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TRUTH Magazine

Winter 2021 Edition



Winter Comfort

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



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

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PASTORAL *Care*

by Matt Amundsen
Executive Director
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At the Grace Gospel Fellowship, one of our main objectives is to develop, cultivate, and mobilize men for pastoral ministry. It has undoubtedly been a challenging year for all of us and maybe even more so for our pastors as they help their families and church families navigate the murky waters created by the pandemic and societal tensions we continue to face.

While training and developing new pastors is of great importance to us, it is abundantly clear that we need to also be ever so vigilant with encouraging our established pastors who are further along in their ministry. The daily challenge for a pastor to balance his family's needs, combined with a congregation's requirements, can be overwhelming at times. This frustration is why we have seen a more significant movement and effort towards "Pastoral Care and Encouragement" as a ministry of the GGF led by Pastor Trent Boedicker of Grace Gospel Church of Ada, Ohio.

Pastor Trent has assembled a team of pastors who come from a variety of seasons of life. These men seek to reach into the lives of pastors with the love of Christ. The demonstration of this love is in the form of personal phone calls, emails, in-person visits, and notes of affirmation. Sometimes these moments come in the form of prayer before an upcoming surgery or in response to a family crisis. At other times this connection comes amid a struggle with church leadership, in which this team can be a sounding board for pastors as they carefully and prayerful-

ly decipher what the best course of action is. One of the men who Pastor Trent has called upon is Pastor Ed Wishart, a longtime GGF pastor and advocate for the health and well being of pastors. Ed has made calls and met many a pastor in places of brokenness and discouragement. His heart breaks for men who have stepped into pastoral ministry, knowing full well the challenges they face, whether personally or professionally. Hearing from some of these men AND experiencing this firsthand, Ed brings a compassionate, tender heart to the conversation. In the midst of COVID and facing the difficulties of balancing family and work, Ed reached out to me one evening, and it was such an uplifting experience to know that someone cared deeply enough to make the call and listen and reflect upon God's faithfulness and provision, even in the center of heartache.

I share this because I know the pressures and expectations of being a pastor and how important it is to have someone or several someones who can come alongside us. It can truly feel like we are on an island when in ministry, which is why I am so thankful for the Pastoral Care Team. I trust that this effort will continue to grow and impact the everyday life and well being of our GGF pastors and their families. Please be in prayer for Pastor Trent Boedicker, Pastor Ed Wishart, and the rest of the team as they encourage and pray with and for our leaders! Also, be in prayer for our pastors and for that matter, pastors across the country and throughout the world!

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At the Grace Gospel Fellowship, one of our main objectives is to develop, cultivate, and mobilize men for pastoral ministry.

...it was such an uplifting experience to know that someone cared deeply enough to make the call and listen and reflect upon God's faithfulness and provision, even in the center of heartache.

THE HOLY SPIRIT EXPERIENCES

by Pastor Ed Wishart
West Hope Bible Church
McClure, OH

Yes, even in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, experience for experiences' sake is having an impact.

One believer hears about the experience(s) of another believer and he/she too wants to experience that experience. Why?

Experience, for Experiences' Sake

Experience the Presence of the Holy Spirit unto the Experience of Life

In our world today, experience seems to be reigning supreme. People are having experiences with angels, while others are experiencing something from the world of the occult and cults. There are a host of people who are having "spiritual experiences" which are not connected to religion. Even within Christian circles we hear about experiences that are unknown to the experience of the Holy Spirit as found in the Scriptures.

Yes, even in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, experience for experiences' sake is having an impact.

Experience for experiences' sake is about people having external experiences by the so-called "movement of the Holy Spirit." People experience a variety of experiences: dreams, visions, word of knowledge, dancing and laughing in the Spirit, the producing of animal sounds, healings, experiences with angels, and the list could go on.

What is generated by experience for experiences' sake is to have another experience that is more profound than the previous experience. Often, the way this occurs seems to be in a mode of competition. One believer hears about the experience(s) of another believer and he/she too wants to experience that experience. Why? 1) Because he/she believes as he/she listens to the experience that is being shared, that the other person has something from God he/she does not have, and therefore, he/she too must have the experience. 2) Because he/she believes it is an experience that makes one's relationship with God more viable, more real, and more complete. People are so desirous of a-more-real-genuine-relationship with God, that many travel great distances for such an experience of God.

One lady from Florida saved her monies to get a one way ticket to California to experience the healing ministry of one faith healer who "had the power of the Spirit." She ended up stranded in California and without the power of the Holy Spirit healing her. There are a host of people who are making Toronto International Airport a very busy airport, because they are flying in from all around the world to experience what is

being called “the Toronto Blessing.” The Toronto Blessing is in a church that you can attend and experience the phenomenon known as, “laughing in the Spirit,” and where you can also experience yourself in the power of the Holy Spirit producing animal sounds. (One of my professors has this to say: When God shows up to do a work, three works are occurring: God is at work, Satan is at work; and the lunatics come out). People are flocking to the Toronto Blessing because they are not satisfied with their own experience of God the Holy Spirit. In their minds, they do not want a relationship with the Holy Spirit that lacks power. A believer without power possesses a relationship with God that could probably be called “inept,” at the least, the relationship with an Almighty God who is not “power-producing.” So yes, there are believers moving from one “blessing-spot” (St. Louis) to another “blessing-spot” (Toronto) because the Spirit of God is supposedly pouring forth a better blessing in one place than another.

What a tragedy it is to have one’s relationship with God dependent upon external manifestations. What a sad tragedy that the viability of our faith is dependent upon being on the lookout for the next Holy Spirit blessing-hot-spot!

But, that is what transpires in one’s spiritual journey when one is dependent upon experience for experiences’ sake instead of being dependent upon the Holy Spirit whom one should understand, as He leads us into the experience of life.

What do you think about when you hear the words “walk by,” “led by,” and “live by?” For one, we should think about the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 - “...walk by the Spirit...”
5:18 - “...you are led by the Spirit...”
5:25 - “...we live by the Spirit...”

As you can see, each verb is followed by a reference to the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God’s Empowering Presence in our lives. Please notice, these verses are not saying “walk by experience,” “led by experience,” or “live by experience!” Experience is transitory. Therefore, by whose experience are we to walk? What spiritual person’s experience is qualified to lead us in our experience? If I live by experience alone, what happens when my experiences contradict themselves? Which experience is really true and genuine? Remember, experiences are transitory.

They vary by age, maturity, culture, and emotions. Thus, how reliable are experiences when they number as the sand of the seashore? Is not the Spirit One?

As we hear “walk by, led by, and live by,” we should be calling into our conscious awareness the Person of the Holy Spirit. We as believers should be conscious of a Person that indwells us. The Word of God says, “But if the Spirit of Him (God the Father) who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He (God the Father) who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His (God the Father) Spirit who indwells you” (Romans 8:11). And, “do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

1 Cor. 3:16. See also 1 Cor. 6:19;
2 Cor. 6:16, Gal. 4:6, 2 Tim. 1:14

Most believers do not make a “conscious effort” to think about the Holy Spirit as a Person indwelling within. As mentioned earlier, far too many believers are preoccupied with what the Holy Spirit can produce in power, rather than His person. Of course, the other extreme is not to think of the Holy Spirit at all because spirit is something to fear, or is too intangible to understand, so why try?

We must make a “conscious effort” to think about the Holy Spirit. He is truly a Person that does have residency in the believer. He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). This verse is imparting to us that the Holy Spirit has emotions. He can be lied to (Acts 5:3). Here we discover the Holy Spirit possesses the attribute of integrity. These are just two of many verses that affirm the Personhood of the Holy Spirit. Beloved, God desires for us to experience the Person of the Holy Spirit in all of life’s experiences.

A moment ago we asked, what do you think about when you hear the words “walk by,” “led by,” “live by?” One answer should be the Person of the Holy Spirit and life’s experiences.

Notice that all the verbs are action verbs: walk, led, live. Everyday you and I walk through life. We walk into and out of daily relationships, events, and circumstances. We are led in and out of life’s experiences by parents, leaders, teachers, the boss, and our own drives and desires. We live in life. We live by motivating factors such as money, prestige, getting ahead and a host of

...there are believers moving from one “blessing-spot” (St. Louis) to another “blessing-spot” (Toronto) because the Spirit of God is supposedly pouring forth a better blessing in one place than another.

Remember, experiences are transitory. They vary by age, maturity, culture, and emotions. Thus, how reliable are experiences when they number as the sand of the seashore?

The Holy Spirit is God's personal presence in our lives. God is at work in and through us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to produce God's will, God's character, God's ethic, in and through our lives.

The priority for our Christian journey is first experiencing the Person of the Holy Spirit as Person, and then consciously allowing Him to "walk" us through life's experiences: to "lead" us into life's experiences; and, to assist us to "live" life's experiences in godliness.

other motivations. These are all elements that make up experiences.

Now, we can allow experience for experiences' sake to pull us through these life's experiences, or we can allow the Holy Spirit to give direction unto these life's experiences. We must make a choice.

What do we mean by experiencing the Holy Spirit unto life's experiences?

The Holy Spirit is God's personal presence in our lives. God is at work in and through us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to produce God's will, God's character, God's ethic, in and through our lives. The verbs walk, led, and live are ethical imperatives and refer to ethical behavior, as well as actions in the experience of life.

As we move through our life experiences, we are to be making a "conscious effort" concerning the Person of the Holy Spirit, who is walking with us, and leading us through life's experiences by His living in us. He is at work in us leading us to see life from the perspective of God. As we are involved in life's experiences, living in our daily relationships, events, and circumstances, we are to experience these under the direction of the Holy Spirit, so that we may experience what God desires for us to experience. God desires that every experience be branded with His holiness and godliness. But this can only occur when we are experiencing life's experiences through the Person of the Holy Spirit, and not for experiences' sake.

It is the Spirit of God who is renewing our minds and transforming our lives, not experiences. It is the Spirit who is in the inner man strengthening us with the power of God, not experience. The Spirit of God is also, from within, reproducing the character of Christ in and through us, and not experiences. For the unbeliever, it is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit that transfers the unbeliever from unbelief to belief, not any experiences.

Let it be said, we are not denying that people have experiences. We know full well that we all do. But, who is driving the cart?

Over the centuries, believers have credalized or doctrinalized the Holy Spirit to be cold, aloof, impersonal, and almost non-existent. Other believers have also actually distanced the Holy

Spirit from their spiritual journey by focusing upon experiences that turn out to be far too often, pure emotion, hype, and yes even under the influence of the spiritual forces of wickedness.

Both groups focus on something or someone other than the Person of the Holy Spirit. Thus, they are missing the most majestic experience there is, the experience of God's Empowering Presence in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

We, along with the Apostle Paul, need to understand the Spirit as an experience and living reality, and as the crucial matter for the Christian life from beginning to end. As Gordon Fee wrote, ". . . the health of the contemporary church necessitates that its theology of the Spirit and its experience of the Spirit correspond more closely."

This is imperative! Beloved, we are "doing" theology all the time. We are "living" out theology in our daily lives. We are grappling with how the gospel works, and works out in our historical setting. We must understand that the Spirit (not experience first) is absolutely presuppositional to our entire experience and understanding of our present life in Christ. ". . . God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts . . ." (Galatians 4:6). We are indwelt by a Person, the Holy Spirit. He is not an experience, but He is to be experienced as a Person unto our experiences in life.

The priority for our Christian journey is first experiencing the Person of the Holy Spirit as Person, and then consciously allowing Him to "walk" us through life's experiences: to "lead" us into life's experiences; and, to assist us to "live" life's experiences in godliness.

Beloved, the fruit that is most often associated with the Holy Spirit is the fruit of joy. Let us enjoy, let us *in-joy* our relationship with the Person of the Holy Spirit. Why? Our relationship with experiences is only temporal - transitory - insufficient, but our relationship with the Holy Spirit is moment - by - moment - eternally - sufficient!

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In-joy!

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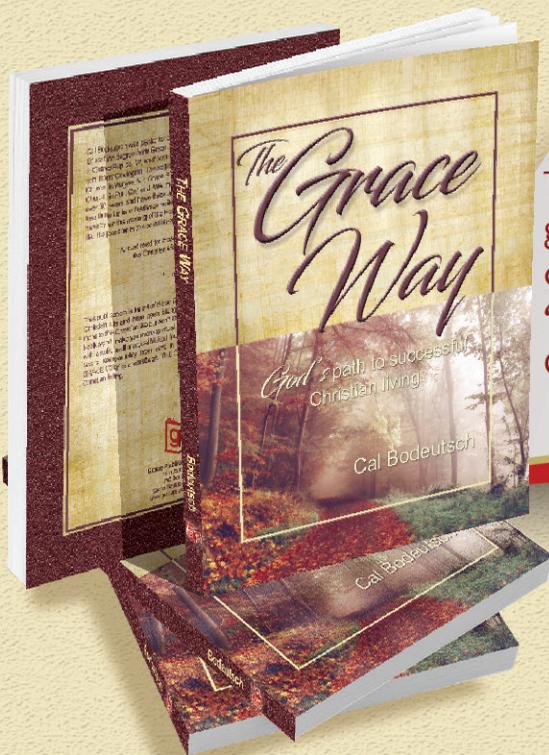
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by Jeremy Clark
Executive Director
Grace Ministries International

BEST LAID PLANS

During much of 2020, getting missionaries to the field has been both a challenge and something Grace Ministries International has celebrated.

The missionaries who were stranded in the States when travel was restricted in March experienced delayed, and plans to either get back to or begin ministry on their fields were frustrated. The Gularts and Brook Seekins were eager to return to their respective fields of Paraguay and Malawi. The Menors, originally from Brazil, were looking forward to their first assignment in Paraguay. Tom and Michelle Sanchez, having already served with GMI in Congo from 1987 to 2001, were looking forward to getting to Burundi after most recently having spent two years in Zambia advancing the work of GMI alongside the

Grace Churches in Zambia. Matt and April Sykes were all set to leave in April for Nicaragua, but that soon became impossible. Ronnie and Jaque Mackensen were only supposed to spend a year in Nicaragua learning Spanish before moving on to Panama to join the Barrantes Family. They, too, were delayed.

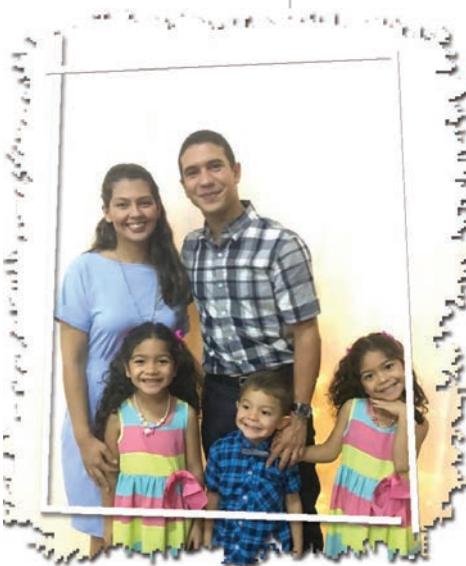
Others had their plans significantly altered during the year. Kennedy and Sofia Simtowe were no longer able to do effective ministry in Mozambique as the government drastically curtailed church meetings and then closed its borders. Aaron Cordero, GMI's newest mission-

ary from Costa Rica, was planning to visit U.S. churches in the fall, but was not able to obtain a visa. Though underfunded, the best alternative was for him to leave prematurely for Nicaragua to begin working with the team there with an eye towards opening Honduras as a new field in a few years.

Despite these setbacks, we have had a lot to celebrate these last few months. In late October, the Mackensens left Nicaragua for Panama. In November, Brook, the Menors, and Sykes all arrived on their fields. In December, the Gularts departed for Paraguay, their country of ministry. We thank the Lord for this and we are grateful for those of you who have stood by our missionaries and prayed for them.

The constant transit of missionaries is normal. From our perspective as sending churches in the U.S., we always seem to be welcoming some while saying good-bye to others. For the missionary, it's often just easier to say, "we'll see you again soon," instead of saying, "Goodbye." Leaving friends, whether here or there is always hard. Even in this, the Apostle Paul was a pattern for those who would follow after him: Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship (Acts 20:37-38).

During his ministry, Paul recruited and relied upon a number of believers to help him with the work of sharing and establishing the gospel



The Menor Family

of grace throughout the world. Towards the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey, he took along young Timothy as he preached the gospel in Macedonia and Greece, resulting in churches planted all along the way (Acts 16-17). Later, Paul sent him to the church in Corinth to remind them to continue following his teachings (1 Corinthians 4:17). Towards the end of Paul's life and ministry, he had Timothy remain in Ephesus to maintain doctrinal integrity in the church (1 Timothy 1:3).

Ephesus is where two of Paul's new co-missionaries, Aquila and Priscilla (originally from Rome) whom he met in Corinth (Acts 18:2), pulled aside Apollos and to more accurately explain to him the things of God. As a result, Apollos proved to be a great encouragement to those back in Corinth who had believed through grace (Acts 18:26-27, 19:1). Later, Titus, whom Paul had left in Crete (Titus 1:5) must have come into contact with Apollos. Paul asked Titus to send Apollos to him while Paul was still in Rome (Titus 3:13). Again we find Aquila and Priscilla remained in Ephesus, whom Paul asked Timothy to greet (2 Timothy 4:19).

Ephesus was a busy place by the time Paul wrote his pastoral epistles from Rome in his final years. It was Paul's teaching hub from which all of Asia heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:8-10). In addition to Timothy, Aquila, and Priscilla, who were already in Ephesus, Tychicus is yet another of Paul's co-workers whom he sent to this city (2 Timothy 4:12). Tychicus had accompanied Paul to Macedonia (Acts 20:4), visited the church at Colossae (Colossians 4:7), and, at some point, also became acquainted with Titus (Titus 3:12). There were others too who traveled and ministered with Paul, such as Erastus, Trophimus, and

Epaphras. Epaphras started the church in Colossae (Colossians 1:7) but ended up as a "fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus" with Paul in Rome (Philemon 23). In the first century, as in our day, the missionary movement has been constant. Considering the perils

and persecutions suffered by Paul (2 Corinthians 11:23-27, 2 Timothy 3:10-12), what motivated Paul? Paul, in spite of all he endured, was burdened by the health of these newly formed churches and the advancement of the gospel. Though Paul suffered much for his unique



The Barrantes Family along with their newly arrived coworkers, Ronnie and Jaque Mackensen

ministry, he writes, "what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28). Later, writing to Timothy, likely his first missionary recruit, he expounds about his passion for sharing the gospel:

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles" (2 Timothy 1:8-11).

He suffered for the sake of the gospel of grace for which God appointed him a preacher, apostle, and teacher—or just as fitting, a missionary—to the Gentiles or nations. Given all the places they traveled and all they endured, it is safe to assume Paul's missionary team had, like Timothy, "carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions" (2 Timothy 3:10b-11a). They also had the same two-fold passion for the ministry: the wellbeing of the churches to which they were sent and the unbelievers with whom they shared this message of grace.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace.



A first sight as you cross from Brazil to Ciudad del Este, Paraguay.

Whether in the U.S. or around the world, our Mid-Acts dispensational churches run the risk, like many other associations or groups of churches, of becoming irrelevant and disappearing if we only engage the single prong of edifying the congregations that already exist. The other prong of evangelism and church planting are equally important and, in fact, are indicative of healthy, established churches following Paul's doctrine and manner of life.

It is difficult to flip through the pages of Paul's letters without finding a reference to any one of Paul's co-workers, who collectively made up what looks like a missionary organization. These first-century missionaries were both church planters and church encouragers—keeping them on track with regard to the message they initially received. If you think about it, in their historical and cultural context, there was only new church growth. In other words, those added to these new congregations were new believers. There were no membership transfers or families checking out the new church around the corner. Any growth came from recent converts to Jesus Christ.

As explained above, Paul's missionary team took on a two-pronged approach to their ministry. They not only shared the gospel to plant new churches, but they also went back and visited the churches they started to keep them strong in the faith they had been taught. Timothy served as a prime example of this second prong.

"For this reason, I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." (1 Corinthians 4:17)

"Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith." (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2)

"As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith." (1 Timothy 1:3-4)



Alex and Deltha Gulart on their first Sunday back in Paraguay

While no stranger to evangelism, Paul saw Timothy as more useful, at least for a time, reminding the nascent congregations of the doctrine by which they were established through Paul's ministry. Meanwhile, Paul and others were sharing the gospel and planting yet other churches. Paul's team of missionaries did not lose sight of these two facets of their ministry.



Aaron Cordero with a new friend from Nagarote, Nicaragua—Eusebio.

Imagine if, after planting tens or even hundreds of churches, Paul and his team decided there were enough local bodies of believers and the whole team for the rest of their ministries did nothing more than attempt to maintain what they already had instead of pursuing evangelism and church planting in new cities and regions of the world. It is not hard to contemplate the irrelevancy, disintegration, and disappearance of the Church in just a few generations given the onslaught of legalism, false teachings, and paganism they were facing, and would confront in ensuing centuries. Assuming even a hundred congregations spread throughout the Mediterranean, how long could they last in a pure maintenance mode? Intellectually, we understand this would not work. Practically, we ignore the ramifications of this theoretical exercise.

Whether in the U.S. or around the world, our Mid-Acts dispensational churches run the risk, like many other associations or groups of churches, of becoming irrelevant and disappearing if we only engage the single prong of edifying the congregations that already exist. The other prong of evangelism and church planting are equally important and, in fact, are indicative of healthy, established churches following Paul's doctrine and manner of life.

Given the few congregations in the first century, it is not hard to see through to the tragic end the hypothetical scenario of a quickly disappearing, conservationist, first-century Church. Enjoying

the fruit of hard-fought gains for Christianity over the past 2,000 years with its ebbs and flows, ministries and churches here and abroad see themselves, practically speaking, as able to merely shuffle the membership deck without too much risk of becoming irrelevant any time too soon. We still look and wait for others to join our churches who have already come to know Christ through someone else's efforts. As we do so, we are competing for a share of a shrinking market of believers. Irrelevancy might be further away now than it would have been in our first-century thought experiment only because the pool of Christians which we can now attract to our ministries is greater than it was two millennia ago.

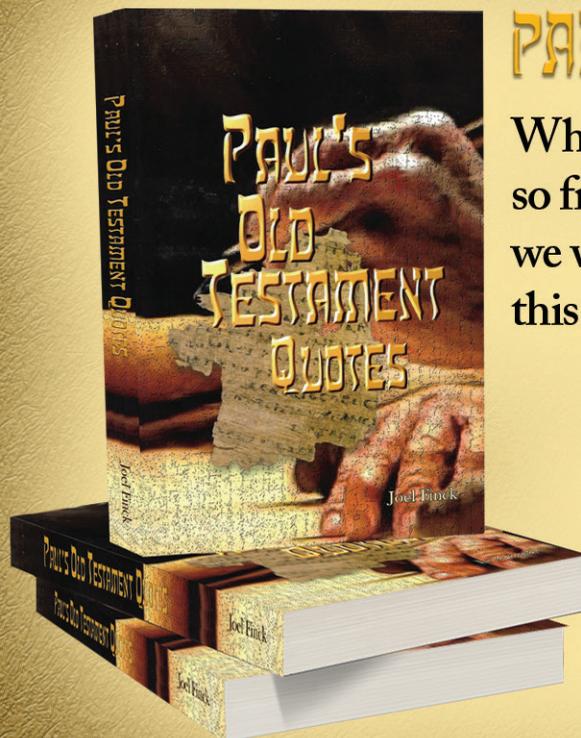
No matter where we serve, our ministry should be grounded in both the edification of believers while actively sharing the gospel with those who do not know Christ. This is in part why Paul told the church at Philippi, "Brethren, join in

following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern" (Philippians 3:17). Paul and his team pursued both evangelism and church health. If they had ignored either, you and I would not be able to enjoy the legacy they left us with millions of believers all around the world. Our tendency in a country where Christianity and a culture influenced by Christianity had been so predominant is to lazily move towards the future, hoping someone else will do the heavy lifting of evangelism while our ministries and churches reap the benefit of a new family or two walking through our doors from time to time. Looking ahead, we will ignore evangelism, leaving a much smaller legacy for future generations than what was left for us? While we cannot make people choose to believe in Christ and His sacrifice for our sins, we have an obligation to love our neighbors wanting for them the same eternal hope which our Lord has so graciously given us. TM

No matter where we serve, our ministry should be grounded in both the edification of believers while actively sharing the gospel with those who do not know Christ.

Editor's Note: *Missionaries are often confronted with difficulties under normal circumstances when it comes to leaving the States to go to the field. Passports, visas, airline tickets, and packing can each be problematic. However, with the current pandemic, the tasks may seem bewildering. This can add expenses due to extended stays and perhaps additional travel. Please keep all of the missionaries in your prayers as they navigate these wearisome days.*

Latest from Joel Finck



PAUL'S OLD TESTAMENT QUOTES

Why does Paul quote from the Old Testament so frequently? This is the burning question that we will endeavor to answer as we embark on this study.

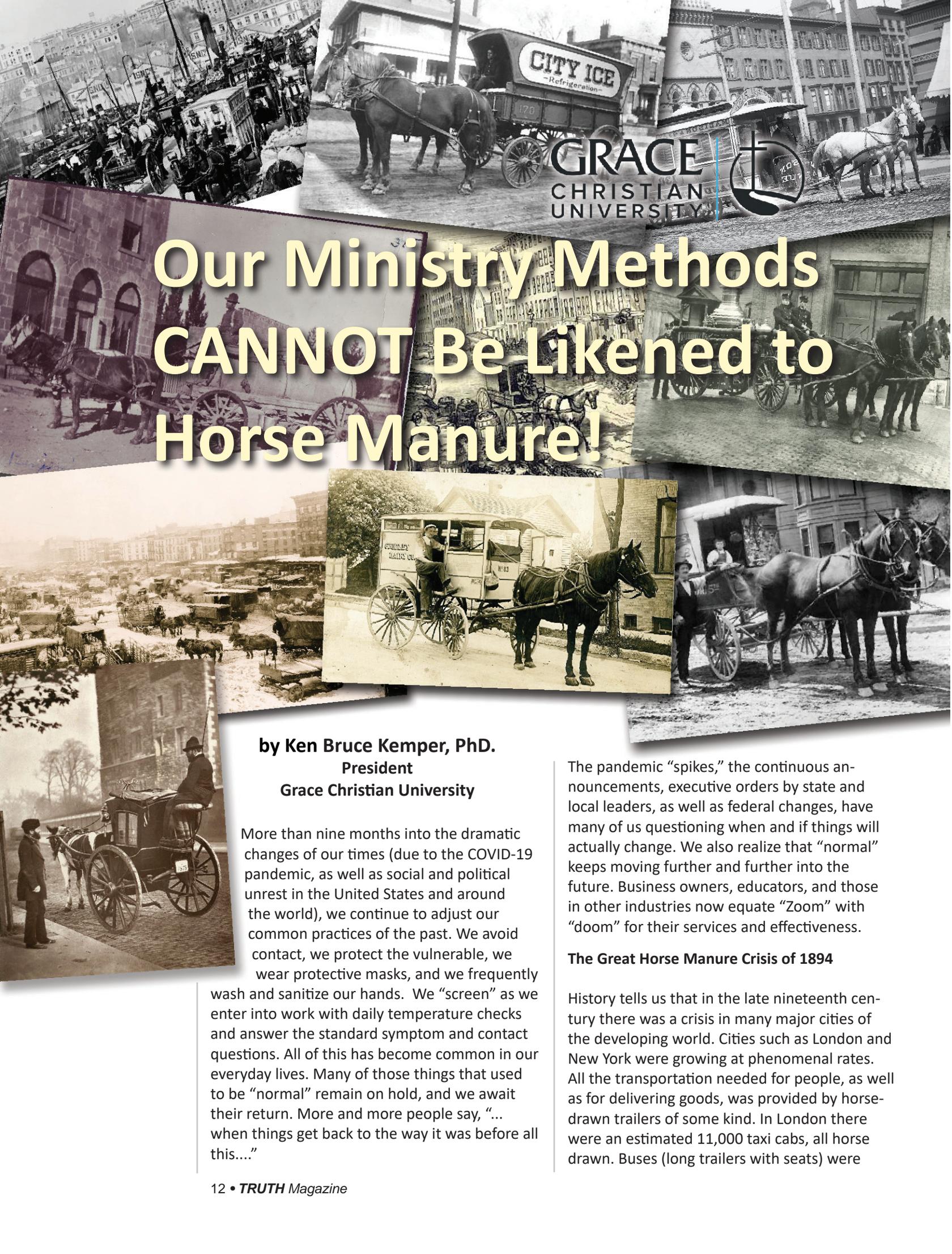
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Our Ministry Methods CANNOT Be Likened to Horse Manure!

by Ken Bruce Kemper, PhD.
President
Grace Christian University

More than nine months into the dramatic changes of our times (due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as social and political unrest in the United States and around the world), we continue to adjust our common practices of the past. We avoid contact, we protect the vulnerable, we wear protective masks, and we frequently wash and sanitize our hands. We “screen” as we enter into work with daily temperature checks and answer the standard symptom and contact questions. All of this has become common in our everyday lives. Many of those things that used to be “normal” remain on hold, and we await their return. More and more people say, “... when things get back to the way it was before all this...”

The pandemic “spikes,” the continuous announcements, executive orders by state and local leaders, as well as federal changes, have many of us questioning when and if things will actually change. We also realize that “normal” keeps moving further and further into the future. Business owners, educators, and those in other industries now equate “Zoom” with “doom” for their services and effectiveness.

The Great Horse Manure Crisis of 1894

History tells us that in the late nineteenth century there was a crisis in many major cities of the developing world. Cities such as London and New York were growing at phenomenal rates. All the transportation needed for people, as well as for delivering goods, was provided by horse-drawn trailers of some kind. In London there were an estimated 11,000 taxi cabs, all horse drawn. Buses (long trailers with seats) were

horse powered by teams of twelve horses, and it was estimated that the 50,000 horses which delivered all the goods to the population of London were boarded within the city. One could produce statistics similar to these for any major urban center during that time period (Tarr and McShane, "The Centrality of the Horse to the Nineteenth Century American City" in Raymond Mohl, ed., *The Making of Urban America*. New York: SR Publishers, 1997, pp. 105-130).

The problem or crisis with all these horses in the cities was that horses produce an enormous amount of manure. The average horse produces between fifteen and thirty-five pounds of manure each day which must be disposed of in some manner. Unhealthy side effects include the huge number of flies, disease, and dried manure blowing throughout the city. It is estimated that the population of 100,000 horses in New York City in 1900 produced 2.5 million pounds of manure per day which needed to be discarded (Burrows and Wallace Gotham: *A History of New York City to 1898*. New York: Oxford Press, 1999). City leaders in London and New York did not see an answer to the smelly problem as more and more people moved in, necessitating more and more horses, leading to more and more manure, flies, disease, and cleanup. In 1894, one Times of London writer estimated that in the next fifty years, every street in London would be buried in nine feet of manure! All the horses had to be fed and stabled--using up valuable land needed for expansion. It appeared that urban cities were on a crisis course with no resolution in sight. We realize that "the rest of the story" was the invention and corresponding demand for self-propelled transportation created by inventors such as Gottlieb Daimler in Germany and Henry Ford in the United States. These commodities became much more valuable and desired than they had been in the past, allowing the impending manure crisis to be avoided. Now, the rest is history.

Our Present Crisis Parallels

Certainly until this paragraph, one was reading with incredulity wondering what the point of horse manure has to do with ministry methods! The parallels to our present crisis are many and are worth considering. Practices of ministry which have been in place for centuries in local churches and in biblical higher education have been compromised, and each one is looking for

methods and means to meet the needs of their constituents. Many times we have employed additional workers to simply pick up the pieces and try to make our former "horse drawn" methods more efficient while the world has been dramatically changing around us.

Consider the demographic changes in America over the last fifty years. Many of our ministry methods are increasingly relevant for an increasingly smaller percentage of the population. The music we use, the services we provide, the communication media we employ—all of it is a vestige of our past. Even though we have tweaked and adjusted our methods over time, we struggle to be effective in reaching the wider American audience. Our wrestling to hold on to and grow church attendance and attract new believers or visitors may be proof of our effectiveness (or lack thereof). The point is this:

As long as we keep the horses, we must deal with what accompanies them!

The shifts we continue to make in our ministry methods represent baby steps, and if the recent cultural events demonstrate anything, it is this: *we are not living in a "Christian America" any longer*. The culture around us is changing rapidly, both Christian and non-Christian, with the growing percentage of Generation X (40-55), Millennials (26-39), and Gen Z (10-25) raising families today.

The Mission Remains the Same

Although demographics and methods for ministry may change as the world changes, be assured first of all that the mission for which God established the Church does not change. God is the author of salvation and the means of salvation is still, and always will be, the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross to pay the penalty for sin and redeem the lost who are guilty before a righteous, holy, and loving God (Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18). God will always be in the business of raising up believers unified in the Church, the Body of Christ, to do His work in this world (Ephesians 3:7, 10; 4:11-13).

The local church is precious and valuable to God's work in the world! We exercise the gifts which we are given by the Holy Spirit through our local church (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 12-13, 27). Each church exists within the context of

We also realize that "normal" keeps moving further and further into the future. Business owners, educators, and those in other industries now equate "Zoom" with "doom" for their services and effectiveness.

Even though we have tweaked and adjusted our methods over time, we struggle to be effective in reaching the wider American audience. Our wrestling to hold on to and grow church attendance and attract new believers or visitors may be proof of our effectiveness (or lack thereof).

Some have attempted to upgrade their technology, and broadcast their present services just as if everyone was still in the room with no adjustments to the media or viewership. However, Barna Research data reveals that the many church members we hope are watching from home are not. Barna reports that one in three people have stopped watching and are fatigued with digital church, and most likely will not return to our church.

It is time for the leadership in our churches and ministries to ask the question, "What if we were starting this ministry right now?" How would we fulfill our mission and God's designed purposes for this church? What are ways we can meet the needs of those to whom we seek to minister?

a community, allowing it to practice methods contextualized to the specific community where God has placed it to fulfill the unchanging mission of God to reach the lost, mature the saints, welcome into fellowship, impact the community as best as possible, and glorify God through it all.

What is the Most Effective Way to Minister Today?

Rather than tweak and adjust our present long-standing ministry methods until we can get through this crisis, should we not ask, "What new ways can we employ to fulfill our mission?" This crisis should inspire greater creativity and sensitivity to the ones who can and should benefit from the ministry. It may cause stress and uncomfortableness to the ministers and church leadership, but change always feels that way for a season. Is this not the opportunity to listen and understand the state of the community around us and our own church members? Some churches and ministries have suspended all services for the duration of this crisis. Some have attempted to upgrade their technology, and broadcast their present services just as if everyone was still in the room with no adjustments to the media or viewership. However, Barna Research data reveals that the many church members we hope are watching from home are not. Barna reports that one in three people have stopped watching and are fatigued with digital church, and most likely will not return to our church (Barna: The State of the Church, Barna Group, 2020). Yet, many ministries boast of how many "views" they might have, comparing it to church attendance in the past, without considering the analytics or algorithms which define just how long someone might have viewed it, along with the other web browsing they did as well.

We have failed at this as a biblical institution as well. We realize that people do not want to be asked to view another service we offer in the place of a personal gathering or engagement. Yes, we should upgrade our technology. Yes, we should seek to connect digitally with those who need our services. But what form and format will minister the most effectively? If we are hoping viewers at home will simply plug into a sixty minute or longer standard worship service because they are faithful to our ministry, we will have limited success fulfilling our mission. That is because by not adjusting our methods we have chosen (unconsciously) to remain the

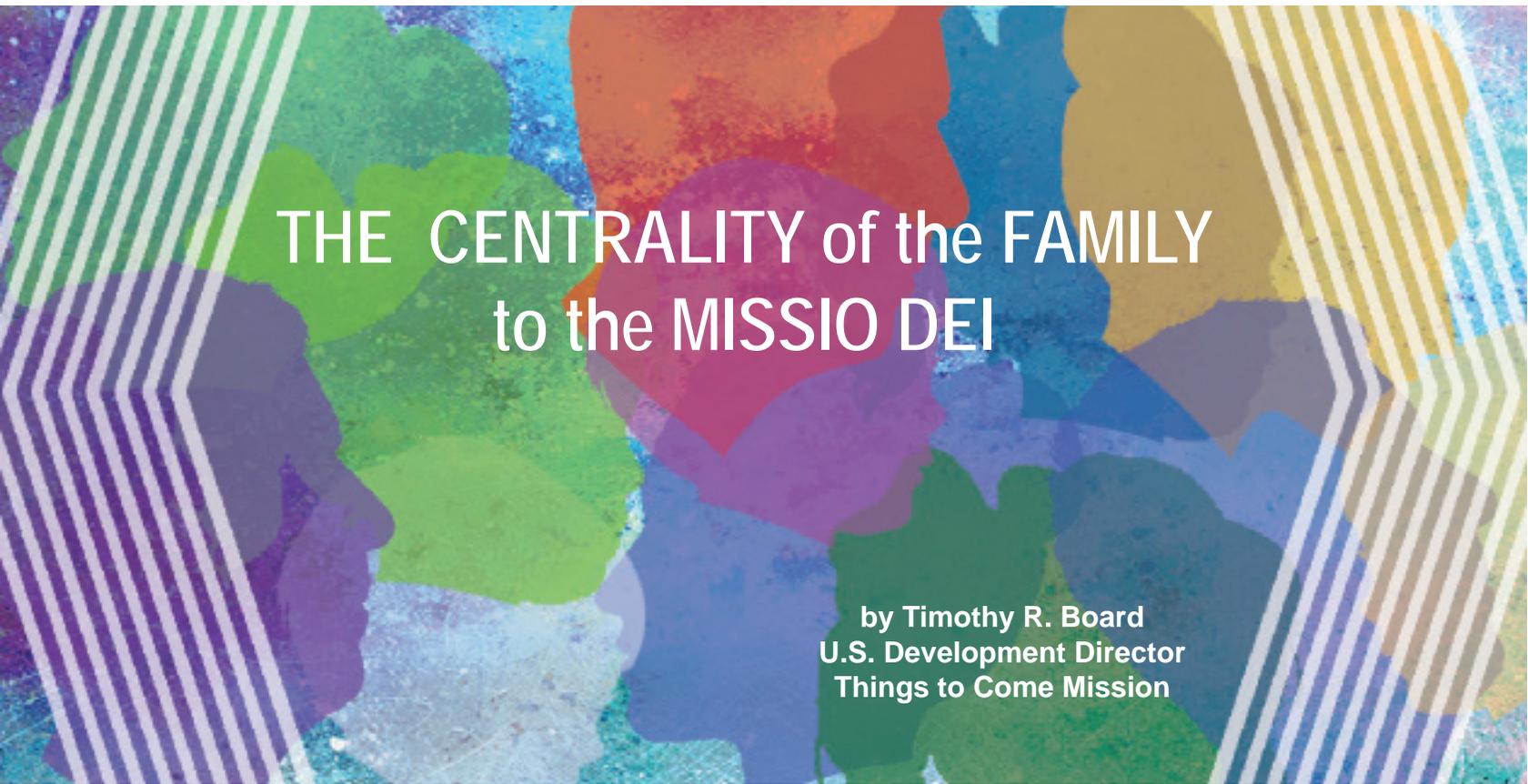
center of the ministry, rather than shifting to meet the needs and desires of those to whom we minister.

Service is always about others, not asking others to observe our service.

We must learn and grow during this hardship and crisis. This is God's way in our individual lives (Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-4). It is also the way used by God to grow the Church throughout history (Acts; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5). "Necessity is the mother of invention" is commonly quoted, but seldom heeded in the American church, as too often we have equated conservative theology with non-changing methodology. People who have seen and heard me preach in Tanzania have asked me if I am "pentecostal" when I am overseas due to my cultural methodology of ministry. Although my theology does not change, I am especially sensitive to the culture and methods of doing ministry in such culturally different places. Let's just say that Grand Rapids and other churches in the US where I minister may not appreciate the methods I practice when in Tanzania and vice versa.

Have Hard Conversations

It is time for the leadership in our churches and ministries to ask the question, "What if we were starting this ministry right now?" How would we fulfill our mission and God's designed purposes for this church? What are ways we can meet the needs of those to whom we seek to minister? I challenge you to boldly reinvest your resources to do those ideas, and reallocate present resources which are currently being spent to preserve unviable methods. Call on people to serve the needs of others in smaller groups or families if public services are not possible or advisable in your area. Consider what neighbors of the church or its members might appreciate and need during this time. Is it help with tasks or comfort during this time? Let us not waste this crisis by "weathering the storm" so as to simply stay the same. We are all being challenged, and subconsciously manifest some forms of change avoidance, but this is a time for managing change to bring about greater effectiveness and to learn methods which will last beyond the crisis. May God grant each of us courage and wisdom for these times. TM



THE CENTRALITY of the FAMILY to the MISSIO DEI

by Timothy R. Board
U.S. Development Director
Things to Come Mission

Advancing the grace gospel to the ends of the earth begins right at home because family life is central to the missio Dei. This Latin term means “the mission of God” and affirms that the Lord is a sending God who deploys His people into the harvest field of souls with the salt and light of redemptive truth vested in the Person and completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The biblical basis of the centrality of the family to the missio Dei is therefore rooted in the undeniable nature of marriage to the nuclear family, the essential position of family to the local church, the necessity of the church to a stable society, and the strategic role of the church to missionally engage culture with the gospel for the glory of Almighty God.

Centrality of Marriage to the Nuclear Family

At the heart of the undeniable centrality of marriage to God’s biblical design for the family is: 1. The Irreplaceable Nature of Marriage, 2. The Irreplaceable Nature of Gender Roles, and 3. The Irreplaceable Nature of Manhood.

Christ Himself affirmed the timeless and irreplaceable definition of marriage as a covenant relationship between one man and one woman for a lifetime (Mat 19:4-5 cf. Mal 2:14-15). This male and female oneness in marriage is designed by the Creator to bear the fruit of offspring and multiply as the Creator’s vice-regents of dominion stewardship (Gen 1:26-28 cf. Ps 8:6-8). Within the context of the marriage relationship, God’s design for the husband and wife

is rooted in being mutually created in the image of God with equal dignity and worth but with inherently different roles and responsibilities that are complementary to one another for the sake of the proper ordering of both family and church life (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:23-24; 1 Tim 2:12-15). The irreplaceable nature of gender roles in marriage also affirms the reality that God particularly branded men in His image and beckons them to reject passivity, accept responsibility, and to courageously initiate decisive action as Christ-built warrior-poets for the sake of their wives and children who are entrusted to them in a stewardship-like relationship (Gen 18:19; Deut 6:4-9; 1 Cor 16:13-14).

Centrality of the Family to the Local Church

At the heart of the essential position of the nuclear family to the local church is 1. The Complementary Relationship of Family and Church, 2. The Component Reality of Family to Church, and 3. The Critical Revitalization of the Family and Church.

The Lord Jesus Christ as eternal Creator of the family and sovereign Head of the Church, which is His Body, designed each of these divinely ordained institutions to partner together in a complementary relationship for the glory of His name (Eph 4:11-16, 6:1-4; 1 Thes 2:11-12). They are not to be in competition, but the family is to enrich the church, and the church is to equip the family. The health and vitality of the local church is a direct indication of the state of the

The biblical basis of the centrality of the family to the missio Dei is therefore rooted in the undeniable nature of marriage to the nuclear family, the essential position of family to the local church, the necessity of the church to a stable society, and the strategic role of the church to missionally engage culture with the gospel for the glory of Almighty God.

As the Sovereign Head of the Church, Christ divinely ordained the local church as central to human flourishing, being the established moral back pressure of salt and light in every township, municipality, and urban population center among all nations worldwide.

Christ has entrusted His Church with the stewardship responsibility of the Grace Commission, which is the intentional engagement of culture among all nations worldwide beginning with the gospel of grace revealed to and through the Apostle Paul for the present dispensation of grace.

home as families are the central components of this divinely ordained institution (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12, 27; Eph 4:16, 5:33-6:4). The departure of young people from church involvement and often the Christian faith altogether is therefore, an alarming trend that is a grave concern to both entities. Revitalizing biblical family life is consequently critical to the health of the church and its mandate to missionally engage culture in every generation with the exclusivity of Jesus Christ, the gospel of God's grace, and the comprehensive nature of the biblical Christian worldview (Rom 11:33-12:2; 13:11-14; 2 Cor 10:3-5; Eph 5:14-17; Col 2:6-10).

Centrality of the Church to the Community

At the heart of the necessity of the local church to a stable society are three biblical characteristics of the church, which are 1. Buttressed Pillar of Doctrinal Truth, 2. Back Pressure of Moral Conscience, and 3. Bastion of Providential Testimony of History.

The biblical basis of the centrality of the family to the *missio Dei* is therefore rooted in the undeniable nature of marriage to the nuclear family, the essential position of family to the local church, the necessity of the church to a stable society, and the strategic role of the church to missionally engage culture with the gospel for the glory of Almighty God. around the globe (1 Cor 3:11; Eph 3:10; Col 1:24-26; 1 Tim 3:15; 2 Tim 3:14-4:5). As the Sovereign Head of the Church, Christ divinely ordained the local church as central to human flourishing, being the established moral back pressure of salt and light in every township, municipality, and urban population center among all nations worldwide. He also designed it to be the reservoir of testimony bearing witness to God's mighty hand and outstretched arm at work in the annals of history thus passing it down through the corridors of time for the glory of His name in future generations (Deut 4:9-10; Josh 4:19-24; cf. Jud 2:7-13; Ps 78:1-8; Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11).

Centrality of the Church to Cultural Engagement

At the heart of the strategic role of the church to missionally engage culture with the gospel for God's glory is the 1. Strategic Relevance of the Christian Worldview to Human Flourishing, 2. Stewardship Responsibility of the Grace Commission, and the 3. Sobering Reality of the Exclusivity of Biblical Christianity.

The comprehensive nature of the biblical Christian worldview is the key that unlocks the divinely ordained patterns of life at the heart of mankind's pursuit, having been created in the image of God, to be creatively innovative, maximize scientific advancement, and expand the horizons of culture for the sake of human flourishing and God's glory as our Creator King and Redeemer (Gen 1:28; Ps 8:6-8; Jer 29:4-7; Matt 22:37-40; Gal 6:7-8; 1 Tim 2:1-7).

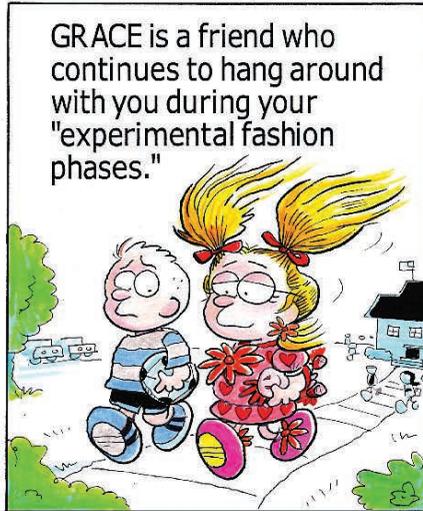
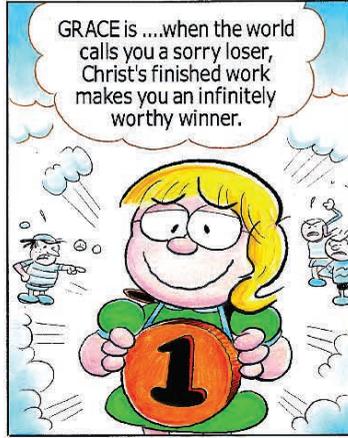
Christ has entrusted His Church with the stewardship responsibility of the Grace Commission, which is the intentional engagement of culture among all nations worldwide beginning with the gospel of grace revealed to and through the Apostle Paul for the present dispensation of grace (Acts 20:24; 1 Cor 9:16-23; 2 Cor 5:9-11). This two-fold ministry mandate includes Christ's ambassadors heralding the message of reconciliation and bringing to light what is the administration of the mystery of God's grace as He desires all to be saved and to understand what He is doing today in the present age (2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 3:8-9; 1 Tim 2:3-4). At the judgment seat of Christ, every member of the Church will give an account of this wholistic ministry stewardship regarding how faithfully they defended the faith as a soldier, advanced the belief as an athlete, and cultivated the faith as a farmer in the arena of culture in general and the lives of people in particular (1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Tim 2:1-7; Titus 2:11-14).

The one true God of the Bible divinely ordained that only those people who consciously place their faith in Christ as Savior by the preaching of the gospel through a human agency are delivered from His wrath against their sin in the eternal torments of the lake of fire (Is 45:22; Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12; Phil 2:9-11; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Rev 20:15). This sobering reality is meant to electrify one's walk with God by deliberately opening the mouth and speaking of Christ to a world in urgent need of living hope.

Advancing the gospel of grace to the ends of the earth does indeed begin right at home because family life is undeniably central to the *missio Dei*. May God's Spirit raise up a new generation with the passion to intentionally live on mission "in Christ" near and far to the praise of God's glory forever! TM

Leah

FROM BEREA



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"YEA, SO HAVE I STRIVED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, NOT WHERE CHRIST WAS NAMED . . ." ROMANS 15:20

St. Louis Bible Fellowship Turns

80



Last year, 2020, may go down in infamy as one of the most trying and difficult times in our nation's history. But, for those of us who are part of the history and faithful legacy of St. Louis Bible Fellowship, it has been a year of celebration and opportunity.

tance of "rightly dividing" the Word of God and encouraged all those gathered to continue proclaiming the truths revealed in the "revelation of the mystery.

Our theme was, "Our Legacy & Our Future!" We learned of those precious saints who had gone before us, who had been committed to "guarding that precious deposit." We heard stirring testimonies from men dedicated to advancing the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Janet Schmittgens, a longtime member of Bible Fellowship whose grandfather and father were both instrumental in beginning the church, chronicled our history in this manner:

On Sunday, October 11, 2020, we celebrated our 80th anniversary and did not allow anything to hinder us as we gathered together to mark this historical milestone. We came together to worship and enjoy a celebration of the spiritual legacy of this local assembly.

With an outstanding worship service and a potluck dinner to remember, we praised God for His faithfulness and for the faithfulness of all those who had blazed the trail. The late Pastor Eugene Rueweler, through the gift and editing of old recordings, managed to share the impor-



Pastor Eugene Rueweler

**HISTORY OF
ST. LOUIS BIBLE FELLOWSHIP**

The assembly had its beginning in 1937 when four men came together and started a group called "The Bible Believers." These four men were Mr. Tieman, Mr. Hacker, Mr. Anderson, and Mr. Benz. They conducted tent meetings at 6143 Etzel Avenue from June 1937 through August 1939, and each evening the speaker was Pastor Intregren (see picture #1). Based on the success of these tent meetings, an empty bank building was rented. Regular meetings began at the new location in December of 1939, and in January 1940, Eugene Rueweler was called to be the new pastor.



Pastor Eugene Rueweler

On March 4, 1940, St. Louis Bible Institute was adopted as the new name. It was also planned to form a Christian school for Bible training with Pastor Rueweler as the dean. On May 9, 1940, Pastor Rueweler was officially made the pastor. On October 6, 1940, another name change occurred, and the church officially became the St. Louis Bible Fellowship.

In May of 1941, a storefront rented (see picture #2). On November 28, 1941, the congregation was incorporated as an independent Bible church. Meetings were held in the storefront building until March 2, 1942, when a church building was purchased (see picture #3).

The first service was held on Resurrection Sunday, April 5, 1942, and on April 12, 1945, the church hosted the first convention of the Grace Gospel Fellowship. Interestingly, it was at that meeting that the GGF adopted its constitution



Congregation circa 1949

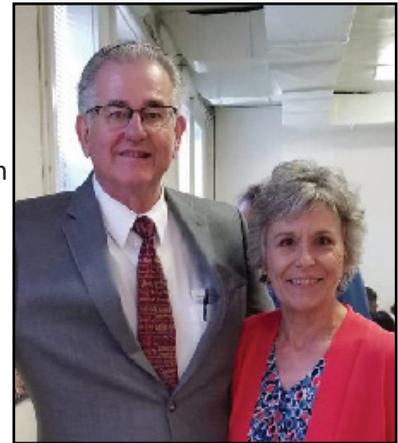
and plans were made for a Bible school to begin in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Milwaukee Bible School eventually moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, and is now Grace Christian University.

Pastor Rueweler pastored the church for over 51 years until his health failed, and it was necessary to go into a nursing home. He passed away on July 16, 1993.

The pulpit was filled by interim preachers until May 3, 1992, when Tim Stringham was called to be the new pastor. He pastored until September 6, 1993. Once again, visiting preachers delivered the word until the church building was sold on March 11, 1994, and the congregation moved to a room at the German Cultural Society.

The church was without a pastor for four years, and various men from the church would preach on Sunday mornings. On October 12, 1997, Pastor Rick Owsley and his wife, Fay, were called to serve as the new pastor.

With a new pastor in place, search began to find a new place to worship. Under the leadership of Pastor Rick, Ken Gardner, Ed Jude, and the keen eye of Marge Richtermeier, a church building (see picture #4) was rented, with an option to purchase. On Palm Sunday, April 5, 1998, St. Louis Bible Fellowship held their first service at the new building. The building was officially purchased on November 2, 1998. We continue to worship our faithful and almighty God at this location.



Pastor Rick & Fay Owsley

St. Louis Bible Fellowship has come a long way since 1940 and continues to preach the Word of God rightly divided with enthusiasm and seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in all that we do.

TM



Congregation circa 1999

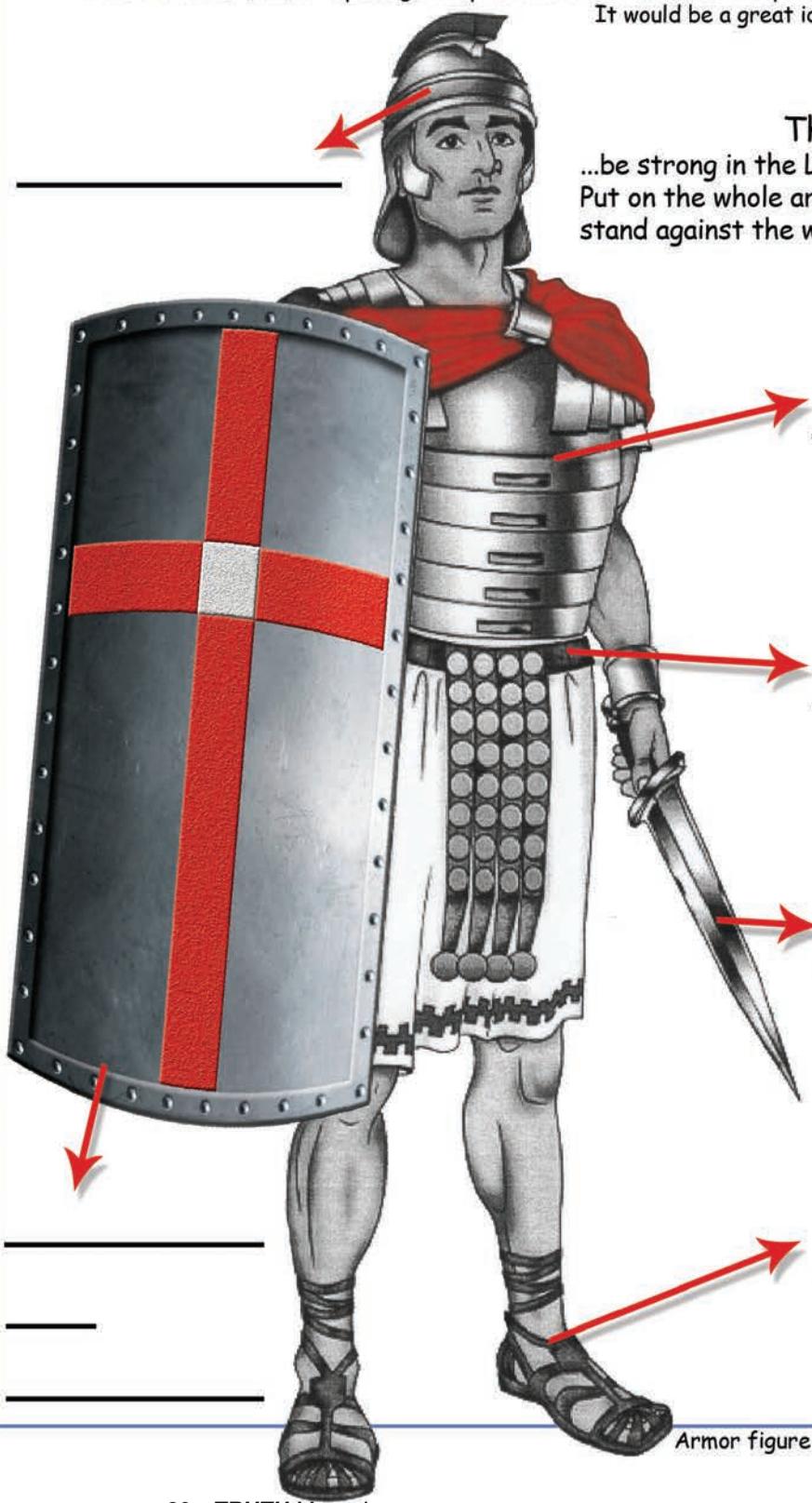
The late Pastor Eugene Rueweler, through the gift and editing of old recordings, managed to share the importance of "rightly dividing" the Word of God and encouraged all those gathered to continue proclaiming the truths revealed in the "revelation of the mystery."

The first service was held on Resurrection Sunday, April 5, 1942, and on April 12, 1945, the church hosted the first convention of the Grace Gospel Fellowship.

TRUTH 4 YOUTH

This page is for all of the younger ones in our fellowship. We hope to be able to convey sound biblical TRUTH that can strengthen and encourage. We will try to have something for all ages, We believe that even young lives should be grounded in the TRUTH of Paul's message of GRACE in the dispensation of the GRACE of God.

Find the words from the passage in Ephesians 6 that describe the pieces of armor indicated by the arrows.
It would be a great idea to memorise Ephesians 6:1-20.



The Armor of God

...be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Ephesians 6:10-11

Armor figure © Rose Publishing

Oh, our God, as we begin this day by the merit of the Son,
the might of the Spirit, the majesty of Thy person,
Release us from failures of the past.
Erase from us the fears of the present.
Remove from us the uncertainties of the future.
Pierce our hearts with truth.
Challenge our lives with Thy love.
Challenge the course of our direction with Thy power and might.

Charge our spirits with a contagious enthusiasm to:

Hate nothing but sin,
Love nothing but Thy will,
Desire nothing but your glory.

Grant us simple faith,
A sound mind,
A steady course.

Fill us with the desire for “things that are excellent” and eternal.
Preserve us from the corrosion of a worldly mind.
Plant within us the mind of Christ.
Protect us from the corruption of a depraved flesh.
Replace our wickedness with the purity of Christ.
Save us from the petty obsession of the trivial.
Heal us where we hurt, humble us when we are self-reliant.
Lift us when our spirits are low, widen our sympathies.
Broaden our understanding, deepen our insights.
Sharpen our intellects, embolden our faith.
Enrich our love, intensify our concern.
Mold our minds, direct our paths.

We pray for the
Peace of nations,
Pardon of the sinner,
Cleansing of the saint,
Triumph of Thy people for Thy name’s sake.

For all our public servants, we implore;
Thy guidance and mercy,
Thy wisdom and understanding.

May they be prayerful in acceptance of responsibility,
Faithful in performance of duties,
Humble in the exercise of authority,
Wise in the execution of obligations.

Whatever Thy will has said to us,
Grant us the will to obey.
Give us the power to perform.

Teach us to pray.

The above thoughts were recently found in the archives of the GGF. These words were penned by Pastor Vernon Schutz. There is no indication as to when they were written but they seem very apropos in today’s world.

Photo courtesy of James Lawley



Join the 2021 **EXITE** team
as we serve in Nicaragua!
JULY 12-25

A trip like this can be a life-changer as you see firsthand what God is doing in the largest country in Central America. Something exciting happens when we step out of our comfort zone with other students to be the "hands and feet of Jesus." EXITE is about spiritual growth as we put our faith into action in practical ways serving our Nicaraguan brothers and sisters in Christ. Experience the joy of seeing how God can work through you in new and powerful ways as you share His love with people in need of a Savior in a culture and environment very different than your own. You will learn about their culture and observe how our Nicaraguan believers are living out their faith in their own community, as well as taking the Gospel of Grace into neighboring towns.

TRIP INFORMATION:

- Dates: July 12-25, 2021
- July 12-14 – Boot Camp at Grace Christian University
- July 15-25 – Ministry in Nagarote, Nicaragua

COST:

- \$850 – EXITE fees (room & board, local transportation, boot camp costs, project donations, sightseeing adventure day)
- \$900 – Estimated plane fare (Grand Rapids – Nicaragua – Grand Rapids)
- \$1750- Approximate total cost
- Age: 14 years old or 9th – 12th grade



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GGFRN

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Sharing what the Lord is doing around the fellowship and how lives are being touched by God's grace.

As a fellowship of churches spread out across the nation, the regional news helps to bring us together.

Let us hear from you!



Cascade Mountain Bible Church (Leavenworth, WA) Pastor Todd James

Last month with six different individuals, including the pastor, contracting the Covid-19 virus, the whole church took one week off and those individuals who contracted the virus took two weeks off. Since then our services have resumed and all is well. For those interested, only one individual became very ill, and after a treatment at a local independent clinic, that individual is also doing very well. We give God the glory and continue to live boldly for Him.



Grace Bible Church (Anaheim, CA)

We had the privilege of having the Gulart family come and stay in the parsonage and Alex did a great job of filling the pulpit until we got shut down by Covid-19. However, he livestreamed his last two sermons before they left on December 8. He and his family are sorely missed as we had some great fellowship with them even during the shutdown.



Cope Community Church (Cope, CO): (Terry Covert, Pastor)

A quick update to let everyone know that I am resigning my position as pastor of Cope Community Church. Probably could call it retirement but feel like there is something that God still has for me to do. Please pray for Cope Church as they begin the process of looking for a new pastor and pray for Patty and me as we seek God’s direction in this new season of our ministry lives.

Denver Bible Church (Arvada, CO): Pastor Bob Enyart

Denver Bible Church (DBC) won a first-round victory in court after we sued the governor’s office for overbearing COVID restrictions. Federal Judge Daniel Domenico issued a 44-page ruling stating that DBC (along with our co-plaintiff, Community Baptist Church) is expected to prevail on the merits. So for our church members, Domenico struck down the state’s artificial limits on attendance and its order for wearing masks during worship services. The governor appealed, and the 10th Circuit, temporarily, has issued a stay. Taking our lead from the Apostle Paul in Acts, we continue the fight to see our God-given rights upheld.

Harvest Fellowship (Brighton, CO): (Pastors Steve Blackwell & Bob Hill)

It’s been very sad with these pandemic limits affecting other churches shutting their doors for good. We have gained several families that we are helping integrate into our church. We kind of feel like a triage center. For ourselves, we have made a commitment to have our church and services stay open peacefully from now on. We believe the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is very clear on religion and non-interference by the government, and yet we can still practice health department safety procedures. We feel like this is a great time to get our minds back on Jesus Christ. We feel very blessed to not be in any kind of financial crisis, and at the same time, continue with our usual schedule. We do not know what the future holds for us here, but

we do know what the future holds for us there, no matter what the world does to us as Christians.



St. Louis Bible Fellowship (Rick Owsley, Pastor)

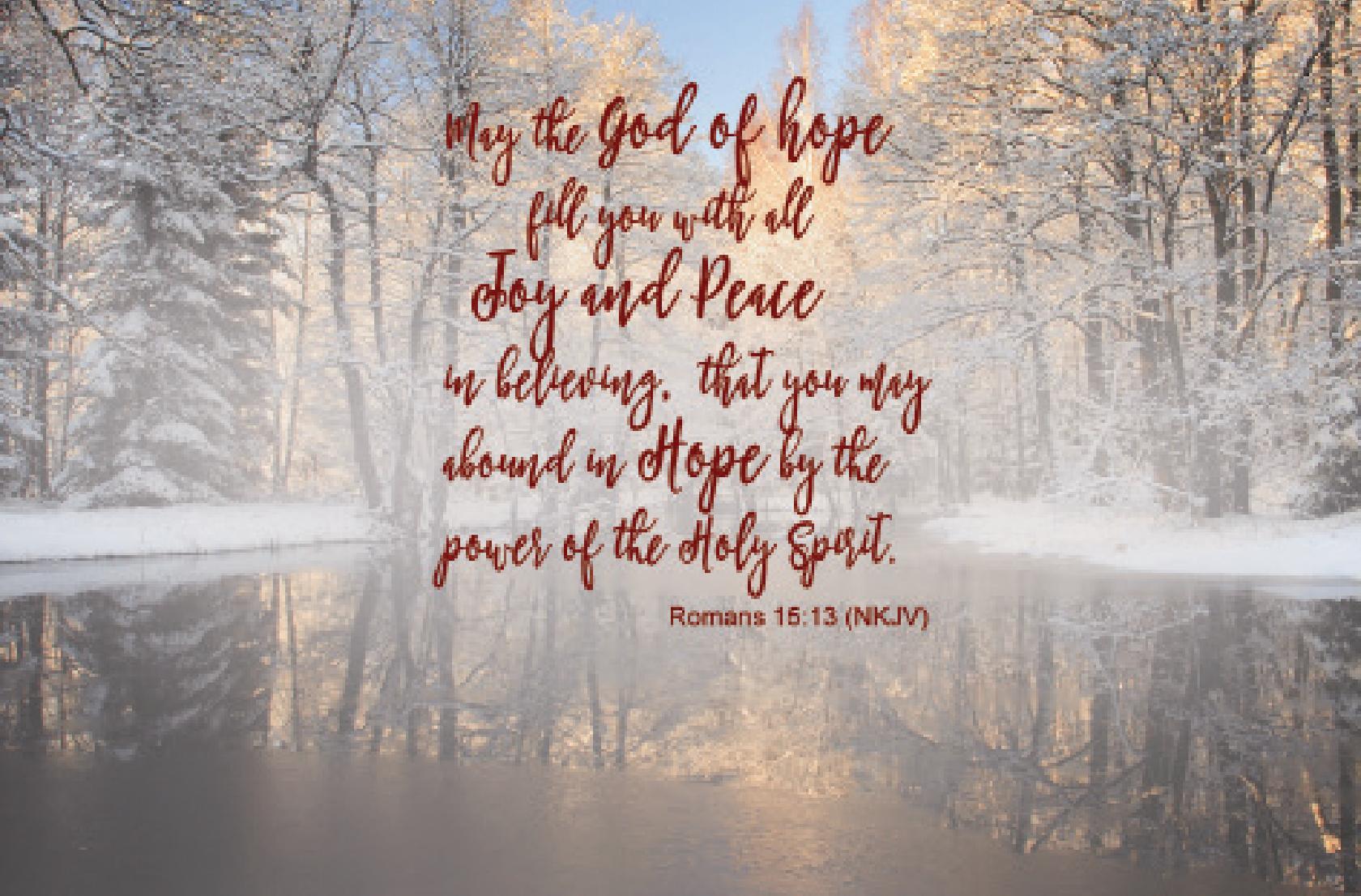
St Louis Bible Fellowship continues to reach out and minister despite the challenges of Covid-19. We have discovered that these difficult times greatly enhance our chances to share the Gospel of the Grace of God. Bible Fellowship celebrated its 80th anniversary in October and just recently ordained Tim Hargrove to the ministry, along with several new deacons and deaconesses. We have seen our numbers increase and rejoice that the Word of God is not bound. We believe that we are living in exciting times and times of opportunity. Maranatha!

Editor’s Note: As you can see as you read the regional reports, the pandemic has had an effect on all of us. Restrictions may vary from one region to the next, but we all are experiencing a new way to worship and interact with each other. Regardless of the extent to which your particular assembly may, or may not worship, remember that true worship comes from the heart through the Spirit. The Lord has thankfully shown many churches the advantages in livestreaming the regular services. This has truly been a wonderful addition and has opened our churches to new opportunities. Let’s remember that we are a “fellowship” and lift each other up in prayer.



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May the God of hope
fill you with all
Joy and Peace
in believing, that you may
abound in Hope by the
power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13 (NKJV)