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TRUTH Magazine

Spring 2016 Edition



*...old things are passed away;
...all things have become new.*

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



GRACE GOSPEL
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TRUTH Magazine

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

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April - June 2016

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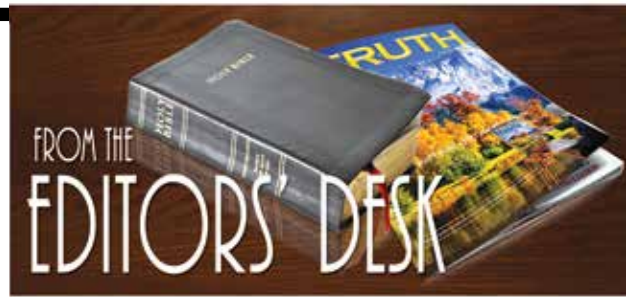
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by Timothy and Sharon McGarvey



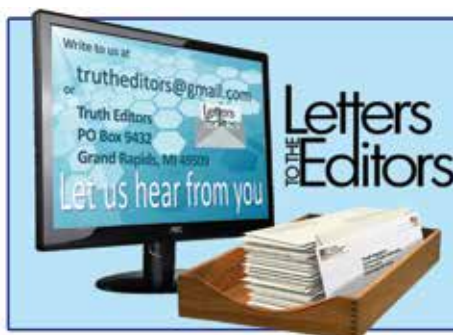
This is the third issue of TRUTH Magazine we have done since taking over the position as editors. It is still a learning process in many ways as we seek to acquire writers and readers. With the last issue we gave the magazine a more contemporary look and will continue to hone in on the right feel so that we can appeal to a broader audience. For you “old timers,” there’s no reason to worry. We are not changing the general content or the theological position of the Grace Movement. The desire is to reach a younger audience and to make the magazine more appealing to the younger generation who are the leaders of tomorrow. We hope nothing is too shocking and we trust you all will understand. TRUTH has gone through several changes over the 60+ years it has been around, and if the Lord doesn’t come back soon, it will probably morph again...so stick with us.

Several interesting articles can be found in this month’s edition; however, we would like to call your attention to one of them in particular. First, it is a good article, and second, it ties in with the ad from Grace Publications for two great books at one great price. The article is by Tim Heath of Things to Come Mission. As a pastor and Executive Director of Grace Publications, I deal with theological issues and questions on a regular basis. Often the questions come out of a sincere desire to learn, while at other times people just simply want to argue their position. It’s okay! Many times the question comes out of a failure to correctly handle God’s Word.

In Steve Shober’s book, *The Song of Solomon, A Love Story with a Hidden Message*, he points out that most of Christendom considers the Church today to be the Bride of Christ. The only reference to the Bride is in the book of Revelation and is connected to the city of God that comes down from heaven. That city is the New Jerusalem which is tied to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy related to Israel and not to the Body of Christ. This replacement theology is everywhere. It’s in religious art and the hymns that we sing, all of which could be avoided if all of the Church simply put the principle of right division into practice. Steve emphasizes this point and shines a bright revealing light on the subject.

Jeff Townley approached almost the same issue when he wrote his book, *A Message to the Bride*. His look at the book of Hebrews is an easy-to-read treatise on the transitional nature of Hebrews and makes a great case as to why the book was not written to the church, the Body of Christ, but rather to Israel in her new covenant relationship to God. Again, the author demonstrates the importance of rightly dividing the Word of God.

We live in a troubled world with conflict around every corner. This past year the Church was drawn to the issue of the four blood moons and the last days, but here again, it was a teaching based on the prophecies of Joel regarding Israel’s last days—again, a failure to distinguish between the Body of Christ and Israel. We strongly encourage you to pick up either or both of these great books. ■



A REMINDER...as we said before, you can mold the magazine into something that truly reaches everyone. Perhaps you could even suggest a theological or practical topic that you think needs to be explored. We want to know. So let us hear from you and together we will grow TRUTH Magazine into a truly relevant periodical. We’ll be watching our mail. This is our letter to you. Now you write to us.

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Churches Reproducing

by Frosty Hansen
GGF President

God created the world with a design that all living things would multiply according to their own kind. Seeds produce the plants and trees from which they came. Therefore, we are not surprised when a kernel of wheat produces more wheat, or an acorn gives root to a new oak tree like the one from which it fell. The same principle applies to the world of animals, birds, and sea creatures multiplying after their own kinds. That is why I am expecting baby robins to hatch in the nest under our deck once again this spring, not a puppy or a guppy.

This principle of all living things multiplying after their own kind has two additional applications. The most obvious is found in the creation account of Genesis 1. Here we find the crowning creative act when God made people in His own image, thus sanctifying all human life.

Created male and female, humanity was given both the means and the command to multiply according to our own kind. My 11 grandchildren, therefore, are all very human and, unique from all other creation, they are bearers of the image of God and capable of receiving His redeeming grace.

Further, there is the Church. God created the Church as a living organism or, as Paul writes, the living Body of which Christ is the Head (Col. 1:18). The Church of this dispensation was created as “one new man” (Eph. 2:14-16) and consists of all who place their faith in the finished work of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). As members of the Church, every believer is intimately connected to one another (Eph. 4:25) and all are called to work together for the growth and maturity of the Body (Eph. 4:16).

Because God created the Church as a living organism, His plan is for the Church to reproduce after its kind. Paul rejoiced because “all over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth” (Col. 1:6). That sentiment can be echoed today as souls come to Christ in our own cities and neighborhoods and around the world, even in countries of great persecution like Iran, North Korea, and areas controlled by ISIS.

Multiplication in the Church

But how does this multiplication of the Church occur? Often we act as if it is all up to God and has nothing to do with members of the Body reproducing. We may reason, “If God wants to reach someone with the gospel, He is powerful enough to do it on His own without my help.” While it is true the Holy Spirit works to convict the heart of the indi-

vidual and God may occasionally use extraordinary means to woo someone to Christ, His established plan for multiplication is to use the Church – to use you and me.

The creative design is that all living things multiply according to their kind. God does not daily *create* more stalks of wheat, oak trees, animals, or even people. He *has created* in the beginning, and in that creative act God gave His living creation a means to reproduce. Similarly, God created the Body of Christ and empowered it with the means to reproduce. The implications are clear: believers should multiply believers and, as an extension, local churches should multiply churches.

Isn’t this what Scripture teaches? The ministry of Paul and his companions was one of sharing the gospel of Christ from town to town, establishing churches with leaders, and urging them to do the same. The message of reconciliation came to Paul from Christ, but then Paul and his companions became the mouthpieces. “God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And He has committed **to us** the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us...” (2 Cor. 5:19-20).

In fact, that is perhaps the paramount reason why God places you and me in the spheres of life where we live today – our neighborhoods, jobs, schools, families. He has surrounded us with people who find themselves caught up in shallow lives, false illusions, the deceptive teachings of our society, and the empty promises of pursuing the American dream. They face a future without hope and without the very God who desires every person to be

saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). God has sovereignly placed us among people who need Christ so we might reproduce—multiply believers and multiply our local churches.

The Opportunity for Multiplication through the GGF

This is also God’s desire for the Grace Gospel Fellowship. The most important truth people can know today is the powerful message of God’s grace through Jesus Christ. As Paul told the Colossians, the gospel of the grace of God continues to make a profound impact in the lives of those who hear and understand it in all its truth. Living as they are in a “grace-less” and “Christ-less” culture, our neighbors and coworkers need to both hear of and witness grace’s transforming power through those who know Christ.

This even applies to people who are classified as “Christian” through involvement in church or other religious activities. For the past few years I have attended a summer conference with some wonderful folks who have come to understand Paul’s message of grace through the broadcast ministry of our Brother Les Feldick. It is encouraging to see their eagerness as they soak up the Scriptures with an excitement to learn more of God’s truth.

What amazes me the most are the personal journeys these brothers and sisters have endured. They testify of attending church all their lives, yet never hearing of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Their past experience was based on church tradition, legalism, and a heavy dose of guilt. Now they are rejoicing in the newfound freedom in Christ, knowing they are accepted completely in Him, no longer

**GGF
VISION 2020
UPDATE**

20 CHURCHES

10 CHURCH PLANTS

Quincy Bible Fellowship
Quincy, IL

Bethesda Church
North Branch, MN

Grace Bible Church
Brownsburg, IN

10 REVITALIZED CHURCHES
GGF Church Health Task Force

Developing resources for church health and revitalization

20 NEW PASTORS

1 Traditional college grad
1 Lay leader
1 Returning pastor
3 Ministry changes

3 TO DATE

6 TO DATE

burdened with the guilt of sins, and forgiven by God's grace.

Then they plead, "Our town needs a church that teaches the Grace Message. Is there a GGF church near us?" It is both sobering and heartbreaking. Sobering, because I realize their church experiences are not unique. While I know there *are* other churches proclaiming the biblical message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ's finished work, it is important to realize there are many churches where the gospel message is never presented, God's grace is unknown, and Bible truth is missing.

It is heartbreaking because, more often than not, I am forced to respond with an apology. "I'm sorry. We don't have a GGF church near you. And we are short of pastors." There are opportunities galore for us to reproduce – both through personal sharing of the gospel and by establishing Grace churches in cities and towns across the country – and it is time for us as individuals and churches within the GGF to pursue God's purpose of multiplication.

The Vision for Multiplication

This is the passion that resulted in Vision 2020 which was unveiled by the GGF leadership last spring.

"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."

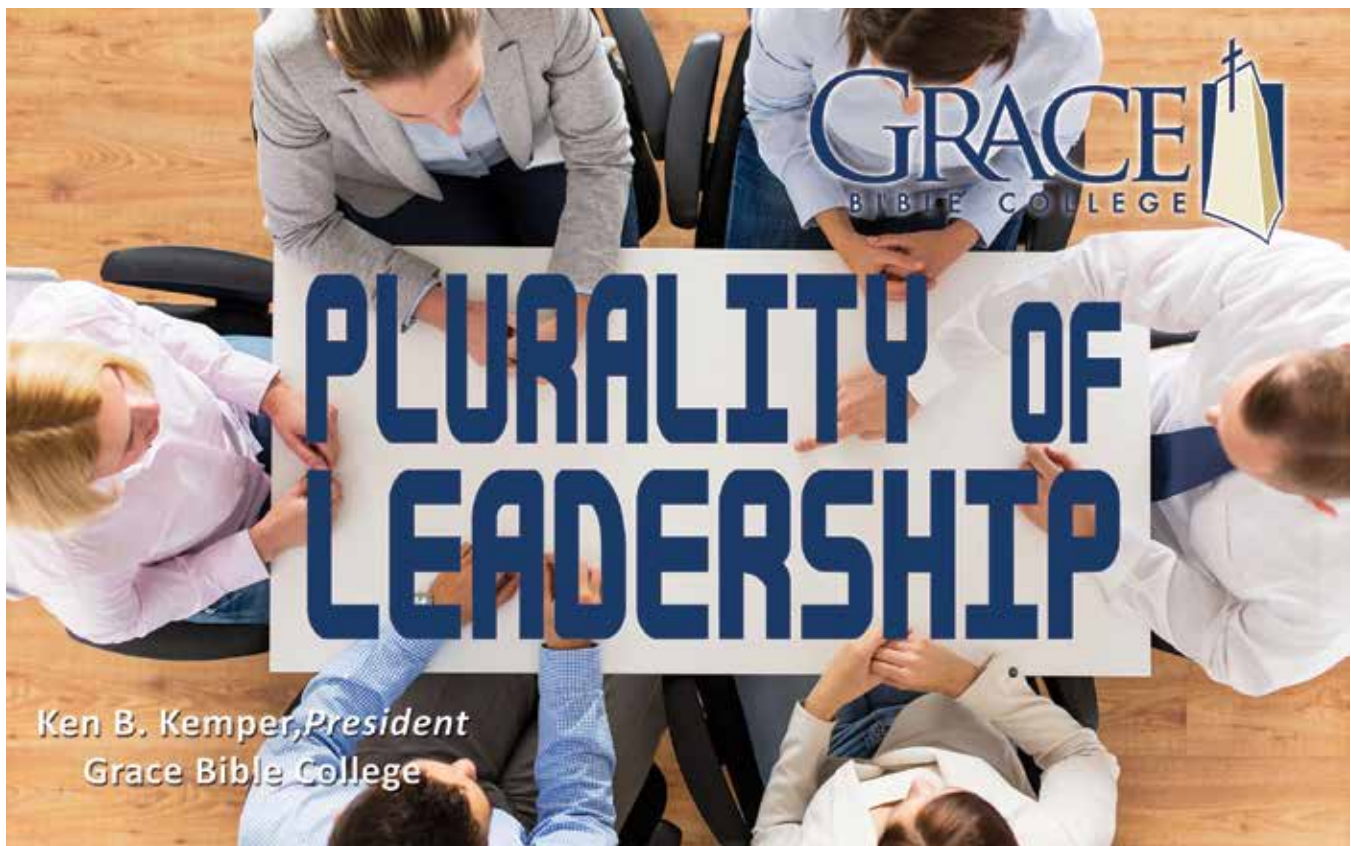
As the vision statement indicates, we fully believe God desires us, as members of the Body of Christ, to be committed to multiplication. This is

accomplished as individuals when we share the gospel, fulfilling our role as ambassadors of Christ who introduce others to the message of reconciliation. It continues as we build up one another within the Body, investing in the lives of other Christians by mentoring them in God's truth (2 Tim. 2:2), and being involved together in the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-13).

We also believe God desires a growing number of GGF churches in our country. There is a great need for additional healthy churches where the gospel of the grace of God is clearly proclaimed. To accomplish this, we need a new influx of pastors and a commitment from our current churches to work together in identifying strategic locations within their regions to plant these new churches. The needs are great, but we believe God can provide the personnel and means to enable us to accomplish this vision.

As we follow God's design by reproducing churches within the GGF, we seek your partnership.

- Share the life-changing gospel of salvation with someone in your life.
- As you grow in grace, find someone you can mentor in the things of Christ.
- Become involved in your church's efforts to reach your community for Christ.
- Encourage your church to join other GGF congregations in planting a new GGF church.
- Pray for God to raise up more pastors with a heart for our churches. ■



Confession time: I am a leader. Deep in my human nature, as well as in my spiritual gifting, I am designed to lead. I come from a family of leaders who have exemplified leadership and it was cultured and learned from my childhood. I am also a deeply flawed leader who struggles with difficult decisions and making the best choices, as well as with personal discipline to be effective in group and personal leadership opportunities. For most of my teenage years, and all of my adult life, I have been in leadership positions with varying degrees of influence. Some of these positions included only a couple of members for a short period of time with no budget to manage, while other positions included thousands of people and multi-million dollar budgets! However, in each and every leadership situation I found the same reality: I NEED HELP! I cannot lead alone or only with my own leadership capacities (no matter how well-developed they may be or how knowledgeable I appear to be in the area I serve). Yes, I need the Lord, and I need others to lead along with me.

Leadership Was Never Meant to Be a Solitary Experience

You have heard the expression, “It’s lonely at the top.” In reality, this can be very true for the individual who decides to lead all alone without a leadership team or a board of advisors to own the task together. Earlier in my life

I made this mistake. I struggled with pride and was too arrogant to be used by God in powerful ways. What a painful learning experience! I have also been blessed to participate in some incredibly gifted and united leadership teams which were used of God to bring about great results and to give Him glory. The wonderful thing about serving on this kind of team is seeing the growth of the team members as they benefit from each other’s gifts and strengths. In sports, the members of any successful team play different roles, yet have the single objective of performing well together and accomplishing their goal in unison. Those who fail to do this may have some incredible talent and an individual “super-star,” but they will never be able to achieve the results they could with the excellence of a unified team.

Let’s define “team” as a plurality of two to 12 individuals—whether on staff or as volunteers—who serve together with a sense of calling and ownership of the church or organization. Let’s also define “leadership” as a recognized role of guiding or influencing other people toward the fulfillment of a purpose. This is an intentionally broad definition, allowing for those who are tasked with church leadership, a youth group, a ministry trip, or a monthly senior luncheon. It may not be a paid position or be identified on an organizational chart, but it is certainly an area of responsibility which must be accomplished in order for others to benefit,

and the one bearing this weight of responsibility is the leader.

Even the greatest leader will be endowed with only a certain level of grace or gifting.

Biblical Rationale for the Plurality of Leaders

Throughout Scripture, there is strong evidence of leadership plurality. In the very first chapter of Genesis we are introduced to a God who eternally exists in three distinct Persons (Genesis 1:26-27). He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which are ontologically equal (meaning in essence of His nature), but separate in function. They serve in unity and share attributes, yet are submissive in function. The Holy Spirit does the work of Jesus Christ, who does the will of the Father (Luke 22:42; John 14:25; 15:26; 1 Corinthians 11:3). The Trinity demonstrates the elements of teamwork in the essential acts of creation (Genesis 1:2-3; John 1:1-3) and salvation (John 3:16; Romans 8:32; John 16:7-11). God is self-sufficient (in need of nothing) and exists in a plural state of being. Since God in His very nature is more than one being, this strongly leads us to assume that plurality of leadership is better than a single being acting as leader. It is understandable, and even illustrated in the Godhead, that submission to others and functional leadership are necessary. It would seem that our efforts as a leadership team cannot escape the example given by God Himself of the value and superiority of team leadership over a singular leader or even over multiple leaders working independently rather than interdependently with the benefit of joint leadership.

The Body of Christ is God's Example of Unity in the Midst of Diversity

Secondly, the Body of Christ, which is the theological and operational reality of our present dispensation of Grace, is a team leadership model. The Apostle Paul himself explains the reality and benefits of the Body in several passages. Remember that in Romans 12 he calls on all believers

to "offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." He continues to explain, "just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us" (Romans 12:4-6). Paul gives such a great challenge to the members of the Body of Christ to value one another and not isolate themselves in mind or actions from others. The grace is for each one to be able to work, serve, and lead together.

Paul further summarizes this well in 1 Corinthians 12:12: "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body." In this passage he goes on to show the dysfunctional attitudes which occur in the body and among leaders who fail to see how God has given value and the need to be valued to other people (1 Corinthians 12:14-26). The unique talents and gifts in the Body of Christ are distributed by the Spirit of God Himself. Therefore, as we value others, we recognize God's wisdom in their distribution and show our humble willingness to learn from one another. Even the greatest leader will be endowed with only a certain level of grace or gifting. But there will always be others around the leader who have gifts which need to be exercised and can add to the leadership mix and elevate the leadership quotient of the entire team! Paul clearly points out that the diversity of our gifts, when practiced in love and unity, is the strength of the gifting for service of the greater Body (1 Corinthians 12: 27-31)! This is our example for leading wherever God has placed us.

The Examples of Jesus and Paul

Beyond these two very strong examples of leadership teams (the Godhead and the Body of Christ), there were numerous leadership teams which were effectively used by God to bring about God's work and will. Jesus called, trained, and sent out twelve disciples to proclaim the story of His life, death, and resurrection. He certainly didn't need help, and is the only leader to not have any "gaps," or weaknesses. The Apostle Paul (the greatest missionary to the Gentiles and regions beyond that the world has ever known) always worked through team leadership. He traveled and ministered in an apostolic team with others whose gifts and talents were quite different than his own to bring a stronger leadership to bear on the responsibilities before them. Paul was a team with Barnabas, Silas, John Mark, Aq-

quila and Priscila, Luke, Epaphroditus, Titus, Philemon, and Timothy. These people did not all serve with Paul simultaneously, but at some time or another Paul worked with them and invested in them while they served and invested in Paul in some way as well because of their unique gifts, experience, or abilities.

It is interesting that Paul gave instructions to the local churches he founded all over Asia Minor to appoint elders and deacons (always in plurality) to lead their local assemblies. There was no mimicking the lone ruler pontiff of his cultural times when it came to church leadership or even his apostolic team leadership. This is not to say that there were not individual responsibilities or accountability. Rather, it seems quite evident that individual responsibility within the team was vital to the team's success. Paul tells the Ephesians, "From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work" (4:16). The team capitalizes on the strengths of each member in the understanding, planning and the execution of the work of God. This is how we must also operate as leaders in the responsibility which God has given us. These biblical examples show the power of team leadership as well as increasing our ability to humbly hear God's voice and be accountable to Him.

The Practical Benefits of Shared Leadership

1. Greater productivity. Strength-based leadership toward a common goal (1 Corinthians 12-14).
2. Less stress and pressure on the leader. Responsibility for success and failure is shared (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).
3. Greater leadership development. Leaders learn and grow from others.
4. More creativity and innovation. Leaders build on one another's ideas.
5. Better decision making. A breadth of perspectives and added insight by multiple members helps in complex matters.
6. More safety and accountability. Leaders left alone are vulnerable to downfalls, and teams working closely assist with accountability.
7. Less loneliness. The team prevents isolation and shares burdens and conflicts.
8. Greater joy and satisfaction among team members. Opportunities exist to voice opinions and ideas and encourage everyone toward meaningful work.
9. Great trust among the congregation or those being led. Trust is greater when people realize there is prayer and planning by a respected group of leaders.
10. Provide better organizational leadership. The whole church or group benefits from the shared strengths and wisdom of the leadership team.¹

I trust God will inspire your leadership and ability to work with others as a leadership team which God uses mightily. ■

¹Hartwig, Ryan T. and Warren Bird. 2015. Teams That Thrive: Five Disciplines of Collaborative Church Leadership. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. pp. 57-60.



Ken B. Kemper, President at Grace Bible College since 2003, welcomes your comments. Contact him at preskemper@gbcol.edu, or follow him on Twitter or Facebook ([@presidentkemper](https://www.facebook.com/presidentkemper)).

***"Two are better than one,
Because they have a good reward for their labor.
For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.
But woe to him who is alone when he falls,
For he has no one to help him up."***

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NKJV



Grace, the Gospel, and Serving Are You Comfortable?

by Jeremy Clark
Executive Director

Reflecting on the week I had just enjoyed with Alex and Deltha Gulart, missionaries serving with Grace Ministries International in Paraguay, I spent a few moments sitting on their 18th floor balcony overlooking much of the city of Ciudad del Este situated on the border shared with Brazil and Argentina. My vantage point inclined me to make a few observations which sitting at ground level could not have offered. Just to the east near the river separating Brazil from Paraguay sat a cathedral from which emanated music and singing loud enough for me to hear several blocks away and nearly 20 stories up. Just behind the cathedral on the shore of the river was a casino—the parking lot filling up by the moment. A few minutes went by when the mosque closest to the Gularts’ apartment, a couple of streets to the south and east, sounded out its call to prayer drowning out most other noises on a relatively quiet night for this part of town.

While the action below was unfolding, Alex was at the dining room table working through and writing down goals to reach Ciudad del Este, other major cities in Paraguay, and even cities across the border in Argentina and Brazil with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paraguay is GMI’s newest field where Alex and Deltha have been living only since last June. In addition to its strategic location in the heart of South America neighboring one of GMI’s oldest fields, Bolivia, Paraguay is also a country where few have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. While less than 10% of the population

call themselves evangelical believers, even fewer actually know Jesus Christ as Savior experiencing His grace which alone saves.

One March evening on the Zimbabwean border in the town of Livingstone, Zambia, which hosts one of the world’s most powerful displays, Victoria Falls, I had dinner with a Zambian, Pastor Charles, who had been ministering there for the past three years. We met on a sidewalk running alongside the busy thoroughfare of this tourist town just a block away from the restaurant where we sat down to eat. His frame was slight and his clothes fit loosely—a humble man who glowed as he talked about his children and the way the Lord has blessed his church. As we talked about his ministry and the challenges he faces, I asked him about the Grace Church in Zambia—the association of churches affiliated and partnering with GMI. Specifically, I wanted to know what Grace Church in Zambia lacked. His answer did not surprise me—it was a topic which was raised, discussed, and debated as to the form it would take during the eight days I would spend there. Nearly every church leader, and even outside observers, agreed with Pastor Charles’ assertion that the Grace Church in Zambia needs more biblical training.

While certainly not disagreeing with Pastor Charles, I wanted to probe a little further to better understand his rationale. Having next asked him how training would benefit local churches, he told me that once a pastor knows and

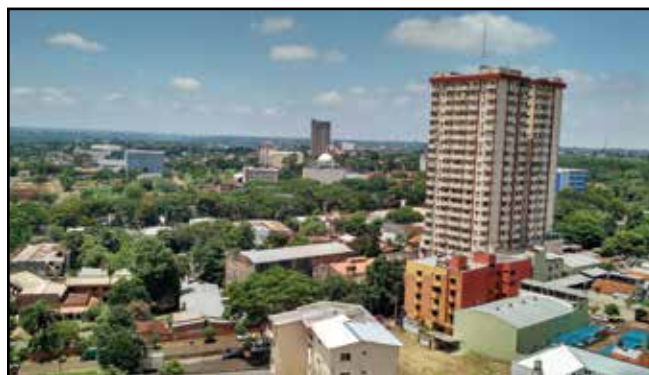


understands the grace of God, the local church in Zambia grows. This was as interesting a plan for church growth as it was straight forward. Very few in Zambia, he shared, know salvation and, if they are saved, understand the grace which saves them. Continuing, he shared that grace helps a believer comprehend his or her relationship with God and it aids the believer to come to the point of understanding what God would have him or her do (a point I wish I had more time to further develop with him). He went on to boldly proclaim that grace helps the believer to serve the Lord freely knowing that his or her eternal destiny is forever secure. Coming to terms with this biblical truth allows Christians to serve in liberty, and not out of fear, because they understand how it is that they are saved. Affirming God's grace, Pastor Charles was really on to something—especially in the deeply legalistic religious climate of Zambia. As Paul, facing opposition to this very message, unapologetically declared, “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain” (Gal. 2:21).

Ciudad del Este, Paraguay, is situated just down the river from Iguazu Falls (pictured above) which is an amazing sight comparable to the power and majesty of Victoria Falls in southern Zambia. Besides their proximity to these unbelievable wonders of the world, both of these fields share a common need. They need more missionaries. As Alex was putting his ideas, thoughts, and dreams to paper

in the form of a strategic plan, the thing that struck me was that he was not planning based upon the presence of only two missionary families in Paraguay for the foreseeable future—the Gularts and also Jerry and Sandi Bomers who are arriving later this year. Having spent an exhausting week trying to keep up with Alex and Deltha and meeting all the people they have acquainted themselves with in their community, I know that this couple is capable of doing a lot for the Lord. However, Alex and Deltha's plans were predicated on recruiting and working with even more missionaries who would help establish works in the capital city of Asunción, the third largest city Encarnación, and the cities just across the borders in Brazil and Argentina. And why shouldn't Alex dream big? As the statistics tell the story, this region of South America desperately needs a strong biblical witness since so few know Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is a place of opportunity for the gospel.

In comparison to Paraguay, the Zambian field has been around a while, but it too needs missionaries. It is a field where GMI does not currently have a residential missionary presence. During my only Sunday in Zambia, five of us traveled four and half hours north to Mufulira near the Congolese border, attended a church service, and then returned to Kabwe. Anticipating the drive, I was rather interested in what the four African believers with whom I was traveling might discuss for nine hours. It was thoroughly enjoyable to sit back and listen to them mull over theology for the majority of the trip. They touched on all the major “hot-button” issues of the day within African Christendom, delving into such matters as eternal security, prophecy, tongues, the so-called prosperity gospel, worship and music styles, present day “apostles” and “prophets,” salvation, the Trinity, and more. It was wonderful to hear their questions, the biblical responses, and how they interacted with each other directly wanting only to bring the light of God's Word and



View of Ciudad del Este from the 18th floor balcony of Alex and Deltha Gulart's apartment

grace to bear on the man-infused confusion surrounding these essential topics.

During the trip a few of them took time to reminisce a decade or so in the past on their own theological training and the scriptural foundation they received. Looking forward they noted with passion the need to continue grounding pastors in the Word and also train the next generation of leaders so that they too will understand, teach, and live daily through the grace of God. Having just persevered through some difficult and tumultuous times, pastors and leaders in the Grace Church in Zambia are now thinking about tomorrow and arriving at the conclusion that theological education is indispensable to the future of the church. These were the sentiments shared by the 20 or more leaders of the Grace Church of Kipiri during an informal meeting after a Saturday service, by leaders of the four churches from Kabwe gathered for a meeting one afternoon, and by Pastor Charles over dinner in Livingstone.

In Paraguay and Zambia the future is bright because there is a disposition on the part of God's people to work hard and to serve Him. Paul was able to write to the Philippian church that he was "confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). This was not a literary device or an empty platitude, but his confidence was based upon the fact that the Philippian believers were disposed to honor and serve the Lord. Just before sharing his confidence he writes, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5). And then again he commends the Philippian believers declaring, "Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in



*A view of beautiful Victoria Falls
Photo credit: www.places.co.za*



Sharing with leaders at the church in Kipiri, Zambia

my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace" (Philippians 1:7). Paul noted these Christians had fellowshiped and worked together with Paul in the grace of God. In short, they were disposed to continue the work and to see it through knowing that it is Christ who gives them strength (Philippians 4:13). This gave him the confidence that God would complete their good work until the day of Christ Jesus.

Whether it is the missionary team in Paraguay or the many leaders and laypersons of the Grace Church in Zambia, these are believers disposed to fellowship and partake in the grace of God which needs to be known throughout the whole world. These fields are unique and strategic in their own right and have potential to reach well beyond their borders. Would you pray that God would move in the hearts of His people here in the States to serve in these countries? Pray for people to work on a team in Paraguay to share the gospel through something as simple as opening their home to a Bible study or through friendships developed by living life with their neighbors. Pray for individuals or families to serve in Zambia to encourage, mentor, and teach pastors and leaders in the church.

One afternoon as Alex and I were challenging a Latin American couple over Skype on another of GMI's fields to consider serving the Lord in missions, Alex told them how he was praying for them. He said he was not praying that they would have peace about serving, but that they would be uncomfortable taking into account the great need to share the gospel around the world. Pray that God will make you uncomfortable with this reality and that this discomfort will move you to take even more action both here and abroad. ■

JONAH'S RIVETING STORY



Jonah's riveting story just makes my imagination race. How could Jonah ever be able to tell us anything? "The word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai saying 'ARISE, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me' " (Jonah 1:1). Jonah did not want God to show any type of kindness to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, an ungodly nation that took pleasure in "beating up" God's people. Jonah did not comprehend how God would use ungodly nations as rods of correction on His own people (e.g., Isa. 10:5-12). God would then deal with the arrogance and haughtiness of the king of that nation who thought it was his own idea and by his own power (Isa. 10:12).

death" (2:5). "I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever" (2:6). According to the Bible, Jonah actually died and after three full days, God commanded the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land. He must have looked and smelled something atrocious. But God wasn't finished with Jonah and continued to use him.

Matthew 11:39-41 records that the Lord Jesus Christ said, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so the Son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The

“...let's ARISE like Jonah, tell God's message, and let the results be by His hand.”

You know the story how Jonah boarded a ship going the opposite direction and was SLEEPING during a terrible storm that God sent. At Jonah's request, "they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging...And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights" (1:15-17). How could Jonah possibly survive without air, water, or food? According to chapter two, he couldn't and didn't: "I cried for help from the depth of Sheol" (2:2). "Water encompassed me to the point of

men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here." Luke 11:30 adds "For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so the Son of Man will be to this generation." What an endorsement of the truth of Jonah's experience!

"The word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying 'ARISE, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.' So Jonah

arose and went to Nineveh...and he cried out and said, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.' Then the people and the king of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least" (3:1-5). The ENTIRE city responded to Jonah's message. "When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it" (3:10). "But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry" (4:1). The rest of chapter 4 describes a very interesting way that God taught Jonah a lesson in compassion.

Can you imagine ANYONE authorized to speak on God's behalf becoming angry that God's message was not only sincerely received but acted upon? "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Too many true Christians have a dislike for some culture, language, lifestyle, et cetera, but SHOULD love and be concerned for the spiritual condition of the people involved. "The Lord...is not willing [does not want, desire] that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

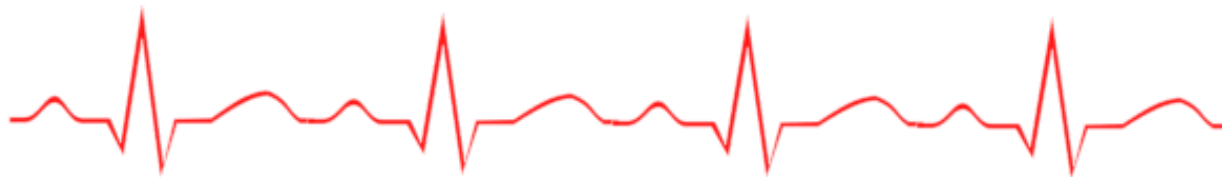
In today's "Administration of Grace," Christians are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20), "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). Our message is "...to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things" (Eph. 3:9). Let's not be a Jonah-type messenger of God but rather "...a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). So let's ARISE like Jonah, tell God's message, and let the results be by His hand. ■

We have all heard sermons about the Bride of Christ. People refer to themselves as the Bride of Christ. Hymns remind us of the future catching away of the Bride and the wedding feast of the Lamb. There will be such an event and all believers will be there, but in what role? Tied into Tim Heath's article, these two excellent books answer the questions. "Rightly dividing the Word of truth" will always open our eyes to Scripture.

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HOW'S YOUR HEALTH?

by Craig MacDonald

You could answer that question in a variety of ways. Maybe you know you've got a health issue, either temporary or chronic, or you might think your health is pretty good. But most of us have learned problems can lie below the surface only to emerge suddenly and unexpectedly. Four years ago I left on my normal Saturday bike ride, got 50 yards down the street, lost consciousness and crashed. Two days later we learned I had a heart rhythm problem that required a pacemaker. I had no idea!

Our spiritual health is much the same. A Christian sometimes knows she's in a bad place, her relationship with God not what it should be. A believer can also think his spiritual health is fine when in fact he has serious, unknown or unacknowledged problems. Of course a Christian might be in good spiritual health, their walk with God all that it should be.

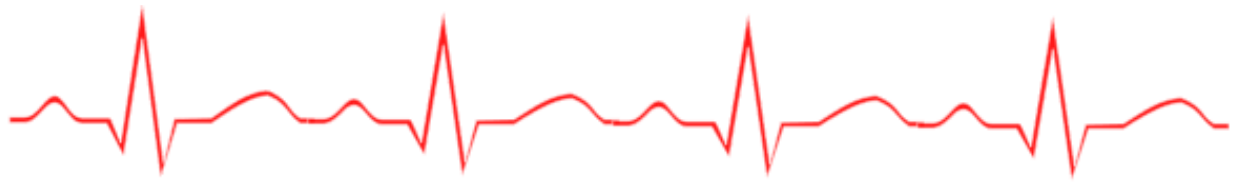
Just as with our physical condition, it's important to have regular checkups so we know how we're doing spiritually. But how do we assess spiritual health? There's no spiritual pulse to check, blood pressure to measure, or scale to step on.

The Bible refers to two dimensions of our spiritual health, and understanding the distinction between them is important if we're going to have a healthy Christian life. The first is spiritual maturity and the second is spirituality. Let's look at them briefly in that order and then talk about how to assess our spiritual health in each of those dimensions.

The New Testament refers often to spiritual maturity, sometimes in terms of milk and meat, showing the parallel with our physical maturity. Peter tells his readers, "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation" (1 Peter 2:2). Contrast that with Paul's criticism of the Corinthians: "I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready" (1 Cor. 3:2). These two passages teach us there's a natural progression. New believers, like those Peter wrote to, need the basic truths of Scripture, but with time they should mature and move from milk to meat.

These two passages fit well with what we read in Hebrews 5:11-14:

"About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil."



These believers were old enough in the faith that they should have been mature and able to teach others, but they still hadn't mastered the basics of God's Word. There's no shame in not knowing what the Bible teaches if you're a new believer. However, as with our physical maturation, as we grow older in the faith we should also grow in our knowledge and understanding of Scripture.

Spiritual maturity differs from what we'll call spirituality. The former should increase as we age in the faith, but the latter has no connection to how long we've been Christians. Romans 8:11-14 explains that every believer, regardless of his or her spiritual age, has the indwelling Holy Spirit and should live according to his leading.

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Not every Christian is old enough in the faith to have learned the truths of Scripture, but every believer has the indwelling Spirit. We should all be sensitive and responsive to His direction, not the urges of the flesh.

Understanding the distinction between spiritual maturity and spirituality helps us with passages like Galatians 6:1 which says, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." This act of mutual care depends upon a Christian's close connection to the Spirit's work in his life, not his spiritual maturity.

Several other aspects of the difference between spiritual maturity and spirituality are also worth noting.

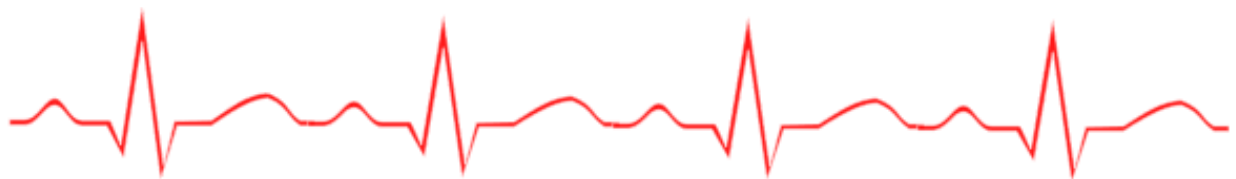
For example, it's possible to be spiritually mature, with an extensive understanding of Scripture, and yet live according to the flesh, very out of touch with the Spirit's leading. That brother caught in a transgression might be a pastor or theologian and the believer who restores him in a spirit of weakness very young in the faith.

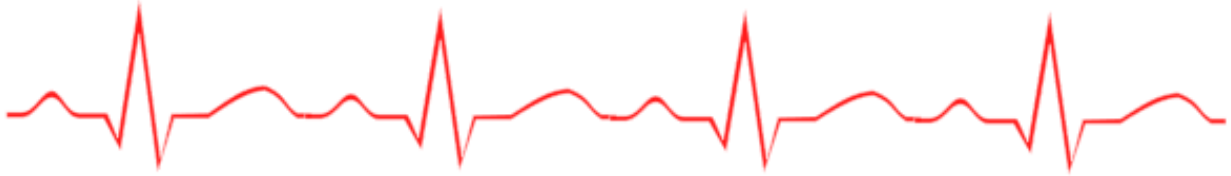
A case can be made that no Christian is more spiritual than the moment after they accept Christ as their Savior. They are at that point exactly where God wants them, perfectly responsive to the Spirit's leading. From then on a believer will go through periods of greater or lesser spirituality as they battle with the urgings of the flesh.

However, these two dimensions are not entirely separate, as the 1 Corinthians 3 passage we looked at above illustrates. In verse 2 Paul says he fed them with milk, not solid food because though they should have been ready for meat they were not. In verse 1 he writes, "But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ." Here we discover the Corinthians were both spiritually immature and living according to the flesh. So what's the connection between spirituality and spiritual maturity? If a new believer quickly falls out of that close connection with the spirit they won't spend the time in Scripture that moves them toward maturity. That's what happened with the Corinthians. They never progressed toward maturity because they quickly reverted to worldly ways.

After someone reaches a level of relative maturity they may then lose their sensitivity to the Spirit, and that's what James seems to refer to in James 1:22-25 when he urges his readers to be both learners (spiritual maturity) and doers (spirituality) of the Word.

With these dynamics in mind we can begin to assess our spiritual health in both dimensions. The easier of the two to measure is probably spiritual maturity because





that's the more objective of the two. Do you know your Bible better than you did a year ago? Can you explain more truths and biblical doctrines, supplying supporting references? How many verses have you memorized in the last year? Before stopping publication in 2003, Moody Monthly printed a Bible knowledge test each year that served as an objective measurement tool, but I don't know of anything available now. Perhaps your pastor could create something.

At a time when more churches are dropping what used to be called the Sunday school hour, and sermons include less and less biblical content, the individual believer has to take more responsibility for his or her spiritual maturity. Ask your pastor to recommend books that will help you grow in your knowledge of Scripture and what it teaches. Several very good, very readable options are available at almost every level.



Some of the national Bible study groups that meet weekly also have value.

Spirituality is much harder to quantify because it's a relationship, a personal connection with the Spirit. However, the passages we looked at suggest that our conduct is one way to gauge spirituality. I cannot claim to be led by the Spirit if my life includes a pattern of sinful behaviors. David's prayer in Psalm 139 provides us a good pattern: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (v. 23-24). Ask God sincerely to show you your level of spirituality and be assured he will, perhaps in ways that you'd never expect.

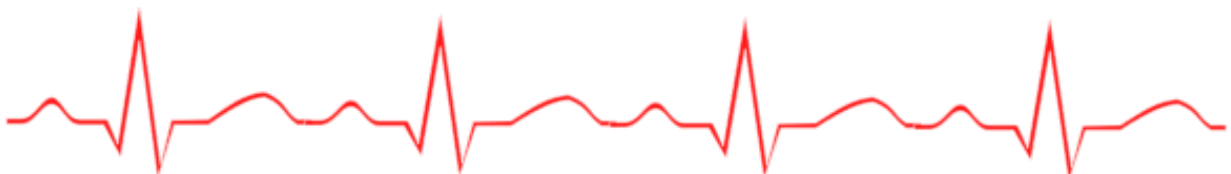
Another metric for measuring spirituality is the practice of the disciplines of the Christian life. We cannot have a vital connection with the Spirit if we're not spending significant time in prayer and reading the Bible. If God wants

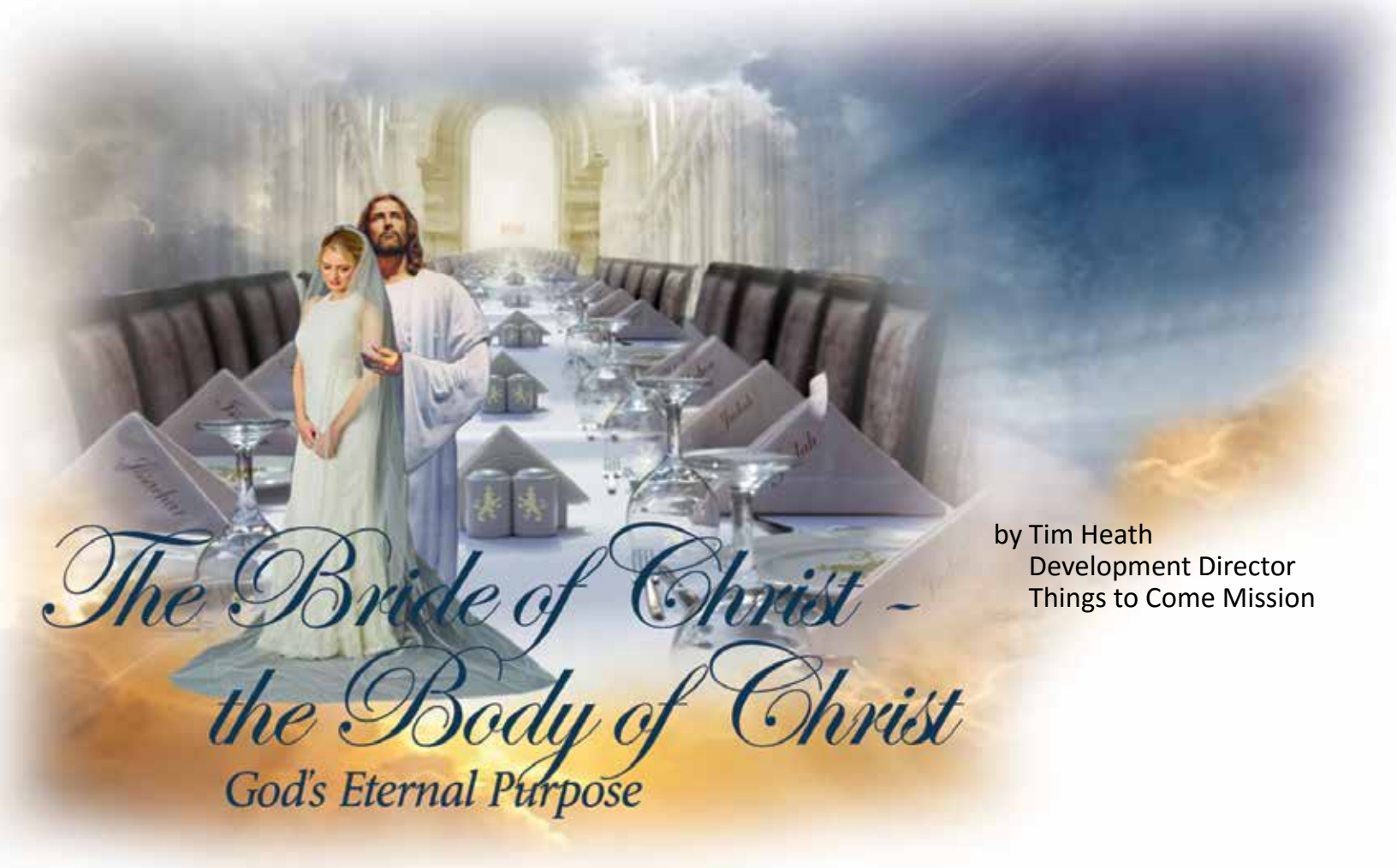
people to hear the good news of Christ's provision and we're doing nothing to help our friends and family to learn about it, how can we be led by God's Spirit?

Just as with our physical condition, good spiritual health requires attention and effort. The time and effort put into growing toward spiritual maturity will have the effect of aligning life with God's design, and that produces what Christ called the abundant life. But the effects of spiritual maturity only come to us to the extent that we submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit and live a life consistent with what we've learned.

“Just as with our physical condition, good spiritual health requires attention and effort.”

So, how's your health? Are you keeping an eye on your spirituality and spiritual maturity? If you gave yourself a grade for each what would it be? What's your method for growing in maturity and your means for assessing your spirituality? If we're not paying attention to both dimensions then chances are at least good that one or both are or will become a problem—and none of us wants to be in bad health. ■





The Bride of Christ - the Body of Christ

God's Eternal Purpose

by Tim Heath
Development Director
Things to Come Mission

The title to this article reflects two different concepts that are often combined into one, yet would appear to be contrasting a “bride” and a “groom.” The question as to “Who is the Bride of Christ?” is further confused and clouded with mystery by the following quote:

At the Second Coming of Christ, the church will be united with the Bridegroom, the official “wedding ceremony” will take place and, with it, the eternal union of Christ and His bride will be actualized (Revelation 19:7-9; 21:1-2).

At that time, all believers will inhabit the heavenly city known as the New Jerusalem, also called “the holy city” in Revelation 21:2 and 10. The New Jerusalem is not the church, but it takes on the church’s characteristics. In his vision of the end of the age, the Apostle John sees the city coming down from heaven adorned “as a bride,” meaning that the inhabitants of the city, the redeemed of the Lord, will be holy and pure, wearing white garments of holiness and righteousness. Some have misinterpreted verse 9 to mean the holy city is the Bride of Christ, but that cannot be because Christ died for His people, not for a city. The city is

called the bride because it encompasses all who are the bride (Gotquestions.org).

The above quote combines several conflicting concepts, casually and without distinction. Notice his contradictions in the following list: 1) he talks about the second coming of Christ, as if this is the rapture (but ignores the rapture); 2) he says the New Jerusalem is not the “church” but then says it represents the church; 3) he ignores all the references to the number “12” (depicting Israel) and simply says that the New Jerusalem talks about the “church’s” holiness, instead of interpreting the New Jerusalem to actually be Israel (which is the context). Israel is the redeemed, the Bride.

Below is a quote from Paul Sadler who, consistent with Scripture and its context, shows several key distinctions between Israel and the Body of Christ. Without this care when interpreting Scripture, we end up teaching error.

In our quest to rightly divide the Word of truth certain “words” and “phrases” are identified with the Prophetic program while others are associated with the Mystery. Interestingly, the “Bride of Christ” is an unscriptur-

al phrase that is foreign to both programs of God. It is merely a theological expression that originated in the futile mind of man to describe those who will be present at the marriage of the Lamb preceding the kingdom (Rev. 19:7-9). The exact phrase used in prophecy is only found in the Apocalypse where one of the seven angels said to John: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. 21:9)—*Paul Sadler, Grace Points, Berean Bible Society.*

Israel is promised to be the "wife" of Jehovah – His new bride (Hosea 2:2, 7, 14-16). Hosea 2:19-20: Three times God says concerning Israel, "I will betroth you to Me."

The Apostle Paul is unique in his teaching that Christ is the Head of the church today. Paul further teaches that we, who are saved (believers in Christ), are members of Christ's body. This union is called a mystery in a chapter where Paul gives sound teaching for husbands and wives. The mystery is not that a man marries a woman and they become husband and wife. No! The mystery is much more profound than that. Eph. 5:32 says they become one flesh! Therefore, just as a husband and wife are one flesh, so are Christ and the church one flesh. Paul says we become "bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh." The concept of Christ being the Head and we being His body is more than a simple metaphor (Col. 1:18, 24-27).

If we are the "body" of Christ, as Paul states, then we are the "groom." And if we are the groom, we cannot at the same time be the Bride. Israel was told though that she is the wife of Jehovah, her husband. Isaiah 54:5 says clearly that "your Maker is your husband."

In speaking about the future New Covenant that God would make with Israel, Jeremiah (3:14, 20; 31:32) said that Israel broke the first covenant (with Moses), even though God "was a husband to them." When John, the baptizer, is told that all people are following the Lord Jesus, he clarifies his position as the "friend" of the Bridegroom, who rejoices with him who has the bride (John 3:28-30). Israelites, who were turning to Jesus as their Messiah are described as the "bride" and Jesus Himself is the "Bridegroom." John, in reference to Israel, brings the Bride and the Bridegroom together!

All doubt should be erased when we turn to the book of Revelation. John hears the multitude say, "Let us be glad. . . for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has

made herself ready" 19:7. Jesus is ready to make war with mankind and the end has finally come. So, John writes what one of the angels declares in chapter 21, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife" (vs. 9). What follows is a description of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. The description of this city is not the Body of Christ for the number "12," which is the number for Israel, is used to describe every facet of this city. The city is not the Bride as mentioned above but it is Israel that is depicted and not the Body of Christ. (As stated earlier, the number ONE represents the Body of Christ – Eph. 4:4-6.)

At least nine times John uses the number 12 to describe the New Jerusalem. In this city there are 12 gates, with 12 angels guarding them. There is a name on each gate, depicting each of the 12 tribes of Israel. The city gates are laid out the same way the tribes of Israel camped when they left Egypt (Numbers 2:3-29). There, Israel was to camp, three tribes on the North, East, South and West sides, with the tabernacle and presence of God in their midst. It is exactly the picture of the New Jerusalem.

“... it is clear that Israel
is the Bride and we are
the Body.”

John continues to describe the city which has 12 foundations and he, once again, specifically clarifies that these foundations represent the 12 apostles of the Lamb. We cannot miss the point John is making that when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, it most clearly represents the nation of Israel, as enumerated through its tribes and its apostles.

The measurement of the wall of this city is 144,000 cubits – (12 times 12 thousand). This happens to be the exact number of the witnesses chosen by God to go into the entire

world with the gospel of the Kingdom (Rev. 7:4-8). These witnesses are virgin Jewish men (14:4).

To help clarify the truth that Israel is the Bride and the city is not just a picture of righteous Gentile believers, we can examine the “woman” in Rev. 12:1-6. The man child must be Jesus and the woman is Israel. Here John uses a person to represent the nation of Israel, like he does with the heavenly Jerusalem, which also represents Israel. John consistently pictures the nation of Israel as the key player in the book of Revelation. The Body of Christ is not present in the book of Revelation in any of the symbolism or the numbering.

If we compare these passages, it is clear that Israel is the Bride and we are the Body. Paul says we are baptized into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13 - He is the Head and we are the Body) at the very moment we are saved (Eph. 1:13). When Paul speaks of the mystery of Christ and the believer being one, it has already taken place. We are right now His Body. Israel is not yet the Bride but will be His Bride at the close of the Tribulation period. In 2 Cor. 11:2-3 and 12-14 Paul’s focus is on the importance of purity “as a bride should be to her husband.” He is not saying we are the Bride in any conceivable way.

A question to ponder: Rev. 19:6-9. Who are the participants at the marriage supper of the Lamb? Who are the guests? ■



Tim Heath is the Development Director at Things to Come Mission in Indianapolis, IN, a position he started in late 2014 after returning to the States from Southeast Asia with his wife, Judy. They served under TCM since being accepted in June 2010. They have also had opportunities to serve the Lord in Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Curacao, Brazil, Bolivia, England, Philippines, Africa, and Thailand by teaching seminars and encouraging missionaries. In addition, Tim has pastored at Cascade Mountain Bible Church in Leavenworth, WA.

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Region 1: Northwest
Chad Stephens

The senior high youth from the Grace churches in **Region 1** met in February for our annual winter blast. Rick Pilieci was our speaker and did a dynamic job. At least four teens from this camp accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Others mentioned they had made decisions to follow Jesus in their career goals. See you at the GGF Family Bible Conference in Spokane in July! ■



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 weekend 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 in Anaheim for Pastor Molina. ■



Region 3: West
Steve Blackwell

Grace Bible Church of Lakewood, Co, continues to reach out to the homeless along the West Colfax corridor of Denver and to our local community with food drives and other needs. We also coordinate our efforts with other nonprofit agencies to share in the advancement of God's kingdom and His grace.

Harvest Fellowship of Brighton, CO, is continuing to reach out in several nations (Rwanda, Uganda, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Honduras) with our short-term mission trips. We are excited to see results from those trips and excited to see our own people participate! Our men's ministry has stayed steady with 40-50 men every Tuesday night. Pastor Steve is presently training/discipling 21 students through the week in dispensational theology. It's so great to see the spiritual awakening of so many people. Bob Hill, Jr. is training our youth in apologetics and Bible with great successes. The teens have become very close as a group. Our women's ministry is growing and has broken into several geographical small groups, and they are going well. All in all, our leadership is pretty excited about Harvest's growth and the ability to delegate without compromising the Grace message. ■



Region 4:
Upper Midwest
Les Takkinen

It has been a challenging but very special quarter of the year in service for our Savior at **Grace Bible Church** of West Allis, Wisconsin. During the past months we have had a good number of people who have been hospitalized for various reasons. Many hours and weeks of ministry have been invested in those who have needed encouragement in these days of afflictions. One of our special elderly saints, Dorothy Russell, went home to be with our Savior.

God has been working in our church body in the lives of many spiritually. We completed the book of 1 John in our morning messages with God using them to touch the hearts and lives of a good number of people. Our attendance has grown during the past three months and all glory goes to our Heavenly Father.

One of challenges we have faced is to respond and be proactive to the Same-Sex Marriage law that has come as a result of a Federal Supreme Court ruling. Because of some more important needs in our congregation, we have had to put off the work of a task force to work on our doctrinal statement regarding this matter. The months of January-March have been involved in formulating our response to this issue in our culture and society.

On March 13, we passed a completed change in our doctrinal statement to address this matter biblically. Our next project is to establish a new policy concerning how we as an organization will respond to our pastors marrying those who desire a pastor to perform a wedding ceremony for same-sex couples. Along with this, we shall also be establishing a new policy in the use of our building for rentals or for any function in the use of our building. There is much work to do, but we have a great task force that has been unified and hard at work in accomplishing these projects.

God is blessing our churches!

Our world is changing but we do not have to conform to the mold of the world. We have decided to be biblical, unique, if necessary, but most of all, pleasing in the sight of the Lord. ■



Region 5: Lower Midwest
Ed Jeude

St. Louis Bible Fellowship continues to grow, as we see steady growth in the number of young adults. This is very exciting—our next planned outreach is to inner city youth. Tyrell and Rachel Shoemaker, graduates of St. Louis Theological Seminary, are preparing to move from Chicago to St. Louis to work with our children and youth and start a ministry to reach inner city children for Christ. Ty and Rachel have been working with *Inner City Impact*, but feel led to move to St. Louis.

St. Louis Theological Seminary continues to add students under the direction of Dr. Tony Sistelos. The Seminary can provide credential documentation as needed for furthering the Lord's work in the USA as well as overseas. Contact Pastor Rick Owsley at 314-402-5259 or email him at rao@fidnet.com for more information.

Quincy Bible Fellowship Church in Quincy, IL, reports having had a long winter as the church has experienced failed heaters, boiler issues, and some minor electrical issues. Among other things, our small group has gotten smaller as we share the Word, rightly divided. However, it will take more than this to stop us, as we have kept our eye on the Author and Finisher of our faith, our Lord Jesus Christ. We have set our sights on heaven and will press on.

We are ever committed to the ministry and are making our move to Quincy, hopefully by April 1. We are planning for spring and summer—plans to reach this community with the message of His marvelous grace.

Grace Bible Church in Brownsburg, IN, officially launched its first service on February 14 with Pastor Phillip du Plessis as its pastor. They have worked hard to fine tune everything that goes into starting a church from scratch.

On February 18, twelve people met for a **Region 5** luncheon in Effingham, IL. Next meeting is at 10:45 AM on May 19 at Ryan's in Effingham, IL.

Steve McFarland is the GGF Region 5 representative for **Prison Mission Association**. Please contact him at pma5region@hotmail.com if you would like any information about PMA ministries or Bible correspondence courses. They have interesting studies for any Bible class or individuals, not just prisoners. ■



Region 9: Western, MI
Kathy Molenkamp

Several things have happened or are happening at **Coopersville Bible Church**. In mid-February we showed the latest film from the Kendrick brothers entitled, "The War Room." The event was open to the public and was very well received by all. We would highly recommend this movie as a real ministry tool for your church. In March we held our annual missions conference. This year we did things a little bit differently. Our first Sunday was reserved for stateside ministries. We heard from Grace Adventures, the Gideons, Forgotten Man Missions (a wonderful mission to the men and women who are incarcerated), and Barnabas Ministries. This last ministry was rather new to the folks but captured their interest. It is a ministry to youth who have gotten into trouble

with drugs, crime, and more. It is very depressing to hear the statistics about how many children and young people are homeless and truly need help. Barnabas Ministries offers to assist them with both their physical and spiritual needs. They try to never say no when a phone call comes in asking for help...they say "yes" and figure out how later. It was also fascinating to hear how the four above-mentioned ministries overlap in mission and cooperate with one another to get the job done.

Our foreign missions emphasis began on Saturday with a dinner and fun-filled evening of games and activities. We had samples of food from three countries and ate our meal incorporating the customs of the countries represented. Not only did we hear from the visiting missionaries, but we also played a couple of games that sought to further familiarize us with the missionaries and the fields where they serve.

Seeing what the Lord is doing both at home and abroad is always encouraging, especially in the world in which we live today. God is still God.

Here are a couple of highlights from **Parkside Bible Church** in Holland, MI:

During the Christmas break, we had a group of 20 students and leaders serve in Costa Rica with the two churches there as part of a discipleship trip. The students spent the past year in training, mentoring, and serving in various ministries at church as part of the preparation for the mission trip. What a blessing to see so many students come back with a passion to serve and a desire to go into ministry, whether it is missions or the local church!

This year our Missions Festival theme was "Loving Locally, Reaching Globally." What an encouragement to hear the testimonies of the missionaries! A highlight was a bilingual student outreach done in partnership with Macedonia Baptist, a local Spanish-speaking church. How awesome to see the gospel preached and the teamwork between churches! ■



Region 10: Central MI
John Lowder

Greetings from **Grace Community Church** in Belmont, Michigan. We have just finished our Foreign Missions conference and are excited about the new and returning missionaries. Beyond the personal sharing and great fellowship, we are encouraged by the work our Savior and Lord is doing around the world through these and many other brothers and sisters in evangelism, education, and church plants in new countries. The gospel is on the move in the hearts of many who have never heard the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. We

are thankful to God for His Word that redeems, edifies, and leads His people to serve Him. May God bless your efforts as together we proclaim God's grace.

Here at **Frontline Bible Church** in Byron Center, MI, we have been going through a sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount called, "Raising the Bar." Pastor John Lowder continues to prepare sermons and preach the same series with Pastor Calvin Lowder and Pastor Zach Kemper from **Valley Bible Church** in Stephens City, VA. Preparing and doing a series together as the two churches has been an incomparable blessing. If there are any pastors reading this and you've never tried team-preaching before, TRY IT! Any one of us would be happy to explain how we do it.

We are also reorganizing some things as a church to accommodate the growth we've been seeing in the church and around us. God has brought a LOT of traffic to our location, and we want to capitalize on the increased visibility. Whether it's redoing our media presence, reviewing how we engage our newcomers and current attendees, or restructuring ministry roles, changes are being made. We've also seen some volunteers take on MUCH larger roles in the church, which should greatly help us with our growth. Challenges are great, but the opportunities are greater. It is our hope and prayer that the changes being made will enable us to plant a church in the next few years to do our part for the church-planting vision of the GGF. ■



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