

# TVM

## TRUTH Magazine

Winter 2017 Edition



*The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."  
Psalm 14:1*

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



**GRACE GOSPEL  
FELLOWSHIP**

# T M

**TRUTH Magazine**

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

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**January-March 2017**

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by Timothy and Sharon McGarvey

What a year it's been. We've gone through the craziest and longest Presidential election cycle in history. In some ways it reached the level of a civil war with brother against brother (Republican against Republican) and the internet and social media used as never before.

Christians were forced to weigh their values and beliefs against what was supposedly best for the nation in any of the candidates. In the end everyone lost. My own church lost two families. One because we were too conservative, the other because we weren't conservative enough. I'm just glad it's over.

We have a great mix of articles this month. Let's focus in on two of them. From the GGF Church Health Task force we read of the need for churches to strike a balance between the preaching of doctrine and practice. The pendulum can swing too far in either direction and our message will be out of balance. Some churches stress one to the near exclusion of the other. In both cases, the congregation loses out on the tremendous value found in a balance.

The second article is from Pastor Rick Owsley and is a follow-up to a previous article on following God. Rick's concern is the instruction from Scripture to be followers of Paul is being forgotten today. C.I. Scofield stated in his reference Bible that everything pertaining to the doctrine of the Body of Christ was to be found only in Paul's writings. As those who profess to be Grace believers, we must stay true to the distinctive message from Paul in his Epistles.

The new year will offer us many opportunities to live and share God's message of Grace. Let's do both!



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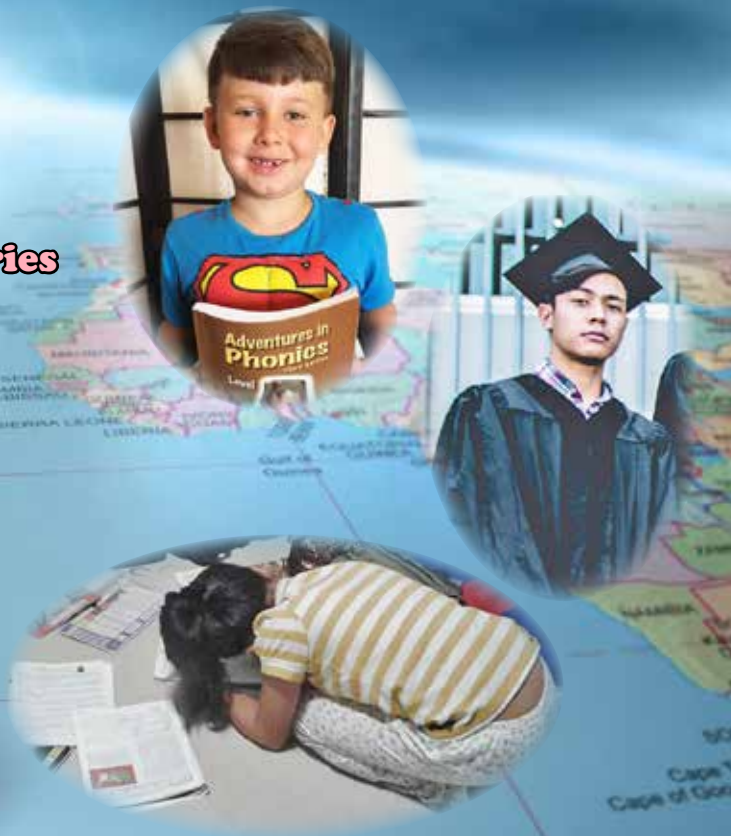
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# ESTABLISHING THE RIGHT BALANCE

by  
GGF Church Health Task Force  
Calvin Lowder  
Jim Shemaria  
Gary Hansen

**T**his article is the expanded explanation of the second of an eight-part series developed by the Church Health Taskforce to use as a Self-Assessment Tool for evaluating the direction of your church and ministry. If you would like a copy of the entire Self-Assessment Tool, you can download it at [ggfusa.org](http://ggfusa.org). If you missed the introduction to this series, as well as the explanation of the first set of questions on the topic of *worship*, you can find them in the previous two issues of *TRUTH Magazine* (available online). The present article is focused on assessing a balanced, practical theology within your church.

The Questions:

1. How much time do you spend equipping believers dispensationally with practical application?
  - How often do teaching sessions include direct application to “real life”?
  - What ways are people given to communally discuss, study, and wrestle with Scripture?
  - In what ways are biblical teachings being lived out in your church?
2. What venues does your church provide for deeper theological discourse?
  - What parts of Scripture are most difficult for your church?
  - Specifically, in what ways does your teaching holistically equip believers?
3. In what ways does your theology guide each aspect of the ministries of your church?

The questions in this section came out of the recognition that Paul’s letters are doctrinal and dispensational and have a concise and direct application section for

how these truths ought to be lived out in the world. For example, Romans 1 – 11 covers several doctrinal and dispensational truths and then chapters 12 – 16 apply them in life. The same is true in Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and the other letters of Paul. It is clear in Paul’s letters that he never intended to teach a doctrinal or dispensational truth that did not have a practical application for life. We do the Grace Message a huge disservice when we separate theology from practice.

A growing sense is developing that the Bible is irrelevant to life in the 21st century. With the onslaught of secular science and the rise of post-Christian thought, fewer and fewer churches and denominations remain committed to a strong biblical foundation for life and practice. Despite this shifting focus, we as the Grace Gospel Fellowship have reaffirmed our commitment to both Grace theology and grace practice through our Core Values statement (also found at [ggfusa.org](http://ggfusa.org)).

In their book, *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, Dorothy C Bass and Miroslav Volf make it clear we are not alone in our struggle to balance theology and practice. In most Christian contexts, there is a tension and recognition of the complexity of synergistically handling theological belief systems and practical Christianity. Rather than seeking balance between the two, often it’s about practice and little or no theology, or on the other extreme the focus is all theology and little or no application. The real challenge, and the goal for healthy, Pauline churches, is balancing the two consistently in one’s ministry.

From our mid-Acts dispensational framework, we recognize the absolute importance of having a clear dispensational hermeneutic when approaching the Scriptures. Most of our churches have been strong in preaching Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery (Romans 16:25). Some have felt the sole purpose of the church is to preach the “Mystery” as in Eph 3:9. We look at the history of our fellowship and praise God for the stalwarts of the faith who have and are boldly proclaiming the message of the grace of God given to the Apostle Paul. But we also realize our fellowship has not always been successful at translating this marvelous message of the grace of God into a format that the average believer or nonbeliever can assimilate into their personal life, their family, and their community. Paul addresses this dichotomy in 1 Corinthians 1 where he chides the Corinthians with the fact

istry, and the joy of the Lord is contagious to everyone who comes in the doors. In short, our Grace theology should lead to an overwhelming experience of grace by those to whom we minister on a regular basis, but sadly we know this is not always the case. We praise God for the ministries that reflect these things in a greater degree but we also realize that we can do more.

A young lady who had been raised in a church setting concluded that the Bible had no relevancy to life. Her life had completely unraveled and she was facing time in prison when she received Christ as her personal Savior. With some direction on how to read and study the Bible, she began to take time to read it. As she read, she was amazed how that the Bible spoke to every need she had in her life. It was not a stuffy, old, irrelevant textbook like she thought. She had grasped

“ *From our mid-Acts dispensational framework, we recognize the absolute importance of having a clear dispensational hermeneutic when approaching the Scriptures.* ”

that they had all these benefits and knowledge but had yet to put them into practice. So often the Grace Message has become nothing more than a litmus test for fellowship with other believers: “If you think like I do, then I will have fellowship with you.” For others, the Grace Message has become a hypocritical, legalistic system whereby grace is preached from the pulpit but extra-biblical requirements govern practice in the life of the church.

Most readers of *TRUTH Magazine* would heartily agree that the Word of God should impact all of our lives, but often there is a gap between what people affirm versus what they practice. We know this by observation of marriages, families, church struggles, and the failures in our personal lives. Our Grace theology should reflect itself through men and women growing in Christ as they learn more of their identity in Christ. Our emphasis on the sufficiency of the grace of God should lead to more intact, dynamic families in our assemblies. Grace churches should epitomize everything exciting and worthwhile of the Grace Message where the wounded are nurtured and not shot, where everyone is built up in the faith to do the work of min-

istry, and the joy of the Lord is contagious to everyone who comes in the doors. In short, our Grace theology should lead to an overwhelming experience of grace by those to whom we minister on a regular basis, but sadly we know this is not always the case. We praise God for the ministries that reflect these things in a greater degree but we also realize that we can do more.

**Question #1:** “How much time do you spend equipping believers dispensationally with practical application?”

We would encourage you to focus on 3 aspects of this question. First is the area of “time.” It takes quality time to accomplish the transfer of information to lifestyle. How intentional are you to carve out sufficient time in your ministry to be sure the transfer takes place? Are your church leaders taking time to model the implications of our theology in their relationships with the congregation?

The second aspect is “equipping believers dispensationally.” Equipping is so much more than just giving information and memorizing a chart. In Ephesians 4:12 Paul speaks of the “perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of

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Christ.” Edifying or equipping believers dispensationally is making sure that all aspects of the Grace Message are well understood and reproducible in the recipient. In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul reminds Timothy of Scripture’s fourfold purpose—teaching, correcting, rebuking, and training in righteousness. And in verse 17, he declares that the purpose of all four of these is “so that the man of God may be equipped for every good work.” Again, the purpose of sound doctrine is so that believers may be prepared to live out their faith well in the world.

The third aspect “practical application” must be clearly articulated today because more and more people need illustrations, clarifications, and practical applications of each theological concept we want them to understand. It is not enough to tell people to live the Christian life; we need to walk with them through the process. The three sub-questions under this section will help you look at nuances of this bigger question.

**Question #2:** “What venues does your church provide for deeper theological discourse?” This question is seeking to address potential problems that can arise in churches where pastors and teachers fail to realize that their ministry focus has narrowed, and also to encourage thought for ways that members of the Body can participate and interact together with the Scriptures. It recognizes that as members of the Body, the Holy Spirit works to help illuminate God’s Word to us in various ways, and it is important to create avenues

*“Our emphasis on the sufficiency of the grace of God should lead to more intact, dynamic families in our assemblies.”*

*“Grace theology lived out in grace living honors God and builds up the Body of Christ.”*

where people can work through their theology and its implications together, rather than just being taught. As we preach the entire Word of God in the light of Paul’s revelation, we are equipping our people to be able to defend their faith against the “many winds of doctrine” that are present today. Only as our people are adept at using the “sword of the spirit” (the Word of God), accompanied by a vibrant testimony, will we be able to send them into the battle of life and not have the casualties that come from having unequipped warriors.

**Question #3:** “In what ways does your theology guide each aspect of the ministries of your church?” Many of our established churches have programs and events that have been running for years, and we continue maintaining them out of routine. We need to make sure that our theology is taught, lived, and shared with practical application in every aspect of our total ministries. It is important to examine each of our programs and ministries with the question of what they communicate about the essentials of our theology. Grace theology lived out in grace living honors God and builds up the Body of Christ.

As we work through these questions, may we be open to making adjustments to our ministries and teaching so that each of our churches reflects both Grace theology and strong grace living. ■



**H**ow often have you been in a group of people for a gathering or to do an important task, and the group was just mingling around making small talk when someone breaks in, “Okay people, it’s time to get organized!”? The implication is that, if left to themselves, the milling around would just continue like an airplane in a holding pattern, never able to land.

Why do we need to get organized? Why can’t we just do “whatever is right in our own eyes”? Doesn’t that sound a lot like a group of students beginning spring break after coming out of a season of organized schedules for work and behavior? Our default human desire would be to sleep in, stay up too late watching entertainment, or playing video games and filling the days with meaningless activities - without accomplishing anything. **The reality is, in this world any purposeful accomplishments are always done in the context of organization.**

That is quite a dramatic statement, but it needs some further explanation and definition to go along with it. First, it is important to discover what is meant by “organization.” Human organization was built into our design when God created mankind. It was always God’s intention for mankind—all ages, genders, ethnicities, and ages—to participate together in an organized manner to accomplish noble purposes.

Let me give a basic definition of human organization as, “*Two or more individuals coordinating their unique perspectives, abilities, and combined efforts to accomplish some desirable end or purpose.*” If we only think of “organization” as a formal business or governmental entity rather than a mindset, we miss the point of the basic elements which are God-given and involve each of us at some level. For generations, young people reach early adulthood and rebel against any structure or formality and declare themselves, “Free at last!” Normally, this declaration is the desire for more autonomy and liberation from any rules or constraints on their behaviors or time. In the college years, there are all kinds of personal indulgences available which can lead to drastic self-destruction if this mindset is given full vent of expression. Examples of this include: binge drinking, video game addiction, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, first year college drop-outs, social entitlement propaganda, and unbridled public expressions.

### ***Organization is God’s Idea***

God created mankind and gave us an owner’s manual by recording the events in the Bible. Back in 1995, I taught a Sunday series while in Port Orchard, Washington, which I entitled, “Origins and Answers.” My premise (many others have also come up with

“ The reality is, in this world any purposeful accomplishments are always done in the context of organization. ”

this) was that we can clearly understand the answers regarding purposes of all things if we go back to their origins. In the scope of the lessons taught in Genesis 1-12, we find all the major themes of Scripture, and mankind's inquiries. In the beginning, God (Elohim) created. He created a world of order—with types of lights, and waters, as well as genera of plants and foliage, species of animals, and genders of man. It was all so very ORGANIZED.

God Himself, as I mentioned previously in the spring issue of *TRUTH* 2016, is an example of the “Plurality of Leadership” (Vol. 66, Issue 1, 2016). The Godhead is three in one and as a plurality is “organized” to carry out all the creative work as well as making man in His image (Genesis 1:26, 27). In the creation account we discover that everything is declared “good” and “very good” prior to the fall occurring in Genesis 3. The one exception to this is in Genesis 2:18. God spoke of man being alone, and He declared that this was “not good.” To remedy this, God created a “helper” who is another wholly different person created in the image of God to complement man. This is so that in relationships there may be wholeness and truly a complete “image” or “reflection” of the plurality of God. The Hebrew word “tamim” speaks of wholeness, or completeness, and being without lack or need. God is “tamim” as a Godhead (three in one) and lacks nothing. This is similar to the prominent theme of “shalom” in Scripture. We usually think of “shalom” as meaning peace; however, it is more than that. It also includes wholeness and human thriving – it implies community organized together. Please do not miss the significance here. All of this occurred prior to the introduction of sin. Our need for others and organization together is not a result of sin and its deficiencies, but is part of God's original design.

More examples of God-created organization exist right from the beginning of time. There is marriage—the husband and wife relationship. There is God to man—Creator and created being relationship. There is the family—parents and child relationships. There are also communities which work the land, shepherd ani-

mals, as well as negotiate resources and basic human needs. All of these take organizational skills and deny self-centered thinking. (For a rebuke of the self-centered action of man, see God's conversation with Cain prior to his crime in Genesis 4:5-7.)

### **Basic Human Organizational Elements**

The most basic elements of all human organization as described throughout the Old Testament describe relational principles.

1. God's intention for man to organize is so he can relate properly to God. The worship of God is a lifestyle of allegiance to the Creator and Sustainer. This relationship is to have guidelines and help man live in favor with, and honor the Lord. Deuteronomy 6:5 reads, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength.*” This is what the children of Israel are commanded to do in the Law as well as to teach to their children in every circumstance of life, “*These commands that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up*” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). The opposite of this is displayed vividly in Babel on the plains of Shinar (Genesis 11) when mankind organizes without a proper relationship to God and attempts to erect a tower. Left to themselves, people will always organize, but not for noble purposes. We see organized crime, gangs, syndicated gambling, human sex trade, slavery, and violent protesting. God's intention and design is for organization to relate properly to God and thus achieve godly ends: “*What is good and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God*” (Micah 6:8).

2. God's intention for man to organize is to relate properly toward each other. The respect and dignity of man is inherent in each person and yet it is to be given between individuals by valuing others as made in the image of God; regardless of age,

gender, ethnicity, education, culture, or capabilities. Early in the Law, the Lord commands through Moses, *“Love your neighbor as yourself”* (Leviticus 19:18). The Children of Israel were given instructions on how to restore wealth and welfare to the poor and needy among them (Sabbath year and Jubilee) as well as the responsibility to care for family members properly in response to God’s unconditional care for them.

3. God also intended His chosen people to relate properly towards others outside of their nationality. *“When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God”* (Leviticus 19:33-34). Even when the nation of Israel was organized to move into the land of Canaan which was inhabited by others, they were to always offer peace first and only fight *“If they refuse to make peace and engage you in battle”* (Deuteronomy 20:10-12). God desires men and women to come together to accomplish peaceful and God-honoring activities which are guided by these principles of proper relationships. These are the most basic elements of human organizations. When they are lost, organizational dysfunction and human abuse are the results.

tionships to God and fellow man which God desires in accomplishing His work in this world.

### ***Organized for a Purpose***

If there is a purpose or cause to be fulfilled, there must be some human organization of individuals (formal or informal) to make it happen. From planning a birthday party for kids, to holding a political convention, the focus of the organization and resulting activity is the fulfillment of the purpose. It is important to remember that the purpose is the “unspoken leader” of the group which comes together to accomplish it. If clarity is lost as to the mission, then frustration will result, and people will become critical and unfulfilled with just “being together.” This is true of a local church, a small group, a Bible college, or a booster club. God has created man and given him the purpose of organizing to do the work of God on this earth until the Day of Christ.

We accomplish God’s work together while exhibiting the basic elements designed by God. We must relate: 1) properly to God (worship and obedience), and 2) properly to our family inside the Church (fellowship and service), as well as 3) to those still outside the family of God (good works, mercy, evangelism, and missions). These are noble causes for organization according to our individual gifts and talents as God intends in the work of the Church which is His Body.

*“It was always God’s intention for mankind—all ages, genders, ethnicities, and ages—to participate together in an organized manner to accomplish noble purposes.”*

These are Old Testament examples which describe human organization from the beginning. We can also find more examples of human organization for the work of God in the New Testament. Some of these I have elaborated on in previous articles; “Leadership’s Value of Team” (*TRUTH*, Vol. 67, Issue 2, July 2016). Throughout the Old Testament God speaks to His people in human relational language of parent to child and husband to wife. These basic organizational terms show order and reinforce the elements of proper rela-

### ***Eternal Order***

The end of the story told in our Bibles is one of an eternal relationship together as members of His Church and in the presence of God Himself! This is a wonderful organization which God has designed for each one who has trusted in the death of Christ for payment for their sins. In eternity we will constantly relate properly to God and also to others. This is a picture of God’s organized eternal state. So, for today... let’s get organized in His way for His purposes! ■



*Just after Caleb and Jeremy had come down from Pico Blanco in 2005*



*Caleb teaching a seminar on leadership*

# Going Dutch for Lessons in Church Planting



by Jeremy Clark  
Executive Director  
Grace Ministries International

It was cold that night—and, yes, 65 degrees is cold in Central America—when Pastor Caleb Befus (Grace Bible Fellowship, Jenison, Michigan), then just a teenager, a couple of his friends, and I climbed Pico Blanco and spent the night on this 7,500-foot mountain which constitutes part of the range defining the southern edge of Costa Rica’s Central Valley. A decade and a year later, this time below sea level and a good 20 degrees colder, we were exploring the streets of Almere, Netherlands, looking for a place to exchange a few dollars for even fewer euros on day one of an eight-day trip to visit some of our Dutch Antillean brothers and sisters living there.

Pulling out his phone and pulling up a map, Caleb made mental notes of our route to the city center while suggesting a slight deviation taking us by a point of interest which popped up called, “Gemeente de Bijbel” or “Bible Church.” What a find! Why not stop by and see if we could get acquainted with some Dutch believers in this city of 200,000 in which live just a small remnant of 4,000 claiming Jesus Christ as their Savior? Turning the corner onto the street where the church was located we felt we had been there before. There was good reason for that feeling—we had been there before. Gemeente de Bijbel was located at the

exact address where we were staying! You see, four years ago it was the home of Grace Ministries International missionaries Carlos and Denise Brunk who started the church in this house now occupied by our hosts—an incredibly gracious family from Curacao who kept us well fed and well refreshed.

Visiting the ministry in Holland was like stopping to see the friend of a friend which, in the Body of Christ, makes it more like visiting family. Historically, some of the believers who attended or were affiliated with the Bible Church in Curacao, which was a GMI field until 1991, left for Holland over the years. Some of these folks ended up in Gemeente de Bijbel—the church which Carlos and Denise planted in Almere in 2001 and first started meeting in the living room of the home where Caleb and I were staying. Now that the Brunks are missionaries with GMI it was a joy to meet these dear people in Holland, many of whom Carlos and Denise led to the Lord and/or disciplined in their faith.

Gemeente de Bijbel is the original church from which two more church plants were started in 2016. Pastor Noé’s congregation meets in a different section of Almere and conducts its services in Dutch while Pastor Marshall, at Gemeente de Bijbel, preaches in Papiamentu—the first language of most of the folks



*Pastor Marshall, Jeremy, and Caleb in front of the entrance to the Corrie Ten Boom house*



*Caleb with Pastor Noe in his living room*

from Curacao—which is then translated into Dutch. The other church plant is in the city of Breda which is about an hour drive from Almere.

As you visualize this growing, church planting ministry in Holland, you may wonder as I did, “How are they doing it?” There are no missionaries there; the pastors have full-time jobs; the congregations have few assets and meet in rented facilities; the culture is staunchly secular, politics are liberal, and Jesus Christ is hardly thought of let alone mentioned in the public square. Yet they are planting churches! The secondary question that came to mind is, “What lessons can we, the Grace Gospel Fellowship, learn from our brothers and sisters in the Netherlands?” These observations will not exhaustively explain their church growth strategy and I will fail to mention some elements essential to their growth; however, it is still worth looking at the efforts of others as we, the GGF, seek to plant churches throughout the United States. To be sure, these churches have their own difficulties and their church planting goals are anything but guaranteed. Nevertheless, they are moving forward and I wanted to know how they are doing it.

### ***Passion for Mid-Acts, Dispensational Theology***

For five nights, from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m. (often ending later), Caleb and I conducted seminars at which 30 or 40 members of these churches faithfully attended. One of the topics they wanted addressed in depth was mid-Acts, dispensational theology. This is who they are. They are churches which believe the dispensation of the grace of God started with the Apostle Paul, that the Body of Christ is different from Israel, and that kingdom promises and blessings specifically

for Israel are different than those given to the Body of Christ. We got the unmistakable impression that they would have gladly talked about and discussed the distinctions between law and grace far more than what time allowed. They know they are different from other churches. They do not baptize, speak in tongues, prophesy, or consider themselves spiritual Israel. They embrace their theology, talk about it, share it with new people in their congregations, share it with other believers, talk about it with other pastors and they try their best to live it out.

That they are different is not an impediment, but a point of strength. On the Saturday morning of our trip we went with Pastor Marshall to a meeting of pastors and representatives from churches in Almere. One of Marshall’s goals was to invite any or all of these 30 or so pastors and leaders to our seminars so they could learn about the dispensation of the grace of God. Marshall is one of the most gracious, humble men I have had the opportunity to meet. His motive is not to win a theological argument and claim victory to inflate his own self-worth, but to help others understand as he does the tremendous freedom that comes from living in grace and studying God’s Word understanding the difference between law and grace. Put another way, because Marshall loves his neighbor he wants them to know and experience the dispensation of the grace of God. If he believes it, knows it is true, and understands that it will bless others, then why not share it?

### ***Identification, Development, and Utilization of Leaders***

Caleb presented a very well-received series of seminars on leadership with his characteristic visual

and interactive illustrations and foundational reliance upon the Bible while winning the respect of his audience with an above-and-beyond effort to get to know every individual personally outside of “class time.” His series was especially applicable considering the intentional movement towards establishing new congregations. If you are going to plant churches, you need leaders. Gemeente de Bijbel, just like most churches, had its share of leaders. It identified them, gave them the opportunity to be trained, and then gave them something to do. For some of these leaders, that meant they go and start a new church. Pastor Noé’s fledgling church plant has perhaps 10-15 congregants. Though he has a full-time job, he spends many evenings studying well into the night preparing his sermons as if he were preaching to hundreds. This is leading with diligence (Romans 12:8).

Leadership in the Body of Christ is a resource which needs to be developed and invested so that it pays dividends and yields returns. Often in local churches we underutilize our leaders, misappropriate their abilities, fail to challenge them, or lose them due to avoidable conflicts simply because there are just too many leaders vying to lead.

## “Do we look for and develop leaders so the work will multiply?”

I wonder if many church splits could be averted and, instead, healthy congregations planted if local bodies developed and recognized their wealth of leadership and had the courage to challenge these leaders to start new churches. In contrast to this, do we tend to maintain the status quo—not wanting to lose anyone—until a crisis develops and the church splits? Leaders, like talents, should not be hidden and left in obscurity, but invested so the work of the Lord might be multiplied.

### **Culture of Church Planting and Multiplication**

So what is the norm for the Body of Christ? It is to grow and to do all things relative to cultivating growth (1 Cor. 3:7-8). My sense is that the churches in Holland recognize this and accept that churches should be, will be, and must inevitably be planted because it is their duty to do so. As with any living organism, it is just part of their DNA to reproduce. Much of a church’s success



*Bicycles, the preferred mode of transportation in Amsterdam, parked alongside one of the city’s many canals.*

and health is not measured by what happens within its four walls, but what happens outside of them. For these believers in the Netherlands, theirs is a culture of growth which Carlos and Denise developed and one that these Christians continue to cultivate. In fact, we see that this church planting/growth culture has also taken root in Curacao where there are now two churches and a relatively new church plant. On Bonaire, the Brunks have planted one church, look to plant another on the island and yet others around the Caribbean. Realizing and accepting the fact that we, the Body of Christ living in fellowship in local churches, are designed to grow is a first step towards creating a culture of church planting.

Our sister churches in the Netherlands possess many other characteristics which we would want to emulate in addition to the three mentioned above. In so far as these three are concerned, consider the following questions as we, the GGF, seek to plant new churches. Given that we are mid-Acts dispensationalists, what do we do with our theology? Do we isolate ourselves in our theological bunkers making us essentially irrelevant? Do we feel a need to ignore or downplay some of the “not-so-mainstream” aspects of our doctrine hoping that others will not reject us? Or, do we live by grace and teach it unapologetically knowing that it will bless others just as it has blessed us? Do we look for and develop leaders so the work will multiply? Do we view the leaders around us as belonging to Christ and His body which is designed to grow or do we act as if these leaders belong to us and what we are doing? How do we view our churches? Are we hoping to simply hang on or are we dreaming of what it might look like to multiply ourselves to God’s glory? ■



# the 4 FOOLS

## Part 2

by  
Pastor Cal Lowder  
Valley Bible Church, Stephens City, VA  
Pastor John Lowder  
Frontline Bible Church, Byron Center, MI

In 2001 Katy Hudson recorded a Christian album and released it through Capitol Records. One of the songs that appeared on the album was “My Faith Won’t Fail.”

### VERSE 1

You could throw me in the fire  
And I won't be burned  
For my faith is Your desire  
And Your love endures

You could throw me in the prison cell  
Shackle me up against the rail  
But time and time again  
My faith won't fail

### CHORUS

For He'll prevail  
In the midst of all my trials and tribulations  
And He'll prevail  
In the midst of all my sin and temptations  
He'll prevail  
When I fall and He will pick me up  
For time and time again my faith won't fail  
Time and time again my faith won't fail

Katy Hudson would later change her name to Katy Perry and produce mega-hit pop songs like “California Gurls” and “I Kissed a Girl.” Those lyrics are a far cry from her 2001 musical declarations. What happened? Is it possible that Katy got caught playing with folly and folly has the upper hand?

As Christians we may get angry and cluck our tongues at Katy for abandoning her faith and morals like this, but is there a better way to make sense of this dramatic course change?

The Bible says those who are skilled in living are wise, and the book of Proverbs is full of helpful directives and insights as to how to live wisely. The opposite of wisdom is foolishness, and Proverbs has much to say about the fool. In fact, Proverbs uses four different words to describe the fool, and each word describes a progression toward greater folly. Obviously, there are similarities between the various fools, but knowing the differences will help us in determining how we are to understand and respond to the foolishness we encounter in others and ourselves.

In the last issue of *TRUTH* we looked at the first two fools, so here's a brief recap:

**1** *The Simple/Simpleton OT* [6612 pethiy (peth-ee')]—is committed neither to good nor evil

because he has not devoted himself to wisdom, and is vulnerable to seduction by folly (Prov. 7). He simply doesn't know the truth about wisdom and folly, but can change. We'll describe him with two words: **DOESN'T KNOW.**

*(The next two fools both use the same English word, but their Hebrew words describe them as being different.)*

**2 The Fool #2** [OT: 3684 keciyl (kes-eel')]—has rejected wisdom and become morally insensitive. He is so occupied with the things of the world that the things of God are of no concern to him. This person knows the truth about foolishness but sees no need to change...YET. We'll describe him with two words:

**HAVING FUN.**

**3 The Fool #3** [OT: 191 'eviyl (ev-eel')]—is not merely dull like Fool #2, he loves folly and "despises wisdom and instruction." He knows the truth about wisdom and folly, but rejects and laughs at changing. His two words: **BEING MYSELF.**

That can be admirable if you are *always* wise and motivated by the Holy Spirit in every decision but I don't know of anyone who could claim that level of spirituality. So what about the other times—are they just being themselves by acting foolishly?

The Hebrew word for Fool #3 is the root of the word for foolishness or folly. All four fools engage in foolishness to a certain degree, but fool #3 has simply become folly personified.

It is interesting to read some of the theories of the psychology of self. They talk about self-esteem, self-awareness, and self-knowledge. They talk about how important is to know yourself. Think about this though: **Scripture never advises us to be ourselves – we are told to be like Christ** (Gal 2:20; Col 3:9; Phil 2:5; Eph 4:24; Rom 12:1,2).

So Fool #3 is a person simply being himself with very little or no restraints. Interestingly, it looks a lot like the acts of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21.

- He despises being told that his way is not the best way (Prov 1:7, 12:15, 29:9).
- He has plenty to say but refuses to listen (10:8).
- His mouth and lack of judgment only lead to more and more problems (10:14, 21).
- He has no filter for his anger (12:16).
- He can't admit to or apologize for doing something wrong (14:9).
- He will not accept the authority of or discipline from his parents (15:5).

- His foolishness will eventually bring punishment (14:3, 16:22).
- He will eventually end up in service to the wise person (11:29).
- He doesn't know what to say around wise people (17:28, 24:7).
- His anger is a burden to everyone around him (27:3).
- He won't stop acting like a fool very easily (27:22).

So how do you treat FOOL #3?

- Don't spend time with him unless you have to. None of the verses in Proverbs say anything about spending time willingly with this fool.
- Brace yourself for a lot of pain if you have to be with him (10:8,14,21; 14:9).
- Let those who still have authority in their life create the pain (school administration? police? employer?).
- Don't rescue this person—let them experience the consequences of their actions and talk.
- Pray for God to break them (Ps 107:17-22).
- Be available to this person for when the pain motivates them to change, and accept them back as God accepts all of us.

And now we come to our last fool in Proverbs...

**4 The Mocker** [OT:3887 luwts (loots)]—is the "free-thinking" cynic who mocks God, sin, and judgment, and is hardened against any correction. He is not content with his own folly but recruits followers as he strives to undermine wisdom by drawing the naive away from God. This person rejects the truth about wisdom and folly, and seeks to influence others to reject truth. His two words: **AGAINST GOD.**

If Fool #3 is folly personified, how is the Mocker stronger yet? The biggest difference between the Fool #3 and the Mocker is that the Mocker pursues others to reject wisdom. Whether their influence is passive or aggressive, they are not content letting others pursue wisdom.

What are the characteristics of the Mocker?

- He's perfectly content being a mocker... for now (1:22).
- He will not let anyone correct him (13:1; 15:12).
- He will make you wish you hadn't even tried (9:7).
- His search for wisdom and meaning in life will be aimless (14:6).
- Don't expect an apology out of him (14:9).
- Pain IS coming to him (9:12, 29).
- Others will learn the lessons from his pain, but not

him (19:25; 21:11).

- He brings trouble with him wherever he goes (21:24; 22:10; 24:9).
- The Mocker does not have to be a person (20:1).

So how do you treat the Mocker?

- He must be taken very seriously. Israel was warned repeatedly to remove the Canaanites from the Land of Israel SO THAT they would not be a stumbling block. We all know what happened when they didn't take God's directions seriously.
- Get him out of your sphere of influence. Don't spend time listening to him (22:10).
- Guard your heart from him (4:23; 6:7-9).
- Pursue your relationship with God (Ps 1:1-6).
- Pray for God to break him, and be ready to accept him back when He does (Ps 107:17-22).

**Know that this is a spiritual battle we are in!** (Rom 1:18-32; Eph 6:10-13). It may look like we are fighting

flesh and blood (including our own folly at times), but the spiritual forces of evil are alive and well. They would love nothing more than to entice the wise to pursue folly, and folly IS attractive... for a time.

**Build wise relationships!** (1 Cor 15:33). It's been said you become like the company you keep. Evaluate the relationships you have with others. Are they helping you pursue wisdom or folly? Don't forget the media (TV, music, internet, etc.) when evaluating your relationships.

Lastly, do we spend so much time trying to rescue Fool #3 and the Mocker that we miss the opportunities to work with the Simpleton and Fool #2? Do we get so intimidated and discouraged because of the Mockers in this world that we stop evangelizing anyone?

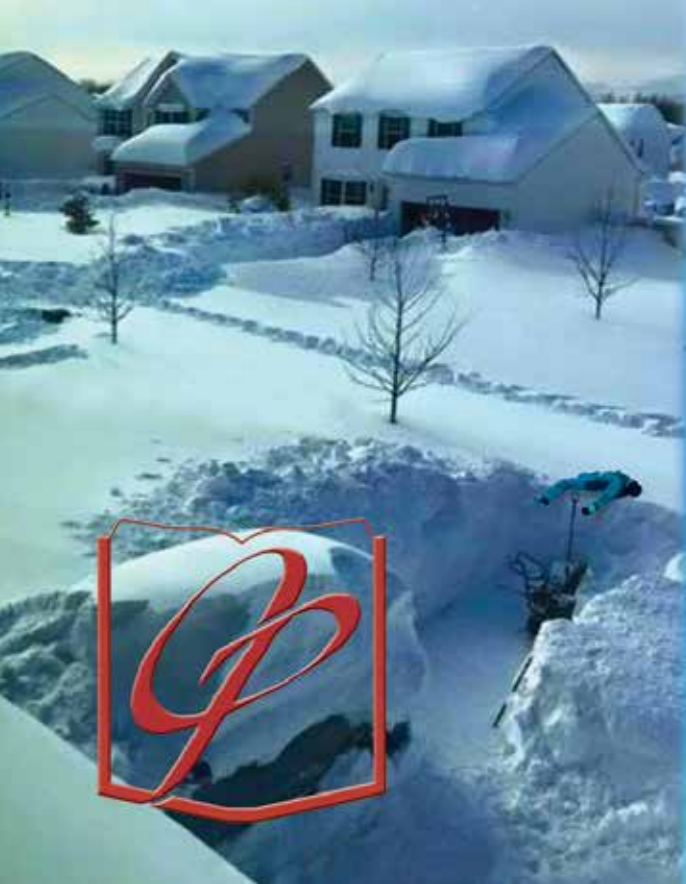
Remember this the next time you're frustrated by the folly all around you: Proverbs 3:34—"He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble." ■

For further study, these are all the references in Proverbs for these two fools.

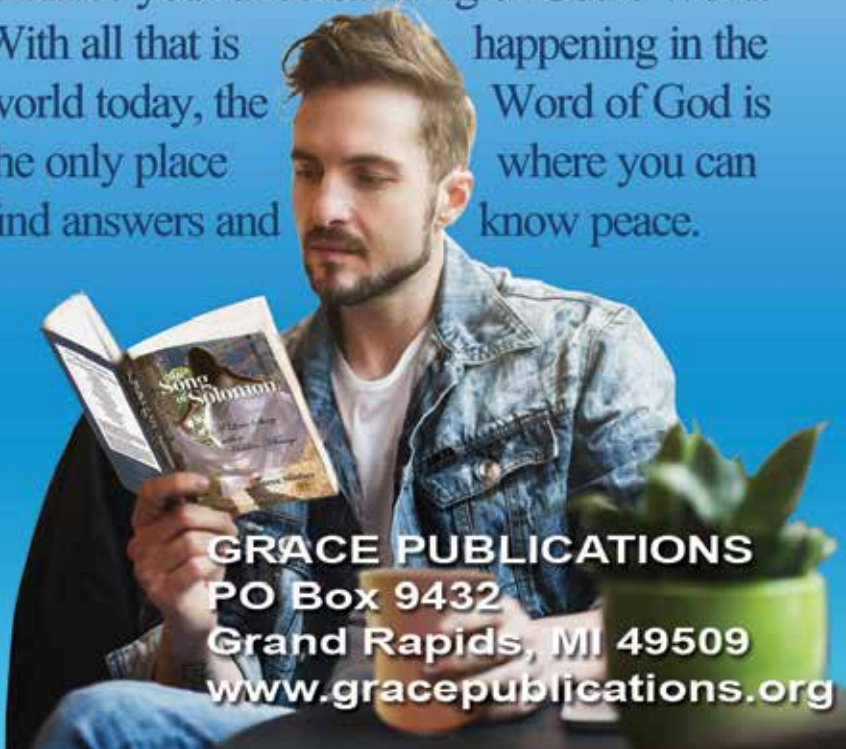
\* The Fool #3 is referenced in Proverbs 1:7; 7:22; 10:8, 10, 14, 21; 11:29; 12:15, 16; 14:3, 9; 15:5; 16:22; 17:28; 20:3; 24:7; 27:3, 22; 29:9 (19 times)

\*\* The Mocker is referenced in Proverbs 1:22; 3:34; 9:7, 8, 12; 13:1; 14:6, 9; 15:12; 19:25, 28, 29; 20:1; 21:11, 24; 22:10; 24:9 (17 times)

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# Followers of the Apostle Paul

by Pastor Rick Owsley  
St. Louis Bible Fellowship

Recently, I had a conversation with a gentleman and it went something like this (if you have been proclaiming the “Gospel of the Grace of God” for very long, you too have had one of these discussions):

“You need to know, Pastor Rick, that I love the whole Word of God!” I responded, “Absolutely, we all do too.” “Well, yes, but the difference is I believe every word of it, and all of it is our guide and compass for today.” “We believe every word of it also. Here, let me give you a Scripture that describes our position. ‘All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works’ (2 Timothy 3:16-17).” “Well, I understand that,” he said, “but you dispensationalists put way too much emphasis on what Paul said. You put more emphasis on what Paul said than on what the Lord Jesus said.” “Well actually, we believe what Paul said is the direct revelation from the risen Lord Jesus and is the Word of God. Don’t you?” *“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37 KJV).*

He finally accused me of being a worshipper of Paul. I gladly admitted to being a follower of Paul and you would have thought he had won the battle of the ages when I admitted to that! That is, until I showed him that the Bible clearly tells us to be “followers” of Paul. The conversation ended with him convinced I had either used a faulty translation or I was not interpreting those verses properly. This is a typical response from those who sincerely love God and love His Word but have been misled for years by a false understanding of the Scriptures and a reliance on traditional and unchallenged teaching.

I have a two-part sermon emphasizing that the Body of Christ has been instructed to be “followers of God” **and followers of Paul**. Part one is normally well received and never challenged. Part two, on the other hand, usually gets me labeled “heretic” in some circles. To proclaim that we are to imitate Paul is met with accusations of heresy and inference that we worship the Apostle to the Gentiles—but that is exactly what the Word of God tells us to do.

In the Summer 2016 edition of TRUTH we looked at Ephesians 5:1, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as

dear children.” The Greek word for followers is *mimētes* and means to imitate or mimic. We are instructed by Scripture to mimic God. In the article we looked at the many ramifications of applying this verse and how this imperative should affect our daily walk and witness. The believer is to strive to imitate certain aspects of the character and attributes of the Lord.

Christians are to strive to mimic God’s holiness, love, graciousness, mercy, longsuffering, and His other attributes. This particular sermon always inspires an arousing “amen,” “hallelujah,” and lots of, “preach it, brother!” No one disagrees that God’s Holy Word clearly tells us to be **followers** (mimics) of God. Without a doubt, we are to strive to resemble God. Most will certainly agree that the word “followers” in 1 Peter 3:13 also means to be imitators of that which is good. “And who is he that will harm you, if you be **followers** [imitators] of that which is good.”

Part 2 of this message is where the fireworks begin as I point out that the little word “*mimētes*” is also used in several other places. First Corinthians 11:1 Paul instructs believers to, “Be ye **followers** of me, even as I also am of Christ.” In First Corinthians 4:16 the Apostle to the Gentiles strongly urges the believers to “be **followers** of me.” Then to the church in Philippi he says:

only the risen Lord Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate. It is because we worship and serve Christ that we desire to follow, declare, and explain the revelation of the Mystery given to the Apostle Paul.

We take seriously the admonition in Ephesians 3:9, “To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.” We realize that the Scriptures can only be understood today when viewed from the advantage of understanding what this Mystery is all about—and one can only understand the Mystery when Paul’s role is properly acknowledged.

If God’s Word tells me to be an imitator of God, and it does, then I want to imitate God. If God’s Word instructs me to be an imitator of Paul, and it does, then I want to imitate Paul as he imitated the Lord. The questions that a Bible believer should be asking, related to this doctrine are: What all does this entail? Will this truth affect my message? Will this affect my doctrine? Will being an imitator of Paul affect my walk? The answer to all of these questions is a resounding yes! First Timothy 2:2 says, “And the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” The undeniable truth is, what we have “heard”

“*The Word of God is clear—Christians are to imitate Paul. We must understand this unique and special revelation given directly to him by our risen Lord.*”

*“Brethren, be ye **followers** together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example”* *Philippians 3:17.* Paul enthusiastically encourages the church in Thessalonica for they “*became **followers** of us...*” (1 Thessalonians 1:6).

The Word of God is clear—Christians are to imitate Paul. We must understand this unique and special revelation given directly to him by our risen Lord. Unfortunately, to proclaim this divine truth is often met with harsh criticism, ridicule, and a false indictment that we worship Paul. We, as Grace believers, worship

from Paul differs substantially from what was delivered to the twelve apostles.

First of all, to be a follower of Paul means to understand the plan of salvation as prescribed in this dispensation and how it differs from that good news proclaimed by the Twelve under their ministry. To follow Paul means to accept his message, that in order to be made a new creation one must believe that Christ died for their sins, was buried, and rose again. Paul’s gospel declares that salvation is entirely apart from any works. Paul’s message of salvation differs

dramatically from that of the twelve apostles. With Paul's message of salvation, there are no works involved, and we are "complete in Christ." It is from Paul that we learn and understand what it means to be a minister of the "word of reconciliation." From Paul we learn that we are "ambassadors," with our citizenship in heaven. To follow Paul means to view ourselves in these roles, as we faithfully preach Christ.

Peter's message, on the day of Pentecost, instructed those who asked, "What must we do?" was to "repent [a work] and be baptized [a work] for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). We cannot be imitators of Paul and preach Peter's message. To mimic Paul, we must preach salvation "by grace, through faith...not of works." We must declare that, "not by works of righteousness that we have done, but by His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5).

So, why is it important to be an imitator of Paul? First and foremost, it is only then that we are sure that we are preaching the correct means of salvation, and secondly, that we are correctly proclaiming the marching orders for today. Paul was so concerned that his gospel was not being preached that in Galatians 1:8 he writes, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." He calls the revelation given to him "my gospel." He magnified his office as the Apostle to the Gentiles, as he proclaimed the truth revealed to him.

To be a follower of Paul will affect our walk. How could it not once we have gleaned, through the truth revealed to him, that we are not our own, that we have been bought with a price. It is through Paul we learn that we are complete in Christ. It is through Paul we discover that we are to walk worthy of the vocation by which we have been called, and that calling is an heir of God—a joint heir of Christ. It is through Paul we learn of our calling on high, seated in the heavenlies. To follow Paul means to understand that we are not

under the law, but under grace, and all the glorious ramifications associated with this truth.

The revelation of these truths that had been "hid in God" and not revealed until it was given to Paul, explains such important doctrinal truths as once being dead in sin, and now dead to sin. It explains the difference between being part of a royal priesthood, and being ambassadors of Christ. It is that revelation given to Paul that explains what one must do to be saved now, and why circumcision avails nothing. It is this revelation given to Paul that explains why at one time this ritual was absolutely mandatory and now if man is religiously circumcised he is a debtor to do the whole law. Once, our Lord instructed His apostles to water baptize, but Paul declares clearly that the Lord did not send him to baptize. From tithing to prayer, from sign gifts to healing, to who we are in Christ, we learn from that revelation given to Paul that God's dealings and requirements have dramatically changed and it is only by following Paul and understanding his message that came directly from the Lord Jesus, that an explanation is provided. To not mimic Paul is to preach a false doctrine! To not follow Paul is to not understand fully what God the Father had intended to accomplish by the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Jesus.

It is an understanding of Paul's gospel that leads us to follow the "Grace commission" and not the Great Commission. It is by Paul's example that we understand what it means to be a "fool for Christ," to be "bought with a price. That we are not our own." It is from that special revelation given to Paul that we understand what being part of the Body of Christ entails, and it is by following Paul that we see clearly the purpose of the Church, Christ's Body.

To be an imitator of God should constantly be the goal of the redeemed. The desire to reflect God's attributes should be the desire of our hearts. But to accomplish these, in this present Dispensation of Grace, we must be followers of Paul, as he is of Christ. ■



Pastor Rick Owsley and his wife, Fay, live in Owensville, MO. Rick has been the pastor of St. Louis Bible Fellowship for almost 18 years and is President Emeritus of St. Louis Theological Seminary. Pastor Rick also serves on the board of Children's Relief Mission and Hope Givers Working Ranch. Rick and Fay have two daughters, two sons-in-law, and three GRANDchildren.

# The Last Trumpet



*A jigsaw puzzle piece may appear to belong in a particular location. As assembly progresses, it becomes obvious that it doesn't really fit there. That is a continuing attraction of puzzles. In my studies of the Bible, **The Last Trumpet** of 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 is a piece that I previously couldn't fit in. ~ Ed Jeude*

With the exodus out of Egypt, God affirmed Israel as His chosen nation. To the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God gave His law and the land promised to their fathers, His land, Israel. They were to be a channel of blessing to all people (Gen. 12:3) and a witness among the Gentiles as God's peculiar people and servant nation (see Isaiah 43:1-12; 44:1-8). They were promised peace and prosperity in their land (on earth, not heaven) if they would have faith in Him and obey Him.

Leviticus chapter 23 identifies seven feasts that the Lord wanted the nation Israel to celebrate after they entered the Promised Land. These seven feasts of the Lord make an interesting study but the focus of this article is feast #5, the **Feast of Trumpets**. The trumpets were sounded to "**gather Israel together**" in the fall of the year, essentially wrapping up that year's harvest.

The nation Israel repeatedly disobeyed and consistently failed to do God's will (summarized by Stephen in Acts 7). According to Romans 11, the nation's favored position was temporarily suspended. They were set aside, scattered, and could no longer even function as a nation while in exile. This scattering did not invalidate any of the promises or prophecies that God had already pledged because God is faithful and one day will fulfill all the covenants that He made with them.

Today, in the "eyes" of God, the nation Israel in exile is "Lo-ammi" (Hos. 1:9), meaning not My people, nor are they occupying God's Promised Land. The regather-

ing of some Jews in the "Holy Land" does not have the earmarks of God's prophesied, very rapid regathering of the exiled Nation.

*Behold, I tell you a  
mystery; we will not all  
sleep, but we will all be  
changed, in a moment, in  
the twinkling of an eye,  
at the last trumpet...*

With the Kingdom program for dispersed Israel essentially on hold, God initiated an entirely new entity, the present-day program, the Church which is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23) with heavenly citizenship and heavenly blessings for its members. This new program was revealed only through Paul who became its first member (1 Tim. 1:16). When the last member is added, the Church

which is the Body of Christ will meet the Lord in the air and be translated to heaven. Many call this event the Rapture. Simultaneously, Israel's interrupted prophetic Kingdom program on earth is resumed.

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the **trumpet** of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first..." (1 Thess. 4:16). "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the **last trumpet**; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51,52). These two Scriptures essentially capture the message of the Rapture.

The archangel Michael guards the nation Israel (Dan. 12:1). Throughout Scripture, the trumpet is identified with the nation Israel. Since God's program for Israel is different from God's program for the present Church, the "Body of Christ," there was a time that I

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first...*

**1 Thess 4:16**

just couldn't see 1 Thess. 4:13-18 as the Rapture because of the Jewish archangel and the trumpet. Two events occur simultaneously: the present Mystery program, the Body of Christ, ends at the Rapture exactly as God's prophetic Kingdom program resumes when scattered Israel receives its **trumpet summons** to enter the seven-year Tribulation, the prophesied seventieth week of Daniel.

The puzzle is assembling nicely but how can the Rapture be associated with the **last trumpet** when

the book of Revelation prophesies many terrible trumpet soundings during the seven-year Tribulation? That is the heart of the problem, the piece that just didn't want to fit in the puzzle.

One answer is that dispersed Israel will be trumpet gathered at the start of the Tribulation **never** to be scattered again. That will be the **last Feast of Trumpets**.

Those who are purged through the Tribulation will go directly into the prophesied Kingdom (from heaven) when the Lord descends to

the Mount of Olives and establishes His Kingdom on earth, the same mountain from which He ascended to heaven. Compare Zechariah 14 with Acts 1:11, "this same Jesus." At that time the "first resurrection" (of prophecy) occurs when all the Old Testament saints, Gospel saints, early Acts saints, and Tribulation saints are resurrected to inhabit the kingdom **from** heaven on earth. Trumpets in the book of Revelation are judgments, not the **(last) Feast of Trumpets**. ■



## Region 1: Northwest



Region 1 pastors enjoyed their biannual meeting together once again this past September hosted by **Mountain View Bible Church** in Post Falls, ID. The churches in this region were blessed by the missionaries who made the circuit under the theme of "Love in Any Language."

**Cascade Mountain Bible Church** (Leavenworth, WA) is enjoying the full-time presence of Tim and Judy Heath.

**Grace Bible Church** (Port Orchard, WA) just celebrated what we called *Heritage Weekend*. We toured the first building we met in, had our annual Harvest of Praise banquet, and were graced with the presence of former (and now retired) pastors Bruce Kemper and Harold Petersen who shared the Sunday morning message. A great

meet at the church and have their own service at 9 am. They then stay and join our regular service at 10:30 am. ■

## Region 3: West



**Bethel Union Church** (Akron, CO): We've had a great year. We have potlucks the 1st Sunday of the month. We've certainly had the best average attendance than any of the previous 12 years I've [Pastor Peter Tel] served here. We started an outreach where on a monthly basis we look for a family or two who could use a care package. These visits have been a blessing to our church. People have decided to start doing things and thinking outside the regular "church box." It is like we are all members of one body operating in different functions. It's perplexing but it almost seems that this is the way God designed our church to function. It's like a spontaneous Spirit-led phenomenon. Whatever it is, I just want to give glory to God because this certainly doesn't come from me.

**Cope Community Church** (Cope, CO): We had our Kid's Christmas program and a Christmas Eve service this year. We have a "Seniors Only Bible Study" (High School Seniors, that is) with ten of our local high school kids. Between three schools in our area we only

have about 20 high school seniors, so God is blessing. Hope you had a wonderful holiday season filled with blessings!

**Denver Bible Church** (Arvada, CO): *Colorado Right To Life* has asked Pastor Bob Enyart to be the keynote speaker at Denver's 2017 "March for Life." His message: To honor God, we must rightly divide the word of truth! That is the only valid perspective from which Christians can reliably counsel the culture regarding God's dispensation with the world today. After all, ultimately and on everything, it's God's opinion that counts!

**Grace Bible Church** of Lakewood (Lakewood, CO): Grace Bible Church is excited for our future growth, having begun the implementation of vision and outreach, geared toward families and spiritual growth. We intend to offer parenting classes and other supportive workshops that will impact the family relationships in a positive manner. We also have refreshed our handout materials, will be installing new signage and getting up to date with technology for social media.

**Harvest Fellowship** (Brighton, CO): We are pretty excited about meeting with each of our ministry teams and defining our organizational values in each of those teams. Not only are we figuring out what our culture is and how we make decisions, but we are problem solving a lot of issues that have been a problem for a long time. What a relief to discuss and solve many of those issues.

**Liberty Heights Chapel** (Lawton, OK): Liberty Heights Chapel held our yearly Christmas program on December 18. We also held a

## Region 2: Southwest



**Grace Bible Church** of Anaheim, CA, held their Annual Cultural Dinner in October. Attendees were overwhelmed with food from Indonesia, Mexico, Brazil, Germany, Vietnam, the Philippines, and the US. Entertainment was provided by Indonesian dancers. A group of Indonesians have come together to

short prayer service on New Year's Day at 11:00 am. We are also planning to have a guest speaker named Bill Hudson of Midpoint Chapel in Millsap, Texas, on February 26. ■

## Region 4: Upper Midwest



**Grace Bible Church** of West Allis, WI—The fall at Grace Bible Church has been very busy. The wonderful news is that the church is being used more this year than in any year in the past. There are many opportunities for people to be ministered to and enjoy spiritual growth through these meetings.

It is because of the use of the building that we needed to have the upstairs carpeting steam cleaned in every area. I appreciate the fact that our church gets dirty. It means that it is getting a lot of use for the glory of the Lord. One of the additions to our weekly ministry is the Truth Project which began on September 22 with over 20 people attending and a few newcomers.

One of the fall projects was to tear down a garage of a widow woman. An overwhelming group of workers showed up and had the garage down in about two hours. Another morning to remove the debris and put it into a dumpster took under one hour of time. The pastors came at the appointed hour and just about did not get time to become involved in the project.



During the Christmas season we had a group go into our community to sing Christmas carols and share the Gospel with a tract, a little information about our church, and a candy cane tied in a ribbon. The location is "Candy Cane Lane" which is a couple of miles from the church and thousands of people come to view the Christmas displays by the homeowners. Twenty-two people came to sing, hand out tracts, and share the Gospel with those who would lend an ear. Some of the people who came to sing along with our group from Grace Bible have never attended our church.

On December 11, we had one of the highlighted ventures of our church. It was the evening of the Christmas program with one of the best outreaches of the church. Many parents, grandparents, and relatives of the kids attended. Pastor Randy shared the Gospel at the end. We had food and refreshments after the program in the lower level. This year was challenged by a snowstorm that dumped six inches of that white stuff on the ground.

This year our morning attendance has increased by 10 people each Sunday. This is not the most significant reason to glory in the work of God here. It is the spiritual growth taking place in many of the attenders and members of our church body. We thank God for His touch of grace in our ministry. ■

**Grace Gospel  
Fellowship  
Regional map:**



## Region 5: Lower Midwest



**St Louis Bible Fellowship** is excited to announce that Tyrell and Rachael Shoemaker will be serving our congregation as Children and Youth ministers. Ty and Rachael, along with their three daughters, were working with Inner City Impact of Chicago, but have recently moved their inner city youth outreach to St. Louis, MO. Ty and Rachael are both graduates of St. Louis Theological Seminary. St. Louis Bible Fellowship continues to welcome new families who are responding to our one-minute advertisement over a local radio station.

Our choir presented a Christmas cantata this year which was well attended. We had a Saturday Christmas Eve service in lieu of the regular Sunday morning service which would have been Christmas Day.

Kaleb Kemper of **Faith Bible Church**, Olney, IL, coordinates the GGF Region 5 meetings. We're planning to have our next Grace Region 5 meeting on January 19 from 10:45am-2pm (Central Time) in Effingham, IL, at Ryan's Buffet. Everyone gets an opportunity to address the group. All are certainly welcome. ■

## Region 9: Western Michigan



**Georgetown Grace Church** in Hudsonville, MI—We have much to rejoice about as we praise God for His many blessings. We continue to enjoy the deep and impactful preaching of Pastor Jared Kusz, the beautiful hymns provided by our worship team, and the humble service and fellowship of our great church family. We have seen the truly sovereign work of God as He continues to bring new people into our church family, including two of our youngest members, Cohen and Silas—twin sons of Pastor Jared and Alise who were born on September 8. Praise the Lord!

At **Coopersville Bible Church** we once again had two teams of carolers who went to homes of people requested by those in our church. Our goal was to give the recipient(s) a “Carol-O-Gram” which was rolled up and decorated and to just bless individuals during the Christmas season.

Our Coached By Christ (CBC) club, which is consistently running 15 clubbers in its first year, had a float in the Coopersville Christmas Parade on December 2 with the children riding on the float and the leaders passing out candy attached to a flyer with information on our CBC program. ■

## Region 10: Central Michigan



**Grace Bible Fellowship** in Jenison, MI, is celebrating 30 years of God’s blessings and faithfulness! On Saturday, January 28, 2017, we will have a celebration dinner at 6 p.m. and on Sunday, January 29, at 9:30 a.m. we will have a special Sunday Service marking 30 years since we were founded as “Christ Church,” a joint church plant effort by Berean Bible Church in Wyoming and Berean Church of Muskegon. For more information, please contact the church at [gbfjenison@gmail.com](mailto:gbfjenison@gmail.com).

Greetings from Region 10 and **Grace Community Church** in Belmont, Michigan. In December we prepared for the celebration of our Lord and Savior’s birth into the world. Beyond the decorations and special events, we focused on Jesus’ coming to be with us so that by grace through faith we can be with Him in heaven’s glory some day. The biblical prophecies, characters of the nativity, and hope of salvation were central to our worship on Sunday mornings. Then we turned our attention to another year of serving God in 2017.

A big transition for Grace Community will be having Pastor Tim Hall retire from full-time pastoral ministry with us. He has

been a pastor since 1973 and with us since 1988. He has served each church faithfully during his many years in the pastorate and will be truly missed by the folks at Grace. Please pray for Pastor Tim and Kathy as they embark on different areas of ministry in their retirement years and also pray for the congregation at Grace Community Church as we search for our next pastor.

At **Frontline Bible Church** in Byron Center, MI, we’ve been doing a new outreach event one Friday a month with some of the creative arts people in our area. We call it Front & Center, which is short for Frontline and Byron Center. It’s an open mic style event where artists can perform in a supportive, affirming, family-friendly setting. It is not limited to Christian music or content, but it must be family friendly. The goal is to make inroads with the creative community so that through relationships we can share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them. We’ve had two events so far and the response has been very favorable! We are praying more artists find out about this performance opportunity, and it becomes a truly life-changing environment for those who come.

We rejoice in what God has done in 2016 and look forward to whatever He has in store as we kick off the new year. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all. ■



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Please join us as we focus our prayers on ***Vision 2020*** and the work the Lord is doing in and through the GGF within the local church!

Highlights:

Daily Scripture and Prayer Point  
6-Week Sermon Series  
Facebook Forum  
Unity as Partners in Prayer

 **VISION 2020**

10 Churches Planted  
10 Churches Revitalized  
20 New Pastors

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Kickoff Date:  
January 29

