

Connection

to inform & inspire

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | GRACE FELLOWSHIP | JUNE 2023

The Value of Acceptance

—Pastor Mark Johnson

Last year I had a difficult conversation with someone who disagreed with a decision that was made by our Elder board. They listened to my explanation and the process by which we came to that particular conclusion. They expressed concerns about the potential outcome as well as their personal disappointment with the decision. I thanked them for their honesty and affirmed their input even if it wasn't the direction we ultimately went.

What happened next surprised me. In the weeks that followed, this person continued to interact with me with cheer and friendship.

They continued to invest in the ministry with enthusiasm. I kept waiting for the other "shoe" to drop. I expected this person to do what so many, in my experience as a person and as a

leader, have done: to distance themselves and eventually leave. Yet that didn't happen.

So, I followed up and inquired, "How are you doing since our conversation?" To this the person replied, "I was hurt and disappointed in the decision, but I understand your position. I don't agree, but I'm okay. We're okay."

The relational value that this person conveyed was the value of acceptance. John Townsend, in his book *People Fuel*, defines acceptance as "the ability to remain connected without judgement." It is assuring a person that

you are for them, even if they fail and even if you disagree. This relational nutrient is vital to healthy and authentic relationships whether the person is a friend, co-worker, or a spouse.



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The Value of Acceptance

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Acceptance is an important principle for the unity of the church. We all have ideas, concerns, desires and convictions about the best way to accomplish the commission of the church: love God, love one another and make God known in the world. When our desires are in conflict or when we fail one another, how do we remain unified? Acceptance.

Paul wrote to the Romans, "accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (15:7). Paul wrote this to address the often hard interactions that were present when believers from different cultural values (ie. Jews and Gentiles) came together to co-labor in the same fellowship. Our differences and failings require the patience and grace that is in accord with the character of Christ toward us.

How have you experienced acceptance? What did it feel like and how were you encouraged by it? I was deeply moved by this person in our fellowship who displayed Christ-like love and acceptance of me. I continue to draw inspiration from this interaction as I endeavor to display Christ's love to others in the same way. May we all.

~Pastor Mark



PRIMERS
TIMERS
SENIOR ADULT MINISTRIES

Skip along the yellow brick road with us as we start our journey to the Prime Timer's Luncheon.

Saturday, June 17th at 11am

\$10 per person

At Grace Fellowship ~ Barrett Hall

Includes a tasty meal along with a program. Interesting details from this iconic musical will be divulged.

Reserve your seat by signing up in the church lobby today!

Questions? Call Jerry at (209) 217-4715



The Fathers Way

~Pastor Jonathan Casas

Father's Day is a wonderful time to celebrate the special bond between dads and their children. It's a meaningful day that reminds us of the love we receive from both our earthly fathers and our heavenly Father.

Fatherhood, as we know, is a rewarding yet challenging journey. It's a role that comes with its share of imperfections and uncertainties. At times, we may feel inadequate or fall short of being the "perfect" father. However, it's important to remember that as men of faith, we were chosen by God to be fathers to our children long before we even were born. Faith plays one of its intended roles in understanding how an imperfect being could be part of a perfect plan.

In our moments of self-doubt, we can find comfort in the knowledge that God, in His infinite wisdom, entrusted us with the remarkable responsibility of fatherhood. This serves as a reminder that there must be a purpose and plan behind it all. He wouldn't have given us this role without equipping us with the necessary aptitude and potential to fulfill it. It can still be very difficult though, with its pitfalls and heartaches.

The Bible offers some guidance for us as fathers. Psalm 103:13 tells us that just as fathers show compassion to their children, God shows compassion to those that fear Him. And Proverbs 22:6 encourages us to teach our kids the right way to live, so they'll continue on that path as they grow older.

Navigating fatherhood in a world filled with numerous distractions and strong temptations can be very difficult as well. But remember the words from Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." It is vital to

keep our eyes straight so we can do our best to become shining examples to our world and to our precious children.

So, as we celebrate Father's Day, let's embrace the incredible gift and responsibility of fatherhood. Let's be present for our kids, love them deeply, and show them compassion. God is with us every step of the way, guiding us in this journey. May our example as fathers inspire and shape the lives of our children and generations to come.

Happy Father's Day to all the dads out there! May your hearts be filled with joy and your journey as fathers be blessed.

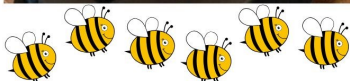
Happy Father's Day



Women's Ministry



"Spring Bling"



Congratulations Graduate 2023!

Congratulations!

Ethan Isaac Krieshok is graduating from Amador High School. He has excelled in the classroom, has loved playing on the basketball and tennis teams, including as basketball team captain and two-time Mother Lode League Champion in boy's singles tennis, and has made many fun and enriching memories with good friends. God has been so good in His guidance, gifting, and provision in Ethan's life. Ethan has spent his entire life at Grace Fellowship Church, growing up and being shepherded by many in this congregation, and for that, both he and Mama are truly grateful! In the Fall, Ethan will begin his college journey at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, majoring in Kinesiology. We are so proud of you, Ethan, not only for all your talent and accomplishments, but even more for your strength of character, integrity, work ethic, loving heart, and commitment to God and His call on your life to be the man of God He created you be! May Jesus be your Faithful Guide, your True Strength, your Solid Anchor, your Fountain of Wisdom, your Priceless Treasure, and your First Desire. We love you! Hold onto God's Word given to you at birth:

"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Ethan Krieshok



RELY

—Duke Foster

So, do we or don't we rely on Him? He gave us a head on our shoulders so what the heck. We can make decisions, determine our course in history. Oh! But wait a minute. Did I happen to rely a little too much on my emotions? How about my feelings at that time? Not to mention all that education and school of hard knocks!

I'm sure you can relate to what I'm saying. As to decisions in life and what you relied on at the time, I'll bet ya someone at some time has asked you, "If you could do it all over again, would you have done it differently?"

I'll bring this line of thinking to an abrupt halt before I head down the wrong trail.

God spoke the universe into existence, raised Jesus from the dead, and "placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church" (Ephesians 1:22), and He has power far beyond any possibility of being measured. Does this help us in our understanding of reliance? When we stop and reflect on the fact that God spoke the universe into existence – what is keeping us from relying on Him? It's not that we don't know this. It's you and me that get in the way. Remember what he has done! His wonders, miracles, judgements. These are all in the Bible and we probably have read about them over and over again. BUT, how has this impacted our lives and more importantly our decisions?

Take a moment to reflect on what He has done for you. Not just the big events but the little things too. When the chips are down, you know we come a running, but how about the everyday routines? What has helped me is constant awareness and conversations with Him.

To rely on the power of God, we must learn to cease trusting in our frail efforts and hand our resources over to the One who can do anything. (Sounds simple doesn't it)? God's power is perfected in our weakness 2 Corinthians 12:9. When we feel up in the air on some major or minor decision, keep this in mind "His strength is made perfect in my weakness". Cry out to Him, lean into Him and hang on like that hand rail you grasp to get up the stairs.



Another critical element in our reliance on Him is prayer. This should be our first step whenever we come up against difficult or critical situations. For me, it's comforting to know that He's got this! Win, lose or draw, He has the best for us.

Romans 8:28 "In all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. AND

Ephesians 3:20 "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us".

From the human standpoint, we definitely have unlimited information at our fingertip's plus the old creative juices that flow when searching out an answer to what ever we're faced with. Reliance on all the information in the world will not guide us without relying on Him and His help.

You've probably heard this before from me but it holds true "Give it to Hem Willy".

Fathering & Our Heavenly Father

~Dana Krieshok, Children's Ministry Director

Last month I reflected on what God has taught me over the years about Himself and how He has refined me through being a mother. Now I wanted to hear from some of the dads as to how God has revealed Himself through fatherhood. So I asked the question: What has God taught you and/or how has He revealed Himself to you through being a father to your children? I was blessed to hear their responses...

"One profound way that God has used my experience as a dad to teach me about my relationship with Him is the love and delight I feel for my children. Our girls, like every other human being, are flawed. They have ups and downs. They make great decisions, but sometimes they choose foolishly. They can be driven and focused in life yet, at times, wander in uncertainty. Yet, at all times, my love for them never fails. I am so proud of them. I rejoice in their rejoicing and grieve with them in their loss. The truth is that if I, a limited and flawed father, can love my children with such wonderful devotion, how much more does my Heavenly Father display a precious and generous love toward me? For this I am truly grateful." -Pastor Mark

"He has taught me the meaning of patience, grace and mercy, of which I have little most times. Through His example, I'm trying to not only disciple and discipline, but also give grace and mercy when it's needed. A lot of the time I feel completely unprepared or equipped to be a father, but I've learned to lean on him more and trust Him to get me through. He has also taught me the need to apologize to my kids when I have said or done something that hurt them. For sure forced me to spend more time in prayer, more time seeking His guidance and wisdom, more time asking for forgiveness when I fail."

-Dale Wiebe

"I did not have a good father growing up, so I wasn't sure how to model being a good dad to my children until they were a little older. It wasn't until I started dating and then married Kim that I was treated like a son for the first time by her dad. Beginning with him,

I learned to love, respect and enjoy a father figure in my life. When I came to saving faith in Yeshua (Jesus), I saw and loved my children in a way I wasn't able to before, because of the Father's love for me. My greatest desire is that our children will see GOD's love for them through me and want their own life-changing relationship with Him." -Sam Aronovsky

"Train up a child in the way he should go - but be sure you go that way yourself."

-Charles Spurgeon

There is no denying the incredible importance and impact of a father, not only to children and the family, but to society as a whole...Dads, God has designed you to train and lead and protect and love your children...you are way more vital to your kids than our culture would have you believe...they need you. They need you to love their mom. They need you to love and submit to God so that they can follow you as you follow your Heavenly Father. You will make mistakes as all parents do, but God's grace is bigger, and our kids learn from our humility, our repentance, and our dependence on God's strength and wisdom. Yours is a high calling in being a dad! They need you to fight the good fight, get back up in God's strength when you fail, and finish the race for the glory of God and for their good. We honor and love you, Dads!

"A good father is one of the most unsung, unpraised, unnoticed, and yet one of the most valuable assets in our society." -Billy Graham

The righteous man walks in his integrity; His children are blessed after him." Proverbs 20:7

Investing in Our Teachers

~ Wendy Chadwick

From the beginning of the Bridge Sponsorship Program, God has been faithful in showing me each next step I should take in the development of this ministry. As I continue to pray for God's guidance, He has recently opened the door to invest in our teachers in a greater way.

About 6 months ago, I came across a news report about a Haitian organization that won a world-wide award: the 2022 UNESCO-Hamden prize for Excellence in Teacher Development. We decided to

reach out for more information and soon Claudel & I were scheduled for a zoom meeting with the Education Director of P4H Global.

As we discussed whether to pursue this opportunity, I learned that there is no national certification program to become a teacher in Haiti. In fact, it's not uncommon for teachers to have no more than a primary school education. Without training, often teachers will simply read a lesson out of the government-mandated curriculum and hope that the students understand enough to do the assignment.

P4H's School Quality Assurance program equips Haitian educators with research-based, student-centered strategies that give them the tools they need to teach well and to transform the culture of their classrooms. The full program is three years long and includes yearly training seminars, follow up evaluations, online support, and ongoing coaching.

With that in mind, I'm excited to report that in April three of P4H's Education Specialists traveled to Carrefour Poy to hold the first training seminar for our teachers! Over three days our school staff learned about educational theories, a variety of learning models, classroom organization and management, collaborative learning strategies, lesson planning, and more.

All this information was presented in a fun and culturally relevant way that has ignited their excitement for teaching. I'm told it was a fun

week of learning and practice. The teachers are already implementing the new methods and strategies they learned!

Teachers play a vital role in this ministry. After all, without them there would be no school! This investment is a way to show our teachers

honor and to dignify the work they do. It will help them become more effective at their jobs, more confident in their abilities, and better equipped to address the needs of their students.

Our stated mission is "to help provide meals, education, and most importantly the Gospel of Christ to the children of Carrefour Poy, Haiti". By investing in our teachers, we are better able to meet those goals thereby giving our students the tools they need to succeed.

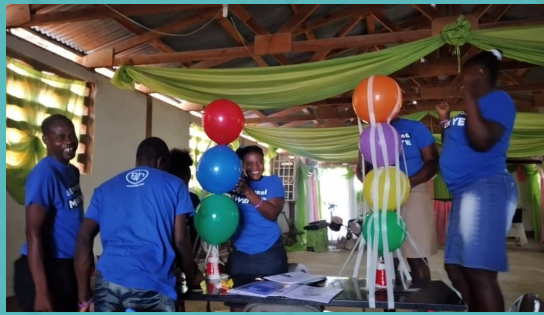
I believe in the power of both the gospel and education to transform Haiti. The gospel is our driving force and highest priority, and education is a practical way to help both students and teachers rise above poverty and make a positive impact on the broken systems in Haiti.

God continues to surprise me with how He uses this little ministry to support the school in Carrefour Poy, and I am humbled by the trust and faithful support of our sponsors. This training was made possible because of generous donations from people who believe in the work we do in Carrefour Poy. It is impossible to convey my gratitude.



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Quotes from Teachers:

My name is Thélot Daccueil, I teach social studies in the 7th, 8th, and 9th grade at l'Ecole Chrétienne de Ruelle Poy. I thank all The Bridge sponsors who agreed to invest in us through this wonderful seminar that took place from Monday 10 to Thursday 13 April 2023. I learned many wonderful strategies and skills that will help me manage my classes better. I believe these trainings are guaranteed to help us work more efficiently. I would like you to continue doing these wonderful activities for teachers. Thank you very much and may God bless you for this wonderful work.

I thank the organizers of these wonderful trainings. I am a teacher in the 3rd year of the fundamental class at l'Ecole Chrétienne de Ruelle Poy. I thank all the team of The Bridge sponsors who worked hard to realize this wonderful seminar from Monday 10 to Thursday 13 April 2023. This training represents a great thing for me as a teacher- it opens my eyes to many wonderful things I did not understand and I commit to use these new methods to share my experience with my class so they also benefit from them. I would like to continue to learn from this wonderful program, so that I can make more knowledge available to my students. Thank you in advance, Alcine Cadet Chériel

This quote is from the founder of P4H Global...

"...Allow me to bring you back to 1804, when Haiti became the first free black republic in the world. Against all odds, our ancestors won the

Haitian Revolution abolishing slavery forever. Today, we are taking part in another Haitian Revolution. This time we are not fighting to break shackles that bind our hands and feet, but rather the shackles that bind our minds, and prohibit us from developing. At the end of our battle, like our ancestors we will be victorious, not with guns and machetes in our hands, but rather with books and pens."

Dr. Berthude Albert, Co-Founder of P4H Global



June 2023 Calendar

- ◇ **June 4 Set up for Creative Arts Camp**
- ◇ **June 5-9 Creative Arts Camp**
- ◇ **June 15-17 Boy Scouts Yard Sale @ Grace**
- ◇ **June 17 Prime Timer's Luncheon**
- ◇ **June 18 Father's Day**

FOR I KNOW THE PLANS
I HAVE FOR YOU,
DECLARES THE LORD,
PLANS FOR WELFARE
AND NOT FOR EVIL,
TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE
AND A HOPE.

jeremiah 29:11



"Walk a little slower, daddy",
said a little child so small.
"I'm following in your footsteps
and I don't want to fall.

Sometimes your steps are very fast,
Sometimes they're hard to see.
So walk a little slower, Daddy,
For you are leading me.

Someday when I'm all grown up,
You're what I want to be;
Then I will have a little child,
Who'll want to follow me.

And I would want to lead just right,
And know that I was true;
So, walk a little slower, Daddy,
For I must follow you."

Happy Anniversary

- 5—Jeff & Cheryl Hanson
- 10—Keith & Rita Kerr
- 10—Robert & Patricia Parkyn
- 15—Steve & Cierra Pera
- 17—Mark & Martha Johnson
- 21—Sean & Artina Parkyn
- 25—Dale & Elizabeth Wiebe
- 26—Mark & Cindy Criswell
- 30—Joel & Stephanie Allen



Happy Birthday

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 1—Cathy Giannini | 15—Jerry Cook |
| 1—Nancy Johnson | 15—Elizabeth Wiebe |
| 4—Debbie King | 20—Jeff Hanson |
| 5—Sally Montagne | 22—Cindy Criswell |
| 6—Carol Heath | |
| 7—Marcy Walters | |
| 8—Karen Faust | |
| 9—Adam Cranfill | |
| 9—Stacey Larson | |
| 13—Jerry Brady | |

