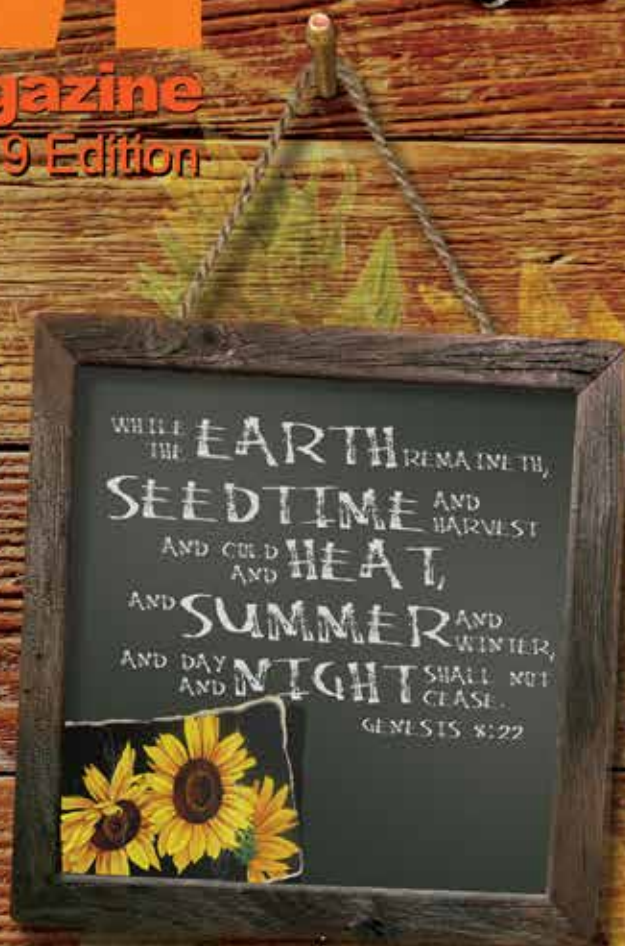


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TRUTH Magazine
Fall 2019 Edition



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



GRACE GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP

Volume 69, Issue 3
October-December 2019

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TRUTH Magazine is published quarterly, with an emphasis on the doctrines of the dispensation of the Grace of God. This is achieved through Bible studies, articles of relevance in today's world, and news about Grace Gospel Fellowship (GGF), Grace Christian University, Grace Ministries International, Grace Publications, and other Grace organizations and churches.

The views and opinions expressed in the ads and articles are those of the authors and organizations. They do not necessarily reflect the views of GGF and/or the editorial staff of **TRUTH**.

PUBLISHED by
 Grace Gospel Fellowship, a nonprofit religious corporation, incorporated in the State of Michigan.

Mailing Address:
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 Grand Rapids, MI 49509

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TRUTH Magazine is the quarterly periodical of the GGF and is included with your GGF membership. Gift subscriptions can also be purchased through the GGF national office.

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What do you
want to be when
you grow up?

- ☒ Computer Geek
- ☒ Fireman
- ☒ Astronaut
- ☒ Forest Ranger
- ☒ Soldier
- ☒ Cowboy
- ☒ Policeman
- ☒ FBI Agent
- ☒ Truck Driver
- and.....may
- ☐ Preacher!



GRACE GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP

Facing a Shortage of Pastors

What will we do?

by: Matt Amundsen
Executive Director
Grace Gospel Fellowship

I have been contemplating how best to approach this topic for a number of weeks and rather than continuing to reflect, it is time to just lay the thoughts out there, ask a few questions, and let the chips fall where they may. Over the last year, people in our GGF churches have expressed their concern over the shortage of pastors available to step into the pulpits of our churches. To be honest, it is a fair assessment.

Most of the criticism is put at the feet of President Ken B. Kemper at Grace Christian University, albeit unfairly. While the university understands that it is part of the equation and is working to do what it can to encourage more young men from our GGF churches to step into pastoral ministry, we often forget there are many pieces to the puzzle. We cannot fix the blame on one entity and call it good...that is short-sighted. I want to take a few minutes to be real with you. I thought about putting this into a video form and maybe I will at some point, but for now I will put "pen to paper" to share my perspective.

As one who grew up in a GGF church (Berean-Shoreline, WA) I had many men who spoke into my life in addition to my parents. It took my youth pastors and a few others to share that they saw something in me, something that somehow translated into future ministry involvement - even if I didn't see it at first.

Recently, I was in Olney, Illinois, visiting dear friends at Faith Bible Church. One of the key, longtime members of the church, Paul Kermicle, asked me, what is it going to take to get more young men into the pastorate? I paused for a moment and said...it will take men like you, with intentionality, looking for qualities and giftings in those around you, then mentoring and mobilizing them to take the next steps. That part does not fall on the university to do the work of the believer. Yes, the university needs to connect to a greater level and they are already taking steps to mobilize students and alumni that will share "Grace." But it is incumbent on us to be looking, speaking into, and sending others!

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If we are to raise up more leaders, then we must plant a seed in their heart and mind.

Maybe the hard part as I visit churches is that there is often very few students in these congregations. Please don't let that stop you/us. Maybe we will need to look outside the four walls. Maybe you know someone at the local restaurant or coffee shop? Could it be a teacher in the local high school? If we are to grow as a fellowship, we will need pioneers; we will need you to step into that gap with a certain bravery and determination to find those qualities and giftings. Seeking out others is very much in our realm of responsibility...but there is another part that I wonder if we have neglected to share, and that is a good story, one that is worth repeating. We are not questioning the power of the ultimate account (the gospel) but rather the story we have told through our actions in ministry.

I have wondered this, not about other people so much as for and about myself. When I set out into the ministry world at the age of 25, taking a part-time position at Northwest Bible Church in Enumclaw, Washington, my wife Sharon Cloud Amundsen and I were wide-eyed with wonder over the adventure we were "setting out upon." We moved 2000 miles from Michigan, not knowing many people, but simply excited to be following the Lord's leading. We enjoyed our eight years there and met a lot of GREAT people and treasure it to this day. We then moved another 2000 miles to Parkside Bible Church in Holland, Michigan, where we served for nine years. Once again, great people and great experiences. I have no doubt there have been times in which a "good story" was shared, whether it was through triumph or heartache or both within one experience.

I do, however, look back at the years in pastoral ministry and regret the level of negativity I carried through seasons of discouragement. Maybe it was after a frustrating board meeting or deflating conversation with a church member; at times it was the disconnection with staff and at other times it was a feeling or sense of simply not being good enough. When we are in the midst of this we "call out" for others to listen AND understand our pain, all the while dragging them into our "season." Until I seemed to be clear of that season I had no clarity that my negative outlook had, at times, been passed on to others. I can only imagine that they might

have thought, "this ministry thing, why would anyone want to get into it?...no thanks!" It truly did not inspire others to want to pursue ministry. Growing up, I was aware that the job of my pastors was difficult and challenging and yet they seemed to enjoy the job and the purpose for why God had directed their paths to Berean. What I learned from them was that life isn't easy but it is rewarding, a true adventure with the Lord by your side each step of the way. In me was cultivated a sense of wonder for what the Lord could and would do in and through me.

Are we doing the same thing? Are we casting a great story? Not a fake, always positive story, but one that ignites a desire to serve the Lord and pursue a deep love for Him and the church, even in the midst of pain and struggle.

We can continue to take the easy way out and assign blame to the university for our lack of pastors, but I am going to tell you this...if it was solely up to "Grace" to garner our pastors, I would never have been a pastor and would not be sitting in this chair today. It took Dan Dean, Tom Drenth, Fred Olsen, David Skeels, Jim Shemaria, Vern Schutz, and my parents (among many others) to instill in me what I couldn't often see on my own.

Look around you. Sit down and tell others what you see in them. Encourage them to pursue ministry. Tell a story worth repeating!

All of this comes from the encouragement I have received from God's Word and through the example of Jesus Christ and his interaction with the disciples along with the intentional approach of the Apostle Paul with young men like Timothy.

If we are to raise up more leaders, then we must plant a seed in their heart and mind. No longer can we afford to be quiet and expect someone else to do the work!

I am excited to partner with President Kemper at Grace Christian University in this endeavor, but we both know it will take the work of the Holy Spirit and the faithfulness of believers like you to encourage the current and next generation of pastors in our fellowship!

"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" - 2 Timothy 2:1,2.



Pivotal Milestones in Our Lives



by Jeremy Clark
Executive Director
Grace Ministries International, Inc.

The trip from Managua's international airport to Nagarote, Nicaragua, the home of Grace Ministries International's first church plant in the country, passes by the Old Cathedral in the center of the capital. In 1972 an earthquake leveled much of the city, rendering this cathedral, though surviving the destruction mostly intact, condemned as unsafe. Its grand clock, once situated high above the plaza but having since been removed, stopped at the moment the earthquake struck around 12:30 a.m. on December 23. Older residents of Managua still talk about life before the earthquake marking a pivotal before-and-after moment in the life of the city and in the lives of many of its inhabitants.

Though two years have passed since Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, the island cannot mask the visible reminders of the forceful devastation that September day. Bar-

ren trees still spot the hillsides, tattered blue tarps protect yet roofless homes, and defunct utility poles lean precariously and uniformly on any number of streets. Puerto Ricans talk of Maria as a pivotal, albeit painful, milestone of sorts in their recent past.

Having visited these two fields the past few months, it was hard to ignore the parallels between these two places whose courses were redirected in mere hours. Similarly, individual lives and the history of humanity as a whole are segmented and marked by milestones and pivotal events. They often change the course of a person's life, a people group's direction, a nation's legacy, or even the fate the world. Consider the most consequential, pivotal event of all.

What did God do before we were? In historical terms, the Bible primarily records God's interaction with His creation. At the

Similarly, individual lives and the history of humanity as a whole are segmented and marked by milestones and pivotal events.



Individually and organizationally, we recognize the grace given us and want to make it known to the nations.

same time, it also gives us glimpses into a reality without us. From eternity past, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit enjoyed fellowship in which they unfailingly loved, joyfully gave, and truthfully spoke one to another (John 17:5, 24; Titus 1:3). Righteousness and goodness effortlessly emanated from their relationship and immutable character as the three persons of the Godhead purposed, planned, decreed and determined, among other things, our likeness (Gen. 1:26) and the blameless state of those chosen in Christ who are saved by the gospel and sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:4-5, 13-14; 4:30). The world needs salvation because all have sinned. God promised in the Garden death, spiritually and physically, for all who disobeyed (Genesis 2:17). God does not lie and satisfied this consequence of sin on our behalf. The Son would come to Earth, live in perfect righteousness, and die for the sins of the world providing salvation to those who would humbly accept it. This too was planned, “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20). Before we were, God planned to love us!

From before the foundation of the world, the Son knew He was going to the cross to fulfill the promise of eternal life (Titus 1:3). It would be the pivotal event of all human history. God revealed much regarding this event to the prophets who “inquired and searched carefully” anticipating the Lord’s gracious offer of salvation through Christ’s suffering (1 Peter 1:10-11). In heaven, even the angels bent over to look into this—the greatest of all events they had witnessed (1 Peter 1:12). Because of His love, Jesus gave Himself for us (Titus 2:14) making it clear that while possessing the ability to save Himself, His foreordained and foretold plan to become the sacrifice for the world would not be thwarted (Matthew 26:53-54). Much of creation looked forward to this event, though not understanding exactly what to expect. Even the Lord’s disciples had difficulty with understanding what would happen to their Teacher (Mark 9:30-32). Now we look back to the cross with the benefit of God’s Word providing the necessary hindsight. As the prophets looked forward, the focus

of their searching and inquiry was the cross through which God in His forbearance would forgive sins previously committed (Romans 3:25). Now, God demonstrates “at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26). This justification comes only through the cross.

Created in God’s image, we recognize milestones and pivotal events in our own lives and in the lives of others. We eagerly anticipate some and others we dread. Nevertheless, they mark a change. For the Christian, the grace given us through the cross—the most significant of personal milestones—should motivate us to reach others with the gospel. If it does not, it is possible we do not really grasp what God did for us either ignoring it or still trying to gain a measure of righteousness through our own efforts.

Reflecting on the pivotal event of salvation in his own life, in Romans 15, the Apostle Paul writes, “because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God” (Romans 15:15-16). He was looking back to the provision of the cross and the grace which came to him through it which motivated him to minister the gospel to gentiles, or the nations. This too is what inspires Grace Ministries International. Individually and organizationally, we recognize the grace given us and want to make it known to the nations.

A few verses later in the same chapter, Paul lays out what he hopes will be realized goals and new milestones in his ministry: setting a course for Spain which will take him on perilous travels through Jerusalem, then on to Rome where the church to which he was writing would send him further westward (Romans 15:24-32). It is likely Paul did not make it to Spain at all, but instead ended up in chains—yet another life-altering event. However, as Paul wrote the Philippian believers, this pivotal event “actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much

more bold to speak the word without fear” (Philippians 1:12b-14).

Having been given God’s grace, GMI seeks to share it with the world setting ambitious goals and striving for significant milestones in pursuit of those ends. In 2013, GMI adopted Vision 2023 which would have us open eight new fields and send out 26 missionaries or missionary families to expand the work on current fields and establish new ones. Through 2018—halfway through our strategic plan, GMI had opened three new fields—Bonaire, Nicaragua, and Paraguay. As Paul’s ministry exemplified, merely setting goals does not guarantee success. However, it does keep us moving forward avoiding the temptation to conserve what we have—a complacency which will inevitably lead to contraction and irrelevance.

For GMI, 2019 has been a pivotal year. In August, GMI missionaries Alvaro and Mauren Barrantes, originally from our affiliated ministries in Costa Rica, arrived in Panama making that GMI’s fourth new field. The next month, GMI missionaries Kennedy and Sofia Simtowe were finally able to move to Mozambique where they have been working with various churches and contacts for years. Mozambique is now GMI’s fifth field since adopting Vision 2023.

The Lord continues to bless. In order to open new fields, we must have new missionaries. Earlier in January, the GMI Board approved Lily Ortega, from Bolivia, to serve in Nicaragua on this growing field. Likewise, this year, GMI missionaries Matt and April Sykes who have faithfully served in Puerto Rico, even enduring the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, were also approved to join this dynamic team in Nicaragua. Both Lily and the Sykes will arrive on the field the first half of next year. As we continue to look outward, the Nicaragua team has already taken two survey trips to Honduras as we look to further expand into Central America.

In September, the GMI Board approved Cleiton and Viviane Menor who have become acquainted with our missionary team in Paraguay over the last couple of years from their home in Brazil. Paraguay is where the Menors

will serve the Lord as missionaries with GMI helping to plant new churches in this country and even in bordering countries. Shortly thereafter, the GMI Board accepted longtime friends of our ministry in Tanzania, Methodi and Omelina Mwendapole to serve in Burundi. The Mwendapoles will move to this sixth new field in 2020 joining GMI missionaries Tom and Michelle Sanchez who are serving in Zambia until the end of this year.

We give thanks for the way the Lord has blessed GMI. At the same time, looking back at the last several years, we acknowledge setbacks, difficult situations, and obstacles which have faced us along our path. The Lord, however, is faithful and has walked with us providing His wisdom and strength. These are opportunities to grow and depend on God in ways that deepen our relationship with Him. In a sense, they are also pivotal moments the Lord wants to use for good—the good of His work around the world.

Significant events will impact and change our lives and the lives of others. Many times these events are tragic and at other times they are blessings. Sometimes they are both. Even in this, our Heavenly Father authored the greatest of all—the death and resurrection of His Son so that we might enjoy fellowship with Him for eternity future. Unlike unbelievers who have no hope, even when we end up “in chains” we can trust the Lord to give us the courage to use that pivotal moment for the furtherance of the gospel.

Having been given God’s grace, GMI seeks to share it with the world setting ambitious goals and striving for significant milestones in pursuit of those ends.



How Can We Hear God and Know His Leading?

by: Kenneth Bruce Kemper
President
Grace Christian University

In a previous article I wrote for Truth (Spring 2019, V69:1), I explored this topic and identified some of the different ways God led Paul and his mission group in the book of Acts and sought to learn from those examples some principles which would be to our benefit today. Due to space constraints, I would now like to pick up this topic as it is developed by the Apostle Paul in his epistles. We see many examples of how God gives direction and vision in these thirteen letters, which make up nearly half of our New Testament. After examining a few passages I would like to suggest a “theology of vision” based on all of Scripture.

Vision in the Pauline Epistles

In the Pauline letters there is a prevalent theme of “living according to the Spirit, rather than the sinful nature” (Romans 8:4-9). This, according to Paul, directs the mind to be set

on what the Holy Spirit desires. The same passage continues to reveal the Spirit’s anticipation of the consummation of this world in the ultimate redemption of all things (Romans 8:23-26). Therefore, a Spirit-controlled mind desires the will and work of God to be done. It is not captivated by short-sighted, earthly thinking and goals (Galatians 5:22-25). Paul explains the mental battle for control of the life and practice of individuals to follow their own agenda rather than God’s, which is led by the Spirit to participate in the greater mission of God in the world. God’s mission of redemption and transformation was noted in the aforementioned article. Paul writes about the wisdom of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:1-10) which is not available to the natural man apart from the Holy Spirit. This godly wisdom is a critical element of discernment for understanding

Therefore, a Spirit-controlled mind desires the will and work of God to be done.

God's will and understanding of vision which is initiated and led by the Holy Spirit.

Paul explained to the early church the practice of spiritual gifts, which are a divine enablement to carry out the Spirit's work and desires in the church and beyond (1 Corinthians 12-14). To the Thessalonians Paul wrote, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22). These words are helpful instructions for discerning the leading of the Holy Spirit both individually and as a group of believers. These principles can help form a context for vision formation. Unholiness can impede the Holy Spirit's direction for vision. Vision from God should be tested or compared with known truth. God's vision should be held in high regard and as inspiration for action. We must disregard evil, which is contrary to God's mission and purposes so as not to subvert His directions and vision.

Paul wrote to the Romans about the clear vision which guided his ministry. He focused on the Gentiles as he was called to do by the Lord, yet his journeys to take the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24) to new places drove his actions. In Romans 15, he explained that he had powerfully and faithfully proclaimed the Gospel, telling the Roman believers, "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation" (15:20). Paul had a clear vision for his work and what the future was to be about, as he told them of his plans to visit Spain, calling the Roman believers to assist him in this

vision as he would come to them en route to Spain. His goal was to include them in the vision for those lost beyond themselves.

Biblical Principles from Paul about Perception of God's Vision

It appears that the biblical analysis of God's work, to lead His people with vision for change and growth, flows soundly out of His redemptive purposes in the world and ultimately serves to glorify God. God communicated to humans who were dedicated to the Lord and soundly sought to honor Him. As was noted in my previous article, these individuals displayed both a humble and worshipful attitude toward God, and upon receiving vision

for change, these leaders moved with immediacy to obey and sought to fulfill that vision. The vision of God supplied assurance and direction to the people in Scripture who received it, whether individually or as a

group. They had assurance based on the character of God and the receivers' dedication to Him. Jonah is an example of an individual who refused to obey and take action to respond favorably to the vision of God. He is a dramatic example of the consequences of such willful disobedience to God's clear direction (Jonah 1:15-17). In addition to Jonah, Sarah, the wife of Abraham, and Gideon were also exceptions, but otherwise there seems to be very little hesitancy or doubting that the vision of God, no matter the magnitude, was clearly attainable. The biblical record of God moving leaders by giving them a vision of a new and blessed future is compelling.

Unholiness can IMPEDE the Holy Spirit's direction for VISION. Vision from God should be tested or compared with known truth.



The future direction and plans of a God-given vision will always accomplish God's mission in the lives of those impacted and fulfilling the vision (i.e., redemption, transformation, and glorification of God).

A God-given vision is not about personal gain, but about God's love, grace, and care for a people which exalts and manifests His character to those who follow and benefit from His vision.

A Theology of Vision

After a global study of all of Scripture and the theological foundations, there appears to be some sound characteristics of a God-given vision which can be very helpful and instructive.

1. A vision from God is revealed and succeeds in relation to the humble disposition of the leaders seeking it.

Vision, if directed from God, is more than a strategic process. In fact, it relies on a humble, prayerful, teachable, and obedient posture of the leader(s) seeking it. The vision is a response of God's direction to address a need, problem, or directional question which has great and potentially eternal ramifications. While on earth, Jesus dedicated Himself to following the Father's vision praying, "yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). In this He carried out the sacrifice for eternal life.

2. Vision from God deals with eternal outcomes as a result of the short-term transformations rather than temporal outcomes as the end.

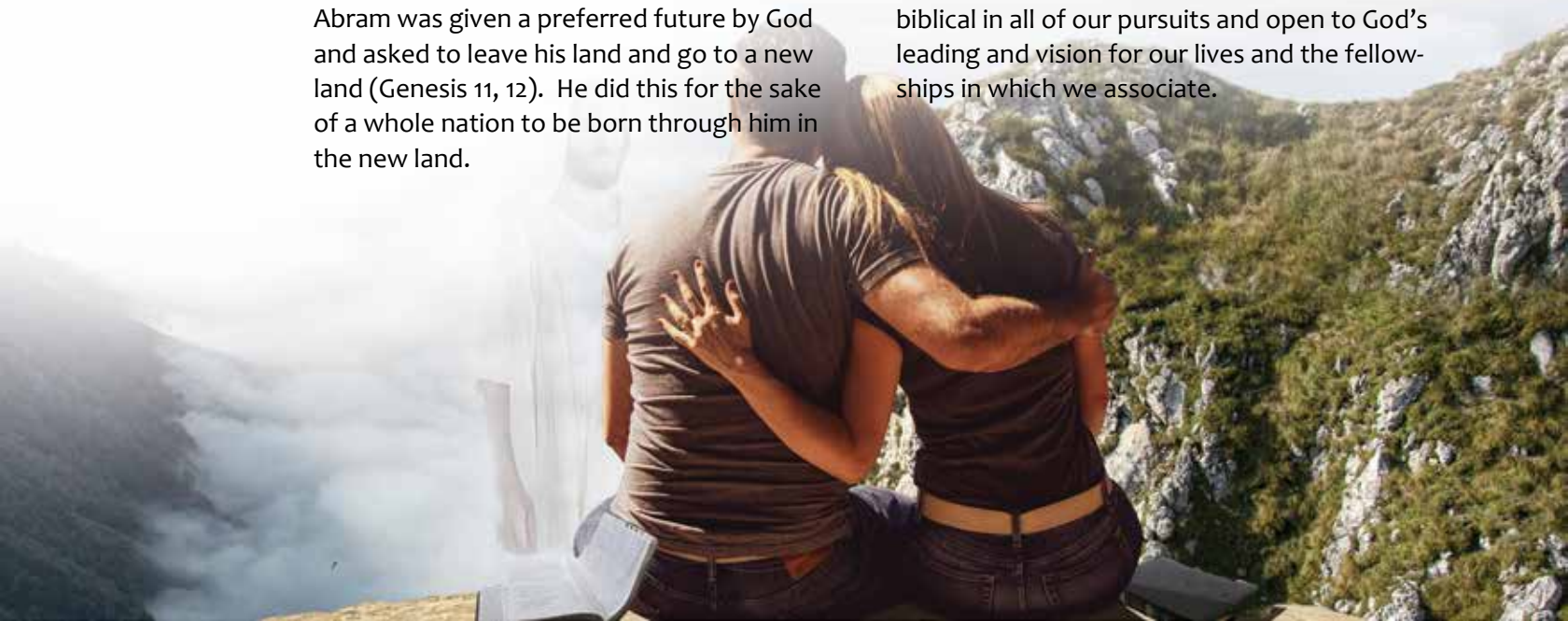
The theology of vision is the correlation of God's eternal mission to redeem, transform, and glorify Himself. A preferred future communicated by a leader will have clear correlation to those purposes and will not be limited by present space and time, even though it may begin in that context. The future direction and plans of a God-given vision will always accomplish God's mission in the lives of those impacted and fulfilling the vision (i.e., redemption, transformation, and glorification of God). Abram was given a preferred future by God and asked to leave his land and go to a new land (Genesis 11, 12). He did this for the sake of a whole nation to be born through him in the new land.

3. Vision from God does not glorify leadership, rather, it magnifies the Lord.

A God-given vision is the execution of God's plan for a person or people which does not result in their individual glory, but in the betterment of many others and transformation to a more desirable state which honors and glorifies God. While Moses hid in the desert of Midian, he was called by God and given a vision to free God's people from their slavery in Egypt (Exodus 3, 4). Moses pursued this vision for the sake of the nation over his own comfort and glory.

4. Vision from God reveals a greater understanding of the character of God to those who seek to carry out that vision both while pursuing it and as a result of its completion.

A God-given vision is not the result of a proud, ambitious, or self-seeking leader who does not seek the Lord and His guidance. These are simply transactional or utilitarian uses of leadership for the leader's benefit. A God-given vision is not about personal gain, but about God's love, grace, and care for a people which exalts and manifests His character to those who follow and benefit from His vision. Paul wrote about the "thorn in the flesh" he was given to keep from exalting himself and allowing the power of God to be shown through him as he ministered to others and endured hardships (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). These principles may be a sort of "filter" for evaluation of vision origin. Vision which falls short of these four characteristics may not necessarily be a vision led by the Holy Spirit, and is possibly human generated. Let's be biblical in all of our pursuits and open to God's leading and vision for our lives and the fellowships in which we associate.



From the GGF and TRUTH Magazine staff . . .

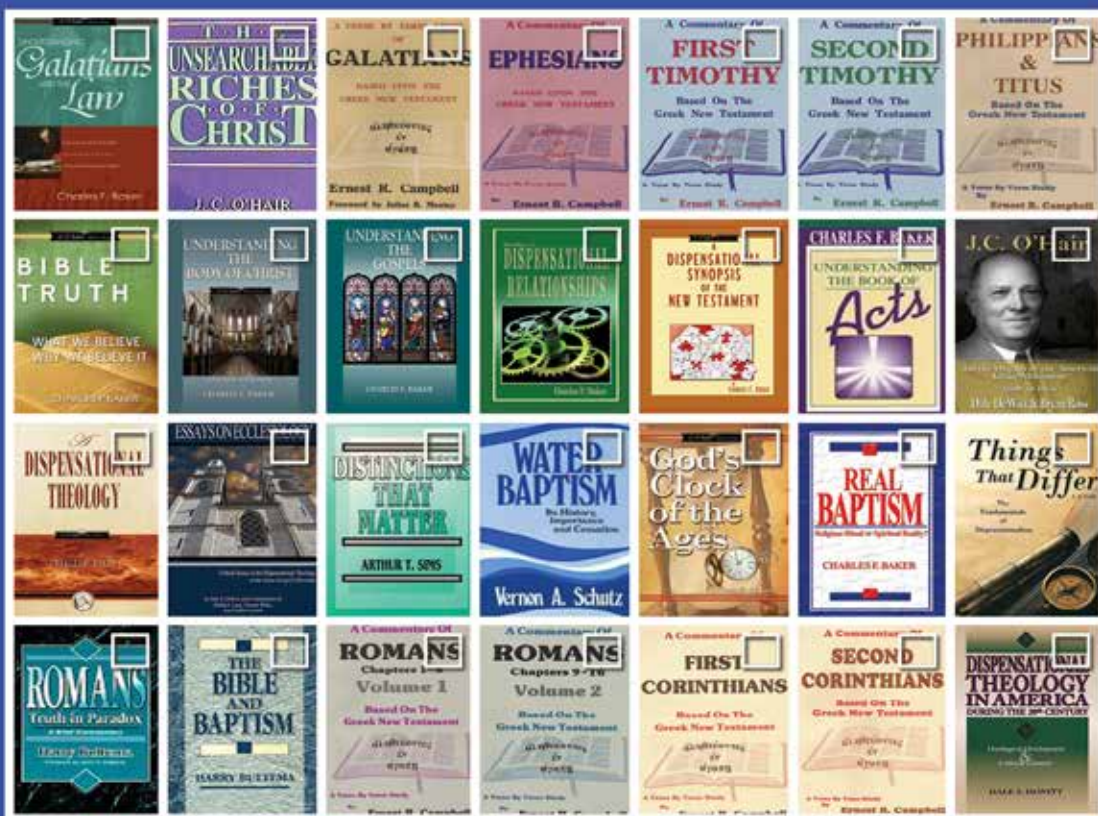
Grace AND Peace BE YOURS IN Abundance

2 Peter 1:2



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REASONS TO CONSIDER AN INTERIM PASTOR

by: Pastor Craig Apel

Often when a Pastor leaves, many in the congregation feel a sense of panic, and there is the danger of acting too fast.

Numerous studies indicate the average stay of a pastor in a local church to be 5 to 7 years. That being so, it's very possible your congregation will be looking for a new Lead Pastor in the not too distant future. There are several reasons, before your church even begins the search process, you should seriously consider calling an Interim Pastor (IP).

1. **Time** – Often when a pastor leaves, many in the congregation feel a sense of panic, and there is the danger of acting too fast. The ministry of an I. P. gives your church the necessary time to analyze its needs; prepare itself; and to do a careful, prayerful search for its next pastor.
2. **Grieving** – If your departing pastor was well-loved, time will be needed for some people to work through their grief at his leaving.
3. **Healing** – If the departing pastor left due to problems in his ministry, time will be needed to address those issues and promote healing.

4. **Attendance** – Attendance frequently declines when the church is without a pastor or I.P. Different voices in the pulpit suggest instability to some people.

5. **Giving** – Giving tends to decline in many churches when people don't think their entire offering is needed. Some Christians will take on other obligations, ministries, or missionaries during this period. When they do it can be very hard to get back to full giving strength when it comes time to call a new pastor.

6. **Fringe People** – People on the peripheral of the church's ministry often tend to drop off altogether when a church is without an I.P. Such people always need special pastoral attention.

7. **Visitation** – The I.P., with the help of lay leaders, is usually the best equipped for following up on church visitors and new persons in the community, as well as visiting the hospitalized and shut-ins.

8. Overload of Lay Leaders – Without an I.P. someone must assume the pastor's responsibilities. Many churches assume this can be done with lay leaders, but trying to do so may weary them. The church will want its lay people energized when the new Pastor arrives.

9. Community Image – Every church wants to give the people in the community, as well as in



the congregation, the sense everything is running smoothly and the church is able to meet all needs, even though it is without its permanent Pastor.

10. Internal Tensions or Problems – It is best for all issues in the congregation to be addressed and dealt with before the new pastor arrives. The church will want him to begin his ministry on a positive note. An IP is more likely and better able to confront problems between members than they themselves are able to do so.

11. Positioning – Using an interim period effectively will reflect your congregation's orderliness and strength and prompt any candidate to look more favorably at your opportunity.

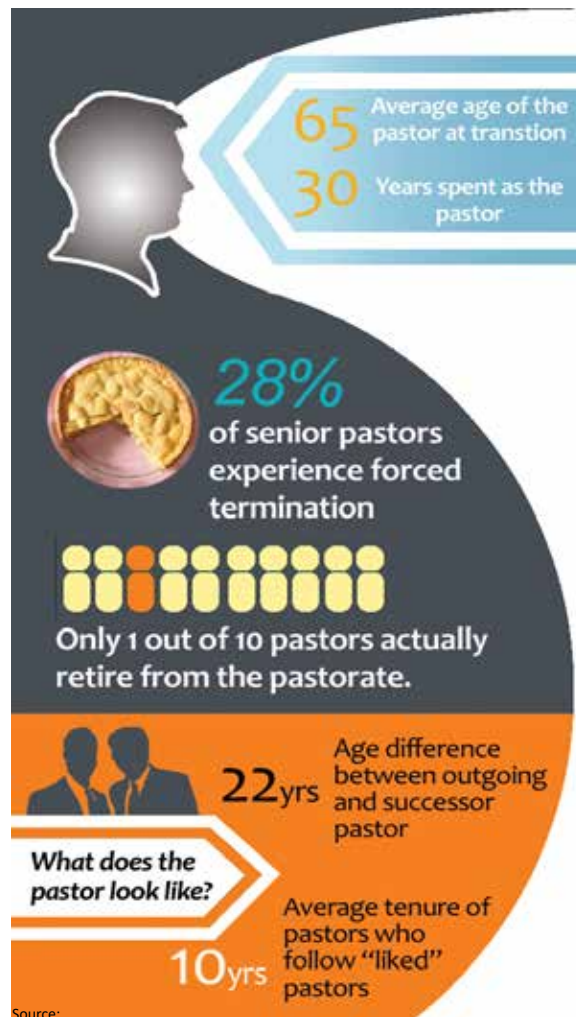
12. Effectiveness – Use the transition time to examine the effectiveness of both the church and its pastor and address longstanding issues without being critical or hurting a sitting pastor.

13. Pastoral Search – An I.P. can be a valuable resource person in forming and guiding the Pastoral Search Committee through the necessary steps to effectively research and call

God's man for the church's next pastor.

It's not likely when your present pastor leaves, your congregation will be in need of all the possibilities an Interim Pastor can provide. But I have little doubt you will be in great need of some of them. And so I encourage you who are leaders in your congregation to consider this list prayerfully and carefully. Then contact the home office of the Grace Gospel Fellowship and speak with Executive Director Matt Amundsen. The GGF presently has several men who have received specific training and have experience in Interim Pastoral Ministry, who may be available to work with your church as you step into the future God has planned for you.

Editor's note: *Craig is very qualified to write this article. He has been an "exiting" pastor, An "incoming pastor," as well as serving as an interim pastor. He has experienced the pros and cons and has grown from each experience. He is now retired and does pulpit supply in addition to serving as an interim pastor when needed.*



Source:
Leadership Network research published in *Next: Pastoral Transition that Works* by Vanderbloemen and Bird

Internal Tensions or Problems – It is best for all issues in the congregation to be addressed and dealt with before the new pastor arrives.

Get Up and Be Light

by: Angela Ortiz

Levantate y se Luz

por: Angela Ortiz



I live on the sunny, beachy and beautiful island of Puerto Rico. In 2016 there was a massive blackout throughout the island. People were in a frantic state of anxiety throughout all of the hours that the island was pitch black. I was working and they sent us home early because of the blackout and the torrential rains that fell. The next day, everyone got up with the uncertainty of whether work would continue as usual, or not. After looking for a place where there was an electric generator, I managed to find one where I could carry out all the relevant calls, only to find out that no work would be done for that day. I was told to stay home for safety reasons so I used that time to finish several tasks.

When you walk in darkness, you always walk in uncertainty, fear, doubt, and anxiety. Only when you turn to the source of light does everything become clear and calm. Christ says in His Word that His children are the light of the world.

Matthew 5:14 says: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden."

Thousands of people live day to day in a state equal to or worse than the day of the blackout we experienced in Puerto Rico. Frantic, anxious, full of fear, nerves (spiritually speaking).

The reason? Because they are disconnected from the Source of Light that is Christ.

As daughters of Christ, we must really be light in the midst of all the chaos in the world. We must shine every component of the Fruit

Vivo en la hermosa isla de Puerto Rico rodeada de sol, playa y arena. Para el año 2016, hubo un apagón masivo en todo el país. La gente reacciono en estado frenético de ansiedad ante estas sin electricidad por tanto tiempo. Yo andaba trabajando y nos enviaron temprano dado al apagón y las lluvias torrenciales que cayeron. Al otro día, todos se levantaron con la incertidumbre de si se continuarían las labores como de costumbre, o no. Después de buscar algún lugar en donde hubiese planta eléctrica, logré llegar a uno donde pude llevar a cabo todas las llamadas pertinentes, para enterarme de que no se realizarían labores por ese día. Aproveché el día libre (forzado) para terminar varias tareas.

Todo esto para decirte que cuando se anda en oscuridad, siempre se anda en incertidumbre, en temor, en duda y en ansiedad. Solo cuando recurras a la fuente de luz es que todo llega a su calma. Cristo dice en Su Palabra que Sus hijos son la luz del mundo.

Lee Mateo 5:14

Miles de personas viven día a día en un estado igual o peor al del día del apagón que experimentamos en Puerto Rico. Frenéticos, ansiosos, llenos de temor, nervios (espiritualmente hablando). ¿La razón principal? Por estar desconectados de la fuente de Luz que es Cristo.

Como hijas de Cristo, debemos realmente ser luz en medio de todo el caos en el mundo. Debemos brillar cada componente del Fruto

When you walk in darkness, you always walk in uncertainty, fear, doubt and anxiety.

of the Spirit to every human being with whom we have daily contact, so that in the midst of their darkness they can turn to the Source of Light that is Jesus Christ by seeing through our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, kindness, fidelity, humility, and self-control.

Take a minute to read Galatians 5: 22-23

You have the calling from God to be His ambassador, His representative on this earth. Light eliminates darkness in every corner. If you are light because Christ dwells in your heart as your Savior, that light must shine to your friends, family, co-workers ... to everyone.

Read through Colossians 3.

That chapter pretty much gives a large list of things that we must completely abandon to allow God to replace them with what His character really reflects. But it begins by urging that our attention should be on the "things above." In other words, if our focus is not to reflect the light of Christ, we will never allow His Spirit to point the way to do it.

Girl...the race towards more of Jesus continues and it does not stop today. May your life reflect the powerful transformation of the Holy Spirit in you and that other people may be motivated to stand up and shine.

Pray: Talk to God about your fears in sharing the gospel with those around you.

Memorize the verse that you will find in Acts 13:47.

Analyze your heart by reflecting on the following questions:

How can I shine the light of Christ on those around me?

Do I surround myself with people who urge me to be light on those who are not?

With what components of the fruit of the Spirit do I struggle more to demonstrate? Why?

del Espíritu a cada ser humano con el que tengamos contacto a diario. Que en medio de su oscuridad puedan recurrir a la fuente de Luz que es Jesucristo al ver por medio de nuestras vidas: amor, alegría, paz, paciencia, amabilidad, bondad, fidelidad, humildad y dominio propio.

Lee Gálatas 5:22-23

Tienes el reto de parte de Dios de ser Su embajadora, Su representante en esta tierra. La luz elimina la oscuridad en todo rincón. Si tú eres luz porque Cristo mora en tu corazón como único Salvador, esa luz debe resplandecer a tus amigos, familiares, compañeros de trabajo... a todos.

Lee Colosenses 3

Ese capítulo prácticamente enumera una gran lista de cosas que debemos abandonar por completo para permitir que Dios los reemplace con lo que realmente refleja Su carácter. Pero comienza instándonos a que nuestra atención debe estar en los asuntos de arriba. En otras palabras, si nuestro enfoque no es reflejar la luz de Cristo, nunca permitiremos que sea Su Espíritu quien apunte la manera de hacerlo.

Chica que lees... Ya llevas 15 semanas creciendo día a día en el Señor. La carrera continúa y no se detiene hoy. Que tu vida refleje la transformación poderosa del Espíritu Santo en ti y que otras personas puedan motivarse a levantarse y resplandecer.

Ora: Habla con Dios acerca de tus temores al compartir el evangelio con quienes te rodean.

Memorízate el versículo que encontrarás en Hechos 13:47

Analiza tu corazón contestando las siguientes premisas:

¿Cómo puedo lograr brillar la luz de Cristo a quienes me rodean?

¿Me rodeo de personas que me impulsan a ser luz alrededor de quienes no lo son?

¿Con cuáles componentes del fruto del Espíritu luché más en demostrar?

Todo esto para decirte que cuando se anda en oscuridad, siempre se anda en incertidumbre, en temor, en duda y en ansiedad.





A Secret But Why?

by: Stephen F. Shober,
Grace 4 You Ministries

Hidden Truth

The following article is based upon the book, “God’s Secret and the Crisis of the Cross” by Grace 4 You Ministries. The main scriptural passage for this book is:

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit, For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:7-10, NKJV).

This passage is often used to support the belief that we have no idea of what God has prepared for the believer. This was true for Isaiah, quoted in the passage, yet, these verses clearly indicate God’s preparations for us were revealed to the Apostle Paul. From this passage we learn also that God ordained a plan for mankind before time began, and in His wisdom determined that some of that plan had to be kept hidden, a mystery. Now why would a loving and caring God keep something a mystery (mystery means secret)? This is opposed to our concept of God as open and self-disclosing.

The mystery was, “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and

God ordained a plan for mankind before time began, and in His wisdom determined that some of that plan had to be kept hidden, a mystery.

partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (Eph. 3:6), and, salvation would be granted by God’s grace based upon faith, without any works of righteousness, in Jesus Christ. But, why was it necessary to keep this wonderful news hidden?

The Scripture provides the answer, stating a most remarkable thing, that is, if the rulers of this world had known God’s secret, they would not have crucified Christ. At first glance, we may wonder why God did not reveal this mystery sooner in order to protect His Son from a horrible death. Then we begin to realize what the world would be like if Christ had not been crucified.

In the past, humans did not see, hear, or perceive many things, because God kept those things from mankind. God progressively revealed those things as time advanced. However, Paul says there was a special wisdom—a peculiar body of truth—that had been kept a top secret from the beginning of time. This wisdom was kept securely hidden by God for thousands of years and for a very important reason, and only revealed when the need for secrecy had passed. In God’s perfectly chosen time, God revealed this mystery to Paul and his associates. The question remains, “Had they known the mystery, why would the rulers of this age have refused to crucify Christ?”

God did not keep a secret because He wanted to withhold truth, but because knowledge of that truth would have changed history, resulting in no person being saved, ever.

All human history and all eternity hinged upon the crucifixion; it had to take place as God planned, at all costs. It did! Then, after Christ’s death, God’s plan was fully revealed; that which had been hidden for ages was finally made known. Had the mystery not been kept a secret, the whole course of human history—and God’s eternal purpose for mankind—would have been rendered meaningless.

Satan and the world rulers knew Christ was supposed to die, that was no secret. However, there was something resulting from His death that Satan and the earthly rulers did not know, or they would have assured His crucifixion did not occur. That is how important it was to keep the mystery hidden.

An uncrucified Christ was totally unacceptable to God; His death was the centerpiece of God’s plan. The crucifixion was an absolute requirement, there was nothing more important. Christ’s death was THE central event in human history. While our first thoughts may relate to how nice it would have been if the Innocent One did not have to die an unfair death, reality rudely wakes us up, with a jolt. We realize that if His death had not occurred, there would be no such thing as salvation; no one could ever be saved, not at any time in human history. The result would be that every human would have to suffer a hostile, eternal existence without God (Hell).

Why Hidden

The reason why Satan and the rulers of this world would not have crucified Christ, had they known the mystery, is that they would have realized what God planned to accomplish in our Age. If they had this knowledge, they would have realized that crucifying Christ was really playing into God’s plan. Here are some of the major impacts resulting from the mystery.

1. Extension of time: As a result of the mystery, God extended time, meaning more time was inserted into human history than previously indicated. That extension of time is the Age of Grace (AOG),¹ which is now nearly two thousand years long. This extension in time has allowed the truth of the mystery to be fruitful and produce accomplishments never envisioned before. The new Age allowed the full accomplishments of Christ’s death to take effect, resulting in a tremendous increase in the number of believers. In the AOG the number of new believers is many times that seen under the Law; our estimates suggest there are some 772 people are being saved today (2000-2025 AD) compared to each person saved under the Law. This is an astounding statistic, something God had to ensure Satan did not know ahead of time. Satan likely thought he was doing very well under the

¹ The Age of Grace is often called the Church Age (the time period from the Apostle Paul to the present). The Dispensation of Grace refers to how God dispenses His grace in this time period.

God did not keep a secret because He wanted to withhold truth, but because knowledge of that truth would have changed history, resulting in no person being saved, ever.

If they had this knowledge, they would have realized that crucifying Christ was really playing into God’s plan.

The truths of the one Body and the spiritual blessing of our Age will set an example, helping the ministry in that day to be unusually effective.

Now our eyes, ears, and heart are touched by the Word, and the things God has prepared for us impact every area of our lives.

Law; but, had he known how many would be saved in the AOG, he may have rethought his involvement in the crucifixion.

2. Gentile Salvation: What Satan did not know is the mystery introduced a new way for Salvation and blessings to flow to the Gentiles. Today, salvation is based upon God's grace and our faith in Christ's work on the Cross. The increased number of people who would be saved was not recognized by Satan, who had in mind the number of people saved under the Law. During the entire Law period, the total number of people saved was in the millions, while during the Age of Grace it is in the billions, in one-third the time.

3. Carry-forward effect: According to Scripture, one age builds upon another, "...not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:21b, also Eph. 2:7). Thus, the exceeding greatness of His power and the riches of His inheritance in the AOG will impact the future (the Millennial Kingdom). During the Kingdom, the power and wisdom of God in our Age will be recognized. The truths of the one Body and the spiritual blessing of our Age will set an example, helping the ministry in that day to be unusually effective. As a result, Christ will be readily accepted, and the number saved will skyrocket.

4. Truths of our Age: The spiritual blessings we have today, by being in Christ, are a witness to the angels in Heaven (Eph. 3:10). The spiritual blessings in our Age were previously unheard, and those blessings certainly have caused Satan great anguish. In addition, things like the restraining influence on evil by the Spirit working through the Body of Christ, the promise of a Rapture, and the Judgment Seat of Christ (a rewards seat where we are praised) are testimonies to the angels, and are part of the ultimate humiliation of Satan. The fact that Christ's death resulted in the forgiveness and justification of all believers in past and future ages, is likely something Satan did not fully realize. Had Satan had any clue of these things, his decision would have been altered; therefore, God needed him to be

ignorant of the mystery so that the crucifixion would occur as planned.

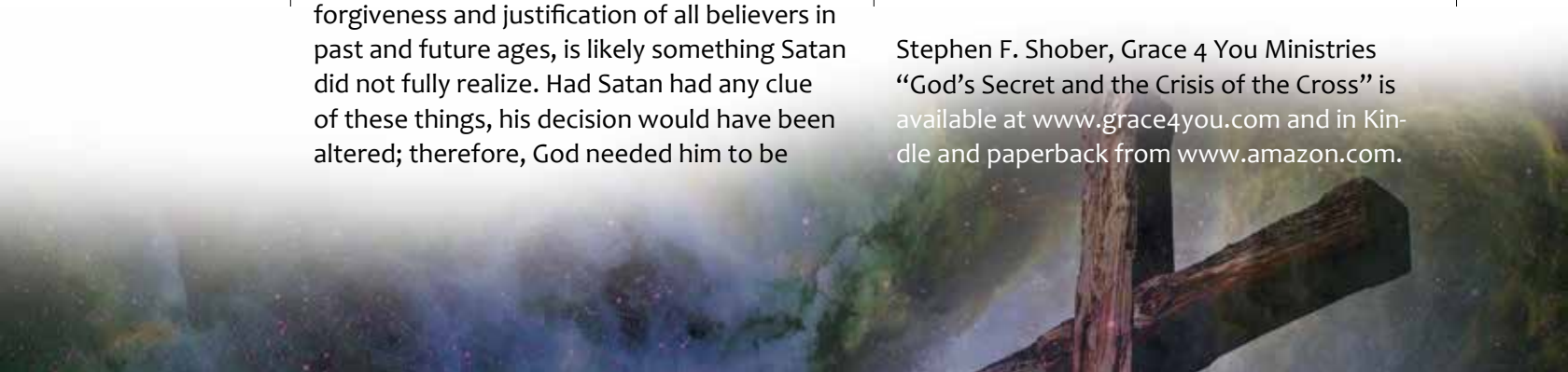
5. Freedom and liberty: We have personal liberty and freedom in Christ. These factors encourage and enable us to do much more than we could under the Law. In the AOG, free people with liberty to express themselves have developed governmental states that encouraged discovery and cultural advancement. Discovery and advancement enabled the world's population to explode; with that explosion there was a more than proportional increase in the number of Christians. Thus, the AOG fostered an environment conducive to the growth of Christianity. The total number of people saved during the entire AOG, through the year 2025, has the potential to be nearly two billion, compared to only 87 million in all the time before Christ, which was three times longer.

While Isaiah may have lamented a lack of knowledge, we are no longer ignorant and can say (literally and/or figuratively):

- Our eyes have seen: the results of God's grace, the completed Word, and the mystery written in plain language (Eph 1:18).
- Our ears have heard: God's plan for the Age of Grace, the gospel of salvation, and the heavenly blessing that are ours.
- Our hearts have been encouraged by: the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives, the Lord's transformation process in our lives, and the comfort of the Lord.

Due to a secret kept, Christ was crucified. Now our eyes, ears, and heart are touched by the Word, and the things God has prepared for us impact every area of our lives. We can truly say, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever, Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21).

Stephen F. Shober, Grace 4 You Ministries
"God's Secret and the Crisis of the Cross" is available at www.grace4you.com and in Kindle and paperback from www.amazon.com.





Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.
II Corinthians 5:18

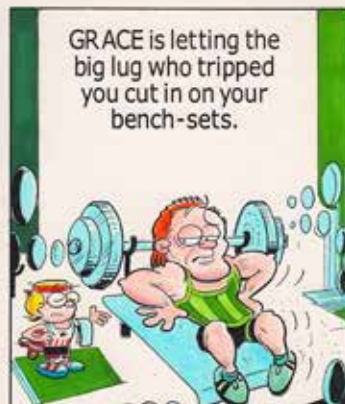
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by Timothy McGarvey
Executive Director
Grace Publications, Inc.

BACK TO OUR FUTURE

REDISCOVERING OUR FOUNDATION

...because they did not obey the voice of the LORD-to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us...

At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time." So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people who were men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD-to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, "a land flowing with milk and honey." Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.

Joshua 5 tells of the time when the nation of Israel had crossed over the Jordan River and now stood on the ground that God had promised Moses while they were yet in Egypt. The ten spies who had been sent into the land

and had warned the nation about the Amorites and the Canaanites were dead (Num. 14:37). Moses and Aaron had both died and now Joshua stood as the leaders of his people. Because of disobedience, Israel had wandered for forty years in the wilderness. Having now entered into long-awaited for and sought-after land, it becomes obvious that something was lacking in their relationship with God.

Joshua is instructed by the Lord to "circumcise the sons of Israel" (5:2). All of the men who had come out of Egypt had been circumcised. However, the children of all those who had come out had not been circumcised. The reason why is not one which enjoys unanimous agreement. Some contend that it was due to their wondering and not being able to stop for the necessary time. However, that seems a little weak. I tend to believe that it was due to a lack of belief. We know that story of the golden calf, and Egyptian deity constructed by the people at the foot of Mount Sinai. Numbers 14 gives us a glimpse into the hearts of the people. Verses 2-4 use these words, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt, ...be better for us to return to Egypt" and, "...and return to Egypt." Acts 7:39 says, "And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt." Joshua was now to perform that which had been neglected. Verse 9 says that once this was completed, Joshua proclaims, "This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt." The "reproach of Egypt" is the heart

that had returned to the gods of Egypt and a neglect of God's requirements.

Perhaps this was in the mind of God even before the nation of Israel had escaped the cruel hand of Pharaoh. The night of the Passover God told Moses that "you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever" (Ex. 12:24). God tells Moses that there will come a time when their children will ask why they observe this (vs. 25). Somewhere along the way in the wilderness, the hearts of the people returned to Egypt and they began to forget.

The same is just as possible in the Body of Christ today. There is a tendency to get so caught up in the "what is new" that we have a tendency to forget the value of what was. For my purpose here, I don't think there is any place or activity where this is more obvious than in the local church. The internet and social media has introduced us to what is being done in the large churches around the world. As a pastor you look and ask yourself, "Why can't my church be that large?" "What will it take to attract the young people like that church?" It is only natural to wonder and to rationalize that if we were big then we could do big things for God.

In the last issue of TRUTH I wrote of how important I believe our theology is. If we truly believe in our Grace doctrine, then we will stand and boldly proclaim it without reservation or fear even if it is controversial. In Colossians 4:3-4 the Apostle Paul is in prison for preaching the gospel. Yet, he is praying for opportunities to be opened up to him to preach even more. I believe this tells us that he believed without reservation both the message he taught and the One of whom he spoke. It is distinctive and not accepted in the mainstream as truth. It is still regarded as heresy by many. But the bottom line is that our distinct message is the **only reason we have to exist as the Grace Movement**.

Some say that it really isn't that important and we risk too much if we are overly vocal. I would call their attention to the words of Paul who instructed us to stay the course and fight the good fight. He told Timothy to "hold fast to sound doctrine" and teach it to faithful

men [and women] who can pass it on to the next generation. So, as Paul passed the baton of ministry to the next generation, he did so with the hope that they would be faithful to the message.

The founders of the modern Grace Movement left us with a tremendous library of books that unfold our theology. In more recent years, other men and women have also contributed to the literature that is available. Grace Publications, Inc., Berean Bible Society, and Bible Doctrines To Live By all have the books that you need. It is rare to find any of these books for sale in your local Christian bookstore who generally won't carry them because of the theology. Everyone of these books **must** occupy a prominent place in every pastor's library.

The future of the Grace Movement and its distinct theology rests entirely on the shoulders of those who are educators, pastors, and ministry leaders in our mid-Acts colleges and churches. Our young people should be taught the truth of the grace message and grounded in it. The future cannot parallel the children of Israel in the wilderness. Instead of seeking new focus, let us go back to our future and continue to build on the firm foundation laid by those who brought us together seventy-five years ago.

This article is not meant to point fingers, but rather to somewhat serve as a call to arms. ALL of us need to stand shoulder to shoulder in a bold manner to further the ministries of the Grace Movement. Our theology has the answers the world needs. A true understanding of the message of grace is what is needed in the world in which we live. A right understanding of the Body of Christ and its place in the eternal program of God affects the way we deal with many of the issues that people are thinking about in regards to the last days.



The "reproach of Egypt" is the heart that had returned to the gods of Egypt and a neglect of God's requirements.

The future of the Grace Movement and its distinct theology rests entirely on the shoulders of those who are educators, pastors, and ministry leaders... [and parents!]

by Timothy McGarvey
Executive Director
Grace Publications, Inc.

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

The story of the good Samaritan in the Gospels has been used over the years in many ways. Probably one of the best interpretations is one that is very needed in the world today. There is so much turmoil in our own country, as well as around the world. Our neighborhoods have turned into shooting galleries. While society offers up various causes for this tragic situation, most blame it on mental illness. I would say that it goes far deeper.

The prophet Jeremiah used these words to describe the human dilemma. He wrote, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"* (17:9 NKJV). The unregenerated heart of man is controlled by the wicked one. Paul tells us in his letter to the church at Ephesus this, *"... who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath..."* (2:1-3).

There is no question but that the only answer that will ever change society in a positive fashion is the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. Only He is able to regenerate the dead heart and make it alive (Eph. 2:1). No amount of free cookies and kindness will ever earn any person the right to stand before God in holy righteousness. It is only through the blood of Jesus Christ by grace through faith in His finished work.

The airwaves are filled with preachers who espouse a theology of positive thinking.

Probably the most famous of them preaching today is the young man from Houston, Texas. He smiles and offers up a sermon of positive thinking bumper stickers but offers his listeners nothing in the way of a gospel message that would produce eternal life.

That said, please don't think that I am joining the PT parade and I don't want to turn the pages of TRUTH into a movie review, but my wife and I attended a prescreening tonight of a movie that will be coming out around Thanksgiving. It's a movie about Fred Rogers and his neighborhood. More than about Mr. Rogers, it's about forgiveness and relationships.

I was driving the other day and heard a discussion as to whether there was life on other planets and if so, would we ever find it. As I listened I couldn't help but think of the world we live in. I thought that we can't get along with our own neighbors (or other countries), are we just looking for someone else with which to fight?

Like the story of the good Samaritan, the movie shows us what is possible if we really try. The movie tracks the life of a reporter whose life is filled with unforgiveness. As he interviews Fred Rogers, he becomes very frustrated with Fred's answers.

While the movie does not contain a gospel message, it does reflect Fred's faith and how it worked in his life. It's the kind of movie we need more of. Who knows, maybe it would be good for all of us if we lived in Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood (But one with a good Grace church).

...maybe it
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we lived in Mr.
Rogers' Neighbor-
hood (One
with a good
Grace church).



NEWS FROM AROUND THE GRACE GOSPEL FELLOWSHIP

Region 1:



Northwest: Ninety-five teenagers from around our region converged upon camp in Auburn, WA for an epic week. Two students detrusted in Jesus as their personal Savior! Joe Pedersen spoke to the junior high and Pat McGillicuddy spoke to the senior high. Our theme this year was memes, which proved to be a challenge to come up with a costume, but it was interesting to see what people came up with. We can't wait to be together again next summer!



Region 4

Grace Bible Church, West Allis, has seen a very full and pleasant summer here in Wisconsin. It seems that 2019 at Grace Bible is becoming a year of change. On September 15, 2019 we changed the time of our morning worship service from 9:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. What is the reason for the change? We pray that God will use the later start time to allow the younger generation (40 years old and under) to come to Grace Bible Church and stir in their hearts a passion for the Word of God.

Our church attendance is maintaining a good level, with a growing compassion and burden to reach out to the world and lead many to Christ. Our mission statement to evangelize the lost and edify the saints will not change. We are committed to deeper Bible teaching and preaching. Our passion is to train, build up the believers, and challenge them to live out the principles of Scripture in their daily lives.

Pray for our community as we pray for your community. Thank you very much!

Region 5



Faith Bible Church in Olney, Illinois, is excited. We had a good summer reaching many with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We look forward to the ministries through the fall months as we will be sharing the gospel of Grace to an unbelieving as well as believing population. Through our Sunday adult and youth ministries and Wednesday night CBC, but also through the school system teaching weekly inside the public schools and working closely with the Richland County Youth Alliance, reaching unchurched youth in the community.

Grace Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, has begun a project of a 5-week overview of the Bible. This is directed mostly toward people in the congregation who may be less familiar with the Bible, but we have also publicized it in the community by having a banner near the road by the church, making multiple Facebook posts, and putting ads in local newspapers. We prepared a series of 30 Scripture readings, six for each day prior to the Sunday on which a summary of the week's readings was taught. We printed booklets with the lessons and Scripture readings which we took to the church. On Sunday the message focused on five sections of Scripture, based on the readings of the previous week. I preached five sermons from September 8 to October 6. Everything about the project could be seen at our website (www.indygracechurch.org/plan.html).

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