

TRUTH

magazine

Fall 2015 Edition

The earth is the Lord's and all its fulness...

Psalm 24:1

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

GRACE GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP

TRUTH

M A G A Z I N E

Fall Edition, Volume 65, Issue 3

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

Feature Article

What If Christ Had Not Died and Risen Again?



page 14

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Additional Articles of Interest



**GRACE GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP**

Vision 2020
by Frosty Hansen

2



*The Drudgery of Doing Work
vs. the Vision for Vital Service*
by Ken B. Kemper

4



GMI
Grace Ministries International

*Is Ultimate Frisbee
Like Discipleship?*
by Jeremy Clark

6

*Also
In this
Issue*

Leah from Berea
by Bill Connolly

8

Ed Says
by Ed Jeude

9

Origins of the Grace Movement
by Dale DeWitt and Bryan C. Ross

10

Dying Without Fear
by Harl Hargett

17



Regional News

20

TRUTH Magazine is the quarterly membership periodical of the
GGF. Gift subscriptions can be purchased through the national
office.

by Timothy and Sharon McGarvey



For over 60 years TRUTH Magazine has served as a means of communication between organizations and individual members of the Grace Movement. With the writings of J.C. O'Hair, Charles F. Baker, Cornelius Stam, Dr. Harry Bultema, and others, it has been the goal of this magazine to promote the unique doctrinal position of the GGF and to pass on to future generations the truth as revealed to and through the Apostle Paul. In addition, articles with an emphasis on godly living have balanced the content. It is our pleasure to step into this position with the intent to carry on that tradition.

In a world that appears to be sliding farther away from the God of creation and the true Savior, we see it is even more important today than ever before to focus on the whole of "the mystery." There seems to be an emphasis today on the practical aspect with less stress placed on the doctrinal. The Apostle Paul warns us of such a day (2 Timothy 4:3). Folks today are afraid of too much doctrine because it is said that it divides. While it may be true that doctrine divides, truth always has—your truth may not be my truth. However, it is truth from which we gain the proper instruction for this life and the means to the life above.

In the past few months we have seen decisions made by our highest court that goes against the Word of God. Marriage is being redefined from that which the Bible described. We have seen videos of those who perform abortions and sell the body parts and tissue for a corporate profit. One prominent former pastor referred to the Bible as "2,000-year-old writings" and those who choose to continue following them will become "irrelevant." A presidential candidate stated that Christians needed to see where society was going and then adjust their thinking. It seems as though Romans 1-3 is alive and well and being repeated in the world today.

The articles about the life and theological journey of J.C. O'Hair have stirred in the hearts of some a renewed appreciation for the Grace Message and its distinctive truths. The battles he fought, both within himself and with those with whom he had ministerial contact, remind us that truth is always worth taking a stand. The fascinating change is his theological transition that basically was begun when a seemingly insignificant question was asked of him and it stirred his heart to find a truly biblical answer. The airwaves are filled with a veritable menagerie of doctrinal positions. Is it any wonder there is so much confusion and chaos in the world today? Simply "rightly dividing the Word of truth" can sweep away so many questions.

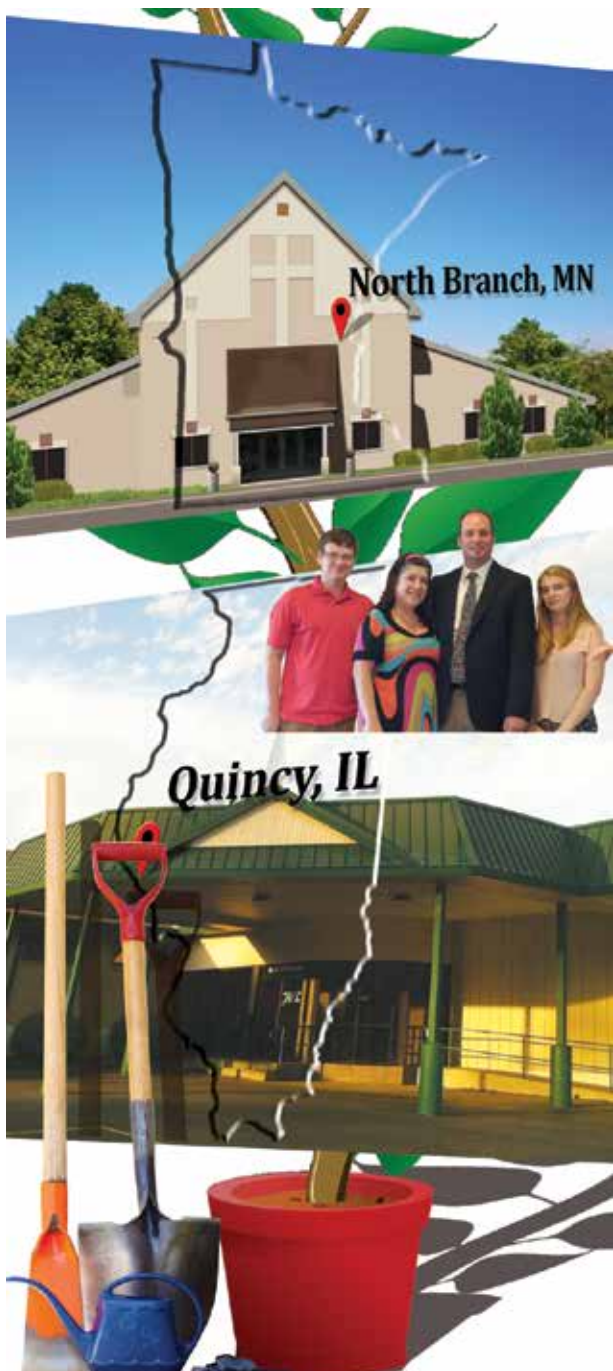
We have enjoyed reading about J.C. O'Hair and have looked forward to each new installment. O'Hair was focused like a laser in his ministry. He loved his message because he knew what it had cost him. Colossians 4 tells us of a time when the Apostle Paul was in prison for preaching the gospel of grace. While there he prayed and asked the Lord that opportunities to preach would be opened to him. Paul believed his message. More importantly, he believed in the one of whom he preached. He also knew how standing up caused him harm. Like Paul, O'Hair knew the separation from other well-known ministers of his day because of his stand, but he never wavered and he didn't compromise.

We rejoice in the Lord and all He is doing today. In the midst of all of the sinfulness, God is still on His throne and the gospel is still changing lives. True joy can still be found in the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are thankful for this opportunity to serve the Lord in this way at this time. May we be useful servants of the Lord.

In putting together *TRUTH*, editors have struggled for many years to get fresh material to fill its pages. Often they have had to go back to the archives and resurrect old, previously run articles. The writings of our founders are still relevant today even if a few of the illustrations are outdated. The basic scriptural information never lacks importance or goes out of style. But as much as we enjoy those older writings, it is good to read the thoughts of a new generation. There are many young pastors (and older ones) who are young ambassadors for truth. They are preaching from the Word of God and expounding the grace of God. Theological issues, practical applications, and doctrinal insights are the very things that are being studied and taught. Why not teach us? A basic article of 1,500 words is what we are seeking.

We would also like to hear from the readers as to what they like or how their life was impacted by a particular article. In the future we would like to add a "Letters to the Editor" page. This page enables us to see what is being read and received by the readership. It also allows readers to see what others may have thought about something they read. Let us hear from you. ■

by Frosty Hansen
President of Grace Gospel Fellowship



Droid! My cell phone had come to life with a voice mail as we traveled down I-5 toward Grants Pass, OR. Since I was driving, Cathy listened to the message and let me know that I needed to call Pastor Rick Owsley as soon as possible. Wondering what might be going on at St. Louis Bible Fellowship, I pulled over at the next rest area and soon found myself in one of the most exhilarating and faith-strengthening conversations I have ever experienced. God was powerfully at work, far beyond what I could possibly imagine!

The Lord had already stretched my faith during the previous seven months as the GGF National Council worked through the vision crafting process. It was an invigorating experience as we spent five two-hour sessions together as we considered how we might trust God to work in new, exciting ways through our Fellowship. The early steps of the process were relatively easy as we contemplated and then reaffirmed what we already knew to be the mission statement¹ and core values² of the GGF. But what about the actual vision statement? What do we believe God desires to do through the GGF in the next five years?

We dedicated ourselves to prayer, both during and between these challenging meetings. As we did so, three great needs constantly rose to the surface – planting more GGF churches, strengthening our existing churches, and developing more pastors. All three areas are of primary importance, and together they reflect the priorities of the Apostle Paul who was constantly starting new churches, building up established churches, and appointing elders for every church.

In April the National Council was able to share a new vision statement during the GGF Leadership Conference:

“We the GGF, by God’s strength and fully believing it is His desire, will work to develop healthy, culturally relevant, reproducing churches with visionary leaders that will partner to plant more of the same.”

It was emphasized that the introductory phrase “*we the GGF*” does not merely refer to any one individual or even a group of leaders. This is a shared vision which includes every GGF church, region, affiliated organization, and member. We as individuals within the GGF must partner together to accomplish this vision.

The real challenge to my faith came as we considered the five-year goals for what we call Vision 2020. By the end of the year 2020, we believe God will empower the GGF to fulfill the following goals:

- 20 churches (10 new church plants and 10 revitalized churches)
- 20 new pastors

(continued on page 3)

¹GGF Mission Statement – “Working together to advance the grace of God and impact the world for Christ.”

²GGF Core Values – For a more complete presentation of the five GGF Core Values (Bible Centered; Grace Theology; Grace Living; Missional; Partnership), see “Roots That Give Life,” *TRUTH*, Apr-Jun, 2015, p. 1-3. Also available in booklet format. Contact GGF.

(continued from page 2)

Honestly, this struck me as a huge task for the GGF. Though I concurred that each of these goals is important and must be reached, planting 10 churches in five years struck me as a steep hill to climb when we consider the lack of church planting by GGF churches and regions in recent decades. Where will these churches and these new pastors come from? Were we setting ourselves up for failure?

Droid! It wasn't exactly the sound of a burning bush or the voice of an angel of the Lord. But under an overcast sky at a rest area in Oregon on May 19, God spoke to my heart with a clear message: "Is there anything too hard for Me?"

As we spoke on the phone, Pastor Rick Owsley began to explain a series of events so unbelievably amazing that it left no doubt in my mind but that the hand of God was at work and would continue to work. A denominational church in Quincy, Illinois, some 130 miles distant from St. Louis, was closing down and had contacted St. Louis Bible Fellowship (SLBF) regarding their building. Apparently, one of the remaining members of the Quincy congregation had come to an understanding of the Grace Message through the teaching ministry of SLBF, and now they were offering to donate their completely furnished, beautiful facility to SLBF. The only expectation was that a Grace church be planted at that location.

Finally, Pastor Rick asked the question, "Would the GGF be interested in partnering with us in this church plant?" Yes! Pastor Rick, the GGF would be thrilled to partner with Grace churches in planting new congregations!

But who would pastor this new church? Don Hosfeld, an elder at SLBF, and his wife, Valerie, had already stepped forward. This couple has been serving Christ faithfully and teaching the Word of God at church and in Bible studies. They also have been praying that God would someday give them a church plant where Don could serve as pastor. The Lord's hand was obviously at work in every step of this church plant.

The inaugural service of Quincy Bible Fellowship Church was held on August 23. Pastor Don and Val currently commute from St.

Louis twice weekly but hope to relocate to Quincy in the coming months. Pray for them as they teach God's Word and seek to reach souls for Christ through this new church plant.

Church planting has also been on the hearts and in the prayers of people in Minnesota for nearly three decades. The leadership of Bethesda Church had often spoken of the possibility of starting another church. Every year when Bible teacher Les Feldick spoke at Bethesda, visitors would ask when they would have a Grace church in their area. The need was apparent, but when would the time be right to plant a new GGF church in Minnesota?

Then God gripped the heart of Pastor Mark Matychuk, and now the time was right! Participating in the vision crafting sessions as a member of the GGF National Council, Pastor Mark was moved by the challenge to plant more Grace churches, and he was certain God desired to use Bethesda Church to reach out to another portion of the sprawling Twin Cities Metro Area. As the vision was presented to the congregation, a decision was made to purchase a barely-used church facility 70 miles north in the town of North Branch.

There was an air of excitement when Cathy and I attended an open house at the North Branch site. Bethesda members who have been commuting from the northern suburbs can now invite friends to a Bible-teaching church that is nearby. Volunteers are excitedly preparing the building for the October 18 inaugural service. Pray for Bethesda's outreach into the community and for Pastor Mark as he initially commutes to preach at both locations.

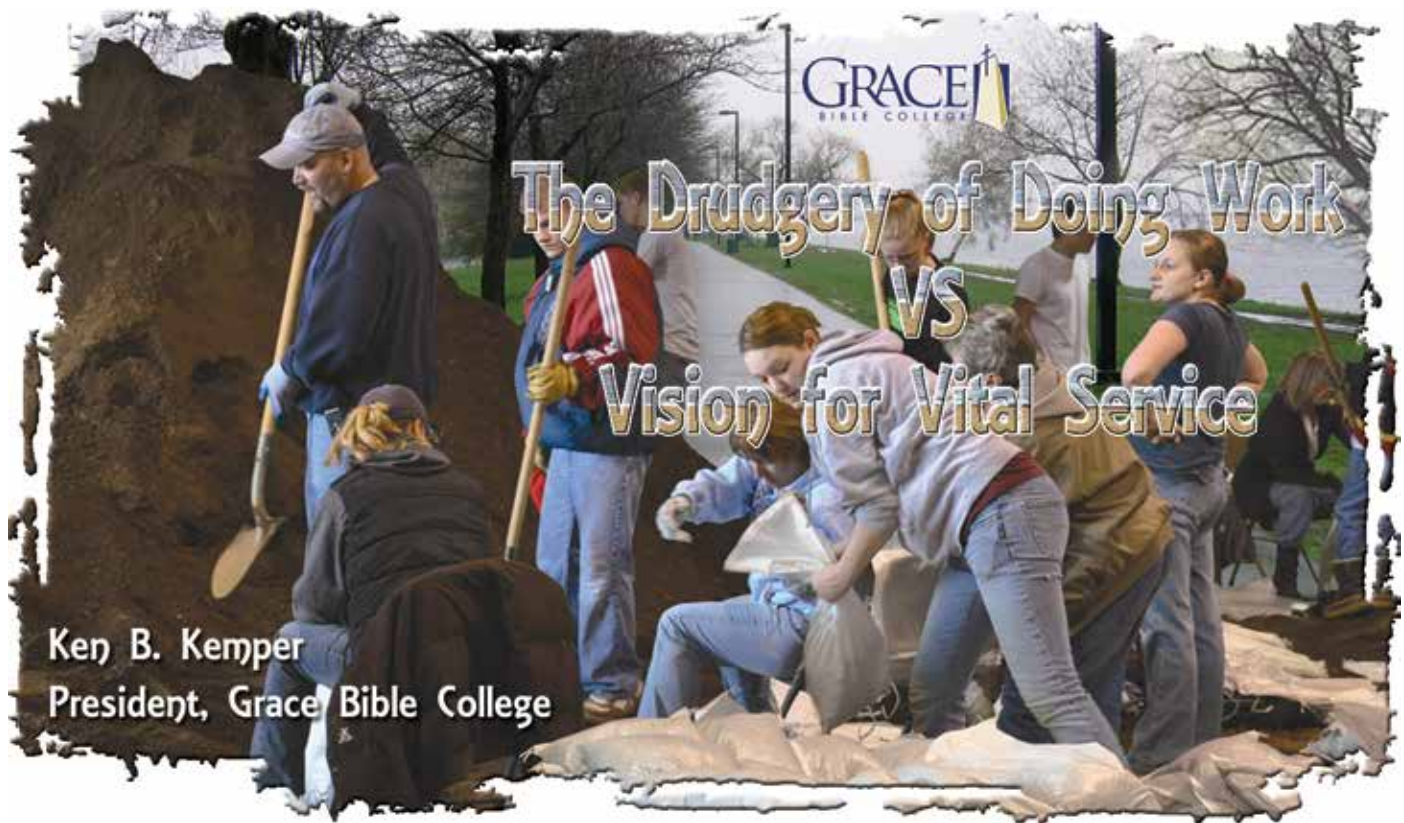
All of this is just the beginning. God is already at work and desires to do even more through the GGF as together we catch a vision for healthy, culturally relevant, reproducing churches with visionary leaders who will partner to plant more of the same. Here is how you can partner with us for Vision 2020:

- Be a GGF prayer partner. Make the goals of *Vision 2020* part of your daily prayers.
- Challenge your church to partner with other GGF churches in planting a new congregation in your region.
- Develop an awareness of struggling churches in your region and look for ways to encourage and assist them in their ministry.
- Is there someone you might encourage to consider serving Christ as a pastor? Maybe it's a young person, or perhaps a current leader in your congregation. Maybe it's you!
- Support the GGF financially as we invest in new churches and existing churches and prepare future pastors to serve Christ and His Church.

There is a tremendous need in our society for the strong, biblical teaching offered through GGF churches. There is a thirst for the clear teaching of the gospel of the grace of God. Our prayer is for churches and individuals throughout the Grace Gospel Fellowship to understand God's heart and catch a vision for what He can do as we work together to advance the gospel of the grace of God and impact even more cities and communities for Christ. ■



Congregation at North Branch Church north of Minneapolis, MN



An Example

Once there was a small town in the southern Midwest portion of the USA located along a beautifully flowing river. The town was constructed there because of its proximity to the river. The businesses and streets were organized and planned around the river's contours. This allowed people to see the small boats on the river, enjoy the green spaces adjacent to the river, or stop to rest or feed the ducks at the edge of the river. Along the banks, river walls protected the town from occasional flooding. Usually, the river rose 3-5 feet above normal when the winter snow melted and spring rains began. At times, the town leadership thought about raising the height of the wall, but instead, they utilized a sandbagging system to secure the town when unusually high water was anticipated or reported farther upstream. Since this type of heavy flooding typically happened only once every 8-10 years, this plan remained the standard practice.

One year, the town leaders heard that the spring forecast called for heavy rain. They decided upon the "usual plan"—employing a dozen men to fill sandbags to begin preparing for the potential flooding. They budgeted an amount to allow 12 men to work for eight hours, and tasked each man to fill 100 bags a day—this was a reasonable 12.5 bags per hour. The men were given their supplies, and sand was dumped in strategic places. The work began—"shump, shump" the shovels dug in and sand filled the 25-pound bags. The men worked well and were able to just about fill the 1,200 desired bags, but by the end of the day, they were quite tired and had sore muscles from their new activity. It was a challenge to begin the

second day with the same vigor they displayed on Day #1. In fact, on Day #2, some of the men decided that making \$12 an hour was not enough to make all their sore muscles worthwhile, so they petitioned for \$15 an hour, or threatened that "this would be their last day." The day ended with only about 950 bags being filled and the entire group was now clamoring for higher pay.

The rain had not yet begun to fall, but the forecast was certain as rain had already begun to fall upstream and to their west. The town leaders reluctantly granted the request of the workers and Day #3 began with 12 workers filling bags "shump, shump, shump." As they labored, their happiness with their wage increase faded. Additionally, they wanted other people to tie off and stack the sacks so they could merely focus on filling them. They were "only filling bags," and as the week progressed, their rest breaks grew longer and longer and their production decreased to only 75-85 bags per worker per day. By the time Saturday rolled around, there were only eight men left and they were not making their quota. In fact, they demanded another pay increase if they were to come back to work on Monday. During this time, the rains had been steadily accumulating upstream, and the reality of flooding was suddenly becoming very real. Sadly, the sandbag production for the full week had produced just over 4,000 bags when the original plan was for those 12 men to produce over 7,000 bags that week! The town leaders took action by broadcasting the urgent need for workers, now offering \$20 an hour -- plus one "stacker" for every three "bag fillers" to expedite the work. About 18 workers began the second week. The minimum goal was 1,200 bags per day, and the town maintenance workers took the filled bags and placed them along the river. The

(continued on page 5)

*"It is important that we be crystal clear about our vision—who we are in Christ...
what we are doing, and what the future holds."*

(continued from page 4)

new team worked hard making their quota on Day #1, but soon the same attitude toward "just filling bags" with sand infiltrated the group. By the end of the second day, some of the workers receiving the increased wage had quit, while others were demanding even higher pay.

Meanwhile, the rain began and the water began to rise. The town leaders dealt with the unhappy sandbaggers, but production did not increase. The people of the town began to see and hear about the flooding upriver, and realized the potential danger. By Thursday, the men had only produced another 3,000 sandbags, and discouragement prevailed. At this point, the town leadership declared a state of emergency to all townsfolk—"stop your work, come to the sand piles and help us 'save the town!'" People came with their own shovels, and in the middle of the pouring rain, men, women, and children worked from sunrise to sundown and well into the night to fill the bags and place them in piles along the river. They worked feverishly and with unified purpose, filling over 5,000 bags on Friday, and again on Saturday and Sunday! They were unpaid volunteers, yet never complained (except when they couldn't get bags fast enough to keep up with their efforts!).

The Moral of the Story

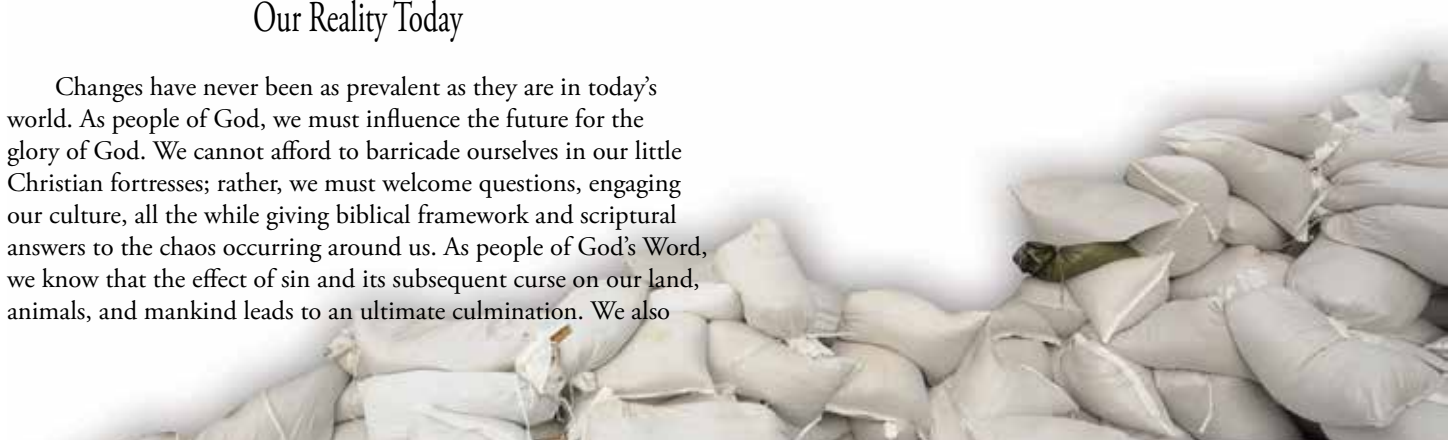
The water peaked along the piled sandbags; eventually the rain subsided; the little town returned to normal. Due to the high cost of labor to fill the first 25% of the bags, the town leaders did not have money to pay anyone to remove the sandbags, so they were left in place by the riverbanks. Seeing the need, the townsfolk declared the following Saturday as clean-up day, and they all came together to clear away the bags and restore the beauty to their waterfront. The leaders were puzzled as to why they were not able to prepare for the emergency with their budgeted labor. The answer came from a wise elder who said, "We made the mistake of hiring people to 'just fill sandbags' -- that's drudgery! We needed people with urgency to save our town!" They proudly labored and celebrated their labor at great personal cost.

Our Reality Today

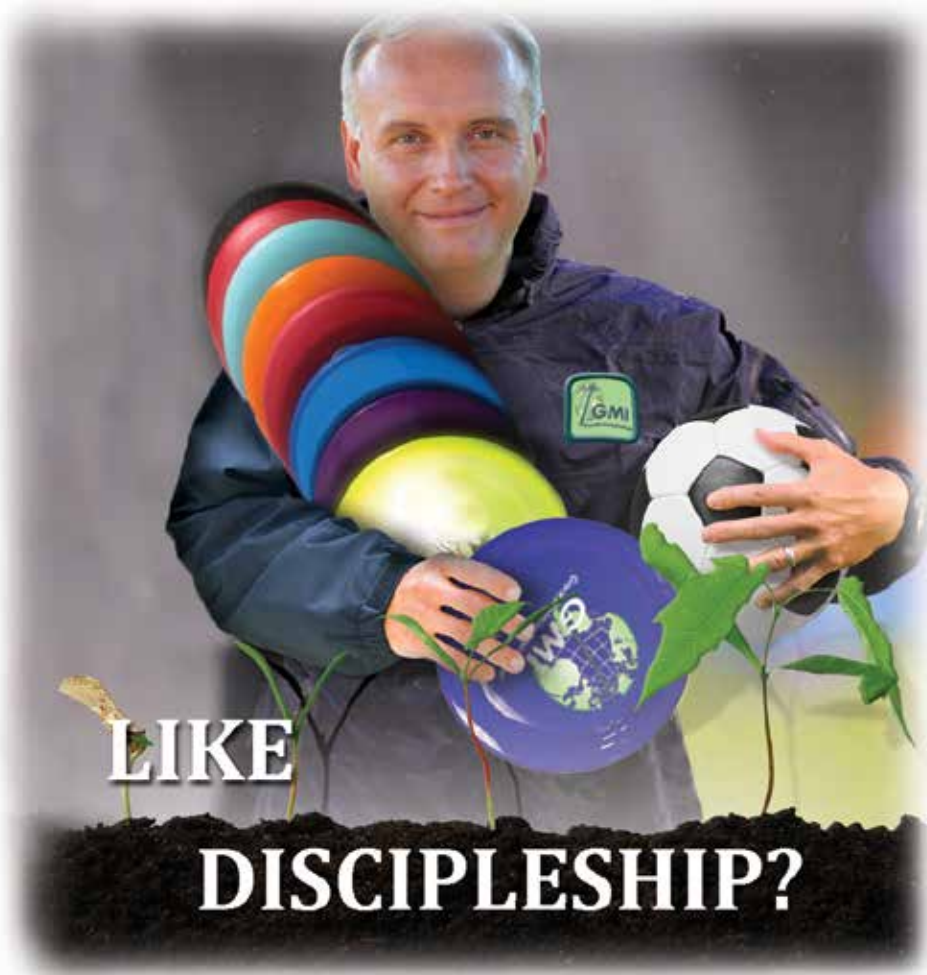
Changes have never been as prevalent as they are in today's world. As people of God, we must influence the future for the glory of God. We cannot afford to barricade ourselves in our little Christian fortresses; rather, we must welcome questions, engaging our culture, all the while giving biblical framework and scriptural answers to the chaos occurring around us. As people of God's Word, we know that the effect of sin and its subsequent curse on our land, animals, and mankind leads to an ultimate culmination. We also

know God did not leave the world spinning "out of control," void of any meaning, but sent His Son to redeem individual mankind, and He desires us to be influencers of others (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). This world in which we live is indeed "foreign ground," and as believers we live here as aliens (seemingly more than ever before). However, God has given us instructions and examples throughout His Word as to how we should live: not as the world, but as a testimony to others – offering an alternative to the world's mindset and influence (2 Corinthians 10:3-6; Colossians 2:6-8). As God's servants in this world, we seek to be purposeful people living with a vision of doing God's work in this world. He is still redeeming and reconciling the world to Himself by using the personal influence and contact of a believer to another person who needs to see and hear God's plan of redemption. God's plan for this Dispensation of Grace is for His human instruments to reach out to others with His love and truth (2 Timothy 2:2). God's vision of using believers to impact others is clear to us – especially when we attend a funeral; we realize that eternity is much longer and much more significant than the temporal here-and-now life which often consumes most of our time. This 'watermark' should bring clarity to our vision for the influence we have in the lives of each person during the short earthly years we have with them. It should also bring a strong dissatisfaction toward any apathy to being a witness of God's love and truth to others.

It is important that we be crystal clear about our vision—who we are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14), what we are doing, and what the future holds. We must communicate it often in our words and live it out in our actions. Confusion comes when believers muddy the message, and find themselves distracted by this world's systems and prosperity. We send an unclear message about why we were redeemed and left on this planet. We are God's agents for truth, love, and grace in a world which desperately needs our influence. We are NOT simply "shoveling" ministry or good works. We are on an eternal mission to reconcile eternal souls which has a Divine enablement of results for God's glory! Our focus on this vision gives us excitement to get out of bed, it compels us to interact with people in our neighborhoods, it prioritizes our budget decisions, and it gives life to living! ■



IS ULTIMATE FRISBEE



behind the thrower. Couple this dynamic with a culture used to kicking stuff and, well, it can be frustrating or entertaining depending on your point of view.

When we first started playing, it was not pretty. Frisbees would constantly hit the roof and find their way gliding through perfectly good sets of hands. For some reason though, this group of Costa Rican young people fell in love with the game and they never quit no matter how many fingernails got bent back or how many shins were bruised. It was not long before they figured out the strategy and took great pride in beating whatever team

I was on. I frequently found myself on the losing team which, from my point of view, was more frustrating than entertaining. Then we had an idea, "Let's challenge the mission teams coming down from the States at their sport."

The summer of 2010 is when a team of Costa Rican young adults beat two teams from the States. They were thrilled! It was an hour or so after that second victory when I realized what had been happening during the previous year. As several of us were standing around talking, one of the guys asked me, "Jeremy, are you proud of us?" I had committed to them my passion for a sport and then taught them how to play.

Isn't this what discipleship looks like? The Apostle Paul committed his passion for preaching, proclaiming, and living the grace of God to others so that they might in turn commit the same to yet other faithful men (2 Timothy 2:2). Paul was able to call Timothy and Titus sons in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4) because he embedded the genetics of this "common faith" into the lives of these two men. Mission work has no legacy where discipleship is lacking.

(continued on page 7)

by Jeremy Clark
Executive Director of Grace Ministries International

"Anything but soccer" was my heart's cry as the young adults' group in Costa Rica discussed what activity to do after our Bible studies. Maybe it was my own cultural (or even personal) prejudice against the sport or maybe it was a touch of missionary paternalism which reasoned that to be a well-rounded person you have to know how to play a sport that involves more than just your feet. I really thought these young people should expand their athletic horizons. I often likened soccer to a Latin American sermon—the clock does not mean a thing and it takes a long time to make a point.

Thanks to a few guys in the group from the Dominican Republic, whiffle ball was a real hit. Then we introduced a new sport—ultimate frisbee. It is a simple game requiring a team to advance the frisbee down the court and into the end zone by passing and catching. The concept is simple, but the technique is tricky. Even for most Americans throwing a frisbee is counter intuitive. It seems to take the opposite trajectory of what you intend often ending up

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“Often discipleship occurs naturally through our Christ-centered relationships, though we probably would never use the word ‘discipleship’ to describe the dynamic.”

(continued from page 6)

It is a privilege to work for Grace Ministries International which supports the efforts of a family of missionaries who understand and live out these fundamental principles of discipleship.

Real Life Examples

Amos Siwisa participated in Brook Seekins’ camps as a young man in Tanzania. Later he attended one of the regional Bible schools which were started by another GMI missionary, Steve Sherman. At these schools the teachers are pastors who sat under the teaching of Steve, other missionaries, and Tanzanian professors at Tanzania Grace Bible Institute. A few years ago when Mike Benton, one of our missionaries serving in the Rukwa Valley, was looking for someone to help train children’s ministry leaders and start weekly soccer Bible clubs, Brook recommended Amos. Mike and Amos have worked together closely both serving the Lord and planning future ministries. Recently, Amos has begun discipling another young man, Jehosaphat Mwendapole, teaching him what he has learned. Jehosaphat is traveling with Amos and teaching at the conferences Amos has organized. Amos is the product of several faithful men and women who shared their faith with him. Now he is investing in the lives of others.

Mike’s wife, Terese, and another missionary, Jodi Guilzon, continue to teach and train a group of women in the Rukwa Valley. The women’s group was started by another missionary, Kim Rabenold, several years ago. This humble group of ladies has become a ministry team which helps the sick, feeds the needy, encourages those who are burdened or mourning, and prays with those to whom they minister. Their ministry continues to impact this remote area

of Tanzania because they first received the blessing of missionaries investing in them.

The first time Talo Vergara met Miguel Mendez was in 2003 during his internship while studying at Grace Bible College. Miguel is well respected for his intelligence and integrity and even became a leader of the national church organization affiliated with GMI in Bolivia (Misión Evangélica Bethesda or the MEB) at the age of 19. When Talo returned to Bolivia in 2006 as a GMI missionary, Miguel was studying at the university to become a doctor. Talo and Miguel traveled, spent time, and studied God’s Word together. Twice they traveled internationally to attend ministry events in Uruguay and Argentina. It was on the first trip Miguel was inspired to start a medical mission organization and became its first president. At the age of 28 Miguel is one of the main leaders of his church, the MEB, and the medical mission organization he helped to found several years back.

Often discipleship occurs naturally through our Christ-centered relationships, though we probably would never use the word “discipleship” to describe the dynamic. Mike and Lynn Caraway are GMI missionaries in western Tanzania. Alice, a Tanzanian, is a good friend of the Caraways’ daughters and a young lady who has spent a lot of time with their family. As they took orphan children into their home, they taught Alice how to change disposable diapers, use baby wipes, and feed a baby using bottles and formulas—infant care which is unfamiliar to most Tanzanians. What they did not need to teach Alice was a love for children. On one occasion Lynn took Alice on two-day bus ride to the city of Dar es Salaam on the east coast of Tanzania with an orphan baby who needed cleft palate surgery. After the surgery, Alice stayed in the 21-bed hospital ward

(continued on page 8)



Miguel Mendez, a national leader in Bolivia, doing a consultation



The women's group Terese Benton works with making ugali

The Challenge

with the baby sleeping in the same bed for a week. Through her relationship with the Caraways, she learned to cook, run the household, and even host and translate for their American guests. Now Alice is getting married, but the lessons she has learned from Mike and Lynn have prepared her for a life of service to the Lord.

Arion and Joselba Silva are key leaders today in the Vila Borato Church in Ponta Grossa, Parana, Brazil. It was a little over three decades ago that they accepted the saving message of the gospel. GMI missionary Mary Mueller worked with Joselba shortly after her conversion while her husband, Ken, worked with Arion. While Joselba lived close to the Muellers, Arion's well-paying job required that he live at his work an hour and a half away. Ken made the three-hour round trip every week to study the Bible and biblical leadership principles with Arion. After nearly a year, Arion left his job to be at home with his family and to serve the Lord in his church. Joselba and Arion are still serving in this church today which the Muellers helped to start during their ministry in Brazil. This was such a blessing to the Muellers who just visited this thriving congregation over the summer.

Without discipleship ministries will die. With discipleship ministries grow and the impact of just one of the Lord's servants is multiplied not just in the present but into the future. In many ways discipleship is the lifeblood of Grace Ministries International. Our mission is to share God's grace with the world. The way we do that is by empowering ministry leaders to evangelize, plant churches, train for life and ministry, and spread God's love through acts of mercy. Empowerment invokes notions of providing resources, opportunities, and giving permission to act. While true, discipleship teaches people what ministry looks like and how to do it. Without discipleship, a believer, given all resources, opportunities, and authority, would not know how to take advantage of them.

Consider two challenges. Are you willing to be discipled so the work of the Lord will be multiplied beyond and through you? Are you serving the Lord and living for Him in such a way that you can and should be discipling others? ■





Scientific studies mostly address CAUSE and effect but I'd like to address something called OCCASION. I often notice "accidents waiting to happen," an unsafe condition that is not my direct concern but I can't go around telling people how to conduct their lives. For example, consider a metal bucket with only a few drops of gasoline in the bottom where someone might throw a lit match. There most probably would be a vapor "whoosh" that could initiate a serious fire. This dangerous situation could be avoided by covering the bucket, having good ventilation, eliminating the combustible material, restricting access, or many other actions.

This example highlights the difference between CAUSE and OCCASION rather than CAUSE and effect. Because we live in a sinful world, there is little we can do to change the basic nature of people, "combustible materials" or even occasionally tossed matches.

The Bible tells the story of David and Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, how David sinned by sexually lying with her and then desperately trying to cover his tracks. When none of David's schemes worked, David wrote a letter to Uriah's commander, Joab, to "Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die" (2 Sam 11:15). Uriah might have become a hero had it not been for the last part of David's letter which compounded David's sin.

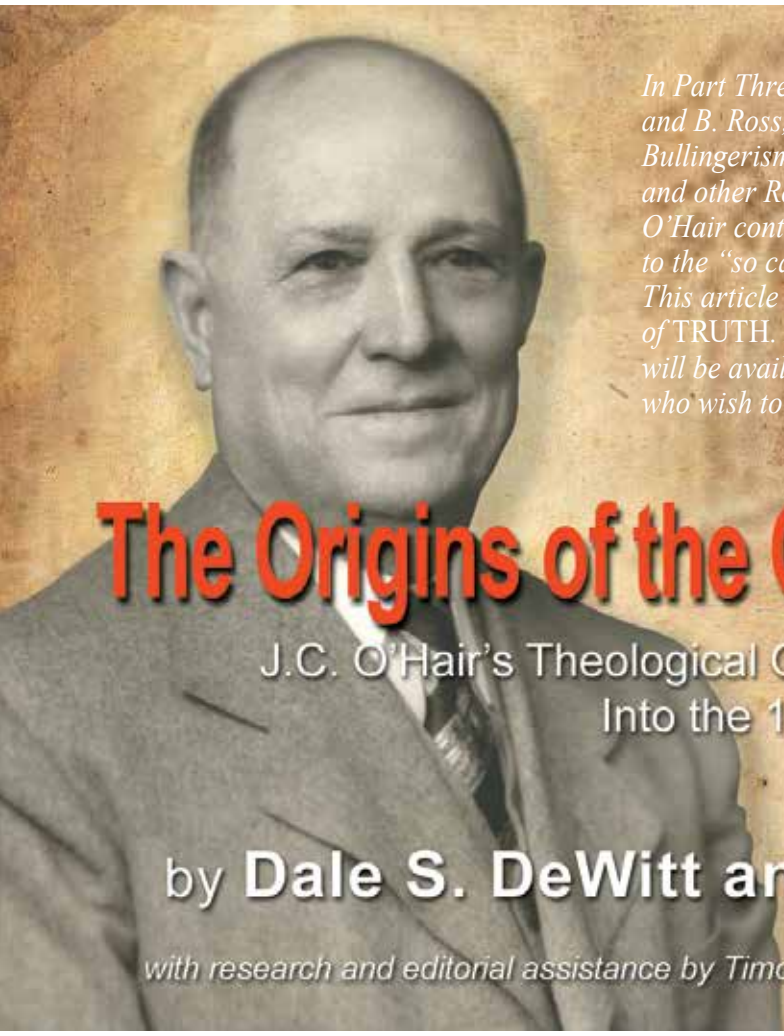
"The Lord sent Nathan (the prophet) to David..." (2 Sam 12:1) who confronted David and got him to acknowledge his sin. "However, because of this deed, you have given OCCASION (my emphasis) to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die" (2 Sam 12:14).

The Apostle Paul tells people to "...give the enemy no OCCASION for reproach" (1 Tim 4:14). On the bright side, there are some positive OCCASIONS in the Bible:

Near the end of Judah's 70 year captivity, "Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra,...issued a decree that any of the people of Israel...who are willing to go to Jerusalem may go with you...and to bring the silver and gold, which the the king and his counsellors have freely offered to the God of Israel...and the rest of the needs for the house of your God, for which you may have OCCASION to provide, provide for it from the royal treasury" (Ezr 7:12-20).

"Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we (Paul and company) persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your conscience. We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an OCCASION to be proud of us, that you may have an answer for those who take pride in appearance, and not in heart" (2 Cor 5:11-12).

A good synonym for OCCASION is OPPORTUNITY. "Be angry and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger. And do not give the devil an OPPORTUNITY" (Eph 4:26,27). So, let's become aware of the OCCASIONS and OPPORTUNITIES that God presents to us because "...we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for (the purpose of) good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). Also, as a way of life, let's "...determine...not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way" (Rom 14:13). **Heads up, Christians!** ■



In Part Three of our “Into the 1940s” article from Dr. DeWitt and B. Ross, we get more details concerning the unchecked Bullingerism-Baptism controversy, which the likes of Haggai and other Regular Baptists referred to as O’Hairism. Also, O’Hair continues to develop and defend his views with respect to the “so called” ordinances and sacraments of Christianity. This article will conclude with Part Four in the Winter Edition of TRUTH. At that time the entire article and all appendices will be available on the GGF website @ ggfusa.org for those who wish to do further study.

The Origins of the Grace Movement

J.C. O’Hair’s Theological Growth and Expansion
Into the 1940s

by Dale S. DeWitt and Bryan C. Ross

with research and editorial assistance by Timothy F. Conklin and Kathy K. Molenkamp

The Continuing Bullingerism-Baptism Controversy

While O’Hair was writing more pamphlets and booklets on biblical phrases and terms related to dispensational theology, a new stage of the Bullinger-baptism controversy was also unfolding.

Fuller and Haggai: Although the Bullingerism-baptism controversy of the 1930s had passed its most virulent stage, it was continued in a new form by David Otis Fuller and Waddi A. Haggai in their 1939-1941 pamphlet, *O’Hairism*, published under Haggai’s name. *O’Hairism* was the pamphlet outcome of a radio and newspaper war which climaxed but did not end with another O’Hair pamphlet, *The Accuser of the Brethren and the Brethren* (late 1945-early 1946). The struggle with Fuller and Haggai was sustained again in the twenty-seventh year of O’Hair’s pastorate at North Shore Church (1950) with another pamphlet, *A Short Message to Otis Fuller*. *A Short Message...* is an irritated response to what O’Hair called a “new pamphlet” by the two Regular Baptists. Fuller and Haggai’s “new pamphlet” has not been identified, but was probably a new edition of their original 1940 pamphlet. In it they continued earlier misrepresentations of O’Hair’s teaching, although a few correct points were included.

A Short Message... is a leaflet of only four pages, it seeks a halt to their crusade. However, it still did not mark an absolute end of the affair, since *O’Hairism* continued to circulate through a total of at least five “editions” (printings?) into the 1950s. In *A Short Message...*, O’Hair refers to one or more private letters between himself and Haggai which seem to be follow-ons of still other earlier private letters which have not survived. The origin and chronology of the debate over Haggai’s *O’Hairism* pamphlet is discussed in Appendix B [editor’s note: the appendices will be found online at GGF’s website].

An important pamphlet of the Fuller-Haggai controversy is O’Hair’s *Judge David Otis Fuller Concerning “O’Hairism”* (1942). It features a collection of quotations from H. Ironside, J. Gray, W. Pettingill, J. N. Darby, Sir R. Anderson, two Moody Bible Institute publications (a pamphlet and an article),⁴⁸ and the Independent Fundamental Churches of America’s *Voice* magazine. These writers and publications contain views similar to O’Hair’s on the continued availability of the kingdom to Israel in the early chapters of Acts. O’Hair gathers such quotations elsewhere, but

⁴⁸ One of the pamphlets alluded to is A. E. Bishop, *Tongues, Signs and Visions, Not God’s Order for Today* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1920). C. I. Scofield fully endorsed the pamphlet in the Introduction. The quotes are from pp. 5, 17 and 19. The article in Moody Monthly is not identified as yet.

(continued on page 11)

Judge David Otis Fuller... is an unusually full collection of such statements in a small pamphlet.⁴⁹ The collection urges Fuller to recognize O'Hair and his fellow fundamentalist leaders' substantial agreements—at least in certain passages in their writings—on the kingdom nature of the events and speeches in Acts 1-12. The offer of the kingdom to Israel in Acts and the Jewish practices of those who received it are basic to O'Hair's view of the end of water baptism.

For the history of this prolonged controversy, O'Hair's most important pamphlet is *The Accuser of the Brethren and the Brethren*. The crucial character of the pamphlet, although not intended as a history of the discussion up to 1946, lies in its biographical and chronological detail on O'Hair's exchanges with Fuller and Haggai—detail not available elsewhere. He refers to circumstances of his call to North Shore Church (1923); details of his crucial 1920 Indianapolis meetings; his trips to Grand Rapids, MI, to teach and preach; his relations with Martin DeHaan of Grand Rapids; details about several early associates in ministry; letters about his alleged part in problems at DeHaan's Calvary Undenominational Church in Grand Rapids; details in sequence of his struggle with Fuller and Haggai; details of a private letter exchange between himself and Haggai; quantities of books he had written up to the time of the pamphlet; and even the number of books he had written on the charges against him of Bullingerism. Nowhere else is so much information available on the activities and process leading to the debate with Fuller and Haggai over baptism and Bullingerism.

If *Accuser of the Brethren*... is historically important as part of the ongoing Bullinger-baptism controversy, *Divine Truth and Human Theories Concerning Water Baptism* (1943) is important as a semi-systematic treatment of the subject—a type of organized theological discussion which O'Hair did not often produce. *Divine Truth and Human Theories*... is organized by topics. All crucial New Testament baptism texts appear in chapter headings; texts and parallels are gathered and their meanings discussed. Here O'Hair engages only passingly with conflicting denominational views of baptism more typical of other pamphlets. The study is really a booklet—fifty-one pages set in small type. The best way to briefly open the pamphlet is a lesson-by-lesson summary.

Lesson One discusses varied answers Christians give to “why baptize?” Lesson Two is on the “divers baptisms” of Hebrews 9:10; it discusses Old Testament sprinkling, pouring or anointing, and notes that immersion was unknown in the Old Testament. Lesson Three is on the one divine baptism of believers by the Holy Spirit into union with Christ (Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:10-12). Lesson Four examines the claim that immersion is a witness to the world—a view O'Hair thinks unbiblical since the scriptural emphasis is on the believer's new life as the main witness to his union with Christ. Lesson Five is on the baptism of Jesus' commission to the

Twelve to go to the nations, and why they kept to Israel in Acts. Lesson Six discusses household baptism scenes in Acts. Lesson Seven notes the New Testament's linkage of baptism with signs and wonders for Israel—a mainstay of O'Hair's opposition to both water baptism and Pentecostalism first formulated from a conversation during his 1920 Indianapolis meetings.⁵⁰ Lesson Eight laments Christians' disunity over baptism. Lesson Nine discusses 1 Peter 3:20-21's baptism with a “good conscience” and 1 Corinthians 15:29's “baptism for the dead.” Lesson Ten enlarges on Jesus' death baptism of Luke 12:50. Lesson Eleven concludes by reviewing the context of his view that water baptism ended with Paul as part of the Gentile church's freedom from rituals of the Law.

Except for the comments on “divers baptisms,” on “baptism for the dead,” and on 1 Peter's baptism “for conscience sake,” the themes here are mostly familiar and available in bits and pieces in other pamphlets but never before brought together in an organized discussion of the whole topic. The booklet is important as a prototype for a complete topical discussion of the subject. This was achieved in the next decade of the Grace Movement's founding era in Charles Baker's *Real Baptism* (c. 1955)—a topical treatment of all New Testament texts on baptism both as a metaphor and water event. Baker also treated the subject systematically in *A Dispensational Theology*.⁵¹

Baptism, the Great Commission and the Lord's Supper

The baptism controversy suggested O'Hair's view of the Great Commission since baptism is part of Jesus' commission to the Twelve (Matt 28:19-20). The Commission appears in the title of a brief pamphlet on this subject—one of great sensitivity for evangelicals who stake their foreign missions commitments on it. O'Hair had discussed this subject as well during the 1930s. Evangelicals' enthusiasm for the Commission in Matthew is not matched by their recognition of its kingdom context even though other dispensationalist teachers of the early twentieth century did at times note the Commission's kingdom setting (Gray, Pettingill, Darby, Anderson). O'Hair asks readers to examine Jesus' words in Matthew's commission, “Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (28:20)”; the passage contains a reference to Christ's whole teaching, including conferred miracle powers, commands to obey Jewish laws and institutions, Israel's priority, and Gentiles' secondary status as “dogs.” Jesus' prior commands limit the Twelve's commissioned activity to Israel.

Hence, as much modern scholarship since O'Hair's time has recognized, though without equal recognition of the Israel-first context and implications, Israel must be included in the term “nations” in Matthew 28:19. This commission is not ours, he thought, since its context is the continued preaching of the kingdom to Israel after the ascension (Acts 1-12). Despite this view, O'Hair and the Grace Movement embraced world evangelization

(continued on page 12)

⁴⁹ A much larger booklet (63 pp.) containing a similar review is O'Hair's *The Lost Precious Gem* (possibly 1944 or 1945). Another is *Let's De-Judaize the Church* (1942); this booklet repeats details of opponents' criticisms and gathers their earlier comments on biblical texts which agree with O'Hair. *The Lost Precious Gem* was induced by Ironside's *Mysteries of God*, possibly the new edition of 1946; if so the date of the pamphlet would be 1946 or slightly later.

⁵⁰ See the account of this event in the part one of the first article in this series, *TRUTH Magazine* (Apr-June, 2013, vol. 63, no. 1), pp. 6-13.

⁵¹ C. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College Publications, 1971), pp. 543-557.

(continued from page 11)

and missions with energy and action, adopting in the meantime an alternative Pauline world-mission text in 2 Corinthians 5:20: “we are... Christ’s ambassadors.” This text, though perhaps lacking the charm and power of Matthew 28:19-20 among evangelicals, became a standard alternative to Matthew’s commission in the Grace Movement. A world-mission statement was included in the first Grace Gospel Fellowship doctrinal confession of 1944-1945.

The baptism controversy led to discussion of the Lord’s Supper since baptism and the Supper were traditionally linked as “sacraments” or “ordinances” through most of Christian history. An acute problem arose when O’Hair’s critics insisted on calling his teaching Bullingerism, suggesting from O’Hair’s elimination of water baptism that he had already or soon would drop the Lord’s Supper as well. Such a view was only imputed to him and never real, although he may have thought of dropping the Supper during his apparent interest in “Acts 28” ideas in 1935 amid the pressures of his debate with Harry Ironside. Whatever he was thinking about the Supper in early 1935, in January 1936, he decisively turned away from “Acts 28” teaching, mostly from considering the implications of this view for the Lord’s Supper and several other important points of doctrine:

I have tried to see a new body beginning after that important climax in Acts 28:25-28; but I have seen too much spiritual disaster result from unsound exegesis and fanciful speculation of well-meaning brethren... [as] they proceed to eliminate some things that they imagine are exclusively associated with the New Covenant, dropping the Lord’s Supper... the rapture... the judgment seat of Christ... and... the believer’s need of a high priest.⁵²

O’Hair continued to embrace the Lord’s Supper into the 1940s and 1950s, most notably in the pamphlet *Divine Healing—Water Baptism—the Lord’s Supper* (1941). This pamphlet summarized four articles in *Bible Study for Bereans* (December-February, 1935-1936; April, 1936) with detailed arguments in support of the Lord’s Supper. In *The Scriptural Position of the Lord’s Supper*, a small personal letter-pamphlet of 1935-1936, he engaged Bullinger’s “Acts 28” view point-by-point, thought by Bullinger to be a basis for denying the Lord’s Supper to the present church.

O’Hair’s reasons for *retaining* the Supper were basically three: (1) No biblical text explicitly links the Supper and baptism; this linkage was a habit left over from Catholicism in the sixteenth century reformers who reduced Catholicism’s sacraments from seven to two and redefined their meaning. (2) Once he firmly decided in favor of the dispensational *unity* of the Pauline epistles and against Bullinger’s *division* of Paul’s letters into “kingdom epistles” (the early letters) and “church epistles” (the later letters), O’Hair was able to accept the 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 command to observe the Supper until Christ’s return. This

view enabled him to criticize Bullinger’s view of the meaning of the Lord’s Supper phrase, “until he comes” (11:26). Bullinger had twisted the phrase into meaning “until after the kingdom comes,” thus taking the Supper from the current church and limiting it to the future messianic kingdom. (3) In the *Bible Study for Bereans* articles of December 1935 through April 1936, O’Hair saw that if the Supper were dismissed as a Jewish intrusion of Israel’s Passover into the Law-free church, one would logically have to

eliminate the new covenant and even the gospel since both were also originally promised to Israel—the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 and the gospel in Isaiah 52:7-53:12. O’Hair summarized these points in *Divine Healing—Water Baptism—the Lord’s Supper*. This thinking then became that of the Grace Movement’s practice of the Lord’s Supper upon its organization in 1944-1945.

One tendency within the Supper discussion was to deny it was actually a carryover of the Jewish Passover into the church. This was done by finding Jesus’ institution of the Supper, not in the Passover celebration, but in the words “after the supper,” along with the words of institution and the new covenant following (Luke 22:20). O’Hair, Stam and Baker all took the phrase to mean “after the Passover meal was finished”; this exegetical move was thought to recognize the separation of the Supper from the Passover. However, nothing in this point actually brought the Supper directly into the church. Hence the early leaders of the grace movement added an explanation of Paul’s words, “I received of the Lord, (about the Supper, 1 Cor 11:23)” to the effect that the phrase referred to a special revelation from the risen Lord in heaven to Paul about the Supper, not to receiving the Supper by oral tradition. O’Hair’s words are:

Compare 1 Corinthians 11:23 with... 15:1-4... [and] Galatians 1:11... Paul received his “grace” gospel from Christ in heaven by revelation... Compare... the language of 1 Corinthians 11:23 and... 15:3. This saving gospel and the Lord’s Supper were given by the same risen Christ to the same apostle Paul.⁵³

Among evangelicals generally, the phrase in both Corinthian texts is read to mean “received from the Lord by oral tradition,” while Galatians 1:11 is seen as a direct revelation since Paul refers to his conversion vision of Christ, which is not the case in the two Corinthian texts. In the new explanation, Paul’s words, “I received of the Lord,” were also thought to bring the Supper into the realm of the mystery revelation (the church) even though Paul does not use “mystery” language for what he received about the Supper. This explanation—of “I received of the Lord” as a special revelation of the Supper to Paul—helped sustain the grace movement’s practice of the Lord’s Supper during a crucial period when its continued observance was in question by some within the young movement.

(continued on page 13)



⁵² J.C. O’Hair, “Is the One Body of Romans the One Body of Ephesians?” *Bible Study for Bereans* (January, 1936), p. 1.

⁵³ *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, pp. 44, 47.

The Series Through the Bible in Fifty-Two Lessons: Ten Books

In 1939 O'Hair began an ambitious writing project intended to appear under the title, *Through the Bible in Fifty-Two Lessons: Ten Books* (1939 ff). The projected series and its first few scattered published volumes had potential to be a major through-the-Bible study for general use. A reference to publication of its first volumes in another 1939 pamphlet, and allusions to western anti-Semitism and war, suggest a date just before the World War II era for the earliest published volumes (1, 2, 5, 6).⁵⁴ If he had completed the series in the form of *Ten Books*, which he probably did not, it would have been his largest writing project. To judge from the size of the four "books" actually published in the announced format, each of the ten projected books was to be about fifty pages in length; ten such books would have amounted to 500 pages or more when combined. Sometime in the 1940s, O'Hair either shifted gears on how he planned to present the studies or abandoned the project. Instead of continuing the plan of presenting the studies under the format . . . *Fifty-Two Lessons: Ten Books*, he may have decided to publish the rest in a series called, *Bible Messages—the Body of Christ* (1941), including some version of the . . . *Fifty-Two Lessons* under this title along with other short studies. We have not been able to

⁵⁴ On the inside back cover of *America's Religious Babylon* (1939), O'Hair announces the availability of the first three books of the series. But he apparently means by this *Books One, Two and Five*, not *Books One through Three*, since *Book Three* does not seem to exist anywhere.

confirm this change. In the few books published in the original format of stand-alone, fifty-page volumes, O'Hair sketched how he saw the content and flow of each biblical book. Within this way of organizing the publication, some biblical portions are covered in much more detail than others. The extent of coverage was probably determined by O'Hair's interest in some biblical books and portions over others—John's Gospel for instance over the other three gospels.

Having searched several collections of O'Hair's writings—both public and private—we repeatedly found copies of only *Book One* and *Book Two*, and *Book Five* and *Book Six*, published in the originally announced format; no other volumes of the series with the original format have been found. *Book One* and *Book Two* cover Genesis 1 through the Mosaic Law. *Book Five* covers the first three gospels while *Book Six* covers the Gospel of John—an example of unevenness in coverage. The four published books can be read with profit, despite frequently repeated ideas found elsewhere in other topical pamphlets. O'Hair read the Old Testament storyline through the glasses of the New Testament in a general way; but he does explain much of the Old Testament with its sequence of events, persons, revelations and prophecies historically as well. In this way the Old Testament storyline is allowed to stand on its own two feet. If he did not finish the series as first intended, it is certainly regrettable since in the few books published there is much worthwhile material. However, in a sense, these volumes are best understood with some background in O'Hair's other more topical pamphlets. ■

God's Clock of the Ages

Charles F. Baker

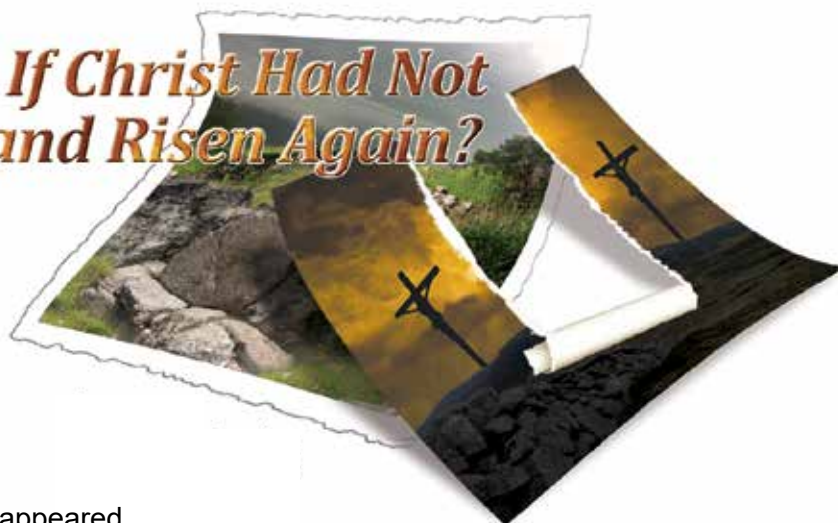
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“What if” questions are common in life. They arise amid tragedies, in transition from one stage of life to another, and even in studying the Bible. What if Eve had not been deceived and Adam had not disobeyed in the Garden of Eden? What would this world be like? What if Israel had accepted their Messiah on the day of Pentecost? Would we be alive? What if Paul had turned east on his second missionary journey rather than going to Macedonia as the Lord said to do? Would Europe and the West be in darkness like the Asian countries are with all of their false religions?

What If Christ Had Not Died and Risen Again?



by Pastor Cal Lowder
Valley Bible Church
Stephens City, VA

(This article originally appeared
in the April 2000 **TRUTH Magazine**.)

You could add hundreds of questions like these to the list but there is one that supersedes them all: What if Christ had not died and risen again? Paul addresses the “what if” of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. We want to use that as a backdrop for considering six problems that arise if Christ did not die and rise again.

A Holy God

Our first problem deals with the very nature of God. He reveals Himself to be holy and then is proven to be a liar if Christ did not die and rise again. In Isaiah 6:3b the seraphim cry one to another, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.” Moses is to put off his sandals when approaching the burning bush because it is holy ground. Also, we have passages like Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 53, Psalm 22-24, and Daniel 9 that speak of One that would come and die for the sins of the people. Christ himself in Matthew 20:18,19 says that the son of man would be betrayed. . . mocked, scourged, crucified and the third day rise again. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Paul records that Christ died. . . accord-

ing to the scriptures. . . and rose again according to the scriptures. If Christ did not do that, then God lied and is neither holy nor truthful. We therefore, could not believe anything else He promises in the Bible.

The Gift of Salvation

Secondly, if Christ did not die and rise again, there is no gift of salvation. Romans 6:23 states that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Once again, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 states that the gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Romans 10:9 states that we are to believe that God raised Christ from the dead. Our salvation is a gift that includes many elements, two of which are the paying for our sin through the blood of Christ and the giving of eternal life to us because He is alive forevermore. God excludes all other “salvation packages” as mere works and worthless, unable to bring a person into a righteous standing before Him. If Christ did not die, then we have no gift from God to

(continued on page 15)

“... there would be no forgiveness for sin if Christ had not died and risen again...”

(continued from page 14)

provide for our needs. God has then left us on our own to find our way out of the dilemma of sin.

No Forgiveness

That there would be no forgiveness for sin if Christ had not died and risen again is our third great problem. Scripture reveals that “. . . without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins” (Hebrews 9:22b). When Adam disobeys, mankind becomes spiritually separated from God and needs something or someone to redeem him from that condition of being in “sin.” Man can pay for his own sins in the lake of fire for all eternity but that will only provide satisfaction for the sins. It will not give a person eternal life with God. Man could have a substitute take his punishment, but the substitute would have to be qualified, willing and able to do so. Certainly no animal met the qualifications. Only one person was qualified, willing, and able: that was Jesus Christ. But if He did not die, there would be no substitute to suffer the penalty for man’s sin.

A Grand Deception

Fourth, if this supposition is true, then all the prophets, apostles, and preachers have been wasting their time. They believed what they heard, witnessed, and read; but if God lied, then they received a faulty message and have passed it along needlessly. The warnings, that this is the only method of salvation and Christ is the only way to God would not be true, and man is free to seek whatever method of salvation he wants. Throughout Scripture it states that God is a jealous God and will share His glory with no one else; and that today Christ is the only way a person can come into His presence (John 14:6, 1 Timothy 2:5). This has been the message of every God-sent preacher since the apostles. Yet if that is not true, then all the missionary endeavors, evangelistic crusades and personal wit-

nessing have been for naught. Think of all the funds that have been wasted on this “foolish message” if Christ did not die and rise again.

The Object of Faith

A fifth problem is that of faith. What do we have to put our faith in if not in the work of Christ? Ephesians 2:8,9 states, “For by grace are ye saved through faith. . . .” Every person trusts something to provide them with “salvation,” either their own works, idols, church creeds and ceremonies, ordinances, environmental projects, macro evolution, religions, governments, or whatever they feel fits their concept of “god.” Without the finished work of Christ, any of the above would be as good as the next since faith would of necessity need to be found in some “self-improvement plan.” The difficulty is that none of these alternatives comes with assurance from a verifiable source that the chosen way will accomplish the intended purpose: bringing salvation. Only faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ assures us of being in right-standing with God.

Robbed of Our Hope

The last great problem deals with hope. If Christ did not die and rise again, then we have no hope of deliverance from this world. The environmentalist says to take care of mother earth, for unless we take care of her she will not take care of us. The humanist says there is no heaven or hell; we just cease to exist. The reincarnationist says to keep trying and we may get better and better with each life we live here on earth. The “God-is-all-Love” group says there is no hell to fear but there is probably no literal heaven either. For the Christian, the resurrection of Christ provides an anticipation of some day being with Him. Paul, for example, could not wait to be

(continued on page 16)

(continued from page 15)

absent from the body and present with the Lord. The resurrection for a believer also provides a system of “checks and balances,” when he realizes that he will some day give account of his works as a Christian at the judgment seat of Christ. For an unbeliever there should be a fear of one day standing before God and hearing the words, “I never knew you; depart from me. . . (Matthew 7:23b),”

*We are well aware that there is
no other name under heaven
whereby we must be saved...*

and then being cast into the lake of fire. If there were not a resurrection, no person would sense restraint of any kind and could live any way he wanted with no sense of reprisal or fear. But Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:20 states categorically that Christ is risen. He had

heard other eyewitnesses speak of Christ’s resurrection. He had personally seen the resurrected Lord at least once and possibly more, and therefore he was convinced that the Lord Jesus Christ had “. . . died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried and that He rose again according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). Therefore, we have assurance that God indeed is holy and did not lie. We can read and know that salvation is a free gift of complete payment for sin and the presentation of eternal life. We have not been deceived, all our sins are under the blood and the preaching of that message is still necessary today. We are well aware that there is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved and our hope is safe and secure in the resurrected Jesus Christ. Have you trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? If not, remember that Christ did die for your sins and is alive today. You will stand before Him. When God checks to see what you have done with His Son, what answer will you give? If you are saved, rejoice that it is true! If you are not saved, receive Christ today before it is eternally impossible.



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Dying Without Fear (for Christians)

by Harl Hargett

My believing grandmother was finally sent to hospice care where she anguished in pain and misery for months. I visited her and as a minister endeavored to console her. She had always been a hearty Christian, strong in faith and loyal to Baptist doctrine. But she was afraid to die. She whispered to me just before she became incoherent in the final stages of dying, "I'm so very afraid." I was genuinely surprised, and I asked her, "Why, nanny? You know where you are going, don't you?" Her eyes sort of glazed and with another wheeze, she replied, "I don't know anymore. It's dark. I can't see. I don't want this."

It rattled me. More than anything I felt that this should not be—that my grandmother, who should've known her fate was into the immediate arms of Jesus Christ should not be filled with such uncertainty. Why would any believer seemingly facing the finality of life, dreadfully rebel against an eternity with Him? In dealing with those who have lingered, I know that trepidation and angst often are in the hearts and minds who have been "saved by the blood of the Lamb."

"I just know it wasn't supposed to be like this." Helen was in tears as she drew up, almost into a fetal position, in the hospital bed. "I was just supposed to die and it would be over." Helen had been in the "last stages" for over a month, in and out of various surgeries, and was even pronounced "cancer free" at one point. "Now, it's so lonely and ugly. Why can't I just die?" she asked sobbing.

That question had been asked of me before. I think I have some answers, though they may be
(continued on page 18)



(continued from page 17)

hard to absorb. Even so, ministers of the gospel had better be able to offer something to those who need some answers in such a morbid condition, don't you think? Our literature, poetry, allegories, and preaching carry the weight of generations and generations of the mystery of death in two basic formats. Either Christians die and go straight to heaven or they must spend some time in purgatory, being refined before going up. Of these two roads, only the first one is acceptable to the collective conscience in "uneasy truce" within the soul itself. Dying with a heart attack, massive stroke, or some other kind of instantaneous trauma (including suicide), is certainly more appealing to contemplate than "dwelling" with tormenting illness or wandering in a "no-man's land" for God only knows how long!

I'll coin a term for consideration in opposition. "Dying in Grace" seems appropriate for this brief on the subject. It offers a concept contrary to dying in the suffocating embrace of apprehension and panic.

personal, Lord and Savior) we believe that we shall live with Him" (Rom 6:6). This parody of a "hooded shroud with glowing eyes" is myth, bogus, and a creation of the tension between mortal soul and body, not of the immortal Spirit of God! Often, one is terrorized by this imagery so the wracked human cannot "let go" for these arms are skeletal and "finger-pointing." Unrelenting pain and pain-management medication can produce the illusion and hallucination of such similar things in the dark, just beyond, though most Christians feeling such would not be able to articulate these ideations.

Guilt and shame are also often at the bed of the dying. The culpability is present in two ways: by the haunting past (regrets) and the present need (surviving despite odds or for sake of family/friends). One cannot contemplate the mortal, immediate decay without "thinking backward" (if one is in the mental condition to do so). I'm also convinced that even those who are comatose or for other reasons unable to be conscious still dream and relive or

*It is criminal when even our pastors, chaplains, and faith-filled brethren
cannot speak the truth in love to our dear, dying ones!*

Let us examine what causes the latter, regretful phenomenon. Keep in mind that Christians "shouldn't fear" the Grim Reaper. St. Paul stated, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality, so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death! Where is your sting? O grave! Where is your victory?'" (1 Cor 15:53-58). This promise has endeared the hearts of the timid of faith since penned by this great Apostle. Yet, in this powerful wordplay there is no immediate comfort when in the languishing hours and days of corruption. There are numerous reasons.

One is the reality of pain. Constant deep ache robs the body of comfort, rest, and sleep and slowly steals away the mental faculties. One's sanity is often in shards at the apex of agony and the body "fights" to find relief—without the sensibility to be grounded. Confusion and disorientation are common in this condition, so it is not surprising that "an easy glance into heaven's peace" would be rare indeed.

This estate is also the likely culprit of what Job describes as "the shadow of death" (Job 28:3b). This "shade" is a palpable, almost living thing, that is the partner in crime of the unease of those who are believers in Christ, but in this moment, it is cowering in response to the unknown Specter. It matches "what we have come to accept as truth." The Reaper is patient, but never far away, waiting to "take the soul" and this is not a friendly introduction, but more like abduction from an alien spaceship. Nevertheless, it has been declared, "If we have died with Christ (the moment we accepted Him as

"sense" what was in some odd manner. For those of faith, this is futile rumination; for God has forgiven all things (Eph 4:32). The present tense is murkier. Even Paul felt this conundrum, while facing execution, he said to the church at Philippi, "For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ: which is far better" (Phil 1:23). But to live in a straitjacket, on some kind of artificial life support, in a drug-induced stupor, without a chance of recovery, knowing in the manner of certain eventual separation from the body---this would've been a "no-brainer" for Paul.

Now there is a sidebar necessary at this point. I know something about "last minute miracles" that all Christians seem to "buy into" and "pray earnestly for" with zeal and by the use of certain misapplied Scriptures. Even to beseech God for such a thing as a "rejuvenation" of the body that is clearly and irrevocably "gone" insults the paradigm of our faith. Either heaven is real, with the promise of relief and worthy of our grasping, or Christ has died in vain! (Refer to 1 Cor 15:12-42.) Listen to St. Peter's benediction, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3). Why would anyone pray for the conclusively dying, only to have them face this life and die again?

Of course, "shame" is partly the reason, which is the by-product of selfishness. Those who are in the throes of an incurable ailment or disease often know how they appear and what kind of gruesome care is necessary from care providers, but they can't stand to face the inevitable or conversely, cannot find their family and friends "willing to give them leave" for the moment to breathe the last breath! Everyone is waiting for that awful moment but everyone

(continued on page 19)

“Fight death or accept the dying. In either arena though, do it with grace!”

(continued from page 18)

is also ashamed to admit such! It is criminal when even our pastors, chaplains, and faith-filled brethren cannot speak the truth in love to our dear, dying ones! Once again, “the need to survive” will often outweigh the evidence, prolong the curtain drop, and increase the drama. This is so very, very shameful and ought not to be!

Many things are involved in “living while dying” that are unwholesome for those of the Bible. Fearing the unknown, catastrophizing the event, staying in denial, keeping alive regretful memories of the past, and trying to “make it easy for others,” or simply refusing to give the body permission to release are the most common. Reading with interest the miraculous, survival stories, I came across an article in the November 2013 Ladies Home Journal in which Ms. Elizabeth Naylor tells of her “beating the odds” after being told she had about three months to live due to a ravenous cancer. It seems that a stem cell transplant and a “lot of prayer” cured her completely. However, Ms. Naylor was clear that while the cancer was progressing, “I was furious—not at my wonderful doctors but at God. While I had tremendous support from our church community, I’d lost all hope. I told Adam (her husband), God and I are finished. I don’t believe anymore.”¹ Of course, she does now! I’m a bit incredulous. She lives and others (more deserving?) perish. Is God this capricious or selective, despite Scripture to the contrary (Ref Acts 10:34)?

Frankly, most with this kind of diagnosis just don’t make it. But these kinds of stories certainly provide hope, though for the life of me, I can’t easily reconcile the “loss of faith” preceding the turnaround. What was the point?

Perhaps our Scriptures point to another kind of relief rather than looking for “signs, wonders and marvels.” Before he became the second King of the Jews, David was under the onus of King Saul who wished him dead. In this quandary David told Jonathan (Saul’s son), “Truly as the Lord lives, and as my soul lives, there is but a step between me and death” (1 Sam 20:3b). All of us are just a “footfall” from the same happenstance.

But it is very, very important to understand this vital second(s). It has been established that “DEATH” is final, but “DYING” is transitional. This distinction must be emphasized!

Hundreds of stories, both anecdotal and scientific, have given metaphors for such, using terms such as “gulf, tunnel, darkness,

floating, roaming” and feeling states such as “cold, hot, peculiar” to describe the ‘in-between’ consciousness and dismal sense of “leaving” the body. I suspect that these rudimentary images are based upon old memories of “what it is supposed to be like” when fully engaged with the impinging abyss. Therefore, it is to be expected that most Christians would be discomforted and disoriented by a fury of defeated emotion and thought, wrapped in disguise as “termination.” Dying simply is never final until it is OVER! And anything can and often does interfere with the end, including rallying, being healed, getting sicker, and becoming even more morbid. “As I left my body, I felt pressure, then a sudden release. I floated up above my body. I sensed a presence with me, then a rushing toward a brilliant white light. I knew peace. I felt loved. But then suddenly, I was sent back.” These sentences paraphrase what so many who have “died and came back” have said. After being stoned to death at Lystra, Paul experienced a resurrection (Acts 14:19-20) but not before “being caught up into paradise, and hearing indescribable words, which cannot be put into human language.” In this intermediate time he also stated, “I could not tell if I was in my own body or not.” But he knew for sure it was a “glorious vision and revelation” (2 Cor 12:1-5).

Without the preconceived “notions” about what is to be expected as one is “dying” then the reality becomes pleasingly stark. God would never leave His children in a vacuum, a black hole, a burning place or some other horror—but He would quickly draw them into warmth, light, probably with a celestial choir in the background (I can be as fanciful). One should never fear the “betwixt and/or between” of life and death; for it is only that—temporary, absolutely temporary!

Let us get it straight then. When Christians are dying, they should know that various sensations (both positive and negative) will come to facilitate the ending of the existence of the flesh. Most of these are caricatures of the imagination. Nevertheless, what will be always the last offering as An Angel of Mercy “Coming to Carry Us Home”!

One final word. Dying is also a matter of choice. Ultimately, the quality and quantity of “dying” is in our own hands. Don’t leave this process to the immature, the doctors, or the family. Make it real for you!

Spell out the conditions that you might or will accept or not in terms of palliative relief. Put it in writing. Tell it to a loved one. Fight death or accept the dying. In either arena though, do it with grace! ■

¹LHJ. November 2013, (pages 107-113) “Let Me Tell What It’s Like to be Given Three Months to Live...and Beat the Odds.”



Region 2: Southwest
Chuck Williams

Grace Bible Church in Anaheim received their new pastor, Joel Molina, his wife, Darcy, and their family with open arms. His first sermon was on September 6. Prior to that Pastor Glen Beauchamp did a great job filling the pulpit for the month of August.

The West Coast GGF meeting took place at the Anaheim church the last week-end of September. Frosty Hansen came out for the meeting. Steve McFadden from Phoenix joined the others from California. While here, Frosty conducted an installation service of Pastor Molina at the Anaheim church. ■



Region 3: West
Steve Blackwell

Denver Bible Church (Arvada, CO): Pastor Bob Enyart—Our Pastor and an elder are traveling, with the blessing of our congregation, for ten days to Oxford and Cambridge in England to examine first-hand historical church documents that are more than 400 years old, that have never been digitized, and that are otherwise unavailable. Now in our new facility, Denver Bible Church has launched a Christian home-school co-op called SHIELD and a quarterly mid-Acts study group involving authors and leaders from around the country. We just enjoyed having two weeks of baby dedications with dozens of parents

publicly committing themselves to raising their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Harvest Fellowship (Brighton, CO): Pastors Steve Blackwell & Bob Hill—Harvest's people have been a real blessing, especially our leadership team. Debbie and I vacationed in Europe, and while I was gone, we had preachers and leaders that took up the reins and did a great job. What a blessing after years of discipleship! Great messages were given by three of the men—they didn't miss a beat. PTL. Our fall semester has started with AWANA, men's group (Band of Brothers) and our women's groups, Grace School of Ministry (our in-house Bible college), parenting classes and several groups of people who desire discipleship and leadership training. Our mommy's coffee (kind of like MOPS without the cost) has 30-35 mommies coming weekly on Wednesday mornings and creates a great connection to each other while learning how to be a mom along with many other personal aspects. It has created a strong younger core of families in the church.

The Point (Westminister, CO): Pastor Jesse Vaught—Pastor Vaught returns from his sabbatical in October. The Point would like to thank everyone who helped out with teaching, preaching, and prayer support over the summer. This fall will be a season of renewal and rebuilding. We would love to see you in person on Sunday evenings or on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/ThePointMinistries. ■



Region 5: Lower Midwest
Ed Jeude

Ben Anderson is moving overseas this fall. His sister, Valerie, is now office manager of **Things to Come Mission** (TCM) which had a one-day 60th Anniversary celebration on September 19. The last GGF Region 5 meeting was in Effingham, IL, on August 20 and the next meeting is 10:45 a.m., November 19 at Ryan's in Effingham, IL. If you have anything to share, contact Pastor Shaun Winters of Linton, IN, phone 812-847-7870 or email him at pastorshaun.winters@gmail.com. Come for the fellowship.

Prison Mission Association (PMA) is celebrating 60 years of ministry during the entire year of 2015. Steve McFarland is GGF Region 5 representative for PMA. Please contact Steve at pma5region@hotmail.com if you would like a presentation or more information about PMA ministries or Bible correspondence courses. These are very interesting studies for ANY Bible class or an individual, not just prisoners.

As part of an ongoing effort to plant new churches in GGF Region 5, Don Hosfeld was ordained by St Louis Bible Fellowship and is now the pastor of an existing church complex in Quincy, IL, renamed **Quincy Bible Fellowship**. Their new constitution is based on GGF doctrines. Attendance has fluctuated between 15 and 30 for the past four weeks. A ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for September 30 with newspaper and radio coverage. Quincy is a college town with great growth potential.

Philip duPlessis of Anaheim, CA, is a well-known GGF pastor. He has relocated to Brownsburg, IN, a suburb of Indianapolis, with the intention of planting a GGF church there before year's end. For venue and service times, phone him at 714-872-2407 or email him at pastorphillip777@gmail.com.

Joel McGarvey of [Bible Doctrines To Live By](#) recently gave a 3-day presentation on ISLAM at [St. Louis Bible Fellowship](#). It is important that Christians have biblical answers to the world's questions. [St. Louis Theological Seminary](#) has the capability of providing credential documentation as needed for furthering the Lord's work in the USA as well as overseas. ■



Region 9: Western, MI
Kathy Molenkamp

[Grace Bible Fellowship](#) - Jenison, MI is happy to report an excitement about living out our vision in our lives and neighborhood: "an engaging community growing in Christ." We are passionate about our growth in Christ and in God's Word which is evident as our Fall Ministry session is in full swing. We have also been excited to invite new families to engage in our church family. God has allowed the growth to be evident on multiple levels: from maturity in Christ to numerical growth. We are also looking to serve and engage the community through various service projects led by youth and adults. These include a traveling youth worship team that visits nursing/retirement homes on a regular basis, participating in tangible service like the Adopt-a-Highway clean up, and community-wide events in Jenison. GBF has also been blessed by a growing staff. In June we welcomed Adam Wolf on staff as our part-time Worship Director. In September we were also blessed to welcome Joshua Befus as our new Youth Pastor. God is doing great things at GBF and we are excited to serve Him as we aspire to be an engaging community growing in Christ.

[Parkside Bible Church](#), located at 14461 James Street in Holland, MI has recently changed the name of their Sunday School classes to Family Bible Hour. They will be offering classes for those from age 3 through adult at 9:30 a.m. every Sunday prior to their 10:45 service. Pastor Gary

Spykerman has announced the following six adult classes that will be held in addition to the children's classes:

"Explore the Book" - A journey through the Bible, book by book.

"God, the Bible, Parkside and You" - Walk through Parkside's Doctrinal Statement.

"Family Foundations" - Explore biblical basics for family success.

"Responding to the Beliefs Around Us" - Learn how best to respond to different beliefs in the world we live in.

"Understanding Your Bible" - Learn a practical and clarifying way to study your Bible.

"Dealing With Grief" - This will be a support group to help in dealing with grief when you lose someone close in your life - through death, divorce, etc.

There will also be a 12-week Sunday evening study at 6:00 pm on the Book of Revelation. All are welcome to join the Parkside congregation for fellowship around God's Word. Bring your Bible and a friend as they walk through some of the most descriptive passages of God's plan for humanity and His people Israel.

Parkside now has a 5-year curriculum that will equip their adults for life and ministry.

This fall Parkside will be looking to fill their Worship Leader position with Chad Lippincott leaving.

There is an opportunity for any golfer to take part in Parkside's annual Memorial Golf Classic for Youth Missions to be held on October 3 at Crestview Golf Course in Borculo/Zeland at 12:30 pm. This is a fundraiser for the Costa Rica Mission Trip planned for between Christmas and New Year's this year when 20 students and adults will be on a discipleship outing. Contact Pastor Matt Amundsen at 616-399-4410 for details or to sign up.

[Georgetown Bible Church](#) - Hudsonville, MI—We at Georgetown Grace Church have been blessed with the wonderful opportunity to develop a sister-church relationship with Parkside Bible

Church of Holland (Pastor Gary Spykerman). Georgetown and Parkside have been able to fellowship through hymn sings in the summer months and a year-long (or more) of Sunday evening services walking through the Book of Revelation. We look forward to continuing this relationship in the years to come as we seek to make unity a goal in our churches. ■



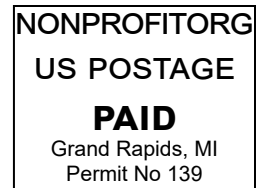
Region 10: Central, MI
John Lowder

We are excited here at [Frontline Bible Church](#) in Byron Center, MI, for the fall kickoff of ministries. Summer is such a great time, but it's nice to have everyone back again. This year we are starting with a focused time of prayer during the month of September called "30 Days of Prayer" with the emphasis on really seeking God's direction for His agenda at Frontline. Too often we can do the things we usually do and forget to seek God for what He's already doing and wants to do. As Henry Blackaby has said, "Find where God is working and join Him there." So, that's our focus here at the start.

One major thing we've been praying for is the best way to reach our new neighbors for Christ. God brought a large outlet mall across the street from our church, which has significantly increased the traffic around us. We are praying for God to show us the best way to reach the commercial neighbors we have in our location.

Lastly, we were absolutely thrilled to receive an estate gift from long-time members at Frontline. The gift was large enough that we were able to pay off the remaining balance of our mortgage debt, thus freeing up a significant amount per month to assist with ministries. Needless to say we are overjoyed and excited to see the impact that can come from being debt-free! ■

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The Past Ten Years

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MALAYSIA 2011

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VIETNAM

SINGAPORE

EAST TIMOR

BRUNEI

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