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TRUTH Magazine

Summer 2018 Edition

depression

"...no situation is
hopeless with the Lord."

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



**GRACE GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP**

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TRUTH Magazine

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

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CHURCH



GRACE GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP

Are we doing it “right”?



by

Church Health Taskforce
Gary Hansen
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The following article is part of the series from the GGF's Church Health Team which discusses the church health questionnaire. You can find the full resource at ggfusa.org, as well as the previous issues of TRUTH, which contain discussion on the first six categories of the questionnaire. These questions are meant to serve as a tool for churches to continually explore ways to strengthen our ministries as we strive to serve God in the world. This article focuses on the seventh category: "Avoiding Formulas and Legalistic Structures."

- I. Where would people place your church on a spectrum between rigid and open in its stand on doctrine and social issues?
 1. How does your church emphasize “Grace living” in relationship to “Grace Doctrine”?
- II. How often does your church reevaluate its ministry focus and structure?
 1. What are the ways your church engages with that language and culture of its environment?
 2. What is your church’s process for suggesting, considering, and applying new ministry forms?
 3. In what ways does your church welcome new expressions of worship?
- III. What are the unwritten expectations that people are expected to abide by?
 1. What would a new person notice about the culture of your church?
 2. How quickly would the stalwarts in your church quiz a new person on pet dispensational points?

The majority of churches within the Grace Gospel Fellowship are from the “low-church” tradition, meaning we do not participate in many formal liturgical practices within our worship services. However, as humans, we are creatures of habit, and as such, we create our own traditions when each of our communities gather as a local church. Some of these traditions might be obvious for anyone who attends for more than a week or two, and others might take a while for newcomers to catch on to. These could be the way we serve communion, the general structure of our order of worship, by whom and how the offering is received, the number of songs sung before and after the sermon, what kind of coffee is served and if it is allowed in the sanctuary, or any number of other written and unwritten rules for how things operate.

One of the most surprising things about the Church in the New Testament is how minimal the

instructions are for what is supposed to happen when we gather to worship. And for the areas where the “what” is given, there’s even less description for “how” it’s supposed to happen. There are instructions to gather, and when we gather to sing, publicly read Scripture, collect an offering, share in the Lord’s Supper, and establish elders, but many of the other activities that we often associate with “church” just aren’t mentioned.

I believe the New Testament’s silence on these issues is intentional. The Lord has given us a very broad outline for the role of the local church but has left plenty of room for His grace through His Holy Spirit to allow each local expression to take on its own shape and form for its context. Thus a 1st century church gathering might have the same elements as a 21st century gathering but look completely different. As would a church in Grand Rapids, MI, vs. Seattle, WA, vs. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, vs. Ciudad del Este, Paraguay. Of course, as you have probably observed, even churches within those cities can look vastly different from one another.

“... for Paul the unity of the Body of Christ is of primary importance...”

The history of the Church and its many reformation movements has often involved attempts to create more solid definition and form to church practice, followed by theological and practical resistance to those areas that have become more rigid than Scripture requires. Even before the Scriptures were completed, this was taking place – in questions like whether Gentile believers ought to obey the Mosaic Law and be circumcised in Acts 15 and Galatians, or what food was appropriate to eat in Romans and 1 Corinthians. The Apostle Paul was regularly working with his churches to delineate which areas of theology and practice were essential to the life of the Church and which were a matter of preference or conscience.

As has already been addressed in previous categories of this assessment, for Paul the unity of the Body of Christ is of primary importance, so that when

nonessential issues of disagreement arise, the role of each believer is to humbly make space for the other believer – “not looking to your own interests” (Phil 2:4), but “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21). In Romans, he admonishes the church, “Let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Rom 14:19).

“We can become comfortable in our routines and bristle at any attempts to introduce something new or unfamiliar.”

This all makes theological sense, but as mentioned in the opening paragraph, we are creatures of habit and can become much more difficult to live out in practice than we would like. We can become comfortable in our routines and bristle at any attempts to introduce something new or unfamiliar. And lest we think this is only a problem for older Christians, let me offer the following example:

Several years ago, our church in Shoreline, WA, decided to stop calling our summer Vacation Bible School program VBS. What kid gets excited about going to school in the summer? So, we switched it to Vacation Bible Adventure or VBA! Much more exciting! People who had been used to calling it VBS naturally had trouble with the change, but probably about three or four years after we had made the switch, I overheard an 8-year-old talking to her friends in the hallway, smugly saying, “I still call it VBS!” The naming of VBS or VBA is, of course, a fairly silly issue with absolutely no theological importance, unless it becomes a boundary marker of what is or is not accepted within our church. The same is true for all sorts of other matters of taste and preference. However, when nonbiblical practices and routines become so rigid that those who prefer something different are made to feel unwelcome or as partial-members of the Body, then they take on theological significance. They become legalistic rules that have no place in the church.

Therefore, recognizing this tendency we all have to become comfortable with what is familiar, to the possible detriment of the unity of the Body of Christ, this

section of the Church Health questionnaire invites our churches to explore the ways nonessentials have been given too much of a place of prominence within the life of the church. It invites us to reevaluate “the way we’ve always done it” and think through how we can better include new ideas and voices into our programs and worship.

Some of these questions are focused on the barriers we might present to new attenders to the church – whether or not we emphasize our mid-Acts dispensational theology so much that those who think differently are made to feel unwelcome in our midst. How “gracefully” do we teach our “Grace” theology? Others are more focused on the general church culture, and what barriers have developed that make it difficult for some members of the church to feel less valued than others, rather than mutually edified.

“Some of these questions are focused on the barriers we might present to new attenders...so much that those who think differently are made to feel unwelcome in our midst.”

A final note and reminder on these issues, especially focused on Paul’s instructions in Romans 14-15. Paul tells the Romans “make up in your mind not to put any stumbling block in the way of a brother or sister” (Rom 14:13). Then, in Romans 15:1, he admonishes, “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not please ourselves.” Our tendency when dealing with issues is to take the position of the weaker brother or sister and ask others to adjust to our preferences. However, one would hope that those who are leaders within the church would be the stronger ones, and those who are weak would be newer believers, children and youth, and those who typically have the least “social influence” within the church. If we must err in one direction in our movement toward unity and mutual edification, the Biblical model moves toward those with the most power surrendering to those with the least. For those of us who have been called to lead God’s churches, may we strive towards unity through this kind of sacrificial love. ■

POPULAR LEADERSHIP

Not So With You

by Ken Bruce Kemper
President
Grace Christian University



Leadership is an extremely important topic. There is so much written about leadership today from every corner of the world geographically, corporately, spiritually, and otherwise. We will always be in need of strong leaders. I have read the history of many of the leadership theories and have been a student of leadership for much of my life. The Bible has much to say about leadership explicitly as well as implicitly. Read the Old Testament and you will see the impact of leadership on the Children of Israel with each succeeding king or judge.

One of my favorite leadership books was given to me by Bill Vinton while we were visiting in the Congo some thirty years ago. It was written by J. Oswald Sanders in 1967 entitled *Spiritual Leadership*. Sanders goes to great length in this book to juxtapose natural and spiritual leadership and the drastic differences between them. As followers of Jesus Christ and members of His Church, the Body of Christ, we see leadership differently than popular culture because our ends—or outcomes—of leadership are different. With clarity of the desired results comes the ability to focus our means or processes to produce those results (commonly known as “reverse engineering”). Clear instructions about leadership come from Jesus Himself as He

mentors and instructs His disciples who will lead the mission after His impending departure.

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

The popular leadership example of Jesus’ day—referred to here as “the rulers of the Gentiles,” as opposed to how God’s people (the Jews) would act, is Jesus’ point of instruction as He teaches His disciples. In the context, Jesus has just responded to the mother of James and John when she approached Him on her knees requesting prominence and leadership by association for her sons in Jesus’ future glorious kingdom. Jesus simply responds to this request by stating that those places are given by the Father and are reserved already (Matthew 20:20-23).

Jesus’ choice of words about the popular leaders of that day and His instructions about spiritual leadership are extremely relevant to us today. Dan Anderson (2013), a friend and longtime president of Appalachian Bible College, describes these as “leadership misper-

ceptions” in his recent book entitled *Biblical Slave Leadership*. These misconceptions are:

- Position is leadership
- Power is leadership
- Prestige is leadership
- Privilege is leadership

Position is Leadership

Jesus calls the popular leaders “rulers of the Gentiles.” To have a title such as ruler is not the same or equal to being a leader. In fact, many of us know people who have the title president, director, boss, CEO or other description on a business card or email signature, yet they are not good leaders! They struggle to lead people and to do anything except hold their position; and even that position is a result of longevity at a lower position as a result of “the Peter principle” (the rising to the level of one’s incompetence and not succeeding so staying there). It may be that those with the titles are leaders, but the title does not automatically make someone a leader. Position does not make a leader. John Maxwell discusses “The Five Levels of Leadership” in *Developing the Leader Within You*. He states that position is the lowest level of influence behind permission/relationships, production/results, people development/reproduction, and ultimately personhood/respect (1993, pp. 14-15).

Power is Leadership

Jesus says the rulers “lord it over them.” They may be in a position to give orders, give directives, and hold people accountable—even to the point of hiring and firing—however, this is no guarantee that the individual is a leader. He may “lord it over” because he is bigger, or he may have force, organizational structure, or advantage, yet not really lead. Power does not make someone inherently a leader. Power can be used positively or negatively by those vested with it. It is a popular misconception as evidenced by young people stating they want to be the boss or own their own company so “no one can tell them what to do.”

Prestige is Leadership

Jesus calls the popular leaders “their high officials.” The implication is that they are highly visible or popular. These leaders were well-known and famous, but were not necessarily leaders. Today musicians, actors and actresses, as well as sports celebrities are famous, but very few of them are actually leaders. A person

with prestige may become a leader, but the status and fame which one has does not necessarily make one a leader. Many well-known athletes have declared, “I didn’t ask to be a role model, and don’t want to be.” Media personalities, although largely uninformed, attempt to speak as an authority on issues they know nothing about. Their ignorance becomes apparent when they speak and write.

Privilege is Leadership

Jesus told His disciples that the popular rulers of the time “exercise authority over them.” The saying “rank has its privileges” is the most faulty idea commonly stated in regard to biblical leadership. The way in which leaders with the fancy uniform, the corner office, or the corporate car are prone to not follow the rules which they insist upon others following is appalling. We have even witnessed our highest political offices showing disregard for the laws of the land under this misconception. To exercise authority and control over others is not necessarily what leadership is, according to Jesus. He refutes this as “of the Gentiles” and not befitting God’s leaders.

A Different Type of Leadership

Jesus’ response to these misconceptions is “Not so with you!” This is a strong rebuke of opposition. He is preparing those twelve disciples to be leaders of a different type. They must have been confused, since they most likely still believed Jesus would overthrow the Roman rulers and set up His kingdom over the Jews with power in replacement of the present weaker leaders. All of these four misconceptions are still widely promoted in our culture today, and sadly enough, even practiced in the Church as well. Among believers we still see people in pursuit of position, power, prestige, and privilege. These are all misconceptions of what biblical leadership is meant to be. After refuting this example, Jesus instructs His disciples concerning what biblical leadership is meant to be.

Jesus’ Leadership Model

To be great, one must be your servant (*diakonos*). To be first, one must be your slave (*doulos*). The example to emulate is Jesus Christ Himself, “the Son of Man” who came not to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. This is a completely opposite example to what Jesus held up at first as popular leadership. Jesus says that it is not at all about

the power, position, privilege, or prestige of the leaders. It is not about wielding influence or personality type for the sake of manipulating others.

Orientation Change

Jesus rocks the boat of the disciples when He explains that there is no chance of reaching the destination if the compass is not oriented correctly! The compass shows true north. If there is magnetic interference, the compass is compromised and will not read correctly. Jesus tells them the orientation of leadership is not the benefit or magnification of the leader himself. This truth alone is a seismic shift. Leaders today often seek to be leaders for their own benefit and privilege—a false north. Jesus states that the one who is great must be “your servant,” and the one who would be first, must be “your slave.” The whole orientation of the leader is 180 degrees different. The popular orientation would be “south” rather than “north” and lead one to move away from real biblical leadership. Jesus states that leadership is about others! His example is one of service, and even slavery to the Father’s will (Matthew 26:39) for the benefit of others, not Himself. Paul himself served the churches and called himself “a slave of Christ Jesus” (Romans 1:1).

Leadership Desire

Jesus does not condemn the desire for leadership in this passage. He merely states, “Whoever wants” implying that leadership is available to anyone who might have righteous ambition and leading. He shows that leadership is a process—“whoever wants to become.” It isn’t something one is born with or endowed. Jesus also shows that leaders are not lonely and separated, but among peers and servants of others. There is a humble accountability to those who are led; it is the opposite of ego and self-fulfillment. The strength and identity of the leader in Jesus’ description comes from the growth and benefit of others whom are served. There is always a need for leaders like this in the church and throughout our society. ■

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BRAND NEW MISSIONARIES--BRAND NEW FIELD

THINGS TO COME MISSION

Serving in **EAST TIMOR**

“Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.”
Acts 22:21



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If you are a member of a species facing an imminent extinction-level event, you are probably not having a great day. The fossilized remains of now extinct animals buried in water-deposited sediments from the tops of mountains to the ocean floors testify to the veracity and precision of the biblical account of a cataclysmic, worldwide flood. These animals which once roamed the earth could not thrive nor survive under the new normal of God-made climate change resulting from the flood. The fossil record provides a snapshot of the Lord's judgment flowing from His righteous and holy character. He caused the fountains of the deep to burst forth both burying and reshuffling the original creation on the crust of the earth leaving us with the habitat where we now dwell.

Not only does the Bible explain our past, but it gives us glimpses into the future which all depict human beings either rejecting God or living in fellowship with Him. While human extinction is not happening, it is instructive to consider what might cause it. We might think of a global nuclear war or a pandemic, but there are other possibilities, too. What if every human, tiring of life, decided to commit suicide? What if humanity collectively decided to kill all of their unborn or even born children? Or, what if everyone decided to be attracted only to those of the same sex never again to produce offspring? While these scenarios are utterly unlikely and almost unimaginable, they are instructive because those actions which would lead to the end of the human race collectively are actions we should not engage in individually.

Scaling it down, let us focus on a smaller subset of humanity. Believers worldwide are represented in Scripture as a body—the Body of Christ. Until the

Lord returns and He resumes His covenant with Israel, His body will remain here on earth though there is no guarantee as to just how large or small it might be (Romans 11:25-27). Nonetheless, it is also instructive to think about what might theoretically cause Christianity cease to exist.

Before considering a few scenarios, it is worth noting some of the doubts and fears of the early disciples—numbering only 120 at one point (Acts 1:15). Traveling to the village of Emmaus, two of them expressed their doubts unwittingly to Jesus Himself saying, “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened” (Luke 24:21). For eight days, Thomas refused to believe his fellow disciples’ account of the risen Messiah unless the Lord would show him His wounds (John 20:25-28). On the day that Mary Magdalene reported to the others she had seen the Lord, the disciples were behind closed doors “for fear of the Jews” (John 20:18-19). What did they fear in that moment? Did they fear being rounded up and put to death like Jesus? From their perspective, this would have exterminated the remnant of those who had placed their faith in the resurrected Christ.



Two thousand years since Jesus appeared in their midst addressing their fear declaring “Peace be with



you,” myriads around the world have joined the disciples acknowledging that Christ is risen indeed. With a couple millennia of Christian history behind us and millions of fellow believers around the world, we are no more worried about the extinction of Christianity than we are about the extinction of the human race. I have to wonder if that is a source of complacency in our Christian walk.



Now let us consider what could conceivably make Christianity disappear within a generation. What if each of us in the Body of Christ refused to evangelize ever again? What if we never discipled another believer? What if our churches were no different from the world in which we live? In other words, what if we did nothing to remove the leaven from our congregations, but allowed the world to conform our churches to its image? In a generation Christianity could be essentially nonexistent. While this is not going to happen, this exercise is instructive. If you and I are not sharing the gospel, discipling others and guarding the integrity of Christ’s Body, then who is? Are we hoping others carry the burden while we enjoy the fruits of their labors?

Complacency, which we as Christians should avoid collectively as we desire to see the succession of the Body of Christ from one generation to the next, is that which we should also avoid individually. The responsi-

bility to evangelize, disciple, and live holy because God is holy belongs to each of us individually as much as it does to all of us collectively. As a missionary sending organization, Grace Ministries International is looking for high capacity individuals who understand that this burden belongs to them individually regardless of what anyone else is or is not doing.

In July 2016 the GMI-affiliated martial arts team, *BreakThrough*, took its first mission trip to Costa Rica. The team visited schools, Taekwondo academies, parks, and other public venues inviting its audience to evangelism events hosted by the two GMI-affiliated churches in the country. A recent college graduate with a degree in biochemistry and a black belt in Taekwondo, Ronnie Mackensen, was taking his first mission trip as a member of *BreakThrough*. He had accepted the gospel in high school and *BreakThrough’s* team members were instrumental in connecting him with a church and getting him involved in ministry. While he watched the Lord work through the team in Costa Rica, the seed of serving on the mission field sprouted and began to grow. For the next couple of years, the desire grew stronger and became an insurmountable passion he had to pursue.

Costa Ricans, Alvaro Barrantes and his wife, Mauren, had years earlier committed to serving on the mission field. Though living what anyone anywhere would consider the ideal life with a great job in the tech industry, a beautiful home, and surrounded by friends and family, they wanted nothing more than to dedicate their lives to serving the Lord elsewhere around the world. During *BreakThrough’s* trip to Costa Rica, Alvaro, performing a few eye-catching and evangelistic attention-grabbers somewhat akin to magic tricks, clearly articulated the gospel with the crowds gathered to watch the team’s performances at both venues. For



Alvaro, he was doing in Costa Rica, what he longed to do on the mission field—share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A couple of months later, in October 2016, Jaque Neiverth—who also came to faith in Christ in high school—was attending a missions conference in her native Brazil where she was challenged to ponder eternity and the finality of hell and that all who reject Christ’s offer of salvation are headed there. It was sobering and pushed Jaque to pursue a path different than the career in education she was undertaking. Now she too wanted to pursue a life in missions. Ronnie continued to grow in his faith and his understanding of the Bible while also taking another mission trip to Paraguay with *BreakThrough* in 2017. Similarly, Jaque visited Paraguay twice during the past couple of years serving short-term with GMI’s missionary team there. She also took a semester’s worth of courses at a seminary near her home in southern Brazil. During her first trip to Paraguay she met Pastor John Lowder of Frontline Bible Church (Byron Center, Michigan) which resulted in her spending March through June of this year interning at his church. Alvaro and Mauren continued to prepare themselves for missions by serving in their home church, taking survey trips to Panama, and studying in Grace Bible Institute (San Antonio de Belén, Costa Rica). Individually they all prepared themselves for future ministry, but collectively their paths were about to intersect.

Ronnie, Jaque, Alvaro and Mauren all grasped that the burden belonged to them to see that the Body of Christ not just survive but thrive. In June 2018, each of them came before the GMI Board and shared why they wanted to become GMI missionaries. Having accepted their applications, the board assigned them all to open the new field of Panama which Alvaro, Mauren, and

Grace Bible Church in Costa Rica had already been surveying in conjunction with GMI. Later that same day Ronnie proposed to Jaque whom he had happened to meet days after her arrival in the States. It was not long after their first introduction they both quickly discovered their mutual passion for sharing God’s grace with the world.

A busy year awaits all of them. For Ronnie and Jaque they are planning wedding celebrations later this year on two continents while preparing to leave for Nicaragua in the middle of 2019 to spend a year learning Spanish and more about ministry and marriage from GMI missionaries Emiliano and Raquel Seravalli who have a six-year headstart on them. Alvaro and Mauren will also begin raising support for their ministry this year even as they plan to visit the States in January 2019 for six months to visit churches and share their burden for the work in Panama before leaving for the same in late summer of next year.



As you pray for these new missionaries, consider what motivates them. They are not depending on others to shoulder the weight of doing Christ’s work here on earth. They are going out individually to do what we all should do collectively, whether home or abroad: to share the gospel of Jesus Christ as they disciple others to know Him better and to share this knowledge with yet even more! ■



Being born and raised on an island, trips to the beach have always been a great “must” for me. Summer is an all year long affair in the Caribbean. Any day that is sunny and bright is good to head out on a spontaneous trip to any part of the island to find a new or visit a known beach. Windows down, music up, and hair flowing in the wind (or “just doing its own thing” if you have crazy curls like me) on the way over to the desired destination. Once you arrive, expect relaxation. Just imagine it for a second. Let’s take a mental vacation for a few minutes, if you will. You’re feeling the calm and soothing breeze, laying to rest on a blanket on the sand with a front row view of the spectacular, majestic, and powerful ocean. What an image, right? Just soaking up all that the beach has to offer is an amazing feeling. Getting your feet wet on the shore and staring at the horizon to try to guess where the sun meets the ocean. An awe inspiring experience for all your senses! Whenever I look at the sea, it leaves me in wonder. It is so grand. The power of its waves is so obvious. At the same time it can seem oh so still...SO much so that it looks like a huge blue blanket. It impresses me how water reflects the color of the sky yet always remains transparent.

I think our imaginary vacation trip can teach us a lot more.

At the beach we find:

- the blazing light the sun gives us
- plenty of salty water
- lots of sand and then some
- trees that bear tropical fruit that is healthy to eat.

God’s own creation leads us and points us to His Son. In Jesus we find:

- The true light that shines through: “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of

the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” John 8:12.

- Living water that quenches our thirst: “...Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them’” John 7:37-38.

- The true meaning to being salt in this unseasoned world filled with sin and maintaining a joyful striving to show His grace through our lives: “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything...” Matthew 5:13.

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” Colossians 4:6.

- That unlike sand, He is our solid foundation; unshakable and unchangeable: “Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone’” Acts 4:11.

²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash” Matthew 7:24-27.

“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid,

which is Jesus Christ" 1 Corinthians 3:10-11.

● The only way to bear good and healthy spiritual fruit is by having Jesus as our Savior to enable us to receive His Holy Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" Galatians 5:22-23.

"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit" Matthew 12:33.

"What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one

Do we recognize the power, the grandiose immensity of God's grace in our lives?

who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building" 1 Corinthians 3:6-9.

Do we recognize the power, the grandiose immensity of God's grace in our lives? When the waves of life rise, do we trust God? Do we seek to have times with God in stillness to recognize His voice? Do we transparently reflect Christ day and night?

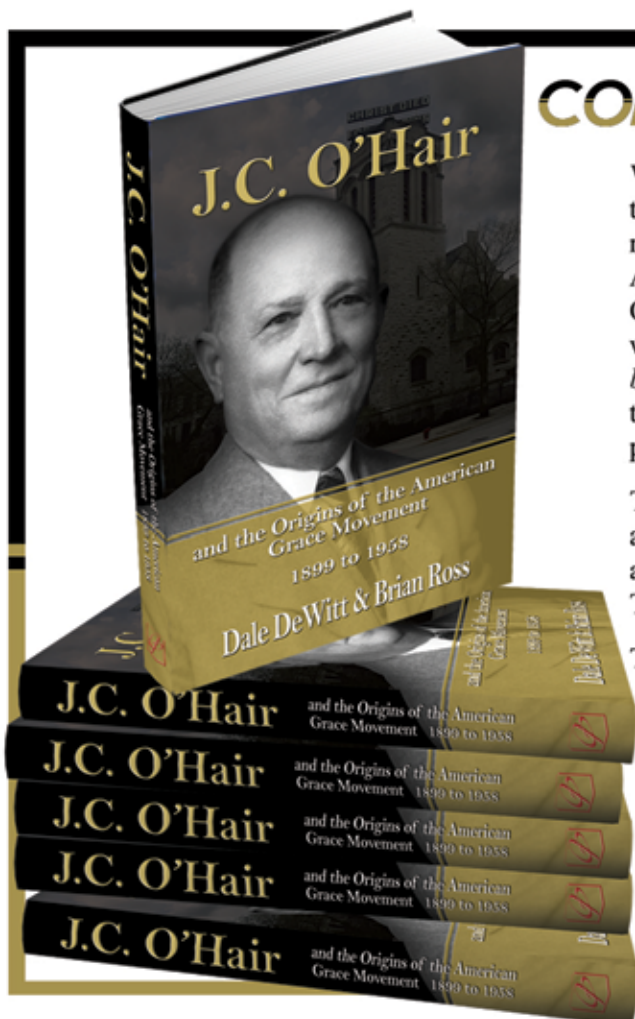
There is Fun in the Son!

For we

Find freedom and

Unchanging love and mercy in the
Name of Jesus

"The seas have lifted up, Lord, the seas have lifted up their voice; the seas have lifted up their pounding waves. Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the Lord on high is mighty. Your statutes, Lord, stand firm; holiness adorns your house for endless days" Psalms 93:3-6. ■



COMING SOON

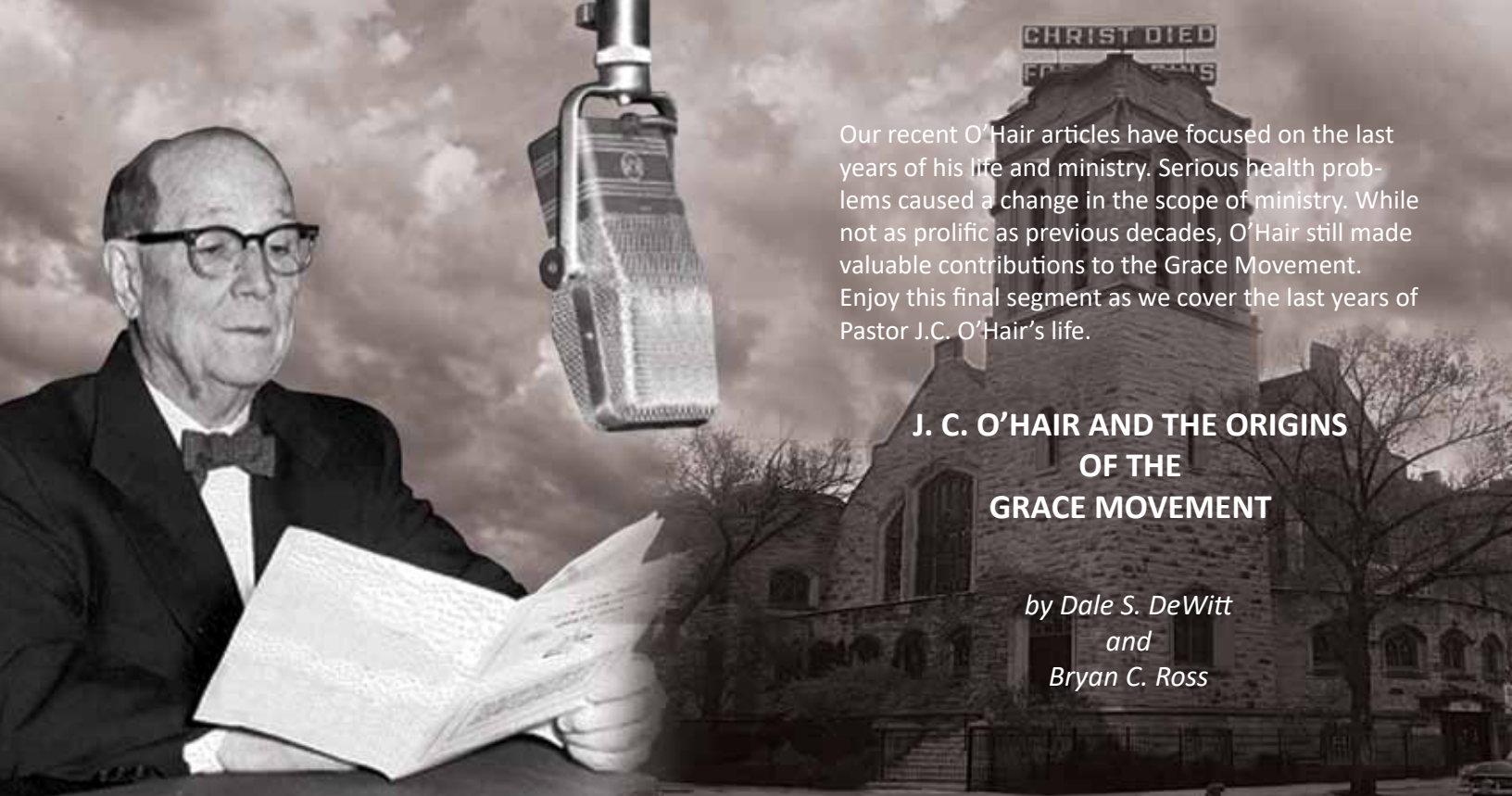
With this issue of TRUTH Magazine, the articles tracing the spiritual and theological journey of J.C. O'Hair have come to a close. We have enjoyed reading them and learning of the early struggles in the formation of the American Grace Movement. As we read of the price that was paid by Mr. O'Hair and others, we can only be reminded of the words of a song that was made popular by Steve Green. Those words are, "*O may all who come behind us find us faithful....*" May we and future generations remain faithful to the message of grace as understood and preached by the Apostle Paul and passed down to us from Mr. J.C. O'Hair.

The articles have been compiled into a single, attractive, hardback book. In addition to all of the material covered in the articles, the book contains an additional chapter and appendices that were too much to include in the TRUTH series.

The book is currently going through the final stages before going to the printer. It will be ready for sale the end of this summer. Look for the opportunity to purchase the book in the next issue of TRUTH.



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Our recent O'Hair articles have focused on the last years of his life and ministry. Serious health problems caused 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 this final segment as we cover the last 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

Pamphlets on Grace

O'Hair also noticed and considered the meaning of John's mention of grace revealed in Christ (1:14-17) as another parallel to Paul. While he acknowledged John's avoidance of the word after chapter one, he saw that Jesus acted in grace throughout John's Gospel. Beyond attention to grace in John, O'Hair produced two booklets on grace in the 1950s. In *The Unsparing God of All Grace* (1953) O'Hair follows the biblical terms, "spare" and "unsparing." Sometimes God does not spare as in his judgment of evil (Rom 1:21-3:8). Prominent in Acts and Paul is God's unwillingness to spare Israel in its rejection of Christ in his earthly mission, then at Pentecost, and finally during Israel's post-Pentecost kingdom opportunity. God's unsparing judgment followed after Acts 12 while God's grace overflowed unsparingly into the Gentile world as a result of Israel's unbelief. He reviews Israel's long history of disobedience with its climactic rejection of Christ in the New Testament era, although he recognized the faith of some Jews. In the era between the tragic national rejection of Messiah's kingdom and Israel's promised salvation, the "parenthesis" dispensation of grace appeared, and the "confirmation ministry" of Jesus continued with Paul until Acts 28.

By "confirmation ministry" O'Hair meant the common apostolic preaching of Christ as fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecies, including those of his

atoning death and resurrection and the available salvation. Prophecies on these subjects are found in Jesus' teaching and Paul's use of "it is written" in his earlier epistles. After Acts 28, however, Paul's "confirmation preaching" ended,²⁰ and the "mystery of God's will" entered the redemptive plan until Israel's promised restoration. Most of this thinking is also found in *The Gospel of Christ*. The point of *The Unsparing God of All Grace* is that God in his grace spares and judges Israel in its faithfulness and unfaithfulness throughout its history; but once Israel ceases to be spared for rejecting its Messiah, God's *grace to the Gentile world is "unsparing."* The title thus represents another statement of the dispensational distinction between prophecy and mystery roughly equivalent to the whole Bible up to Paul as prophecy, and the whole of Paul as mystery, with a further distinction between Paul's pre-Acts 28 teaching and the mystery emphasis *after* Acts 28. The title of another pamphlet, *The Prophesied Kingdom of God and the Un-Prophesied Body of Christ*, exhibits the primary distinction, but not the secondary pre-Acts 28 and post-Acts 28 distinction.

²⁰ J. C. O'Hair, *The Unsparing God of All Grace* (Chicago: J. C. O'Hair, 1953), p. 20. After the abrupt close of Acts there is no "CONFIRMATION" ministry (O'Hair's caps). He also says, "After that sudden close [of Acts] 'IT IS WRITTEN' is not found in the Epistles of Paul, called his 'prison' Epistles." While this is true, it is also true that the Prison and Pastoral Epistles allude to or echo the Old Testament; a few such allusions even describe aspects of the new dispensation of grace like the people *near and far off* of Ephesians 2:17 echoing the language of Isaiah 57:19. Paul's use of the Old Testament is not limited to direct quotes; allusions and echoes also appear.

This somewhat unguarded refinement of dispensational theology's usual distinction between Israel and the church—also seen in the chart of *The Gospel of Christ* discussed previously—might sound to some like a virtual return to “Acts 28” thinking—a view O’Hair rejected in 1936. And yet he again distances himself from the Acts 28 view as he did earlier. On the other hand, to suggest Paul’s later mission, preaching and writing was a “no confirmation” situation, sounds like O’Hair thought Paul suddenly quit using texts from Old Testament prophecies *after Acts 28* in the Prison and Pastoral Epistles. In fact one meets this tension between Acts 28-like remarks and rejection of Acts 28 teaching in several articles and pamphlets all the way to the end of his life. Instead of trying to resolve the matter, we leave it for readers to ponder and perhaps resolve for themselves.

The title of the other 1950s pamphlet on grace exhibits O’Hair’s exuberance over its subject: *The All-Sufficient Much More Overabounding Grace of the God of All Grace* (1955). The pamphlet recognizes the Old Testament’s Hebrew word for grace²¹ and its many thoughts and events of grace. In the New Testament “grace” is almost exclusively found in Paul. The pamphlet begins with Job’s question, “how can a man be righteous with God? (Job 25:4).” The answer is—only if God acts in grace to grant his own righteousness as a gift to unworthy sinners. The pamphlet discusses many aspects of grace, especially in texts which imply or state its newness in the Gentile world mission. These texts speak of grace abounding beyond the abundance of sin (Rom 5:20-21), of “grace upon grace (John 1:17),” and of Christ’s own righteousness of life and atonement now made known and freely offered (“but now,” Rom 3:21-24). Paul says God created the “dispensation of grace” for Gentiles (Eph 3:1-4), that the grace of God has appeared to all men (Titus 2:11), and that “at the present time there is a remnant (of Israel) chosen by grace (Rom 11:5). If salvation is by grace, it is “no longer by works (as the Jews wrongly supposed).”²² Paul also thought of grace as teach-

ing and enabling Christians to be godly doers of good (Titus 2:11-12). The texts on grace gathered by O’Hair also contain several “then” and “now” elements contrasting the newness of the New Testament’s grace with “then,” thus recognizing the new movement of God’s kindness in sending Christ for the undeserving world’s salvation.

These two pamphlets on grace seem aimed at Christians whose thinking overshadowed the larger biblical ideas of grace because of traditional emphasis on law- covenant- or Sabbath-keeping. Or they may have been aimed at Christians who were unable to recognize the newness of the dispensation of grace and the grace of personal salvation.

The Christian Life

It seems fitting to conclude this account of J. C. O’Hair’s thought in the 1950s by considering two pamphlets wherein his emphasis on grace reaches into actual life and who might be the target readers. The booklet *The Christian Life* was first issued in the 1920s and then kept in print for most of his ministry. By about 1950 O’Hair thought he had distributed as many as 25,000 copies. This earlier pamphlet was complemented by the two 1950s pamphlets on the Christian life: *Living the Christian Life* (c 1951) and *What It Means to be a Christian* (c 1952). Why did he issue two pamphlets on what seems to be the same subject and in close sequence with each other? Part of the answer lies in his chosen target groups.

Living the Christian Life seems aimed at North Shore Church Christians or radio listeners needing instruction in puzzling or easily neglected aspects of the Christian life—details like recognizing the normalcy of suffering, engaging the practice of prayer, and attention to good works as the outcome of salvation. Without good works, lawless Christians indulge in what O’Hair calls “wasted grace.” Three great gifts come with salvation—eternal life, righteousness, and the Holy Spirit. O’Hair’s *Living the Christian Life* gives extended treatment to freedom from the Mosaic Law, the Christian’s life of service, holiness in the Christian life, and the normal Christian’s commitment to Bible reading and study. From attentive, thoughtful reading and study of the Bible believers will recognize real dispensational distinctions and thus avoid temptations to legalism, ritualism and miracle quests. These more fully developed themes suggest the pamphlet might

21 The Hebrew noun for “grace,” (*khan*) often translated “favor,” occurs about sixty-five times in the Hebrew Bible; the meanings are about the same as *charis* (grace) in the New Testament.

22 What O’Hair assumes on what Jews believed about salvation by works based on Paul’s comments, for example in Galatians, became in the last decades of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries a point of dispute among New Testament and late Judaism scholars over Judaism’s actual theology of salvation in the second temple era. In this view Judaism was not a religion of works; certain Dead Sea Scrolls, however, do in fact refer to “the works of the law” in a phrase virtually identical to Paul’s in Galatians 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10.

have been aimed at recent converts or new members coming into North Shore Church or other newly formed churches, perhaps fellowships in Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa—the nearer reach of his radio broadcasts. The pamphlet includes people of Reformed or Adventist backgrounds who needed deliverance from the Mosaic law or church law, and instruction in the principle of dispensational changes. O’Hair thought Christians needed freedom from legalism to thrive in their Christian life through the power of grace and the Spirit.²³

The other pamphlet, *What it Means to be a Christian*, makes several rare references to D. L. Moody with a story and comments on Moody’s zeal in personal and public witness. However, the pamphlet seems directly aimed at modernists and liberals in denominational churches. Their thinking reduces Christianity to the Social Gospel and the Christian life to cultural values like social ethics, humanitarianism, literature and art—a type of Christianity-as-culture thinking described by H. R. Niebuhr as embracing no more than “The Christ of Culture.” Paul Allen, O’Hair’s predecessor at North Shore Church confessed in a conference speech at the Chicago Hebrew Mission about 1918 that he had been an artsy, humanist Christian for much of his ministry, but had recently turned to a more biblical faith.²⁴ North Shore Congregational Church must have had many such people when O’Hair arrived in 1923. Culture Christians of this sort at North Shore likely decreased in numbers to nearly none during O’Hair’s pastorate and his forceful Trinitarian evangelistic preaching. However this may be, denominational churches with modernist pastors and congregations were all around him in Chicago. O’Hair was certainly thinking of members of such churches. The pamphlet often mentions modernist Christians and asks them to consider the true biblical gospel, the supernatural Christ of the Bible, and the Christian salvation. It argues for the true Christian life as originating in a relationship of faith with the Bible’s Christ, and for recognition of the Bible’s God as not just the God of creation and culture but the God of the biblical Trinity. The three persons of the Trinity offer grace and salvation for every human need, and impetus and power to good works; anything less is “wasted grace,”²⁴ a de-

scription close in meaning and implications to Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s “cheap grace.”

Conclusion

O’Hair continued to participate in fundamentalism’s revival of pamphleteering—an effective method of questioning the churchly *status quo* just as pamphleteers challenged the political *status quo* in the years before the American Revolution. However, O’Hair’s written output declined in the 1950s from about eighty or more booklets and pamphlets in the 1940s to about twenty-five in the 1950s. Other researchers may discover more items than are identified here; but these numbers seem fairly close to reality. Some possible explanations can be suggested for the decline. O’Hair was seventy-four when the decade began, and in the 1950s most American males were seriously aging at this stage of life. O’Hair’s controversies must have been stressful and may have contributed to aging beyond normal decline. By 1955 he may have begun feeling the early onset of the cancer which hospitalized him in July of 1956 and finally took his life in January 1958.

**“...the Grace Movement
in its first organized
fellowship was formed
in 1944-1945.”**

Among the subjects on which O’Hair chose to write in the 1950s, dispensational themes received the most attention. His 1950s pamphlets and booklets tended toward simple basic distinctions between two terms—for example, church and Israel, Paul and the Twelve, law and grace, prophecy and mystery, and apostolic “confirmation” and “revelation” preaching. However, O’Hair’s double and triple patterns show little interest in biblical numerics in the manner of E. W. Bullinger’s *Number in Scripture* or F. W. Grant’s *Numerical Bible*. A few pamphlets contain further refinements on how O’Hair understood basic biblical terms related to his dispensational theology. Most of the 1950s pamphlets, however, repeat familiar distinctions as does *From Melita to Miletum* on miracles continuing before but ending after Paul’s arrival at Rome (Acts

²³ P. Allen, in *The Jew in History and Prophecy*, pp. 64-67.

²⁴ J. C. O’Hair, *What it Means to be a Christian* (Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, c 1952), p. 27.

28). Sometimes, when two-term contrasts fail to tell the story, a trifold (three-term outline) could be identified as in *The Gospel of Christ's* three columns labeled "confirmation," "confirmation and revelation" and "revelation." O'Hair also continued to discuss outlines of the dispensations. The 1950s writings feature strong interest in baptism issues, partly because of a new attack on his views from fellow fundamentalists after 1950.

While it could not be rightly said that O'Hair intentionally established a look-back way of thinking in the 1950s, such an outlook did become more prominent in the decade. He reflects on his controversies, especially those over baptism, and he thinks back to certain friends, opponents and teachers from whom he had learned; this is how references to D. L. Moody, I. M. Haldeman, Mel Trotter, and others entered this decade's pamphlets. Part of the impetus for look-backs was a new, third stage of the controversies over baptism, in which he felt compelled to answer attacks by M. R. DeHaan and J. R. Rice over baptism and "hyper-dispensationalism"; their attacks forced the baptism issue into prominence once again. The pamphlets discussing these issues thus contain reviews of other ministers, teachers or denominations and their views of baptism. Focus on baptism was not a fetish with O'Hair as it might seem to some critics. Baptism discussions rather involved a serious and deeply felt concern about how the denominations and their spokesmen, backed by historical sentiments and traditions, defended conflicting and non-negotiable baptism ideas by failing to critically examine their biblical roots, contexts, connections, and purposes.

In these respects O'Hair had longed for a new reformation-like movement in which the walls of denominational conflict could begin to come down. By removing existing conflicts over water baptism and recognizing the one non-water baptism of believers into Christ's body by the Holy Spirit, an important new beginning might be made toward unity. It was a bold vision of how to resolve at least one crucial aspect of tragic denominational strife—a vision grounded in the Reformers model of recovering lost biblical truths like justification by faith alone or the post-Reformation recovery of an Israel-centered future millennium.²⁵ For O'Hair the key to recovering lost truth was recognition of Paul's mystery-revealed theology on the formation, nature and task of the church. He viewed

his own mission as an expansion of J. N. Darby's biblical teaching, realizing, however, in his last decade, that Darby's beginning in the further recovery of lost truth had stalled—a recognition he stated openly in the title of one 1950s pamphlet. Instead of a church-wide reformation, those who understood his biblical appeal formed a fellowship of their own when they encountered harsh resistance and rejection by other evangelicals. From these realities, the Grace Movement in its first organized fellowship was formed in 1944-1945. It continues today in its several sub-divisions to advance O'Hair's basic ideas.

"O'Hair had longed for a new reformation-like movement in which the walls of denominational conflict could begin to come down."

John O'Hair's Final Days

Among the pamphlets and booklets of the later 1950s is the last theological piece O'Hair wrote. A reasonable guess is that the end point is represented either by *The "Paulites"* and the *"Thessalonian Baptists,"* *The Gospel of Christ*, or *The Church of Christ and Ten Confused Fundamentalists*. Whichever it was, the last booklet was likely published in the first half of 1956 or early 1957.

On July 17, 1956, O'Hair suddenly became seriously ill. He was rushed to a hospital in St. Charles, Illinois, then to another in Elgin, Illinois, for surgery. After surgery he continued to recuperate at the home of his son-in-law, Dr. Clarence Wyngarden in Wheaton, Illinois. Wyngarden was a physician, the husband of O'Hair's daughter Elizabeth and the college physician at Wheaton College. O'Hair remained in Wyngarden's care for many weeks before he regained sufficient strength to resume preaching and teaching at North Shore Church. But his return to the pulpit was brief; he remained in his resumed pulpit ministry only until early December 1957 and died in January 1958. A funeral service was conducted at North Shore Church on January 17 followed by a memorial service in Wheaton, Illinois, where he is buried. He was Chairman of the Board of Milwaukee Bible Institute/Milwaukee Bible College and of Worldwide Grace Testimony Mission, and was a Board Member of India Mission/International Missions/Christar from about 1930 to 1948. ■

²⁵ W. C. Watson, *Dispensationalism before Darby* (Silverton OR: Lampion Press, 2015), references in passing.



depression

**"...no situation is
hopeless with the Lord."**

by
Stephen Shober

Grace 4 You
Exploring God's Word

Teen Lesson 21 (abridged)

Bible Truth

Introduction

Depression is a condition in which a person feels a dark, heavy cloud of gloom and misery. Short-term moods of sadness and grief are common; however, when such moods dominate a person's life for over one month, then it may be a medical condition. When we become a child of God through faith, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heaven and have a bright future. However, while we live on this earth, we struggle with earthly feelings.

"...however, when such moods dominate a person's life for over one month, then it may be a medical condition."

A depressed Christian generally knows he/she has eternal and heavenly blessings, but feels trapped now by unexplainable moods of despair. Depression is an unwanted, debilitating condition in which nothing brings pleasure in life. Depression is an issue of how a person feels, which can be totally out of touch with what a person believes and knows to be true. That is the dilemma of depression.

Here is how depression feels: "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, here would be not one cheerful face on earth.... To remain as I am is impossible; I must die or be better, it appears to me."

Discussion: Consider the person quoted above (a believer with an important job); his depression robbed him of all joy and he could hardly continue in this life. (Person's name is at the end of the lesson.)

Results and Causes of Depression

Depression occurs in people of all ages, including teens, often resulting in:

- a feeling life has no joy or hope
- sleep disorders
- fatigue and exhaustion
- problems concentrating
- irritation, anger, and hostility
- self loathing and suicidal thoughts
- crying very easily

Christians often think depression is caused by sin. However, Christians can be depressed just like non-Christians and both respond to medical treatment. If

sin were the primary cause, why would a non-Christian respond to medical treatment (since sin issues were not addressed)? The truth is, depression can have various causes:

- Most often, depression is the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain; such an imbalance is no more a sin than having diabetes or acne. Generally, the chemical imbalance can be treated by a health care professional; anyone with depression is encouraged to seek such help. Chemical imbalances are caused by poor nutrition, drug abuse, low blood sugar, allergies, medical conditions (like thyroid or adrenal problems, stress overload)....¹
- Depression can also be caused by our minds (soul), that is, how we think and feel about things. Thus, it is important to learn how to think properly and to avoid negative thoughts and toxic emotions (Teen Lessons 19 & 20). Negative thoughts may include things that are true (sexual abuse, bullying); since such things hurt us so deeply, we have to learn how to break their strong hold on our minds.
- Depression may be caused by a spiritual problem, e.g., if sin has captured a person's mind and the person cannot regain control even after confessing it to God and asking for help.

Biblical Characters

Many biblical characters seem to have suffered from temporary depression: David (Psa. 61:2, 77:2-3, 143:4), Hannah (Lesson 15, 1 Sam. 1:6-19), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), and Paul (2 Cor. 1:8; 7:5-6). King David poured-out his heart and soul to God, saying, *"For the enemy has persecuted my soul; He has crushed my life to the ground; He has made me dwell in darkness ...Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me; My heart within me is distressed. I remember the days of old, I meditate on all Your works ... My soul longs for You like a thirsty land"* (Psa. 143:3-6). The events in David's life, over which he had no control, were severe and had beaten him to the ground. He recalled the good old days and meditated on God's goodness, as many depressed people do today. Yet they suffer. Depression robs a

person of all joy and hope. In God's time (after much prayer, reading the Word, and meditation), David was more content.

Life Applications

Physical Health

Our nutritional status influences the functioning of our brains and minds. A deficiency in certain nutrients can cause depression. A study of civilizations with long, healthy lives shows they ate much like in the Bible, that is, small amounts and primarily whole foods (foods with nothing added or taken out). Unfortunately, altered foods taste good, so as these healthy cultures moved from a simple diet and started eating modern (but altered) foods, the "diseases of civilization" followed, including depression. The Scripture says, *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him"* (1 Cor. 3:16-17a). Your temple requires a well-balanced diet, which will help your body produce the correct chemicals in the right amounts, this is important.

"Many biblical characters seem to have suffered from temporary depression: David..., Hannah..., and Paul...."

Regular exercise and adequate sleep are also essential to combat depression. The Scripture agrees, *"For bodily exercise profits a little...."* (1 Tim. 4:8a). This verse means exercise profits us in this life (for a little time), but it has nothing to do with our eternal life. Exercising for at least 30 minutes four times a week, to the point a good sweat is raised, increases serotonin. Getting adequate sunlight is also helpful (especially in winter).

The Lord has made special provisions for us. Psalms 104:14 says, *"...and vegetation for the service of man...."* which means certain vegetation the Lord has created (often called His medicine) has a special service for humans. There may be times when a person needs special help from God's pharmacy (herbal remedies) or from a pharmaceutical drug.

"Let food be your medicine and medicine your food."
Hippocrates, Greek physician, 460-377 BC.

¹ Considering chemical imbalances, serotonin is a chemical used in the brain's message carrying system (called a neurotransmitter). If there is not enough serotonin in the brain, the messages related to mood do not get transferred adequately; resulting in a depressed mood.

Mental Health

Depression is often related to improper thought patterns. Persistent negative thoughts and deadly emotions (hate, anger, resentment) can set the stage for depression, perhaps by upsetting the chemical balance in the brain. Thoughts and emotions are a complex topic, bringing them under His control is discussed more in the resources noted at the end of this article.

The thing to remember is that depression is a feeling, not what the person believes. You can know and love the Lord, walk in His truth, yet feel like all joy has been lost. You can try your best to not worry, believe you are saved, do all the right things, and go to bed feeling all is well; but, wake up the next morning with a feeling of overwhelming dread. Depression is not the lack of understanding the Lord, His provisions, or His grace. How a person feels may have nothing to do with reality, because feelings can be due to a chemical imbalance.

If a person's body does not produce enough insulin, that person will have diabetes. The person will get sick unless she/he eats correctly and takes needed medicine (regardless if they trust in the Lord or not); this is also how depression works. What makes depression so miserable is the person does not want to feel this way, yet that is the case. Depression is a very lonely and scary place, a place where we Christians have to learn to be of help.

Discussion: Can a person love the Lord, have no hidden sin, have good thought patterns, and still have a headache? (Answer: Of course!) Now consider that the same holds true for depression.

Double Whammy

When a person feels emotionally down (depressed) and another person hurts them even more, that is the double whammy. The common double whammy is telling a depressed person his/her problem is due to sin (this happens too often in writing and from the pulpit). The depressed person is in mental anguish and needs help from another, only to receive nothing but more pain in the form of criticism, put-downs, accusations Instead of adding insult to injury, we Christians are instructed to comfort and encourage those who are suffering.

Spiritual Health—What You Can Do to Help

Here are some things you can do that may be of help to those suffering from depression.

- Comfort them, confirm their worth, tell them you love them, and let them know they can get through this. Please recall, *"Therefore if there is any consolation (encouragement) in Christ, if any comfort of love ... fulfill my joy by being likeminded...."* (Phil. 2:1-2, parenthesis added).
- Suggest reading the Bible together, but do not pick-out verses you think they need. Reading from books like Philippians and Colossians allows the Lord to speak to them through the Word. *"Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation...."* (1 Tim. 4:13).
- Pray with them. Hearing another person pray for you is very encouraging and gives hope.
- Do not say, "be happy" or "all things work together for good." Saying such things is hurtful and like telling a drowning person to swim (if they could, they would). Instead, ask how you can help (Eccl. 4:10).
- Be careful to not accuse the person of sin, wrong behavior, or so on. Just be there with/for them and let them talk. If his/her talk is constantly negative (how he/she has been wronged), subtly change the subject. You may have to be the one to show how to have a positive outlook, to walk the talk.
- If a person is in a presumed hopeless situation (like an abusive relationship with no way out) discuss ways to get professional help or seek a trusted person with experience in this matter.
- Think of a time when you were down, what did you learn that would help others (2 Cor. 1:4-5).

Take 2 Heart

Summary

Depression is a dark, gloomy cloud that dominates a person's life. Depression is a mood, a feeling, of unexplainable sadness (it can exist even if a person believes in a bright, heavenly future). The causes of depression can come from our body, mind, or spirit. Generally, it is caused by some type of chemical imbalance, and it is not a sin to have an imbalance in body chemistry. A depressed person needs the comfort of the Word, mu-

tual prayer, for us to be there, and for us to help the person see no situation is hopeless with the Lord.

Gospel

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6-8).

Encouragement

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:20). Our struggles in life are given perspective when we realize that God can (and does) do things beyond our expectations, even surpassing what we think is possible. For those suffering from depression, may the Lord provide for you in this manner. For those not suffering from depression, may the Lord enable you to be a person who can help in

unknown ways. May the peace of the Lord overwhelm you and provide comfort beyond words.

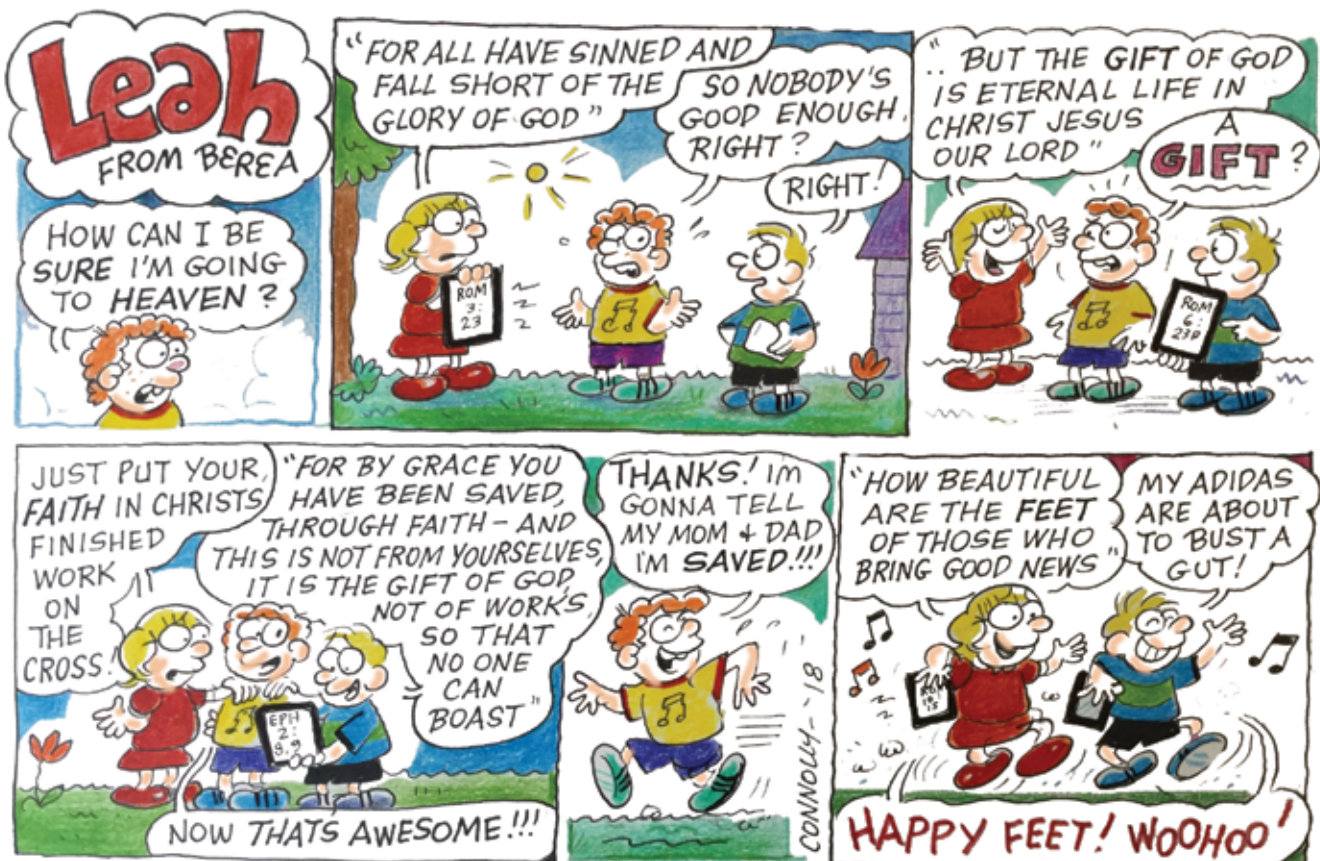
(Answer to quote: Abraham Lincoln)

G4U L21, Depression, as revised for Summer 2018 TRUTH

Grace 4 You Ministries
www.grace4you.com

Stephen Shober, ND, Director

The lesson above can be seen in its entirety on our website, as well as other free Teen Lessons and Adult Studies addressing issues related to depression. In-depth information is in our book, "Biblical Transformation—the Renewed Mind," (eBook on our website or paperback from Amazon). ■





Region 1: Northwest



Sixty-eight women from region 1 convened in the town of Raymond, WA, at Falls Creek Lodge April 13-15 for a retreat. Ladies from four of our region's Grace churches came together and enjoyed time in God's Word, hiking, doing crafts, and visiting during free time. Linda Holton did an excellent job speaking in the main sessions. Other ladies led workshops during breakout times. A great time of growth was experienced by all.

Josh Herman reports that he attended a church planting conference in Michigan this past April. They have a list of recommendations for him to continue his growth in becoming a church planter in the Vancouver, WA, area. Please continue to lift him and his team up in prayer as they begin laying the groundwork for eventually planting a church there. ■

Region 3: West



Bethel Union Church (Akron, CO): It's been a busy spring. We had some great times during our weekly men's breakfasts. We

had 6-9 guys attend from four different churches. Our kids' group, BUCanears, also finished off a great season. Now we're gearing up for VBS and camp season. God is good.

Cope Community Church

(Cope, CO): Hot town, summer in the city, back of my neck get dirt and gritty...Oh, sorry! My '60s soul is popping out. We at Cope church are doing well and gearing up for our Vacation Bible School in June and also our Bible camp in Wyoming with Dennis Moore's church from Laramie, WY. This is always a favorite week for me. Teaching the Bible to kids and teens, good food, old friends, and giving the Spirit a week to work in our lives.

Grace Bible Church of Lakewood (Lakewood, CO): We are praying for an evangelist (one of the gifts yet for this dispensation) to help us expand our ministry (especially to our local community). Pray with us to meet this need.

Harvest Fellowship (Brighton, CO): We are busy with camp and the youth are gearing up to sell fireworks for their annual and only fundraiser. We have about 4-5 interns graduating from high school who will be serving in our church as well as outside these walls. We are starting a college group and a church service for our NextGen

category (age 16-29). At our leadership level, Steve is using the summer to reposition our church in a more logical structure from a ministry point of view and working especially on our "Bringing In" (outreach) of reaching people for Christ which is part of our mission. ■

Region 4: Upper Midwest



It is with great anticipation that we at **Grace Bible Church** (West Allis, WI) await the coming of Alex Tulsie in June as our Intern Pastor for six months. Alex is on his last semester of work in order to graduate from Grace Bible College (soon to be officially Grace Christian University) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Alex is coming to us to learn about the pastoral ministry in a local church. His parents, Cliff and Kerri, live in Omaha, Nebraska, and Cliff pastors Lakeview Bible Church in Carter Lake, Iowa. It was some 35-40 years ago that I led Cliff to the Lord—Cliff also attended Grace Bible College. His son, Alex, will be a blessing to our church body and it will be good to have him on staff if only for a short time.

Spring has fully sprung with all the rain and green vegetation. We are doing some new landscaping around the church and parsonage. The work will probably take much of the summer, but we are excited as we enhance the church property for the Lord. A summer recess for the teachers will be for three months as we prepare for the

fall with classes, small group Bible studies, and specialized ministries. Have a great summer! ■

Region 5: Lower Midwest



Affton Grace Bible Church (St. Louis, MO) began running ads on Bott Radio network and have been receiving visitors, many returning for midweek services.

St. Louis Bible Fellowship (St. Louis, MO) looks forward to a busy summer as we plan special events for our children's ministry and a concert with the Lester Family Singers. We say goodbye to Ty and Rachel Shoemaker as they return to Chicago and the Inner City Impact ministry, but we say hello to Rick and Victoria Wattanapuruda as they assume the children's ministry role.

Faith Bible Church (Olney, IL) is putting the finishing touches on a complete renovation update of their auditorium and is thankful to be debt free and connecting with a few younger families as well! After almost nine years in Olney, Pastor Kaleb and Amber Kemper will be transitioning into the role of Lead Pastor at Eastport Bible Church in New York beginning in August. It's especially difficult to leave such a great group of people at such a positive time, but thankfully there are many good years ahead for Faith Bible Church.

At **Bethesda Church** (Prior Lake, MN) we have been reaching out to our community in several ways. We had our first Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University (FPU) Class this spring during our Wednesday night

AWANA meetings which reached many new people who have never come to our church before as well as parents of AWANA children. We had one new family bring their four children to AWANA while attending the FPU class. We are holding our next FPU class starting July 8, Sundays at 9 am for the nine-week class.

Another outreach we have is "Operation: Good Neighbor" where we get a list of new residents in our zip codes, mailing out a "welcome to the community card" with a personal invite to our church to each one. Then after they get our card, we have our church folk who live near them, visit them and welcome them to our neighborhood and give them a church mug with candy, a pen, and a personal card from me. We have had some come to our church campuses in North Branch and Prior Lake now, so its been wonderful way to connect. We have over 12 different families helping reach out to their neighbors.

We also ask for prayer for our VBS August 13-17. Last year we had over 300 children, so we are planning for more growth. Pray for many souls and families to be

Region 9: Michigan



Rush Creek Bible Church (Byron Center, MI) would appreciate your prayers as we partner with our sister churches and prepare for our annual summer kids program called KidsGames, being held June 18-22! In years past we've been able to use the local intermediate school to host KidsGames which has brought in anywhere from 300-400 Kinder-

garten-6th graders. However, this year the local school system is using the summer to do a number of updates to the building so we don't have access to the school. Thus, we've had to work out how best to host and manage that number of kids in an entirely new setting! By the time you read this, it will have already taken place. Please pray that no matter how the environment for the week turned out, the seeds of the gospel will truly take root in the children in attendance bringing transformation to them and their families.

Frontline Bible Church (Byron Center, MI) is partnering together with over 500 churches in the West Michigan area to bring a Luis Palau Crusade to the city of Grand Rapids. We have been praying for the unsaved all around us for months now, and we can't wait for the main event to take place Sept 8-9 in downtown Grand Rapids. Pray for both consistency in prayer for the unsaved in our circle of influence and the boldness to invite them to join us at the event. May God bring revival to hearts in our city and region through the clear sharing of the gospel, and may Frontline see its passion for the lost grow through it all.

Berean Church (Norton Shores, MI) - On May 12 a group of us headed to Detroit to attend the Home Plate program that is put on by the Detroit Tigers. The weather wasn't all that good, but the messages that the players, such as James McCann, Michael Fulmer, and others, gave were great! The game was just as exciting as the weather cleared and the Tigers went on to win the game. It was a great time of bonding with families and enjoying some fun together.

Mother's Day was celebrated with an all men's impromptu choir

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serenading our ladies with an original song written by Pastor Rob to the tune of “It Is Well.” On Father’s Day, our women returned the favor to sing for our men in the church to another original song as we honored our dads. We put up a large new playground set in the front of our children’s wing for our families to enjoy which is visible from the main road going by the church. Six large trees were harvested to make room on the church property and also to open up the beauty of our large rock wall in front of the church.

We began to plan our VBS program, Time Lab 2018, in Janu-

ary and to see everything come together has been amazing. Our VBS took place from June 18-22 in the evenings. We had over 80 volunteers who worked together put on a fun, energetic, and life-changing Vacation Bible School. We were beyond thrilled to share the story of Jesus Christ by traveling back through time to see the lives of these children change!

We are planning a big community picnic on the church grounds in early September with a bounce house, face painters, and games for all ages. We can’t wait to invite the community to come and learn all about who we are as a church! We

are also looking to possibly open our parking lot for parking and to serve hamburgers and hotdogs to those who are attending football games just down the road at the local high school, as well as taking advantage of our new 15-passenger bus we purchased to get people to and from their cars. There are a lot of exciting opportunities happening and we can’t wait to see how God is going to use us!

NOTE: It has been decided to merge Regions 9 and 10 together as **Region 9: Michigan** ■