only one boat, but the few who had been rescued constantly peered out to sea. Without thinking of themselves, they went out day and night searching tirelessly for the lost.

Some of those who had been saved, and several others from around the area, sought to associate with the station and support them with time, money, and help with their work. New boats were purchased and new staff members were trained. The small lifeguard station grew and was remodeled with pools and restaurants, and new members were added. With such a luxurious building, new rules were imposed, such as not allowing the entry of someone rescued without first bathing and being examined, so as not to dirty the furniture.

At the next meeting there was division among the club members. Most of the members sought to stop the club's rescue activities because it was annoying for them and obstructed the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted that their purpose in saving

En una costa muy peligrosa donde los barcos chocaban con frecuencia, había una pequeña y sencilla estación de salvavidas. El edificio era muy simple y solo había un bote, pero los pocos que habían sido rescatados miraban constantemente hacia el mar. Sin pensar en sí mismos, salieron día y noche buscando incansablemente a los perdidos.

Algunos de los que se habían salvado, y varios otros de la zona, buscaron asociarse con la estación y ayudarles con tiempo, dinero y ayuda con su trabajo. Se compraron nuevos barcos y se capacitó a nuevos miembros del personal. La pequeña estación de salvavidas creció y fue remodelada con piscinas y restaurantes, y se agregaron nuevos miembros. Con un edificio tan lujoso, se impusieron nuevas reglas, como no permitir la entrada de alguien rescatado sin primero bañarse y ser examinado para no ensuciar los muebles.

En la próxima reunión hubo división entre los miembros del club. La mayoría de los miembros buscaron detener las actividades de rescate del club porque para ellos resultaba molesto y obstruía la vida social normal del club. Algunos miembros insistieron en que su propósito de salvar las vidas era lo principal

lives was the main thing and clarified what their name was: the lifeguard station. But the majority finally voted against it and said that if they were looking to save lives, they should start their own lifeguard station in another area of the same coast. They did so.

The years passed and the new station experienced the same changes that the old station had. Then it became a club, and again another lifeguard station was founded. History keeps repeating itself, and if you visit the coast today you will find many exclusive clubs. Boat crashes are very frequent in these waters and most people drown.

What can we learn from this well-known, but often repeated, story?

What do you think are the reasons why the lifeguards lost their purpose?

Was it bad to change the building and have new furniture or equipment?

Do you think something similar has happened in general with the church of Christ?

What lessons does this story leave with us?

Why do I exist? Why am I here? Why did God create me? What is my purpose? What does my personal MISSION statement say?

What do we as a church exist for? What does your church MISSION statement say?

There are many statements of mission or purpose, but our mission should not be different than the mission of our Father.

Jesus was very clear about the mission the Father had entrusted to him (John 4:34): a) doing the will of the Father, dying (Luke 22:42, Mark 10:45); b) carrying out the work entrusted to him, making disciples (John 17:4).

And we as churches that have been entrusted with such a valuable message, what is our mission? What are we doing with it?

What did Jesus entrust to His disciples as a mission? We could conclude that the same thing He was doing and modeling during His time with them:

- a) Dying (Luke 9:23)
- b) Making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20)

For us it is clear that this mission was given to the flock or church within God's plan for Israel; however, its essential principles are totally valid (the forms changed, but not its essence).

In Matt. 28:18-20 Jesus begins by making it clear that He supports them, so then (THEREFORE) He gives them a great CHALLENGE which, by the way, is a MANDATE, NOT a suggestion: MAKE DISCIPLES!

y aclararon cuál era su nombre: la estación de salvavidas. Pero la mayoría finalmente votó en contra y dijeron que si ellos buscaban salvar vidas, que comenzaran su propia estación de salvavidas en otra zona de la misma costa. Ellos así lo hicieron.

Los años pasaron y la nueva estación experimentó los mismos cambios que tuvo la vieja estación. Entonces ésta se convirtió en un club, y nuevamente otra estación de salvavidas se fundó. La historia continúa repitiéndose, y, si visitas hoy día la costa, encontraras un montón de clubes exclusivos a lo largo de ésta. Los choques de barcos son muy frecuentes en estas aguas, pero la mayoría de la gente se ahoga.

¿Qué podemos aprender de esta conocida, pero tan repetida, historia?

¿Cuáles creen que son las razones por las que los salvavidas perdieron su propósito?

¿Fue malo cambiar el edificio y tener nuevos muebles o equipo?

¿Creen que ha pasado algo similar con la iglesia de Cristo, en general?

¿Qué enseñanzas nos deja esta historia?

¿Por qué existo? ¿Por qué estoy aquí? ¿Por qué me creó Dios? ¿Cuál es mi propósito? ¿Qué dice mi declaración de MISIÓN (personal)?

¿Para qué existimos nosotros (como iglesia)? ¿Qué dice su declaración de MISIÓN (iglesia)?

Existen muchas declaraciones de misión o propósito, pero nuestra misión no debe ser diferente que la misión de nuestro Padre.

Jesús tenía muy clara era la misión que el Padre le había encomendado (Juan 4:34): a) hacer la voluntad del Padre, morir (Lucas 22:42, Mk 10:45); b) llevar a cabo la obra encomendada, hacer discípulos (Juan 17:4).

Y nosotros como iglesias a quienes se nos ha encomendado un mensaje tan valioso, ¿Cuál es nuestra misión, qué estamos haciendo con ella?

¿Qué encomendó Jesús a sus discípulos como misión? Podríamos concluir que lo mismo que Él estuvo haciendo y modelando durante su tiempo con ellos:

- a) Morir (Lucas 9:23)
- b) Hacer discípulos (Matt. 28:18-20)

Para nosotros tenemos es claro que esta misión fue dada para el rebaño o iglesia dentro del Plan de Dios con Israel, sin embargo, sus principios esenciales son totalmente válidos (las formas cambiaron, pero no su esencia).

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THEREFORE,
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 ”

Do the same thing that I have been modeling for you these three years... Imitate me!

He assures the CONTINUITY of His Name and work, Jesus constantly told His disciples that He had chosen them to bear much fruit.

When a plant bears fruit (the PRESENT), what is inside the fruit? The seed (the FUTURE, its survival, and continuity).

And what does the SEED produce? Another plant EQUAL to the one that originated it.

Therefore, what is the meaning of the fruit that God wants His disciples to give? MORE DISCIPLES. And Jesus gives three important guidelines to fulfill our MISSION of MAKING DISCIPLES:

1. **GOING:** It is not “go and do.” It is a LIFESTYLE (as you go), not a specific event or activity. The life of the believer, of a disciple of Christ, is that wherever he goes, he must fulfill his mission to share the message of reconciliation and make disciples (multiply). That’s what Jesus did during his earthly life.

2. **BAPTIZING:** A ritual that for the Jews meant purification, consecration, identification; truths that today in our dispensation are made in a spiritual

En Mt. 28:18-20 Jesús inicia dejándoles claro que Él les respalda, así entonces (POR TANTO) les da un gran RETO, que, por cierto, es un MANDATO, NO una sugerencia: ¡HAGAN DISCÍPULOS!

Hagan lo mismo que les he estado modelando durante estos 3 años... ¡Imítenme!

Él asegura la CONTINUIDAD de Su Nombre y su obra, pero a través de humanos.

Jesús constantemente les dijo a Sus discípulos que los había escogido para llevar mucho fruto.

¿Cuándo una planta da fruto (el PRESENTE), qué hay dentro del fruto? La semilla (el FUTURO, su supervivencia y continuidad).

¿Y qué produce la SEMILLA? Otra planta IGUAL a la que la originó.

Por tanto, ¿Cuál es el significado del fruto que Dios quiere que den sus discípulos? MÁS DISCÍPULOS.

Y Jesús da 3 pautas importantes para cumplir nuestra MISIÓN de HACER DISCÍPULOS:

1. **YENDO:** No es “vayan y hagan”. Es un ESTILO DE VIDA (mientras van), no un evento o actividad determinada. La vida del creyente, del discípulo de Cristo, es que, por donde vaya debe cumplir Su misión de compartir el mensaje de reconciliación y hacer discípulos (multiplicarse). Eso hizo Jesús durante su vida terrenal.

2. **BAUTIZANDO:** Un ritual que para los judíos significaba purificación, consagración, identificación; verdades que hoy en nuestra dispensación, son efectuadas en una dimensión espiritual por el Espíritu Santo, el cual nos bautiza en Cristo (Gál. 3:27). Por los tanto nos corresponde hoy enseñar a los nuevos creyentes sobre su nueva identidad de hijos amados, puros, consagrados; debemos afianzarlos en su fe y práctica de la nueva vida en Cristo. Y siempre procurar que ellos lleguen a ser discípulos de Cristo y no de mí o de otra persona.

3. **ENSEÑANDO:** ¿Enseñando qué? OBEDIENCIA. A Dios se le demuestra el amor al obedecerle (Dt.6:5; Juan 14:15). Con una clara identidad como hijos de Su Padre (SER), ahora debemos enseñar a los discípulos a parecerse a su Padre obedeciéndole, creciendo y santificándose (HACER) (Efesios 5:1-2).

¿Pero qué dice el apóstol Pablo sobre la misión que Jesucristo modeló y enseñó? (MORIR y HACER DISCÍPULOS). ¿Qué hizo Pablo? Lo mismo, y nos enseña a que imitemos su ejemplo (1Cor. 11:1). ¿Qué quiso

continued on page 16



by Ken Bruce Kemper
President
Grace Christian University

As clocks struck midnight around the world on December 31 people gathered to celebrate the beginning of a brand new year. The anticipation of the new is exciting. But for most of us, the reality is that nothing really becomes new, beyond turning the calendar page and the last digit of the date.

Why is there such negativity about “New Year’s Resolutions”?

The extremely simple, but overwhelmingly profound reality is this:

Only as one deliberately ends the old (relationship, distraction, habit, or context) will there be a significant new or lasting change.

The late Jim Boeck, pastor of Berean Bible Church (now Parkside Bible Church) in Holland, Michigan, also did counseling with a Christian organization known as Winning at Home. He was known for stating simply, “If nothing changes, nothing changes!”

The significance of this principle is illustrated throughout Scripture in the lives of individuals whom God used. They were called to stop doing something, end their present journey, and begin something else which God was calling them to do. The endings were costly, risky, and dramatic. The change was vocational, personal, and life-altering. Above all else, it was faith-dependent upon the character and power of God by the one putting a halt to something to allow God to make new.

When young people (as well as older ones) in an audience are asked, “How many of you would like to make changes in your life?” the response is usually 100% of those present (or very nearly 100% because of those who are reluctant to give feedback). However, most of these same people have not made any signifi-

cant changes recently and actually do not know how to go about doing it! Most have never learned how to deliberately end things in their lives so that the new can begin. Our society mistakenly believes it can just add or multitask more and succeed, when research and our experience shows it just does not work out that way. Today we are more apt to just go along with what happened yesterday, and passively do it again tomorrow, as we have become accustomed to, rather than stop the flow and change.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, “Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending.”

People God Used Ended Things

Abram

Abram, the father of the Jewish nation, was a man of substance and great means who lived in Ur and Haran. He had numerous flocks, and servants and was well settled when the Lord called to him, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you” (Genesis 12:1). At that point, Abram exercised the foundational principle noted above—he put an end to life in the present place and in the context of his extended family to obey God. With courageous faith Abram embraced whatever new reality God had for him! “So Abram left, as the Lord had told him” (Genesis 12:4).

For many of us today, we would have sought a way to be obedient and stay put. We would say, “Surely God wouldn’t want me to leave family! God values family.” But God blessed Abram through his faith in God by ending his present situation so that God could begin a new nation through him in a new land. Failure to put an end to or leave his past behind would have disqualified Abram for the new.

Rebekah

Some years later Abraham's wife Sarah dies, and he desires to find a wife for his promised son Isaac. Abraham sends his head servant back to Haran and to his extended family to seek a wife. It is here the servant encounters young Rebekah by the well. Her brother Laban and father Bethuel are God-fearing men. They state that they will not argue with God's will and allow Rebekah to go with this servant and believe his story of their relatives Abraham and Isaac. But if we look closely at the account recorded in Genesis 24, we can see a modern parallel. While Laban and Bethuel agree to permit Rebekah to leave (the many expensive gifts sent to them were convincing), they respond, "Let the girl stay with us a few days, say ten; afterward she may go" (24:55).

They did not want to end the present relationship and family harmony, but wanted to keep her longer. At this, the servant grows worried because he promised to return with a wife and asks them to "send me on my way" (24:56). Laban and Bethuel believe that the current situation is too nice to give up, so they suggest calling the girl to consult with her—no doubt believing she had begun to think over the implications of leaving her family and the present security she enjoys. Nonetheless, when Rebekah is openly questioned, she replies, "I will go" (Genesis 24:58). Think of it. What she knowingly stated was this: "I will end this security and present life and head out with this stranger to a faraway land to become the wife of a man I have never met!" What bold and radical action! With great courage, Rebekah put an end to something so God could use her for the continuance of a great nation of His favor. Today, we are much more familiar with the way Laban and Bethuel reasoned than we are with Rebekah's thinking and response.

Jesus Called His Followers to End Things

Peter, Andrew, James, and John

Jesus was walking along the Sea of Galilee and came upon two families of fishermen. The account in the Scriptures does not tell of a motivational speech or many fiscal enticements, but rather of Christ's simple call to follow Him and become a "fisher of men." In both instances, the record describes these men as presently engaged along with others in their vocation; yet, they immediately "left their nets" (and also left their families and livelihoods) to follow Jesus (Mark

1:16-20). There is no record of a temporary leave of absence or days off, rather we see the willful and deliberate halting of what sustained them and was the family business. These men could not drag just one fishing net along as a backup plan or do some "moonlighting" while learning the new trade from Jesus; they ended things the day they were called, so God could work and do something with and through them which changed the world!

Matthew the Tax Collector

A similar occurrence happens to Matthew (Levi) as he gainfully works his daily post to insure his comfortable lifestyle. Jesus passes his direction, looks at him, and tells him, "Follow me." Matthew gets up, leaves his post, and follows Christ. Matthew also invites other tax collectors and "sinners" to a dinner party at his home so they can meet Jesus (Matthew 9:9-12). Due to the pedigree of the guest list, this was no boring party void of good food, drink, or engaging conversation! Matthew brought all his sinful associates together to declare he was ending his deceptive and sinful life that day, and was beginning a new one. What courage and accountability Matthew displayed! Remember, it was not Matthew but Judas who later dipped into the funds of the ministry team. Matthew went on to write our first New Testament book near the end of his life.

Those Not Wanting to End

Jesus taught and gathered crowds of followers. People in His time were not much different than we are. There were those who were attracted to His teaching and the authority with which He taught. However, they did not really want to end anything or change to follow Him. They gave Jesus reasons which explained their present contexts and rationalized reasons to limit change. Jesus' response was poignant: "Let the dead bury their own dead," and "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:57-62). Jesus' offer of leading followers was real and available, but just like the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22), there must be clear decisions to cease or halt present priorities and distractions for those He calls to become followers of a new order and mission. God's calling is not an invitation to expand one's multitasking capabilities but to put a stop to something. In so doing, one would evidence new values and a new calling for life which necessarily excludes the old.

Paul

Saul was a religious leader who had advanced beyond most of his Jewish brothers, having been educated by the best rabbis and schools. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews and regarding the law, a Pharisee with zeal to persecute those who were contrary (Philippians 3:4-7), and he was faultless in legalistic righteousness. God called him on the road to Damascus, blinded him, and sent Ananias to instruct him in a new way (Acts 9). God took all that was formerly of value to Saul and showed him it was now worthless (Philippians 3:7-10). Saul's dramatic ending of the old allowed him, after mere days with the disciples in Damascus, to immediately begin to "preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20)! Those who heard him were astonished because what he had originally come to do in Damascus had ended (Acts 9:21-22). There was no mixing of the old Jewish, Pharisaical legalistic righteousness by the law with this new message of Jesus Christ's sacrificial death once for all for sinners. The old absolutely had to end, so that the new, better, and life-giving could begin and could now change lives and the world the way it had changed Saul (he later changed his name to Paul).

God is the Master of Change and New from the Dead Ends of the Past

We were blessed to plant churches with our Tanzanian brothers during the years we served there. In one urban area we sought a place to begin gathering with our newly-saved believers and a fellow pastor. After many weeks, we learned we could rent a nice building with a gathering place in the front and house in the back with a courtyard where our pastor and his family could live. It was near a main square in the part of town we had targeted and prayed over for some time. Before we closed on the deal, I asked to view the building. When we went through the nice double doors into the large room, there was a huge counter that was used for serving drinks and bright paintings on the walls of suggestive images! It had been a social club and bar where all manner of debauchery had taken place. We stared at the walls, prayed, and determined that the former use of this place was terminated so that God could redeem the property and do the same thing in the lives of the people (redeeming them) in the community. We transformed the large counter into a pulpit and painted over the images on the walls as best we could. We were blessed to see a number of

people come forward to bow before that pulpit to confess Christ as Savior and begin a new life! There was never a thought that we should simply "coexist" in that building with the bar. The former had to go, end, and cease, so that the new could come to life and be God's instrument!

The Present Reality

This is how God works. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The new can never come if the old does not go! Peter and Andrew stopped fishing so God could use them. Matthew stopped collecting taxes, so God could use him. Paul stopped his self-righteous legalism and valued it as rubbish to be God's instrument to bring grace to the whole Gentile world!

Paul told the Romans that because of the reality of the believers' identification baptism into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, in this newness they must conscientiously "Put to death, [consider dead, reckon to be dead] the old self" (Romans 6:6, 11-12). This is a state of mind, body, and heart that includes the values, emotions, and actions of our lives. Believers are to no longer feed the flesh but give their bodies as instruments of God for His use. It cannot happen if we are unwilling to stop or end the old, self-centered ways. God places His Holy Spirit in the life of a new person (vessel) to guide and use for fruitful labor (Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 5:18). This is the reality of the simple yet profound principle of deliberately ending the old, so that the Holy Spirit can have freedom to control and make new.

Simply put, you really are not capable of just adding more to your life. You cannot be fruitful without pruning that which is diverting energy or time preventing you from being healthy. Pruning is God's way to convict you to eliminate wasteful time, energy, and habits you have developed. We need to celebrate the ending of those habits, thought patterns, relationships, screen time, or preoccupations which keep God from starting something new and changing us. To deliberately end things has cost and involves risk—that is what the people of faith have always known, but they stopped, halted, and trusted God to begin, and change for His glory. Change does not guarantee growth, but growth always means change. Change implies ending something, so that the new can begin. Let's put an end to it! ■

...And how shall they hear



by Jeremy Clark
Executive Director
Grace Ministries International, Inc.

...without a preacher?



Pictured above left to right: Prison Ministry Chaplain Jackson, Tom, Michelle and Grace Church elder Eddie Phiri; GMI missionary Sue Vinton sharing the gospel with the Evangecube this past November in Malawi; and Alex Gulart speaking and sharing the gospel at a youth camp in Paraguay in early December.

Hell (or more accurately, “Sheol”—Hell’s waiting room) was simply not big enough. Like a snake opening wide its mouth to swallow its dead prey, God, through the prophet Isaiah, personified Hell’s entry point declaring, “Sheol has enlarged itself and opened its mouth beyond measure” (Isaiah 5:14a) to receive those who did “not regard the work of the LORD” (Isaiah 5:12b). These were not those who had never heard of God, but these were His people to whom His oracles had been entrusted (Romans 3:2). However, in their rebellion they lost their knowledge of Him (Isaiah 5:13). They called “evil good, and good evil” and “put darkness for light, and light for darkness” (Isaiah 5:20). They also failed to recognize the operation of the Lord’s hand (Isaiah 5:12).

If this was the fate awaiting God’s chosen people during Isaiah’s ministry who should have known God, then consider the plight of the rest of the souls He created. For those who are saved and know the truth, we find ourselves in one of two categories. Jesus draws a stark distinction declaring: “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters” (Luke 11:23). In other words, if we are not bringing people to Him, we are a detriment to the cause. It could be that our silence implicitly affirms the evil around us instead of exposing it for the purpose of introducing men to their Savior (Eph. 5:14). It could be that though we call ourselves Christians our apathy for sharing Christ tells the world that He is just not that important and they are fine without Him. It might be that we live as the world does, as practical atheists rejecting Him in deed while, thus, teaching our neighbors to do the same.

If knowing that we are potentially working at cross purposes with the Lord is not enough to motivate us to share the gospel, then let’s consider our competitors for the souls of men. The question we have to ask ourselves is whether we care about the eternal destiny of neighbors more than the competition.

Sennacherib’s reign over Babylon began around 705 B.C. which was 17 years after Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was taken into captivity and exiled. He oppressed the greater region and even attempted to take Jerusalem, the capital of the Southern Kingdom. Externally, he was an adherent of his own false god, Nisroch, and was ultimately killed by his sons while worshipping in his temple (2 Kings 19:37). Internally, he was self-absorbed and a self-worshipper which is why God likened Sennacherib to Satan with his desire to rise in prominence above the Most High (Isaiah 14:12-14).

A curious thing happened on his way to Hell. Sheol took notice of Sennacherib’s imminent arrival producing one of the most disturbing statements in all of the Scriptures: “Hell from beneath is excited about you, to meet you at your coming; it stirs up the dead for you, all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. They all shall speak and say to you: ‘Have you also become as weak as we? Have you become like us? Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, and the sound of your stringed instruments; the maggot is spread under you, and worms cover you’” (Isaiah 14:9-11). The dead kings who once ruled on the earth awoke in excitement and anticipation that this wicked ruler would now be ruled by death just as they. For a moment they reveled in

his demise looking forward to his presence making light of his impotence, “Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms?’” (Isaiah 14:16). The dead and condemned were eager for Sennacherib to join them. These dead kings wore their earthly crowns for a time, while we have the opportunity to receive crowns for all eternity awarded to us as we gather the lost into the presence of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). Does the passion of these condemned kings for the lost to join them in suffering supersede our passion to see the lost saved? Do we match their intensity or have we lost before the game even got started?

The rich man knew why he had joined these kings in torment several hundred years later. Lazarus had suffered on earth while the rich man had received his blessings (Luke 16:25). With his fate sealed and taking notice of the impassable gulf separating him from Abraham and the faithful on the other side waiting for their entrance into Heaven, he pondered the destiny of his lost brothers (Luke 16:28). Their trajectory would also have had them land in Hades (Sheol) upon their death, but the rich man was not eager for this. Though he may have wanted to be with them, he did not want them to end up there. He begged Abraham

“**DO WE LOVE THE LOST ENOUGH TO PUT ASIDE OUR DESIRE FOR HAPPINESS EVEN FOR A MOMENT TO CONSIDER THEIR PLIGHT THOUGH IT MEANS TAKING ON THE HEAVY BURDEN OF GRIEF?**”



In the village of Mbewa, Blessings Banda teaches how sin entered into the world

to raise not himself, but Lazarus from the dead to warn them (Luke 16:27-28). The rich man errantly thought a miracle would convince them of the truth. If this were true then would not all Israel have repented and accepted Jesus as their Messiah immediately ushering in His kingdom on earth? Though Christians incessantly seek or even “create” miracles for validation, the Word of God is sufficient and even lets us know that He has given us the privilege of gathering the lost on His behalf by sharing the truth of the gospel (Romans 10:8-15). While this dead and condemned rich man was passionate for the lost, we must ask if our passion matches his, or does another one of the dead have us beat?

The Apostle Paul, like any believer, is dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:11). This “dead” man was no longer under condemnation (Romans 8:1, 34) and did not fear separation from God (Romans 8:35-39). However, he wished for the impossible that, “I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh.” (Romans 9:3b). While obvious hyperbole, since he also wrote that he desired to be with Christ (Philippians 1:23) and that he was sealed unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30), he was expressing how much he was willing to give up for the sake of the lost. One of the first things he surrendered was the pursuit of perpetual happiness trading it for perpetual dismay regarding his lost brethren: “I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart” (Romans 9:2). Do we love the lost enough to put aside our desire for happiness even for a moment to consider their plight though it means taking on the heavy burden of grief?

But even if Paul could not suffer his countrymen’s punishment on their behalf, what did he give up in an effort to reach them with the truth of the gospel? He gave



Givemore Nyakambiri teaching in a town called Moatize in Mozambique the last weekend of November.

up any chance of a regular income or even the stability of living in one place for any significant length time. He gave up his comfort and the somewhat predictable expectation (in human terms) of what tomorrow would bring. He traded the absence of conflict for conflict with pagans, the countrymen he tried to save, and perhaps most painfully, with the churches he founded. He surrendered his health and ultimately his life for the sake of the gospel. Should not the passion of the one God chose so that “Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life” (1 Timothy 1:16b) inspire us to give up that much more in order to gather people unto Christ?

World leaders, especially in the west, intended for the Détente of the 1970s to thaw the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, but at the expense of half the planet. The idea was simple: let us just accept that half the world’s population would be free and the other half would live under the shackles of communism with the hope we will just leave each other alone avoiding confrontation. It was not until a few world leaders such as Reagan, Thatcher, and Pope John Paul II dared to confront the evil of communism and its materialistic worldview pursuing its end, not its toleration. Many Christians hope for a spiritual Détente where we can live out our freedom in Christ knowing that our future is eternally secured while we promise not to bother the rest of the world hoping they will not bother us either. Would this not be apathy—the opposite of love—and, ultimately, the pursuit of comfort at the expense of our neighbors?

It is not hard to come across a sermon today instructing us as to how we should not share the gospel. We are warned of all the ways we might offend or turn



Alvaro Barrantes and Chuck Befus sharing the gospel at a school in the Talamanca Region of Costa Rica in February 2017

someone off to God to the point that we can convince ourselves that opening our mouths at all will do more harm than good. We rest comfortably, therefore, in the “righteousness” of our silence. While noting that, “some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife...from selfish ambition, not sincerely,” Paul takes solace “that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice” (Philippians 1:15-18). Thus, if Paul can rejoice when Christ is preached from self-serving motives, cannot we give ourselves a little latitude and speak of Christ no matter how ineloquent it might sound? At times our speech will be too harsh and at times too soft. It might be too logical or not logical enough. We might present the gospel the wrong way to the wrong audience or, yes, even turn off or offend someone with our words. The latter will happen no matter how polished our explanation, but the point remains that we need to preach Christ. Only through experience and practice will we hone this skill and become more effective.

When do we start? We start now so that we “walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil...understand[ing] what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:15a-17). God’s will is not mysterious or something we need to divine, but He has clearly revealed it. God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9b). In order for us to be gatherers rather than scatterers our passion for the dead (the lost) must be greater than the passion of those who are already dead or even dead twice. ■

KENYA COAST VISION 2022

For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose. I am able to do all things through Him who gives me strength. (Phil. 2:13; 4:13)

OUR GOALS

1. Increase membership of Mombasa church to 200 adults and 1200 adults in the Coast Region
2. Double the number of Grace Churches in the region from 8 to 16
3. Establish a new Bible training center in Voi Region
4. Enroll 50 Bible school students each year for a total of 200 graduates
5. Complete construction of Mombasa-Mikindani church wall and floor
6. Give regional leaders 200 Ksh (\$2) initiative per month starting January 2019

OUR MISSION

Mombasa Grace Bible Church-TCM Kenya endeavors to follow the Apostle Paul as he follows Jesus Christ by strategically and creatively building a growing community of Grace assemblies around the city of Mombasa and beyond, as well as spreading His saving grace to unchurched communities.

OUR VISION

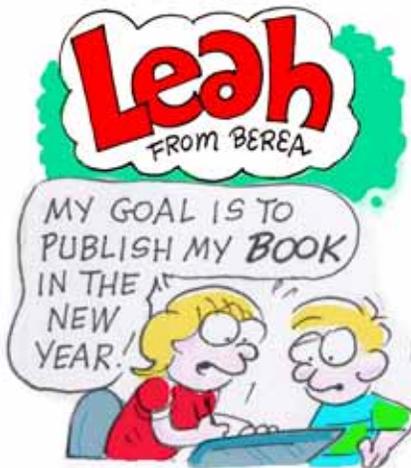
To preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to all people and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery by winning lost souls, equipping the saints, reproducing Grace churches and producing committed believers in Grace teaching whose lives are Christ-like in character.



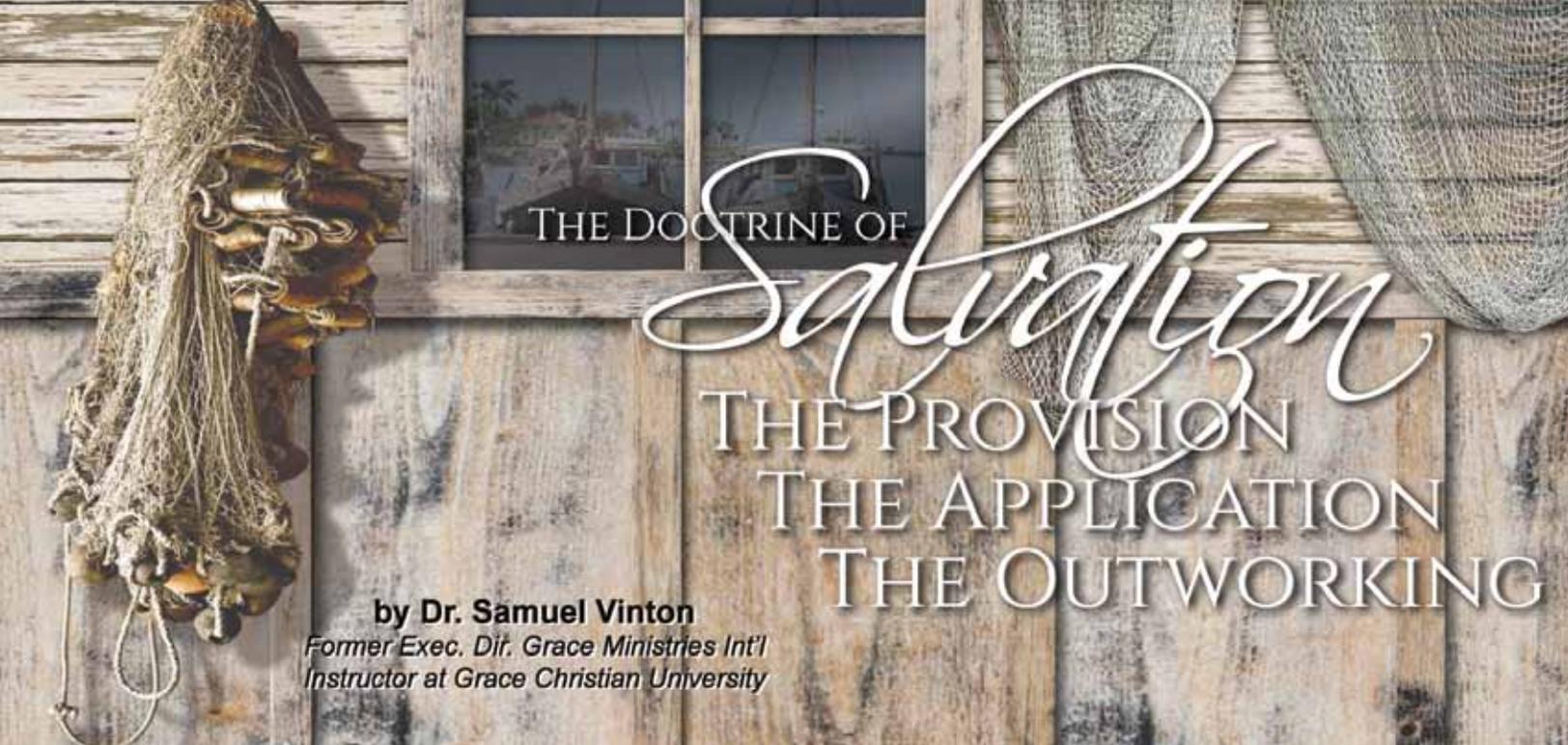
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- CONNOR '18



THE DOCTRINE OF

Salvation

THE PROVISION
THE APPLICATION
THE OUTWORKING

by Dr. Samuel Vinton

Former Exec. Dir. Grace Ministries Int'l
Instructor at Grace Christian University

THE RECEPTION OF SALVATION

Even though I was only ten to twelve years old, I still have a vivid recollection of a skit that my father and several pastors put on at a large Bible conference at the Kama church in Congo. Since the church platform was dirt, a hole big enough to hold a man and deep enough so he could not climb out was dug in the middle of the platform. When the skit started the man was crying out for help, so onto the platform came one of the pastors dressed like a Hindu priest who proceeded to tell the man what religious ceremonies he would need to perform if he wanted to get out of the well. After him came a pastor dressed like a Buddhist monk, then another one as a Muslim imman. All of them told the man in the well that he needed to pray, be good, and practice the right religious rites. Then came a shamman dressed in leopard skins. He performed several incantations and promised to protect the man with strong medicine but the man in the well would need to pay a fee. Finally, a pastor dressed the way Jesus was depicted in the picture rolls used by the church appeared. By then, the man in the well was desperate, begging for help, and acknowledged that there was no way he could get out of the well by his own effort. The pastor playing the role of Jesus reached down and pulled the man out of the well. The pastor then proceeded to give a gospel message and invited people to trust Jesus for he was the only One who could save them.

The first thing we need to establish in our study of salvation is that mankind cannot save themselves. The expression “total depravity” is often used to express the terrible, sinful state we find ourselves in as human beings. But since there has been some confusion as to the definition of “total depravity,” I would suggest that the words “total inability” better express what we mean when speaking of mankind in the context of getting saved. Since the day Satan deceived Eve into believing that his way of self-effort and good works was better than God’s way of faith and obedience – people all over the world are depending on their own goodness and good works to get to heaven. That is the reason Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5 insist that good works have nothing to do with anyone being saved since salvation is simply by the grace of God shown to unworthy sinners who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The term “application of salvation” has two components. The first component deals with man’s part—what human beings need to do to receive God’s salvation. The second component deals with what God does to the ones who receive salvation and are saved. In this article we will deal with the first component—what is man’s part in getting saved?

What Must I Do to be Saved?

The reception of Christ’s provision of salvation answers the question, *how is the saving work of Christ on the cross received by the sinner?* In other words,

how does a sinner receive God's salvation provided by Christ when He died on the cross?

Christianity claims to be the true faith. Jesus declared that there is only one God (Mark 12:29) and He (Jesus) was the only way to God the Father for anyone to be saved (John 14:6). Peter made the same claim about Jesus before the Sanhedrin when he stated that "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The claim that Jesus made and which was affirmed by Peter is contrary to the dominant way of thinking in today's world. According to Norman Geisler, a well-known theologian, there are four basic terms that are important in our discussion of religious truth.

"*Pluralism* is the belief that every religion is true ...*Relativism*, similar to pluralism, claims that every religion is true for the one adhering to it...there are no criteria by which we can discern that one religion is true or better than another. *Inclusivism* maintains that one religion is explicitly true, and all others are implicitly true. *Exclusivism* holds that only one religion is true and that what is opposed to it in other religions is false" (Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, pp. 411-12).

Along with what Jesus said in John 14:6, we have the following statement that also affirms that He is the only means of salvation: "Whoever believes in [Jesus] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:18). See also John 3:36; 8:23,24;10:9. Christianity is therefore very exclusive when it claims that salvation can only be found in the person of Jesus Christ. As Christians we have no way to present the gospel in a politically correct way. We did not make the claim that Jesus is the only way: **He did**. And this is where we stand.

In light of the above, we ask: "Are there any conditions for **our reception** of God's gift of salvation? Since Christians are not in agreement on this issue, let us summarize four main views on the conditions for salvation: Roman Catholic, strong Reformed, Church of Christ, and Protestant reformers.

The Roman Catholic View on the Conditions for Salvation

The infallible pronouncements of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) states that there are two condi-

tions for receiving the gift of salvation: faith plus good works. In the words of the Catholic dogma, "*by his good works the justified man really acquires a claim to supernatural reward from God.*"

The Strong Reformed View on the Condition for Salvation

According to extreme Calvinists, there are absolutely *no conditions* for anyone to meet before they can receive the gift of salvation. This view states that since humanity is so totally depraved, they cannot understand or receive the gospel. God therefore must regenerate the elected sinner who then can believe. R.C. Sproul stated: "*We do not believe in order to be born again; we are born again in order to believe*" (*Chosen by God*, Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 1994, p. 73).

The Churches of Christ/Disciples of Christ View on the Conditions for Salvation

According to Jack Cottrell, "We shall present the following acts as conditions for salvation in the New Covenant (post-Pentecost) age: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism" (*The Faith Once for All*, Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 2002, p. 349). Cottrell also states, "baptism is by definition the momentary immersion of the body into a pool of water. Nothing else really counts as baptism" (p. 368).

The Protestant Reformers View on the Condition for Salvation

The Protestant reformer Martin Luther's cry was **faith alone**. According to the early reformers nothing but faith was necessary for salvation. This stand caused the Catholic Church to hold the Council of Trent where they reaffirmed the dogma that works was also necessary for salvation.

For those known as evangelical, Bible-believing churches and denominations there is strong agreement that faith alone is the one condition for salvation. When the Apostle Paul stated to the Ephesian elders, "*I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Acts 20:21)—with Charles Baker, I understand that **faith** and **repentance** must be viewed as **two sides of the same coin**. In other words, each

is a part of one saving act by which a person receives the gift of everlasting life. This truth of being saved by grace through ***faith must never be compromised by adding anything else to it***—the truth stated in Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5.

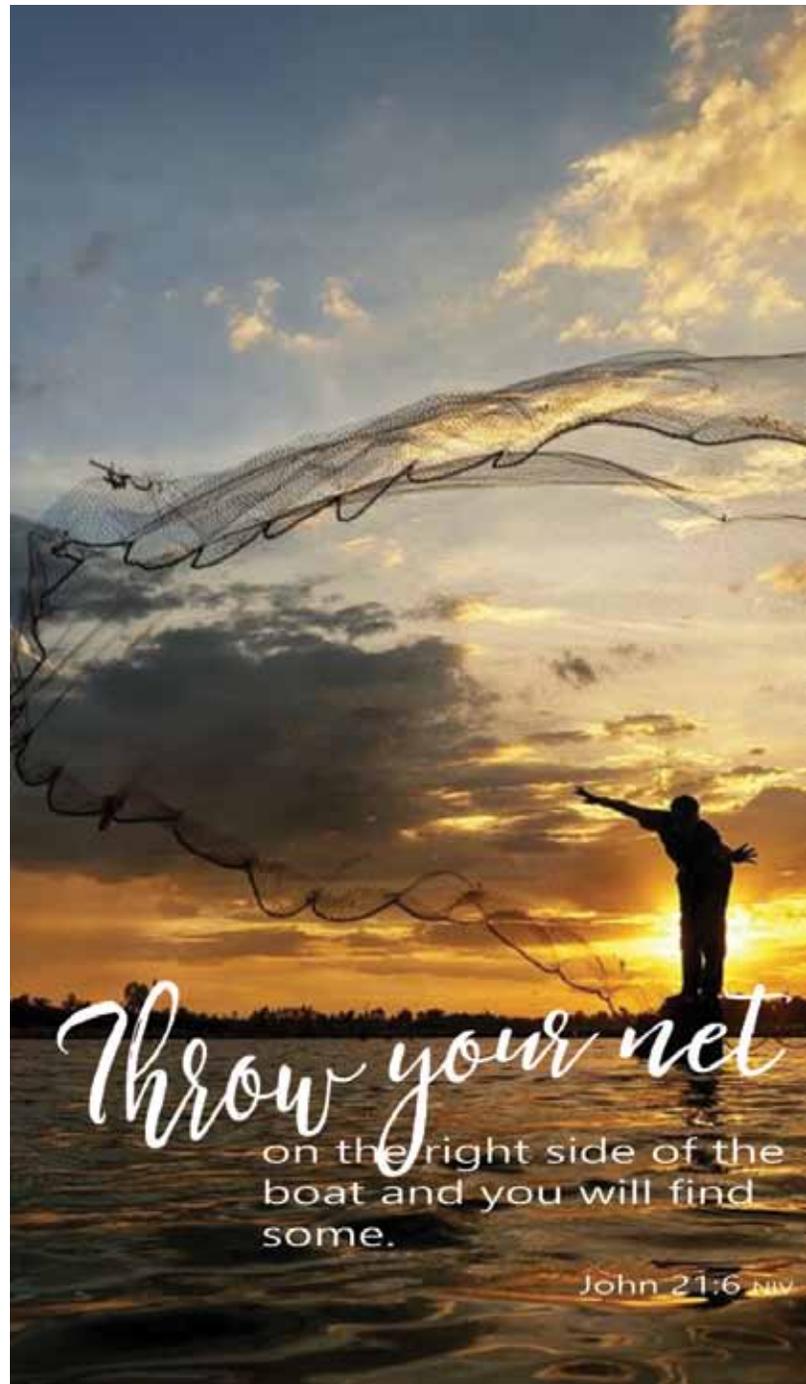
I recall once arriving back in the States from one of my trips to Latin America and being asked by the custom officer what was the purpose of my trip. After telling him that I went to work with our missionaries and national church leaders, he followed my answer with, “What does Acts 16:31 say?” When I answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved,” he responded, “Brother, welcome back home.” I left him thankful that my mother had taught me that verse when I was a young boy! My point is that each Christian should be prepared to answer with confidence the question “What must I do to be saved?” with “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved;” or with “...if you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved,” (Rom. 10:9), or with “to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” John 1:12) or with “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). And then be prepared to share your own story of salvation!

Having answered the question, ***what must I do to be saved?*** There remains another question as we consider this aspect of the **application of salvation**. That question is this: ***what does God do to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?*** We will treat that question in the next issue of TRUTH magazine.

Before concluding this article it is important to consider the **preliminary work of the Holy Spirit** in bringing a person to faith in Christ. This special ministry of the Holy Spirit is His work of **conviction**. When sinners hear the Word of God the Holy Spirit takes the Word and uses it to convict them that the wages of sin is death and as sinners they have missed God’s holy standard (Rom. 3:23). Because of this they are completely helpless and unable to earn salvation. The only thing required of them is to trust the Lord Jesus as the only One who saves lost sinners. The key passage regarding this work is recorded in John 16:7-11 which is very important in our understanding of what the Holy Spirit does in bringing a sinner to see their need of believing on Christ. The conviction in and of itself

does not result in salvation because the person being convicted must say NO to Satan’s lies and turn in faith and say YES to the One who is the truth, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6; 1 Thes. 1:9).

Whenever we share the gospel we must always understand that no oratory skill or persuasive presentation will bring a person to salvation. This is the work of the Holy Spirit who takes our words (often poorly stated) and God’s Word (that we quote) to convict the unsaved to trust the Lord Jesus to save them from their sins. Let us therefore bathe our evangelistic efforts with prayer, use Scripture in telling the gospel story, and be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our own hearts as we share the good news of salvation. ■



dimension by the Holy Spirit, who baptizes us in Christ (Gal. 3:27). Therefore it is up to us today to teach new believers about their new identity as beloved, pure, consecrated children; we must strengthen them in their faith and practice of the new life in Christ. And always try to make them become disciples of Christ and not of me or someone else.

3. **TEACHING:** Teaching what? **OBEDIENCE.** God is shown love by obeying Him (Deut. 6:5, John 14:15). With a clear identity as sons of His Father (**BEING**), we must now teach the disciples to look like their Father by obeying, growing, and continuing their sanctification (**DOING**) (Eph. 5:1-2).

“ In what aspects of life and mission did Paul follow Jesus and command others to do the same?”

But what does the apostle Paul say about the mission that Jesus Christ modeled and taught? (**DIE AND MAKE DISCIPLES**). What did Paul do? The same, and he teaches us to imitate his example (1 Cor. 11:1). What did Paul mean? In what aspects of life and mission did Paul follow Jesus and command others to do the same? Let's see:

a) **Dying:** We are to die to self, sin, and our way of life crucifying the old man (Gal. 2:20).

b) **Making disciples:** We are to make disciples who make disciples teaching others to be like Jesus (2 Tim. 2:2, 1 Thess. 2:8).

He gives us the privilege of participating in His work; to be His representatives. He has delegated us as His ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20)! But in order to do that, we must first die to the “self,” to our comfort, to our sinful or selfish desires, because this requires sacrifice

decir Pablo? ¿En qué aspectos de la vida y la misión Pablo siguió a Jesús y les ordenó a otros a que hicieran lo mismo? Veamos:

a) **Morir:** Debemos morir al yo, al pecado y a nuestra forma de vida, crucificando al viejo yo (Gál. 2:20).

b) **Hacer discípulos:** Debemos hacer discípulos que hagan discípulos enseñando a otros a ser como Jesús (2Tim. 2:2; 1Tes. 2:8)

¡Él nos da el privilegio de participar en Su obra; de ser Sus representantes, nos ha delegado como Sus embajadores (2Cor. 5:20)! Pero para poder hacer eso debemos primeramente morir al “yo”, a nuestra comodidad, a nuestros deseos pecaminosos o egoístas, porque esto requiere de sacrificio (tiempo, dinero, confort, etc.) Pablo habla mucho sobre morir al “yo” para ser útiles, tal como la semilla debe morir para dar fruto (Rom. 12:1; Hechos 20:24)

Nuestro Padre nos ha escogido y salvado para ser como Jesús, para imitarle, seguir Su ejemplo cumpliendo la misión del Padre, y todo lo que eso implica. Nos escogió para dar mucho fruto, reproduciendo nuestras vidas en otros, como las plantas.

La misión no es sólo ser luz (dar buen testimonio), no es simplemente ser instrumentos para que otros sean salvos (nuevos nacimientos), sino invertir en vidas, haciendo creyentes sanos, fuertes, maduros (**SER**); enseñándoles a imitar a Cristo también y continuar el ciclo (**HACER**). Al final hacemos discípulos de Él, no míos.

DIOS QUIERE DISCÍPULOS QUE HAGAN DISCÍPULOS, NO SIMPLES ESPECTADORES.

Recuerden: La iglesia **NO** es un **HOTEL** o un **CLUB** social.

Si usted se siente cómodo en una iglesia, ¡TENGA CUIDADO! ¡Examínese, puede ser que esté engañado y sólo tenga una religión y no una relación con Dios tal como la que Cristo vino a moldearnos! La iglesia **NO** es un lugar para estar “muy cómodo.”

Somos **SALVAVIDAS, NO TURISTAS...** ¿Es usted más como un salvavidas o un turista en su iglesia local? Tenemos la gran oportunidad de salir de la zona de **COMODIDAD** y empezar a cumplir la **MISIÓN DEL PADRE**. ¡Acerquémonos al **MODELO ORIGINAL**, el que Pablo estaba siguiendo!

(time, money, comfort, etc.). Paul talks a lot about dying to “self” to be useful, just as the seed must die to bear fruit (Romans 12:1, Acts 20:24).

Our Father has chosen and saved us to be like Jesus, to imitate him, to follow His example in fulfilling the Father’s mission, and all that implies. He chose us to bear much fruit, reproducing our lives in others, like plants.

The mission is not only to be light (giving good testimony), it is not simply to be instruments for others to be saved (new births), but to invest in lives, making healthy, strong, mature believers (BEING); teaching them to imitate Christ also and continue the cycle (DOING). At the end we make disciples of Him, not of ourselves.

GOD WANTS DISCIPLES THAT MAKE DISCIPLES, NOT SIMPLE SPECTATORS.

Remember: The church is NOT a HOTEL or a social CLUB.

If you feel comfortable in a church, BEWARE! Examine yourself, you can be deceived and be a very religious person and have a religion and not a relationship with God like the one Jesus came to show us! The church is NOT a place to be “comfortable”.

We are LIFEGUARDS, NOT TOURISTS... Are you more like a lifeguard or a tourist in your local church? We have the great opportunity to leave the COMFORT and begin to fulfill the MISSION OF THE FATHER. Let’s get closer to the ORIGINAL MODEL, the model Paul was following!

Let’s observe within our churches how many souls surround us ... Which of them needs someone who invests time, cultivating a friendship, teaching and modeling the life of Christ?

PARENTS: What would it look like if we began in our homes to MAKE DISCIPLES and not religious kids? Think, how things would change in our homes, in our church and society!

How do you think we can cause an effect, at least similar, to that caused by the first disciples if we do not follow the original model, the original mission, if we are tourists and not lifeguards?

There outside (and here inside) there are many people, a drowning world and we have the answer, we have THE SAVIOR-JESUS.

ARE YOU A TOURIST OR A LIFEGUARD?

Let’s not lose the MISSION of the Father! ■

“
IF YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE
IN A CHURCH,
BEWARE!
EXAMINE YOURSELF,
YOU CAN BE DECEIVED
AND BE A VERY
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AND HAVE A RELIGION AND NOT A
RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD
LIKE THE ONE JESUS
CAME TO SHOW US!
THE CHURCH IS NOT A PLACE TO BE
COMFORTABLE.
”

Observemos dentro de nuestras iglesias a tantas almas que nos rodean... ¿Cuál de ellos necesita de alguien que invierta tiempo, cultivando una amistad, enseñándole y modelándole la vida de Cristo?

PADRES DE FAMILIA: ¿Cómo serían las cosas si empezáramos en nuestras casas a hacer discípulos y no pequeños religiosos?

Piensen, ¡¿Cómo cambiarían las cosas en nuestros hogares, en nuestra iglesia y sociedad?!

¿Cómo creen que podremos causar un efecto, al menos similar, al que causaron los primeros discípulos si no seguimos el modelo original, la misión original, si somos turistas y no salvavidas?

Allá afuera (y aquí adentro) hay mucha gente, un mundo ahogándose y nosotros tenemos la respuesta, tenemos a EL SALVAVIDAS, EL SALVADOR JESÚS.

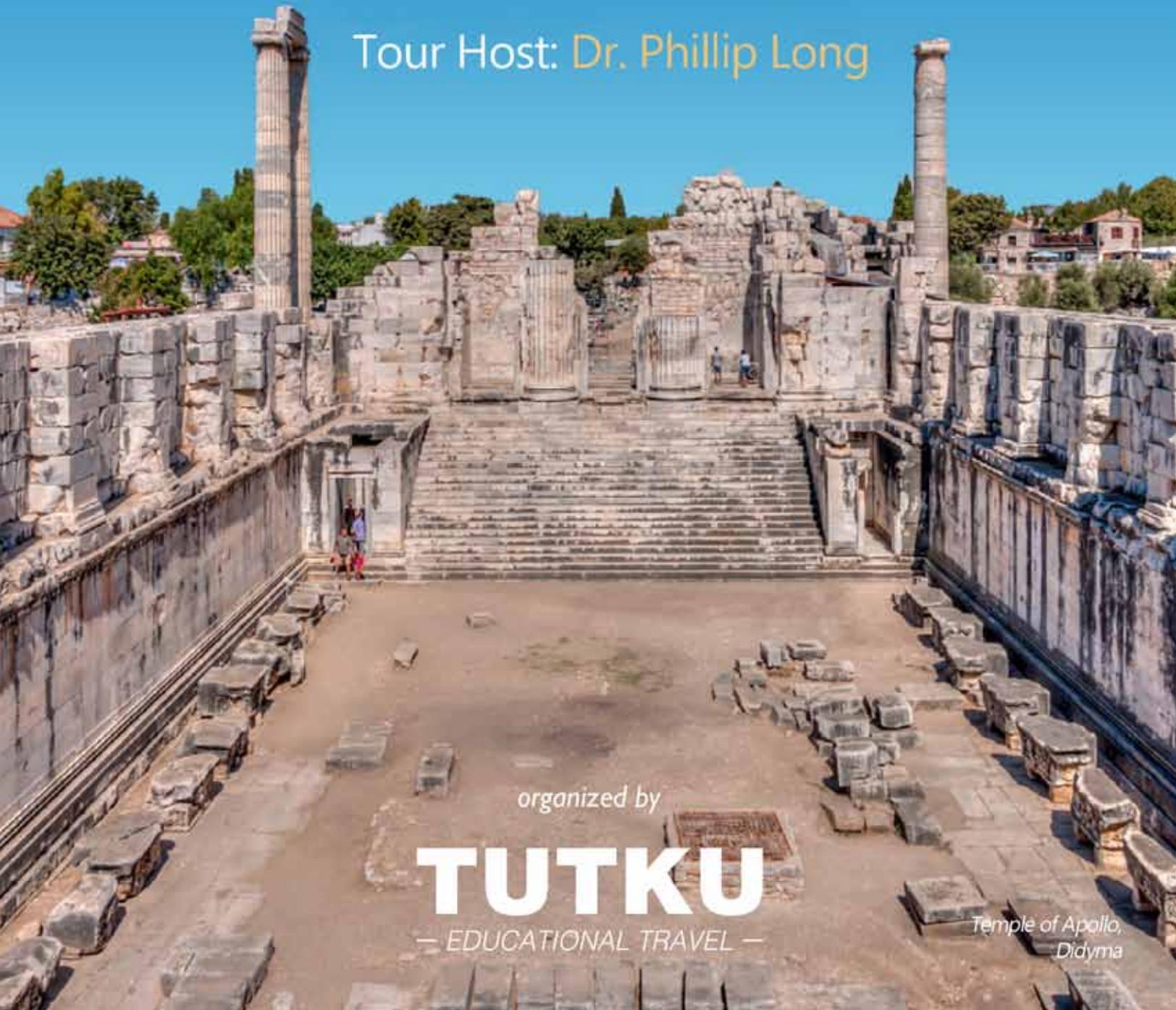
¿ERES UN TURISTA O UN SALVAVIDAS?

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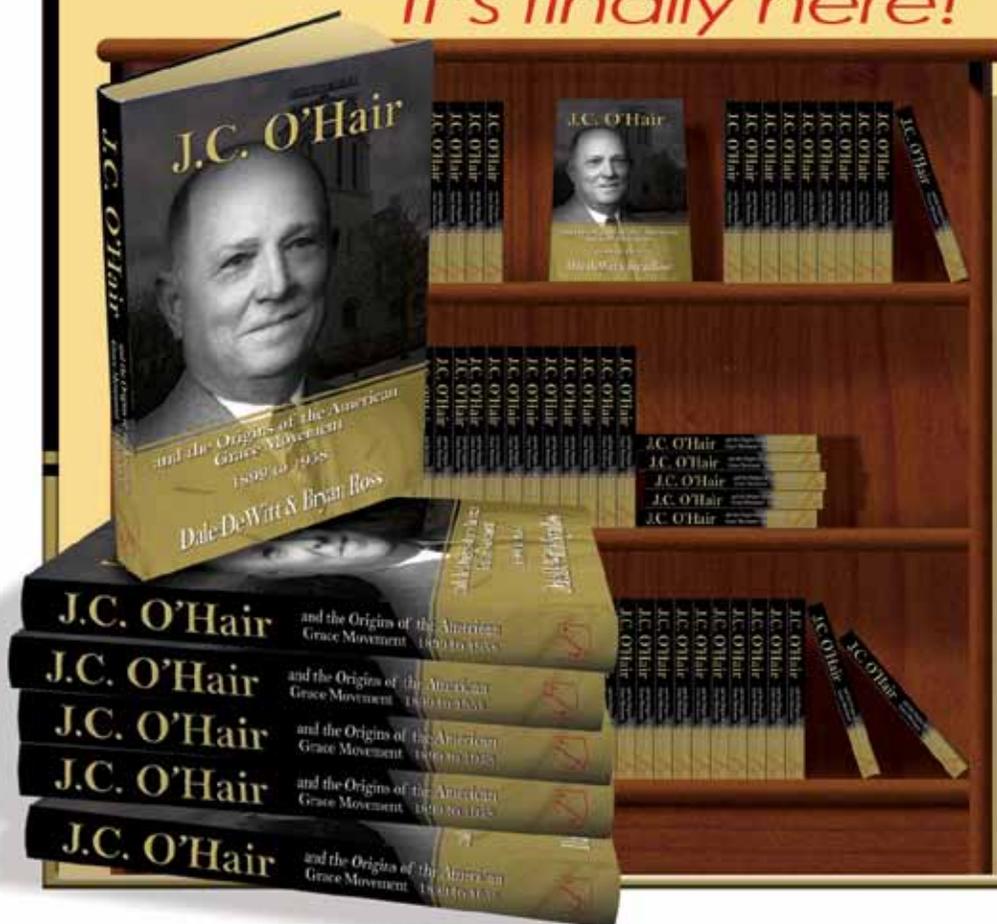


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Grace 4 You
Exploring God's Word

by Pastor Karl Records
Preakness Bible Church
Preakness, NJ

If you'd told me that I'd be driving into the Lincoln Tunnel in December for church planting workshops with key leaders from our church, I would have said you were crazy. Now, I would have believed traveling the 17 miles to see the Christmas Tree in Rockefeller Center, the Nativity Scene at the end of the Christmas Spectacular, or maybe even a Brooklyn Nets game—but not church planting! Church planting has its own connotations: difficult, scary, and only for those who have a type A personality!

I wasn't interested when GGF Director Matt Amundsen asked me to join the GGF group to Exponential in New York City, but he hired his "muscle" Pastor Kaleb Kemper to convince me to join him for the drive from North Jersey. Besides talking about the great Packer comeback over the Bears the previous night, Kaleb and I had a great 4-hour talk about ministry. The conference challenged and changed my thoughts on church planting. After attending Exponential, our ministry conversation was completely different on the drive home.

The first workshop showed five different stages of churches. Levels One and Two are churches in decline—just trying to hang on and keep people from leaving. A Level Three church is growing. Level Four and Five churches are multiplying, having planted a church or are planting churches that plant churches. Church planting and multiplying churches? Training men and sending them to start other ministries? My head was spinning with ideas.

The concept of planting churches comes right from the book of Acts, yet why haven't I thought about it? I started visualizing how these concepts would work in New Jersey and at our church. Church planting and discipleship are significant in Paul's ministry. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in Lystra, Iconium, and An-

tiocch after a short stay. Their training was abbreviated yet God used these men who loved the Lord and were willing to be used by Him.

The theme of Exponential DC was not "Being the Hero" but "Being a Hero Maker." This was clear to me and affirmed what I learned at the GGF Leadership Conference about the pastor as the coach—not the MVP. The paradigm for too long has been the pastor did the work and everyone applauded (or criticized). Reshaping and rethinking ministry, which really just means going back to the Word of God, tells us the role of the pastor is equipping the saints for ministry. I left wondering, could this work? And what steps at Preakness Bible Church did we need to take to make it work? I also knew that if we were going to multiply ourselves in New Jersey, other leaders needed to have the same vision.

“

Reshaping and rethinking ministry...tells us the role of the pastor is equipping the saints for ministry.

”

Recently a team of six from Preakness traveled to hear some of the same concepts together. Our church is growing and "the next step" is getting closer. Our prayer is for the "next step." While we seek God's will, may we continue to be intentional in our ministry, evangelism, and witness; make disciples (2 Timothy 2:2) who are making disciples; and preach the Word to people who are thirsty and hungry for God! ■



Region 2: Southwest



Grace Bible Church of Anaheim, CA, had their Annual Cultural Dinner on November 3 with food prepared from Indonesia, Germany, Brazil, Philippines, Vietnam, and an American table featuring hot dogs. Attendance from the neighborhood was good. The men have breakfast together one Saturday a month where the great fellowship is enjoyed and they have also taken the opportunity to turn some of those Saturdays into workdays to get some things accomplished at the church. The ladies recently had their Annual Christmas Luncheon which was fun for all. Each lady brought a dozen cookies and a Christmas ornament to exchange.

John Lowder, Mike McFadden, and Tom Drenth from the GGF visited the region the second weekend in December with some encouragement for the area.

More news can be found on pages 22-23. ■

Region 3: West



Pastor Peter Tel is in his 14th year at *Bethel Union Church* of Akron, CO. They are family. They have really come together with

their various gifts and it feels full and alive there. The worship team, outreaches into the community, ministries within the church—we are members one of another. Why should we be surprised? God did it. We serve an amazing God!

Grace Bible Church of Lakewood, CO—Harl has been really sick and is now recovering. He has had health issues for some time, which has been hard on the church. Mark Smith has been carrying the load but is worn out while also running his construction business. Please pray for both of them.

Harvest Fellowship in Brighton, CO—This fall we have been landscaping the side of our church, along with creating a lawn, firepit, brushes, basketball court, a GaGa pit, and tetherball. We will also be putting in a volleyball court, and later, an area to play football and soccer. It is already crawling with kids and teens (which we were hoping would happen). Our high school graduate interns are hard at work helping out at Harvest and being disciplined by the people they work under. This year we have adopted an elementary school, helping them with events and teaching kids in areas where they aren't doing so well. We also have a volunteer from our church in one of our middle schools who was recognized nationally for his effort in teaching wood and metal shop, as well as coaching varsity football and basketball. He was awarded a \$15,000 check for

the school district and a complete woodshop which was donated by Mike Rowe (*Dirtiest Jobs*). We are all blown away by his fulltime volunteer service in his retirement that has impacted our community. ■

Region 4: Upper Midwest



One of the patriarchs of *Grace Bible Church* of West Allis, WI, and a solid supporter of the GGF went home to be with the Lord on September 26, 2018. His name was Kenneth Sweet and he was 96. In his younger years, Ken would have been at Family Bible Conferences of the GGF as a regular attender and would bring a number of people from the West Allis church with him. He will be missed greatly by our congregation.

During the past quarter of the year, our church put in place a new screen to replace the old one which was more than 50 years old. We improved our multimedia ministry with new equipment for PowerPoint and recording, and this will eventually allow people to stream the morning service live. Sometimes moving up to the present in our fast-moving world takes some time for smaller churches because of the high cost. We are thankful to God for His provision financially and for those people who have the technology abilities to operate the new equipment! ■



MORE REGION 2 NEWS...

In today's society, polarizing actions are common and seemingly acceptable as a response to the challenges we face and different perspectives we face. At times we even take great pride in standing in stark contrast to the opposite end of the spectrum. While I stand firm in my convictions, I believe there is room for a middle ground, not a place like Laodicea that was lukewarm and "about to be spit out" (Revelation 3:16 NIV), but a place that cultivates a "both and..." approach. This approach promotes core values that our Fellowship holds dear. These values are found in "Roots That Give Life," a succinct document written by former GGF President, Frosty Hansen, and advocated by the GGF National Council.

The root system of the GGF consists of five important core values: 1) *Bible Centered*, 2) *Grace Theology*, 3) *Grace Living*, 4) *Missional*, and 5) *Partnership*. Much of our focus through the years has been heavy on "*Bible Centered/Grace Theology*" which is our base and foundation, yet we often neglect the remaining three or relegate them to the second tier of importance. Is our *Grace Living/Missional* approach to Ministry and *Partnership* with fellow believers intended to be a "Second-Class" citizen? I think not!

God's Word and our fervor for Mid-Acts Dispensational Theology promote and propel us into action, not only within the four walls of our churches, but hopefully, into the neighborhoods God has blessed us with, whether down the street, across the seas, or to points in between.

A number of months ago, Pastor Mark Bruszer from *Grace Community Church* of Prunedale, CA, invited me to speak at their annual missions trip to Mexico, a combined effort of the youth groups from the Southwest Region of the Grace Gospel Fellowship. This annual trip has grown each year and serves as a rallying point for the region and their desire to "Impact the World for Christ."

Through my years in Youth Ministry, I was involved in many missions trips to Central and South America, but never as a participant, only as a leader. Honestly, I was a bit nervous going into Mexico. It was kind of a strange feeling. Maybe that was the case because I wasn't the person in control, knowing each step, each turn along the journey. I joined the caravan heading south from Los Angeles with the students and leaders from *Grace Bible Church* of Anaheim, CA, and *Grace Bible Church* of Riverside, CA.



...by Matt Amundsen

We met the rest of the groups in San Ysidro, near the Tijuana (TJ) border. After breakfast, the 50+ members of our group circled up to pray and set the tone for the steps ahead. Getting across the border in either direction can be difficult, but for the most part it was uneventful this time through. We traveled the short distance to our lodging spot which serves as the base for multiple orphan ministries in the region. After getting settled and unpacking a bit, we quickly headed for an orphanage south of TJ just off the Pacific Ocean.

Much of the next few hours were spent in *Grace Living*, serving the children and families who were residing there. What a blessing to witness the team being *Missional*, reaching into the kids' lives—whether it was during the *Bible-Centered/Grace Theology* gospel presentation, craft time, outdoor activities, worship, or meal time. It felt like our core values were modeled in a complete sense. To see students from Prunedale serving alongside students from South Gate was a beautiful picture of *Partnership*.

The partnership among the Southwest Region youth groups is close knit. They come together in the summer for a great week of camp at Palomar Mountain and have other events throughout the year.

Personally, I was encouraged to be welcomed into the family. To be given the privilege of sharing from God's Word and discovering the truths of Scripture together as a group was the culmination of a weekend that changed my life, both as a participant and colaborer in ministry, but also as Executive Director of the GGF—to see that our Fellowship is pursuing Christ, both in words and actions. It reminded me just how important it is that we build our foundation on the Word of God and allow it to penetrate every aspect of our body... from our heart and mind to our hands, feet, and mouth.

May we be a Fellowship known for our pursuit and passion for the Scriptures and yet equally known for our love for Jesus and every person we come in contact with. It should be our desire to be used by God to impact a world that so desperately needs hope and salvation.

Maybe your region of churches is involved in serving others with the love of Christ. We would love to hear about it! Perhaps your church desires to serve but is searching for a ministry or project. Feel free to email me at matt@ggfusa.org so we can start the conversation. Serving Together!

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