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TRUTH Magazine

Summer 2017 Edition

*He stilled the storm to a whisper;
the waves of the sea were hushed.*

Psalm 107:29

*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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STRIVING TOWARD NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

by
GGF
Church Health Task Force

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This article covers the fourth category from the GGF Church Health questionnaire. You can find the full resource at ggfusa.org. The goal of this questionnaire is to provide a resource for churches to continue to grow into greater health as we seek to serve our God in the world. This current article focuses on the topic of "Striving Toward Neighborhood Engagement."

- I. If your church was suddenly moved from your neighborhood, what would be missed?
 1. When outsiders mention your church name, how positive are the comments?
 - a. If there have been problems in the community caused by the church (or people in the church) how have these issues been addressed?
 - b. Who would not feel welcome if they walked into your church?

- II. How different are the age/income/ethnic demographics within your church from your community today?
- III. What impact is your church making on your community? Children, youth outreach, Bible studies, and work projects?
 1. What are the major issues that are facing your immediate neighborhood and how can you walk with them through those challenges?
 2. In what tangible ways have you loved your neighbors in the past year?
 3. How often are individuals in your congregation encouraged to engage with their neighbors?
 4. What sort of church-organized service opportunities does your congregation engage in?
 5. How concerned are your church people to pray for, witness to, and share the Lord with their neighbors.
 6. What local community organizations does your congregation support?

As we strive to be united within our churches, it is important that we are also focusing on our relationships with both our Christian and non-Christian neighbors. Our congregations ought to work to equip themselves to address both the physical and spiritual needs of those around us in a way that shows the gospel of the grace of God. As we live in this way, others will be impacted with the message of love, forgiveness, and justice that we preach. Our reputation in the community will directly influence the way the message of grace is heard.

Loving the Haters

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you" - John 15:18-19.

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as if God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God"- 2 Corinthians 5:20.

*Our reputation in
the community will
directly influence the
way the message of
grace is heard.*

On the surface, we find an apparent tension between these two verses as they speak to our relationship with our world. On the one hand, Jesus recognizes that a sinful world stands in opposition to God, and therefore we should not be surprised that they will also reject His messengers. There is no doubt that anyone who has sought to proclaim the gospel and represent Christ in the world has experienced what Jesus talks about here. In these instances, Jesus' words can be a comforting reminder that the rejection we are experiencing is not a personal attack against us but the natural response of a person enslaved to sin. It can feel natural to just throw up our hands in resignation that this is just the way things are.

On the other hand, Paul declares in 2 Corinthians that the fundamental posture of the Church toward the world is as ambassadors of God, proclaiming that He has worked through Christ to make it possible for those who are opposed to God to be reconciled with Him. Indeed, when we step back from Jesus' words in John 15, we recognize that the fundamental message of the gospel is that Christ's posture is sacrificial love toward the world that hated Him. "While we were sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In spite of our opposition to Him, God has revealed Himself as "God with us, and God for us." As ambassadors of God's reconciling work, therefore, we understand that the Church ought to orient itself toward the world with this same love of Christ.

Along with this, it is important to recognize that there will be many times and places where the message of the gospel and the values of our heavenly citizenship run into conflict with the messages and values of our world. While this topic could be a whole series of articles, for our purposes here it is again important to emphasize how our response ought to be in these circumstances. Just as our sin does not limit God's love for us, neither should the sin of the world limit our willingness to pursue loving relationships with those around us.

Ready to Do Whatever Is Good

Paul's words to Titus are instructive for us: For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "no" to ungodliness and worldly passions and to "...live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:11-14).

He emphasizes the work of God's grace gives believers an understanding of how to respond to sin, and forms us into a people who are, literally, "zealots for good

works.” Ephesians 2:8-10 says nearly the same thing. We have been created in Christ Jesus in order to do good works but notice how strong an emphasis Paul places on “doing good” in just 2 chapters of Titus.

“Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone” (Titus 3:1-2).

“This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone” (Titus 3:8).

Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives (Titus 3:14).

Peter pushes on this same point with his congregations, “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us...For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people” (1 Peter 2:12, 15).

Again and again Christians are instructed that the grace of God should make us ready to do good in our world, and according to Peter, the only reason those outside the faith should be able to accuse us of not doing good is through false judgments clouded by the sin in their own lives.

Located in the Neighborhood

But the world is a big place, and knowing which good works God has prepared for us can take a great deal of discernment. In the next issue of TRUTH, we will address the topic of Global Engagement, but for now we want to focus on our own neighborhood. We believe, in His sovereignty, God has placed each of our church-

es in our particular communities for a unique purpose. As such your church is particularly qualified to work as ambassadors of reconciliation to your neighbors.

The previous questions are intended to focus your discussions as you reflect on the ways your church is present in your neighborhood. Obviously, if you have a building, people know you are there because of the structure and the sign, but a church is not a building or a sign but the gathered community. Do people outside your church know the people inside your church? If so, what do they know about them? Is your church known as a people who do good in your neighborhood?

We believe, in His sovereignty, God has placed each of our churches in our particular communities for a unique purpose.

There is no single formula for how you might engage with your neighborhood, but to supplement these questions, here are a few other things to consider. Because of changing demographics, many of our church members no longer live within the neighborhoods where our churches are located. Perhaps your community’s demographics no longer reflect those of the church. What might it look like to begin to reach out to the people in your church’s community who don’t look or act like you? Do you have a relationship with the leaders of your city? Is there “good” already being done by groups – other churches, schools, nonprofits – with whom you might be able to partner? Who are the most vulnerable people in your communities and how might you show Christ’s love to them? ■

GRACE

Part 1



Our Message Our Theology Our Practice

Ken B. Kemper, President
Grace Bible College

Grace is a common, rather simple word. We have become so accustomed to the term “grace” that we fail to revel in its multifaceted wonder and the depth of its incredible realities. The intent of this article is to show three powerful aspects of grace. Grace is a *glorious message* of unsurpassable value. Grace is a term of *deep theological significance*. Grace is a *dynamic, motivational guide for us to practice*.

These three aspects of grace—the message, the theology, and the practice—are not independent from each other but interrelated and clearly overlapping, yet their understanding in a systematic (not necessarily progressive) way gives enlightenment and greater understanding to each one of us regarding grace. The tendency of believers today is to emphasize one of these aspects of grace—the message, or theological system, or practice—to the detriment of the others, therefore minimizing the significance of the reality in the life of the believer and the church locally and globally. No doubt readers will find elements of what follows to be an obvious “restating” of some common biblical concepts. The intent of this article is to weave those common concepts into a strong fabric of “grace theological” standing. This fabric of grace is for declaration as the “message” as well as the “practice” for everyday living which is unique to our understanding as believers in this present dispensation of the Church, the Body of Christ. It is the prayerful ambition that in this objective one might not only find enlightenment, but also feel the prompting of the Holy Spirit toward new realities of belief and practice for the glory of God.

These three aspects or forms of grace are similar to three aspects of time—past, present, and future. The three aspects of space or volume are length, width, and depth. In each example, none of them exists alone but reveal something different than the other aspects and make up the whole. So, it is with the message, the theology, and the practice of grace.

Our Message is Grace

God is a gracious God from Genesis to Revelation. His attributes are constant and consistent. He is ontologically full of grace just as He is holy and just. These attributes are not merely what He does practically nor are they contextualized according to a particular circumstance, rather they are due to His eternal character. Although there are plenty of examples of God’s grace evidenced throughout the Old and New Testaments, and many stories which illustrate His grace, the Scriptures declare that in this present age of the Church, the gospel message is “the Gospel of the Grace of God” (Acts 20:24). Paul uses this term to signify the major ingredient in this message which is declared to the world. In his recorded travels in the book of Acts, as well as in the letters Paul penned, the message of grace is explained. He even goes so far as to refer to the message he preached as “my gospel” (Romans 2:16; 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8) due to its distinction and application from the earlier Jewish message.

Paul contrasts this declaration of God’s grace in this present age with past ages in which the message

was different. He claims in the books of Galatians and Ephesians to have been given this message directly from the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. He did not learn it from those original disciples who were already doing ministry. He also notes that his message was not merely due to self-discovery of Old Testament readings (Gal. 1:11-24; Eph. 3:1-10). Paul's own miraculous conversion recorded in Acts 9 on the road to Damascus separated him from the beginning as "God's chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). This was clearly a message which had no ethnic boundaries and caused him to "unleash" the message of God for salvation to all people (Gentiles are all races, and ethnicities other than the Jews) rather than confine his focus to his own Jewish brothers which was the learned (by enculturation) historical pattern of God's favor since the days of Abraham. Paul (who grew up as Saul) had learned this well just as all religious Jews did for centuries.

Toward the end of his ministry, Paul writes to Titus, declaring, "The grace of God which brings salvation to all men has been revealed" (Titus 2:10). This message is salvific and life changing. The grace of God extends "favor" to those who do not deserve this favor. The message is of God's love for those undeserving of His love: "For God demonstrated His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Paul explains the "activating ingredient" of the grace of God is **faith** in that which God provided for salvation on the cross—"For by grace are you saved by faith" (Eph. 2:8). The message is summarized by Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians where he explains, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18,19). By this we might understand that the message of grace is the message of reconciliation of God and man through Christ Jesus.

This message is glorious because it is based on God's grace demonstrated by Christ dying on the cross for mankind with total disregard for the recipient's gender, race, socioeconomic status, or depth of depravity! He is the innocent sacrifice for all of sinful mankind (2 Corinthians 5:21). What an incredible message the message of grace is. It has no parallel prior to it or following it.

Lewis Sperry Chafer notes well the nature of that grace for salvation when he states:

"By its nature it [grace] is interminable and is a position before God which rests wholly on the merit of Christ, to be conditioned by and dependent upon human worthiness is to contradict the whole order of divine grace and to make impotent man to be, in the end, his own savior" (*Systematic Theology*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 225,226).

His words capture well the essence of pure grace – it is dependent upon God and His finished work on the cross, not our human efforts to clean up our act in a certain way so as to be presentable to God. In fact, this would demean God's grace as if man were not in need of it. Chafer is also well known for stating that the "riches of grace" are part of the "33 divine undertakings" which happen in the life of a believer when that person places faith in God for salvation based on the cross (Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, p. 227). In response to faith—not actions of human effort—God initiates 33 different blessings on our behalf as a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

“*The grace of God extends ‘favor’ to those who do not deserve this favor.*”

I am simply overwhelmed by how Paul explains to the Ephesians that God has saved them and made them alive, seated them with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ, "in order that in the coming ages He might show us the incomparable riches of His grace" (Ephesians 2:6-7). The message of grace is God's overwhelming love expressed on the cross for all sinful men. This grace is on display as it reveals the transformation of lives from lost to heavenly saints for all eternity! As the sinner begins to understand, with awe, the great height of God's love, he desires to respond by faith to God's supreme sacrifice for sinful man to

provide reconciliation with God through the blood of Christ. What an amazing, life-changing message!

Why do so many people not respond to this message of incredible grace? Most likely it is due to the reality that it is so counterintuitive and contradictory to our human pride and ego. We experience life all around us and mimic our society which places value on our human actions and activities: what we do, say, and perform. God's love does not conform to that human paradigm which automatically filters and excludes concepts and realities which do not fit nicely into it. It is only by the work of the Holy Spirit, who John tells us brings conviction of guilt, sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11) that one comes to faith. The application of the content of our message is a resulting Church for this dispensation. The nature of the Church is dependent upon what message believers have responded to in faith. It cannot be any other way. If I respond to a message which states, "Clean yourself up so God can accept you," or "Do good things to please God," the church will reflect this as the norm and values of church life. This is rampant all over the world where I have traveled. People are working to please God, hoping they gain enough credit to tip the scale in their favor at the end of their earthly journey. This is not our message of grace, and it should certainly not be the *modus operandi* of our fellowship together as believers. This message is learned from other religions and is an emphasis on the message of works or sanctification not justification by grace through faith. It may be more similar to the message of other dispensations but not the gospel of the grace of God.

Our Theology is Grace

I appreciate how so many writers have endeavored to capture Paul's distinctive ministry for which he was called by the resurrected Lord. Dr. Charles F. Baker, Pastor J. C. O'Hair, and more recently, Pastors Craig MacDonald and Joel Finck have assisted our understanding of the grace theological position. As an early adult, C.R. Stam's book, *Things That Differ: The Fundamentals of Dispensationalism* (1951) really opened my eyes and helped me to carefully compare Scripture with Scripture and not just lightly peruse and assume that "similar" means "sameness." I also appreciate Dr. DeWitt's challenges to think deeply and respond to scholarly works which both support and criticize our grace theology, as well as to do good biblical exegesis rather than resort to broad generalizations which

may not be sustainable in defense of our position. To build a consistent theology of grace is a deep and long process in which we compare and contrast Scripture prayerfully with the Lord's direction. We need to seek to construct a framework for understanding this present dispensation in light of the whole of Scripture, while at the same time noting continuing horizontal truths as well as vertical truth and realities.

“ *God's love does not conform to that human paradigm which automatically filters and excludes concepts and realities which do not fit nicely into it.* ”

Some of the broad generalizations which came from early dispensationalists are helpful but not completely accurate upon further study and examination. Yet, we are tempted sometimes to be unwilling to even examine these generalizations because of our respect for those great men and theologians who helped explain dispensational theology to the rest of us and those outside of our grace camp. Honest inquiry and openness to study only makes for more sound conviction and dialogue. I appreciated my advanced theological and biblical training at non-grace institutions which helped me better understand other perspectives and wholeheartedly reaffirmed my commitment to our grace theology. My grace theology is not a first generation apologetic coming out of Covenant Theology or Pentecostalism. I was raised in a first generation conservative grace preacher's family and had that message expounded to me my whole life with little outside perspective to compare to it. We do well to continue to respect and honor our past and to study the Scriptures rather than just repeat their words.

Paul's emphasis for our Church age is described as God's "oikonomia" (Luke 16:2,3,4; 1 Corinthians 9:17; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2,9; Colossians 1:25; 1 Timothy 1:4). In the Luke passage, the reference is to a house steward or administrator which illustrates the meaning very well. God's household is being managed by "grace." It

is the key component of this present “oikonomia” in which the Church, the Body of Christ, is prominent, and we are not only saved by the message of grace but the theological framework of the Church is the grace of God. In Ephesians, Paul explains that those who before the cross were called “uncircumcised” were “separated from Christ, excluded...foreigners and without hope...or God in the world, but now in Christ Jesus you were brought near through the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:11-14). The standing of all believers is based solely on the grace of God and not on ritualistic practices of allegiance. “His purpose was to create in Himself one new man of two thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility” (Ephesians 2:15b-16). This “one new man” is Paul’s reference to the Body of Christ which in Ephesians 3 is explained as the “mystery” of the Gentiles and Israel as heirs and joint members of one body (3:6). This theology of grace is shown by Paul to be global and greater to the previous practice under the law of the selective favor of God to a people in covenant. It is because prior to the cross of Christ the clear sufficiency of grace for all people’s was not possible due to the necessity of a just judgment for sin.

It’s worth noting that authors such as Dr. Andrew Farley in his book *Naked Gospel* sees and distinguishes the theology, principles, and actions of the twelve disciples as different than what is applicable after the cross of Christ explained in Paul’s epistles. I believe it is significant when scholars who would not be called “grace preachers” see these distinctions through careful study, and teach and write on them with conviction. Farley would note that the explanations in the Gospels further emphasize the human futility to achieve rightness with God by the law and human effort, and the need for the cross and a theology of grace.

Grace theology is often characterized by its “spiritual” and “heavenly hope,” as opposed to the Jewish earthly prophesies of a future literal kingdom. But it is more than simply the future hope which characterizes a grace theology, it is, as Dr. R.F. Suerig (former pastor of Grace Memorial in Denver) notes, even the Church’s view of Jesus Christ. Dr. Suerig lists our view of Christ as:

1. *The crucified Lord, on the cross.* Paul doesn’t spend time on Christ’s earthly life (2 Corinthians 5:16) rather on His death for payment of our sin and our redemption. He was crucified, buried, and raised (1 Corinthians 15:1-5).

“*The standing of all believers is based solely on the grace of God and not on ritualistic practices of allegiance.*”

2. *Christ in glory* – Colossians 3:4: “When Christ who is your life appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory.” He is the risen, living, High Priest making intercession for us. Paul makes his defense before Agrippa and states, “I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven” (Acts 26:19).

3. *Christ is inside the believer* – Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.” Christ is “in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

4. *Christ is coming again.* Paul tells that Christ is returning and that He will also catch up the Church which is His Body to their calling (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; Titus 2:13) of uniting with the Head completely for all eternity (Suerig, *The Testimony Through the Ages*, 2d, 1997, pp. 129-130).

Dr. Suerig’s emphasis is very much needed in contrast to the many who solely teach and emphasize the earthly life of Jesus as a model for our practice. Certainly, we can understand the nature and character of God illustrated by the living Word (John 1:14; Hebrews 1:2-3). But, intending to “do as Jesus did” in this present age—after the reality of the cross and the indwelling Holy Spirit—although well intended, does not work. The heavenly Christ sits at the right hand of the Father as our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) having finished the work of justification for sinful man before a holy God (Romans 3:25-26). Our actions and emphasis today is to honor and glorify him.

Our message we advance in the world is strongly based on the theology we hold dear. In this first half of the topic we’ve looked at our message and a beginning portion of our grace theology. In the next issue we’ll further develop thoughts on grace theology and move into the practice of grace. It is a rich topic and one we hold dear as “grace believers” and therefore not easily confined to one standard length article. Please be patient for the second portion of this article in the next issue of TRUTH in the fall. ■

preparing today for MISSIONARY LIFE in the future

by Jeremy Clark
Executive Director
Grace Ministries International

Producing sustainable, God-honoring results in missions requires a long-term approach and strategy. Churches, Bible schools, and clinics, for example, do not form overnight. A lot of thought and planning goes into their inception and development so they thrive and are ultimately self-sustaining. Likewise, becoming a missionary who is effective on the field is not something that just happens. This too requires thought and planning. That is why Grace Ministries International produced a brochure containing the following text so someone considering missions now can get prepared to serve the Lord on the field.

You are either seriously considering missions as your new vocation or you finally gave in and have made that commitment to pursue missions full-time. Now you may wonder what you can do to get prepared for such a life-changing venture. Once you apply to Grace Ministries International, you will go through different orientations, perhaps specific training geared for your ministry, and probably language studies. However, you are wanting to know what you can do before all that happens to better prepare yourself and your family to serve the Lord around the world. Maybe you have not even contacted us yet, but you still want to get ready for this next chapter in your life. Here is the best piece of advice I can give: live here and now like you will live there and then. Let me explain this by taking you through a few areas of life where you can begin to live now like you will as a missionary then.

Do Ministry Now. Serving the Lord is the Christian norm. It is not a special calling nor is it something you begin doing after you pick up your luggage in customs in

your new host country. It is something you do now and forever because you are saved. Not writing to pastors or missionaries, but to everyday believers in the church at Ephesus the Apostle Paul writes, “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called” (Ephesians 4:1). We were called through Christ’s death and resurrection—the ultimate and only sacrifice available for our sins which had eternally separated us from God. That’s quite a calling! Not only does this implore all of us to live honorably and righteously before God in this world, but if you want to serve the Lord on the mission field, you need to practice now what you hope to do then. Are you discipling others now? Are you teaching or leading Bible studies? If you are inclined to serve or are talented at administration, how are you using these gifts for the Lord now? Do you share the gospel with others or are you waiting until you reach the field before you exercise your “calling” to do so? God desires that all men be saved (2 Timothy 2:4) and He has given us the privilege of sharing the gospel of the grace of God until He returns. Let’s take advantage of the opportunity now!

You may have a full-time job which you believe makes it nearly impossible to give much time to the Lord. Remember, when you are on the field you will be the full-time missionary encouraging people who are working 40, 50 or 60+ hours a week to give of their time to the Lord. Not only do you want to practice good ministry habits now, but it is not a bad idea to put yourself in the shoes of those local believers with whom you will be working on the field.

Practice Self-Motivation. Much of mission work requires initiative and intrinsic motivation. There usually is not going to be someone around telling us what to do or how to do it. While not all of us are leaders of others, we can all practice a degree of independence. What I mean by that is simply getting the job done as if it depends on us alone, doing it well as if no one else is looking, and seeing it through to the end. This is a skill and a work ethic which is learned and refined through practice. Here is a small example. No one told me to create this brochure. I saw the need, began the project, asked others to help, and now you are reading it!

Hand Over Ministries. If you are in ministry or doing ministry, what are you doing to hand over your areas of responsibility to others? In a practical sense, you may very well be leaving your ministry and heading to the mission field soon. So, who is going to carry it on when you leave? On another level, training others to do what you do (and even doing it better) is excellent practice for missionary life. As a missionary, the ability to train others to do a job and turn them loose to see it grow and flourish is a valid measure of success on the mission field.

Relationships. Practice good relationships now. You have all kinds of relationships at the workplace, at church, in your neighborhood, within your extended family, and in the community. When you get to the mission field your world, in a relational sense, will get a lot smaller. You may be working with only one or two other missionary families. You will not have a family network immediately available to you nor will you have that wide circle of friends you have here in the States. Having healthy relationships is all the more important. You cannot be indifferent to your relationships on the field as we might be more inclined to do here in the States knowing that we have other people, friends, or family members we can depend on for help or friend-

ship. Practice treating people here as if you depended on them there. "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

Family and Marriage. The same is true for your immediate family. The missionary life will draw your family closer together in ways you never imagined. However, if you do not learn how to deal with the stresses of life as a family now, the tensions you experience on the field could also potentially have the power to pull your family apart. One valuable discipline you can practice now is serving together as a family as you would then on the field. You will get to know your spouse's and children's strengths and weaknesses and how to set them up for success and avoid failures.

Coming at the subject of relationships from another angle, if you are single and want to be a missionary, why would you ever date someone who has no interest in missions? You are certainly free to change your mind and decide you do not want to serve as a missionary, but if it is important to you and you think it will be for some time to come, do not settle for someone who does not share your same goal. On the flipside, if you are married and you want to be a missionary, but your spouse does not, you cannot force him or her to share your goal. All you can do is share your desire, pray, and wait.

Finances. You are not going to be rich on the mission field so practice living here as you would there. If you have debts, aggressively pay them off. Not only is debt one of the biggest impediments to people serving overseas, but by disciplining yourself to pay off your debt much sooner rather than much later, you will naturally force yourself to live on a reduced income. Even if your debts are paid off, put away as much as you can into savings. Not only is it good to save, but once again you will see just how far you are able to live below your means.

Begin to look at spending in a different light. What do I want and what do I really need? What things must I have and what things are dispensable? You may have never thought about this before. The reality is the options for clothing, food, household items, and electronics will be drastically limited by the lack of availability, different options, or the increased cost of obtaining some of them. Instead of being shocked by what you cannot purchase then, reevaluate your wants now and find out what it is you really do not need.

*You are not automatically going to become
a great teacher/discipler/equiper there
if you are not doing it here.*

Health. Living on the mission field typically leads to a healthier lifestyle. You tend to eat better and exercise more if nothing else because people walk to more places than people who live in the States. Start exercising and eating healthier now. Moving, adapting to a new culture, and learning to live in new surroundings are tiring enough. Why not reduce some of the physical stress by getting into better shape now which will certainly help you then? Being healthier now will lead to fewer physical problems down the road.

Education. Aside from the requirement to have at least one year of college-level Bible education to become a GMI missionary, you may simply want to further your biblical knowledge. If you are going to teach, you need to learn. If you are going to train, you will want to be equipped. While this applies to your knowledge of the Bible, it also applies to any other area of teaching or training you anticipate doing while on the field. Furthermore, take what you learn now and put it into practice here. You are not automatically going to become a great teacher/discipler/equiper there if you are not doing it here. Ask other mature Christians whom you know well what areas of your ministry you can improve upon or where you need to step up your game so you can serve effectively on the field. This might require additional training or more ministry experiences.

Language Studies. Education also encompasses language learning. You are not going to become fluent or conversant in a language using Rosetta Stone, Duolingo, or poring over grammar primers and vocab cards, but it is a start! If you know what the language is of the region where you want to serve, then start learning it. Sure, you will need to go to language school, but why not make it easier by learning as much as you can now? You will develop a basic understanding of the grammar and some vocabulary which will help you acquire the language that much faster meaning that your meaningful ministry will also begin that much quicker.

Perspective. This might be the hardest thing to do now which will prepare you for life when you are on the field, but it is time to change your perspective about what really matters in life. Perhaps the easiest way to do this is by considering all things in light of your eternity with Jesus Christ and the eternity of the lost around you and around the world who do not know Him. When you do so, most other issues in life will fall into place. Paul often thought through these kinds of issues even as it pertained to his own life. He says in his letter to the Romans, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:3). Essentially, his passion for his lost Jewish, countrymen was such that he wished he were the one separated from Christ, not them! From prison he writes to the Philippian Church, “But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you” (Philippians 1:23-25). Do I want to die to be with Christ or live for the purpose of bringing others to Him or closer to Him? That is an eternal perspective.

When we think this way our possessions, income, comforts, and conveniences do not seem all that significant any more. They are no longer pursuits which drive us day to day, but Christ and His salvation for others takes preeminence in our minds. What begins to happen is that when you think in this manner you declutter your life. In essence, it becomes that much easier to pick up and go. No longer do you have the attachment to so many physical things you do not think you can part with, your routines, habits, and endeavors which might hold you back. Having an eternal perspective frees you to enjoy your heavenly citizenship (Philippians 3:19) while moving about the earth He created to share His salvation and His Word with the people He created.

Now get ready for the adventure of a lifetime! ■



Life is a Journey.

by Matt Amundsen

GGF Executive Director



GRACE GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP

Imagine for a moment with me—you stand at the trailhead of your favorite trail or one that you have dreamed of hiking in the Appalachians...or maybe the Rockies or Cascades. You know that the hike ahead will challenge you, although you are unsure just how. The path at times may be straight and appear to carry on forever. Other times it will be filled with unexpected turns, detours, and hazards that must be navigated.

The question is, just as in life, will you hike this trail alone or with the company of others? Sometimes we need to get away and have that alone time with our thoughts and more importantly to have a time of quiet reflection upon the Lord and His creation. Other times, having someone along provides great conversation and a sense of experiencing life together, whether it be with a close friend, your spouse, or a family member. Immense value comes from being alone with God and journeying alongside others, just like we find in life.

I remember when my wife, Sharon, was going through chemo treatments for ovarian cancer. For both of us, in different ways, we experienced an overwhelming feeling of being alone as we stepped into the unknown. The dark clouds encamped around us and at times it felt as though they would never leave. In the moments of darkness in life, we often assume we are alone. As I look back...there were certainly times when we were by ourselves, simply walking with the Lord. I don't treasure the fact that cancer has taken away a part of our lives. I do praise Him for the fact that Sharon is cancer free. I do praise Him for his faithfulness which is not dependent on our desired outcome. I do praise the Lord for how He brought people into our lives who were and are willing to walk with us. The reality is that we are never alone. Psalm 23 is a reminder that God walks with us every step of the way. I take that as an encouragement to the Body of Christ, that we should journey together.

“...we cannot reach and surpass these goals without our churches and people joining together.”

I will admit that this way of life is messy and unpredictable. As creatures of habit we're not comfortable with aspects of life being out of our control. At times, it would be fair to say that our own lives are difficult enough to manage without attempting to step into the life of another. Why even try?

If I step on toes, please know that before I stepped on yours, I had to step on mine. Life and ministry are far easier “in the moment” when we do it alone. We don't have to bother others. We don't have to share the credit. We tend to get the desired result we are looking for. We don't have to let others into our “messiness” nor do we have to deeply care about the struggles of others. Things are controlled—at least it seems that way.

What stops us from journeying with others? Why do churches in the same city not partner together in ministry? Do we make assumptions? Maybe we assume they don't want to join us. Could it be that we assume they don't need us, or worse yet, we don't need them?

The Grace Gospel Fellowship is an organization that works alongside pastors and the local church to impact the world for Christ. It is paramount that we work together. Why? How do we know this to be true? The only place we will find the answer is in God's Word. Let's take a look at this for a moment.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:16:

“From him the whole body, joined together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Wait a second. We are to build each other up? And using our gifts and talents will serve to accomplish that? Of course, this means we need to work together. We can accomplish far more jointly than we can by

simply being independent. More importantly, think of the testimony it would be to the skeptical, unbelieving world to see and hear of churches merging or simply joining together to display the love of Jesus, and not within the four walls, but on the street, at the park, in our homes and neighborhoods. When I look for a visual of how amazing this would be I am drawn to a passage in the Psalms:

“How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity. It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore” – Psalm 133.

Also, Paul shares just how powerful it is when believers join together in support of each other. Much of what he shares here is the generosity and outpouring of the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Here is a passage to consider:

“In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability. Entirely their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations. They gave themselves first of all to the Lord and then by the will of God also to us” – 2 Corinthians 8:2-5.

The most powerful aspect of this passage is the fact that they could have, and maybe some would argue should have, used their resources to help themselves, and yet they gave to other churches and people

in need. I am not encouraging a mentality of neglecting our flock, especially since we are called to take care of those God has entrusted to us, as we see in 1 Peter 5:2. I am suggesting that we fully realize that other believers and congregations are indeed a part of the Body of Christ, just as we are.

Over the last number of months, it has been a blessing to see people around the world praying and coming alongside missionaries from Things to Come Mission and Grace Ministries International during some very dark and painful experiences. People have been getting on their knees to seek the Lord's will, healing, comfort, and strength in these situations. Others have been giving of their time and resources to assist these families. Deep and rich fellowship has been cultivated and it has been awesome to see the Lord's hand in all of this. He wants us to partner. He has no desire to see us in competition with each other.

- Seek out a brother or sister in Christ or a sister church.
- Organize a time of joint Bible study, worship, or fellowship.
- Reach into the community together—outside the four walls.

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" – Matthew 5:16.

Focus your eyes and your efforts on the Lord. Make Jesus Christ central to all that you say and do. Each time you reach into the community, give God the glory!

At the Grace Gospel Fellowship, we have a vision of planting 10 churches, revitalizing 10 churches, and

*“Focus your eyes and your efforts on the Lord.
Make Jesus Christ central to all that you say and do.”*

Numerous pastors in my life towards the end of their sermons, have asked the question, “So what?” How does this impact my life? What steps can I take to encourage this unity in my life, my church, my community? I want to share a few things from God's Word that I pray will serve as challenges and notes of encouragement as we seek to journey together.

“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” – Galatians 6:2.

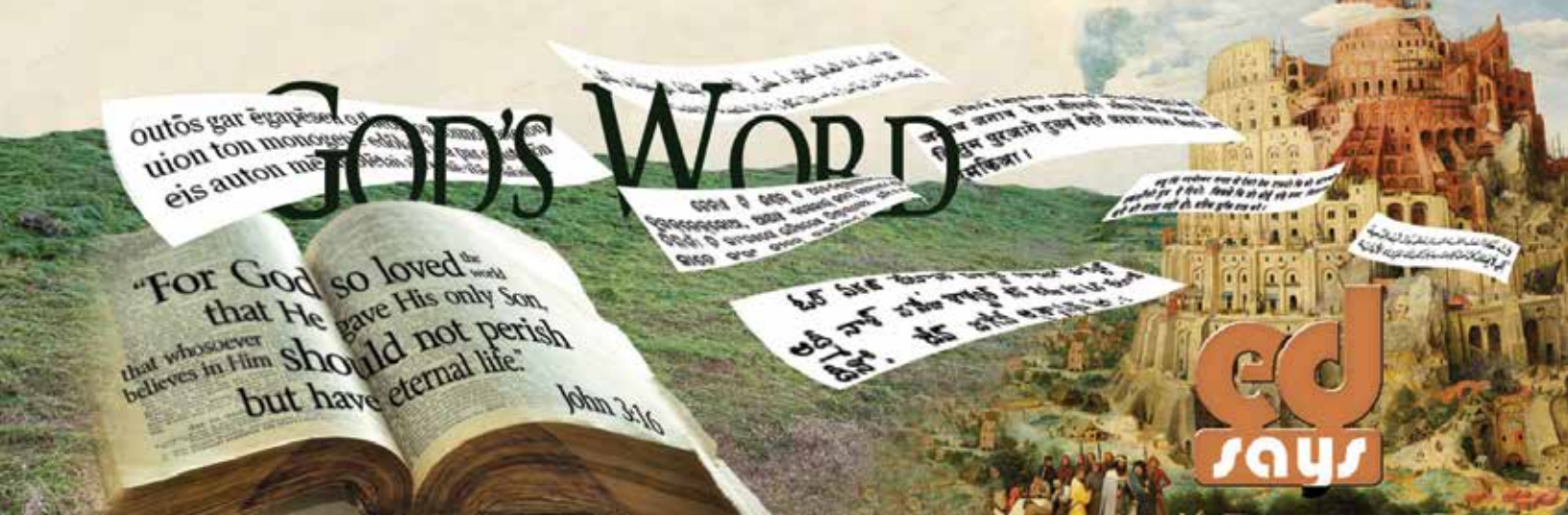
- Pray.
- Call or message them.
- Be a listening ear.
- Speak the truth in love.
- Share your time and resources with them.

“Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” – Hebrews 10:25.

developing 20 new pastors by 2020. We understand that none of this is possible without the Lord's direction and provision. We also know that we cannot reach and surpass these goals without our churches and people joining together. Maybe you have thought about planting a Spanish-speaking church in your hometown. Someone from a sister church might just be praying about the same opportunity. Maybe your desire is to see churches in your city combine to worship together or serve meals at the local park. Others in your city may have the very same burden. Maybe you have sensed the Lord's nudging to step into ministry or encourage another young man or woman to do the same.

Imagine again, you are standing at the trailhead. Will you invite others to join you? When others seek your company along the trail of life, will you join them? The sure thing we know is this: God said yes and He faithfully walks with us around every unexpected turn.

Are you willing as well?! ■



After Noah's flood, God (*Elohim* plural) said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language, And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us [*Elohim* plural] go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech...and they stopped building the city...and from there the Lord scattered them abroad" (Gen 11:6-9).

Psalm 119:89 states that, "Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven," but the Bible doesn't tell us in what language. On earth, isolated groups communicated within the group but it was an almost impossible situation to communicate meaningfully with other groups. There have been **many** efforts to reunite the languages such as Esperanto and/or simplify translations using "Babelfish" but basic problems remain. All the king's horses and all the king's men (including computer programs) couldn't put Humpty together again. Mary loves John does not mean that John loves Mary. The Greek language has four different words for love.

At appropriate times, "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (Psalm 68:11 KJV). "...men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21). Some also wrote what God told them and we call these original writings "autographs." Copies were made from these autographs and further diligently copied by hand. If an error was found that couldn't be corrected, the copied manuscript was destroyed. Nevertheless, a few errors were generated and perpetuated simply because the translators and copyists were all sinful human beings.

Irrespective of isolation, ongoing developments and growth of a language, the mechanisms

that God used to confound the languages, are legion: The German language has a gender for each noun. A sentence including that noun invokes gender as part of the sentence construction. There are things like nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative cases that cause havoc. There are plural nouns, singular adjectives, and scattered exceptions. I won't even address tonal languages where the same word has different meanings according to its tonal scale or syllable emphasis.

Some misinterpretations of the Bible can (and should) be corrected by studying "original language" gender in both Nestle's *Greek Interlinear* (which I prefer) and the *Greek Majority Text* where every text fragment has **some** kind of vote. The concern is that an "imperfect" manuscript could or may have been copied more times than a true copy. That is an ongoing lifelong effort of many sincere, diligent scholars. I thank God that both Greek Texts are available today. The Bible includes sufficient redundancies to be internally consistent.

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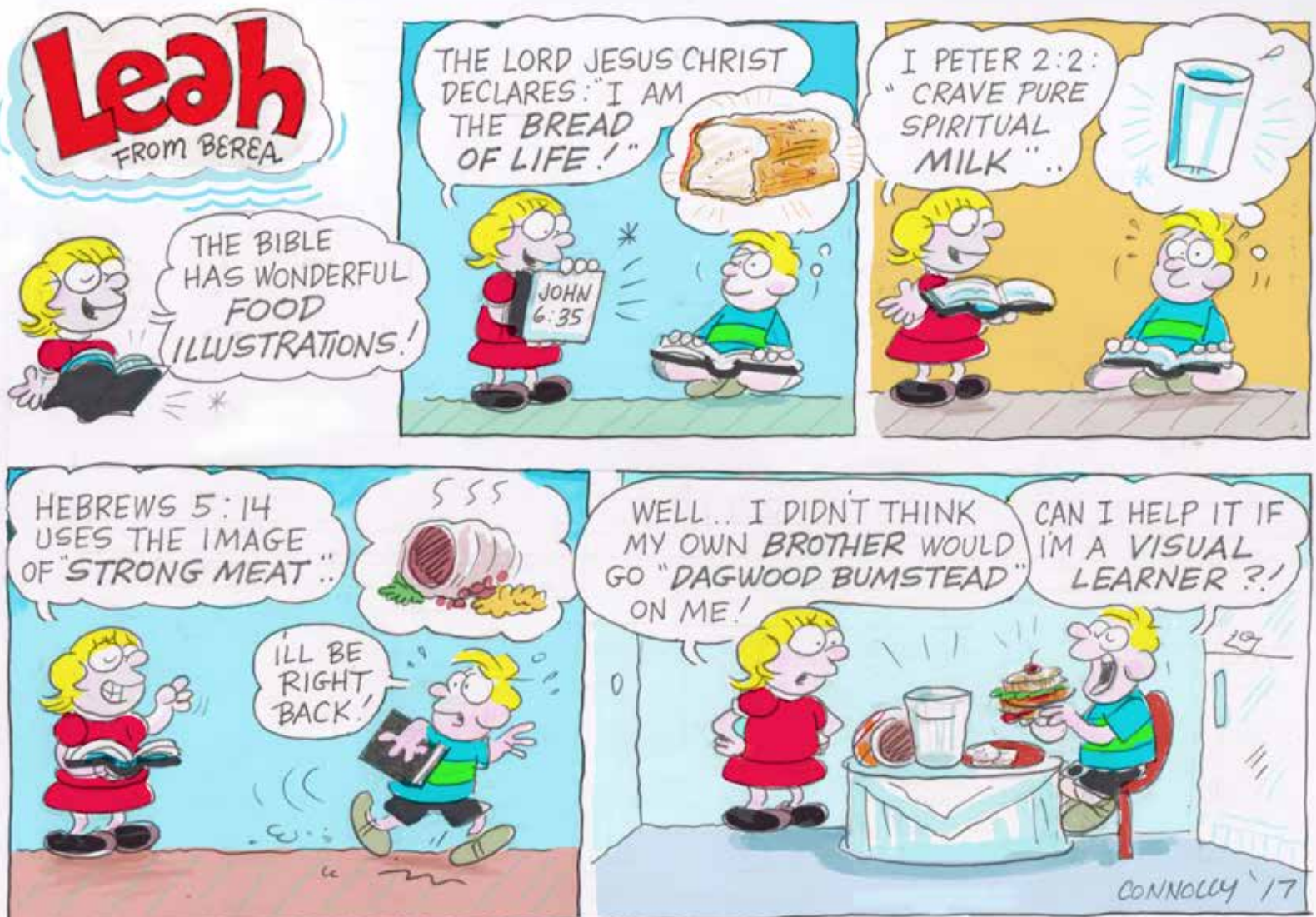
For EXAMPLE: The sinless (perfect) Lord Jesus Christ is coming again. This statement is true and documented elsewhere in the Bible. This EXAMPLE addresses a specific misinterpretation: "For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away" (1 Cor 13:9-10). Many people take this

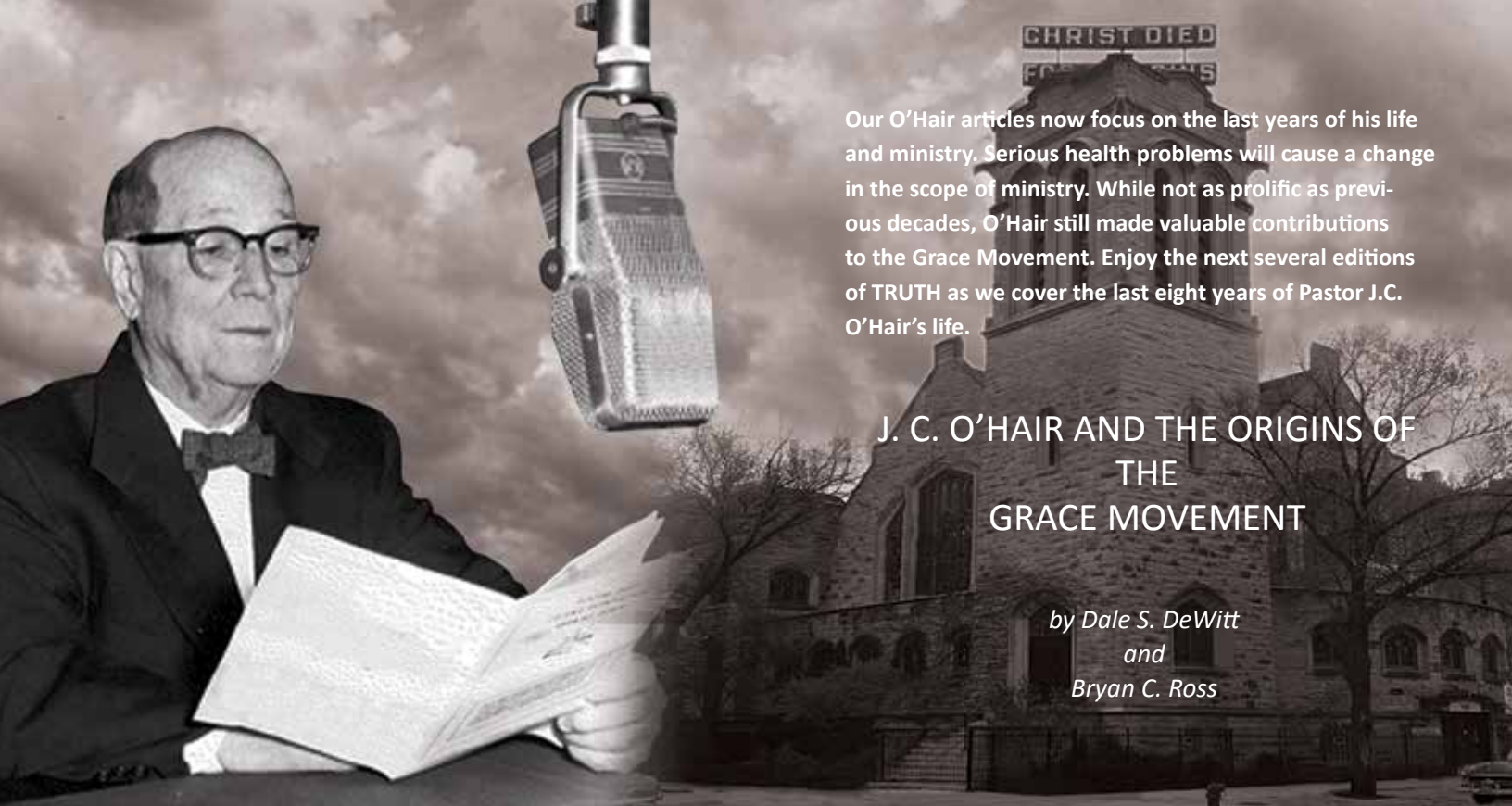
verse to mean that we may not know now but we certainly will know when He comes again. We certainly will but that is not what the verse says. The word perfect in the Greek (teleios) is neuter gender. It can only refer to a completed thing, not a person. I am persuaded that the perfect means God's completed Word (Gk graphe) translated Scripture 51 times. The Bible was not fully written at that time but now is complete (2 Tim 3:16).

Another EXAMPLE is the gender of the present day church, the Body of Christ. Ephesians 5:5 tells husbands to "...love your wives even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for it" (Eph 5:25 KJV). The gender of the church is neuter in Nestle's *Greek Interlinear Text* and is thus translated it rather than her. This is consistent with Galatians 3:28 where in the church of today, the **Body** of Christ, "...there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ." Bible schools

today teach Greek mostly from the *Majority Text* which translates the present-day church as feminine (her). This misses the main point that today's church is the **Body** of Christ, **not** the *bride* of the lamb. What a basic truth to be misunderstood by so **many** sincere Christians!

CONCLUSION: It is **wrong** to base a Christian doctrine on a single translation of the Bible, much less on one or two verses of that translation, or even a single word such as dispensation or baptism. One doesn't have to be a Greek or Hebrew scholar to understand the Bible but studying it pays big dividends. After all, the Bible is its own best commentary. Peter wants you to read it, "...like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word..." (1 Peter 2:2). Paul wants you to read it, "Study...rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:16 KJV). Read it with reverence. It's God's love letter to you. ■





Our O'Hair articles now focus on the last years of his life and ministry. Serious health problems will cause a change in the scope of ministry. While not as prolific as previous decades, O'Hair still made valuable contributions to the Grace Movement. Enjoy the next several editions of TRUTH as we cover the last eight years of Pastor J.C. O'Hair's life.

J. C. O'HAIR AND THE ORIGINS OF THE GRACE MOVEMENT

by Dale S. DeWitt
and
Bryan C. Ross

Dispensational Pamphlets of the 1950s

O'Hair begins the substance of two major pamphlets—*Dispensational Bible Study* and *Concerning Dispensational Bible Study*—with discussions of Paul's Greek word *oikonomia*, the New Testament source of the term "dispensation." The regular meanings of the term—"administration [of an estate by a manager]," "administrative arrangement," and "dispensation"—are only part of its defining elements. Rather, its larger circle of related meanings comes from passages which fill out details of the mystery-church in Ephesians and Colossians. These texts and their contexts govern the larger theological meaning of *oikonomia* in phrases like "the dispensation of the grace of God" (Eph. 3:2), "the dispensation [administration] of this mystery" (3:9), and "the commission [*oikonomia*] God gave me . . . the mystery" (Col. 1:25, NIV). These and other such phrases add defining detail. "The dispensation of the grace of God" is the newly revealed Jew-Gentile church of the Pauline-led world mission in contrast to biblical Israel and its Mosaic law. From both Israel and its law the Gentile world had been alienated throughout Israel's history (Eph. 2:11-22). The use of "dispensation" for this new arrangement suggests its appropriate use by analogy for preceding eras of redemptive history like law, promise, and kingdom.

O'Hair continued to think with Haldeman that rather than one single, all-encompassing pair of contrasting terms—the usual church-kingdom contrast, for example—a *group of related contrasts* was an effective way to explain dispensational ideas. Accordingly, in *Dispensational Bible Study*, O'Hair again gathers scriptural detail to show how the "era"—at times his preferred term—from Adam to Moses was outlined by Paul as the first and foundational period of revelation; but he still hesitated to call this first era a "dispensation," or "the Dispensation of Promise." The Adam to Moses era was followed by the Dispensation of Law which ran from Moses to Israel's rejection of Christ in the New Testament (for O'Hair, Acts 12, but finalized at Acts 28). The Dispensation of Law was succeeded by the current Dispensation of Grace by which the gospel is sent to the Gentile nations *without* Israel, its ordinances and rituals, or its land and other related national identity markers (male circumcision, for example). A new way of thinking about Scofield's first three dispensations thus emerged without the awkward crowding of Scofield's first three dispensations or even Scofield's revelation-test-failure-judgment scheme to define each dispensation. For O'Hair the first three dispensations became effectively Promise (Adam to Moses), Law (Moses to Christ), and Grace—a modest revision of Scofield's scheme. Strangely, this pamphlet does not

discuss the future Kingdom Dispensation, although the distinction between the present Dispensation of Grace and the coming Dispensation of the Kingdom is basic to dispensational theology, and O'Hair did speak of it often elsewhere.

In *Concerning Dispensational Bible Study* O'Hair offers a set of *twenty-seven descriptive "Statements,"* as he calls them, based on or implying biblical contrasts. The "Statements" for the most part consist of two basic terms or concepts. For example, in "Statement Number One," as he labels them, he says,

Some years after Christ died on the cross . . . Paul . . . heard the Lord Jesus say to him "get . . . out of Jerusalem . . . I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles (KJV)." Two or three years before Christ died . . . he said to Peter and the eleven . . . "Go not into the way of the Gentiles."⁸

The pamphlet's contrasts are much like Isaac Haldeman's in the first essay of *How to Study the Bible*, but more detailed and less simplistic than one-word categories as in the case above which might have been reduced to "Gentiles out . . . Gentiles in." Other "Statements" are less explicit in the first sentence or two but yield the same kind of contrasts as Haldeman outlines and to some extent in similar language. Each contrasting pair consists of explicit scriptural categories like Israel and church, law and grace, Jews and Gentiles, or prophecy and mystery. O'Hair's "Statements" for introducing dispensational contrasts are pointed and confrontational, intended to press each point forcefully. Each "Statement" seems meant not for well-versed readers but for people unfamiliar with the idea of dispensational differences. Another similar pamphlet of this decade, *Some Interesting and Most Important Bible Questions*, introduces dispensational ideas by raising questions about a similar set of contrasting biblical events and concepts; the difference is mainly rhetorical—"Questions" instead of "Statements."

Other pamphlets concentrate on further two-term contrasts which O'Hair had been discussing for some time.⁹ *The Riches of the Lord of Glory* is wholly devoted to a single two-term contrast. In this pamphlet the

difference is between what is *traceable* in the prophets (the New Israel's national salvation) and what is *untraceable* in the prophets (the mystery of the church). The contrast is based on the term "untraceable" in Ephesians 3:8 and Romans 11:33 and the implied "traceable" truths of prophecy. Still another pamphlet, *The Petrified Saint and Two Saint Pauls*, draws out differences in Peter and Paul's preaching—a distinction O'Hair began discussing in the 1920s, for example, in the important twin pamphlets *Jesus Christ a Minister of the Circumcision* and *The Twelve Apostles and Paul*.

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Haldeman did not make this contrast as such; but he suggested it as an extension of his view of the Twelve who continued preaching the kingdom in Acts in contrast to Paul's new revelation of the church. Haldeman did, however, outline several different New Testament "gospels" he thought should be distinguished. Some might question the simplistic nature of such keyword contrasts as "essentialist" or bare bones thinking; the caution is valid. And yet populist simplicity was the way the dispensational movement worked, especially among the middle dispensationalists of the early twentieth century. Pamphleteering was its style and pamphlets are intended to be pointed and simple.

From Melita to Miletum details the contrast between the regularity of miracles, sign gifts, and baptism for Israel before Acts 28, and their disappearance in Paul's Prison and Pastoral Epistles of Acts 28 and after. These seven epistles, written during and after Israel's final rejection by God occurred, exhibit several cases of apostolic associates not miraculously

⁸ J. C. O'Hair, *Concerning Dispensational Bible Study* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, n. d.), p. 4; this pamphlet is not specifically dated by any allusions or copyright; it probably originated in the 1950s since it uses his printing format conventions of that decade.

⁹ O'Hair, *Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (1941), pp. 13-19.

O’Hair’s emphasis is — the only way to grasp Israel’s election is by reading and understanding its national history which illustrates how election works.

healed: Epaphroditus, Trophimus, and Timothy. Epaphroditus recovered but no miracle is mentioned. Trophimus was left ill at Miletus by Paul, too sick to travel, and Timothy was instructed to drink wine for his frequent illnesses. The seven Prison and Pastoral Epistles together lack even one case of miraculous healing, nor do they mention baptism. This pamphlet sounds like an expansion of O’Hair’s message during his Indianapolis meetings of 1920 on why signs and wonders ended when Paul reached Rome. In several other pamphlets he referred to the sermon’s theme and to Paul’s unhealed coworkers. Apparently, O’Hair never developed his 1920 Indianapolis message into a pamphlet or booklet in its own right until he wrote *From Melita to Miletum*. Whether or not another such pamphlet exists with the whole sermon exactly as preached, he used this argument again and again for the end of sign-miracles after Acts 28, appealing often to the Bishop-Scofield-Moody pamphlet of 1920 for support. O’Hair learned of the Bishop pamphlet after his 1920 message at Indianapolis and was delighted to discover it since Bishop made the same argument as O’Hair had made independently. No pamphlet or booklet of O’Hair is more like the way he describes the decisive Indianapolis message than *From Melita to Miletum*, although other pamphlets may have contained parts or summaries of it. This pamphlet also contains a basic two-member contrast: sign gifts for Israel before Paul reached Rome and cessation of sign gifts for Gentiles after Paul reached Rome.

The pamphlets discussed above are mostly repetitions of familiar arguments developed and published over several decades with little or modest expansion. This is not the case with a pamphlet entitled *The Nation Israel . . . Three Elections*. Here he discusses three events in which Israel is elected or reelected by God: Abram’s original election (Genesis); Israel’s election as a special nation with its own law (Exodus, Deuteronomy); and Israel’s future election to its promised final salvation (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel). For each of the three “elections” he cites texts in which God made a

choice, even of an Israel already His people in fact or plan and forever into the future. O’Hair understood “election” as a sovereign act of God in which he chose to enter, continue, or reestablish a relationship with Israel either before it existed or before its renewal after sinful departures. Election was a way for God to accomplish His purpose and affirm or reaffirm its operation *in history*. In all three elections some form or stage of Israel’s salvation was involved. The purposes of God in Israel’s election do not include *eternal life*; they are rather aimed at Israel’s realization of its national earthly calling. The choices include relief of Israel’s suffering, overcoming its persistent sinfulness, renewing its promises and power on earth, and bringing glory to God. Election is both a decision to save and at the same time to advance or finally fulfill the promises. It is not a decision to select persons or a nation for *eternal* gain or loss but to achieve divine purposes on earth within Israel’s actual or projected history. Divine “choosing” affirms God’s sovereign determination to activate some stage of His saving plan with Israel on earth.

In this pamphlet, O’Hair does not discuss the divine choice of eternal destiny usually associated with Calvinistic predestination of individuals to eternal life or, in extreme Calvinism, to eternal loss; but he does not explicitly shut this door either. O’Hair’s emphasis is—the only way to grasp Israel’s election is by reading and understanding its national history which illustrates how election works. Israel’s history included its most drastic sin—its rejection of Christ and the unforeseen consequence within God’s plan—the movement of the gospel into the Gentile world without Israel’s salvation (Rom. 11). Multiple elections must happen because Israel sinned greatly unto judgment because it is loved by God for the father’s sake and because the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. This means God’s gifts are permanent and stand firm with no possible change of mind on His investment in Israel or His promises of Israel’s national role in world redemption (Rom. 11:26-29). ■

Region 2: Southwest



Pastor Joel Molina and his wife, Darcy, from *Grace Bible Church* (Anaheim, CA) have started a Bible study for the residents of an apartment house nearby—some have been attending the church. They have good fellowship there on Thursday nights. Pastor Joel has also begun a Saturday morning Bible study in English with some Filipino men who have been attending the services. ■

are participating in their yearly fireworks stand for their only fundraiser. Last year they had 3 stands operating and netted over \$21,000. We had 60 volunteers work the stands and will this year as well. No more bake sales! It funds camp, retreats, operational costs, and this year another larger vehicle for the growth in the youth group. Several of our youth will be going to Cambodia for a short-term mission trip. Our motorcycle ministry has combined with the Hell Fighters (national Christian bike club). They are circling the Denver Metro Area to stop and pray at locations for our city, called the “Jericho Project.”

Liberty Heights Chapel (Lawton, OK) - Liberty Heights Chapel is looking forward to summer. We just finished our Vacation Bible School which was held June 5-9. While our numbers were a bit down, we still had a very successful Bible school. On June 11, our guest speaker was Pat Kilgo and his parents. Pat is a missionary to Malaysia and is sponsored by Things to Come Mission. In July, we plan to attend the Peace Church Family Bible Camp. ■

Region 3: West



Grace Bible Church (Lakewood, CO) - GBC of Lakewood is moving into a place of giving the Holy Spirit an avenue in the congregation to accept self-directed ministry. We are especially praying that the Spirit would supply us with the evangelist gift. Also we are looking forward to expanding our worship team and Bible studies.

Harvest Fellowship (Brighton, CO): Harvest is doing well. A majority of our ministries have stopped for the summer (we work on the semester system) other than home Bible studies, so summer groups are meeting and creating activities and general fun. Steve Blackwell gets to do some writing with the reduction in activities. Our youth

Region 4: Upper Midwest



Grace Bible Church, West Allis, WI—Life in a church is not only about spiritual ministry, but it is about all aspects of the physical

plant of the church building and parsonage. One goal was to put a new projector for our PowerPoint in the front of the church.

Another goal of the church has been to do a kitchen remodeling project at the parsonage for many years. Linda had been patiently waiting over these years being content yet always looking forward to the potential of it coming to pass.

It has been great to see God answer prayer, see people pray purposefully, and work together during this time. We have grown closer to our people, depended upon them in unique ways, and have seen the hearts of people open to us as they provided meals, invited us to their home for a meal, and shared wisdom that has helped us make decisions over these months. ■

Region 5: Lower Midwest



St. Louis Bible Fellowship

(Pastor Rick Owsley) continues to welcome new families into our local fellowship. It is exciting to witness such enthusiastic interest in the Word “rightly divided.” Our Junior Church program is growing under the leadership of Tyrell and Rachel Shoemaker. Our weekend Vacation Bible School had a camping theme, with the emphasis “to come and learn S’MORE about Jesus.” Steve McFarland is the GGF Region 5 representative for Prison Mission Association and was the speaker on Prison Mission Sunday, June 11. Pastor Rick will begin a Sunday morning series on the clash of world views, with emphasis on defending the Christian world view.

Faith Bible Church, Olney, IL (Pastor Kaleb Kemper)—After several years of planning, the sanctuary is being renovated. Having recently celebrated their 50th anniversary, the congregation is looking forward to how God will continue to use them to impact the community for Christ.

Grace Church in Indianapolis, IN (Pastor Don Sommer), is piloting a Coached By Christ kids' program this summer, with the possibility of continuing it into the school year. Joel and Leah Sanders were accepted as TCM missionary candidates. They will be serving a one-year internship with Grace Church in Indianapolis while completing Berean Bible Institute courses. Robby and Tegwen Heath have also been accepted as TCM missionary candidates. ■

Region 9: Western Michigan



Berean Church of Norton Shores, MI, has enjoyed a season of celebration and ministry opportunity with Pastor Rob Renberg. We recently had a "Mortgage Burning" service that featured several former pastors and recognized people who have served the church in various capacities.

This year also marks the 100-year anniversary of the book *Maranatha* written in 1917 by Berean's founding pastor, Harry Bultema. This volume can be traced as a key component of the beginning of the modern day dispensational "Grace Movement."

We now have three GBC students on staff: Derik Keeslar (Wor-

ship Director), Nick Brown (Youth), and Brenna Johnston (Youth Intern). Berean is also searching for a new full-time Associate Pastor of Family Ministry to begin a renewal of focus to target families as we serve the Lord in our community. We will be having a Home School Co-op using the church on Fridays, bringing over 75 families to our church facilities on a regular basis.

The GMI "Breakthrough" Tae Kwan Do 2017 Paraguay missions team provided a presentation of high flying energy and martial arts during a recent worship service which was enjoyed by all.

Praise the Lord for great things happening at **Parkside Bible Church** in Holland, Michigan! Their mission statement is: "Passionately Pursuing Jesus Christ within Community." The community at Parkside is striv-

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ing to reach deeper into the heart of our Savior and into the hearts of one another. They have some new and exciting ministries taking place this summer: Kids Games - an outreach week for kids 5-12; Summer Kids Club on Wednesday evenings for ages 5-12; Summer Worship Nights - concerts with speakers and challenges on Sunday evenings for ages 12-29; and Super Seniors which is a weekly Bible study with a group lunch for ages 55+.

They are also thrilled to add Joe Johnson as Associate Pastor to their staff. Joe is a 2013 graduate of Grace Bible College majoring in Pastoral Studies. Joe has a passion for helping people live in the new life of the gospel and has a love for equipping people to commit to faithfulness in Christ. Joe and his wife, Kaylee, have 2 young children, Norah and Soren. ■



*Joe and Kaylee Johnson
with Norah and Soren*

Region 10: Central Michigan



Rush Creek Bible Church in Byron Center, MI, just wrapped up their 2016-2017 ministry year! To celebrate we compiled the number

of volunteers and hours that made all of our ministries possible and we were truly blown away by the generosity of our congregation as over 350 volunteers donated over 21,000 hours of their time! However, just because it's summer doesn't mean the work is done as June 19-23 is our yearly Kids Games ministry that sees over 400 students and 150 volunteers (from Rush Creek and other area churches including our sister church Frontline) come together for an incredible week of Bible lessons, games, and activity tracks that truly minister to the community! Finally, be in prayer for us as we continue the process of investigating a potential ministry expansion campaign and following the Lord's leading to make an even greater impact in the community in which God has placed us! For more information about Rush Creek and our ministries visit us at rushcreek-bc.org!

At **Frontline Bible Church** in Byron Center, MI, we've been busy preparing as a church for Pastor John Lowder's sabbatical. It's been a lot of work to this point, but rewarding as well for everyone. While we are aware the three months will be quite different not having our Lead Pastor around, it is our desire to not just survive the time but rather to thrive during that time. The theme for those three months is "Being the Church." Knowing that every person will have to step up a little more during this time, our hope is that we have a better understanding of what this means because of this experience. We are especially excited that almost half of the preaching responsibilities will be covered by congregation members trained here at Frontline.

If you've ever thought of taking a sabbatical or would like to give your pastor the gift of one, please feel free to contact us and we can share with you more information. (616-878-3113) The value is felt by more than just the pastor.

At **Coopersville Bible Church** (Coopersville, MI), we were pleased to be able to have two of our church board members join Pastor Tim for the GGF Leadership Conference this year. It was an excellent time of worship and instruction in the basic plan of God for growing a church. With so many church growth programs, it was refreshing to see one that had evangelism and discipleship at its core. It was great to be able to spend this time together.

We have begun two new programs this summer. The second Tuesday of the month is a Gospel Music Jamboree that brings together singers and pickers from around the area to sing some old (and new) gospel tunes. Also, we are having a picnic/movie night once a month. The first night we gathered and watched the excellent film, "Courageous," which was followed in June with "Time Changer." A picnic, popcorn, and a warm summer evening—what could be better to watch a Christian film?

VBS was a success as we once again used the Answers in Genesis program. We went back and used one of our previous programs (we've kept eight from past years) that dealt with space and the mighty hand of God. AIG does a wonderful job with their material and we highly recommend it as it really reinforces God's Word and its foundational truth. ■

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