

Connection

to inform & inspire

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | GRACE FELLOWSHIP | FEBRUARY 2024

Give That Others May Live

—Pastor Mark Johnson

This month is our 28th annual missions conference. Since the very first year that Grace Fellowship has been in existence (1996), we have prioritized and celebrated supporting God's work around the world. For 28 years we have pledged a minimum of 10% of our church's income to missions every year. That has resulted in countless lives being transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This year's theme is "Give That Others May Live" based upon the scripture passage in 1 Timothy 6:18 which states, "let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready

to give, willing to share...".

God is the source of everything we need and

name. God took our filthy rags and exchanged them for a treasure that cannot be measured.



In Christ we live a life that truly matters. We no longer look to the securities of this world which are so uncertain, but we look to the source of all things who calls us by name to live in such a way that points others to him. We give that others may live.

enjoy. When we had nothing to offer and stood condemned by our sin, God sent his Son to pay our debt. Though faith in Jesus we are forgiven and offered eternal life in his

Join us as we celebrate what God is doing through Grace to spread the love of God to our world! We all have a role in giving others access to the greatest treasure known to mankind.

Unleashing Gratitude: Breaking Free from Taking Life for Granted

Take a moment and answer this question. Yes, I am addressing you directly. Take a brief pause from reading these words to focus on this:

“Do I take things for granted? If so, what?”

If you followed the prompt, chances are that you made a quick 3-5 second list in your head. My own list went as follows:

1) Family, 2) Time, 3) Whoops! I am drawing a blank on #3.

However, upon some time and reflection additional thoughts surfaced: health, sleep, relationships, anything that stabilizes me, safety and security, education, and technology. Then my thoughts extended to third world countries who probably don't take things for granted: clean water and sanitation, food supply, basic healthcare, personal safety, and the list goes on.... On a side note: my mother always said to eat everything on my plate because people in Third World countries are starving.

Why do we take things for granted? I was having a conversation where someone identified our church building as something we can take for granted. How could this be? Can you imagine the amount of ministry that has gone on inside of it? How many lives were won for the Kingdom? How many hearts have been changed? How many conversations have brought us closer to the Father? How many weddings have been held? How many people have experienced healing in their relationships? How many memorials and funerals have gently aided people in their grief? How much worship has God received from his people? How many prayers have been made on behalf of others? How many children have been touched by the Lord? How much change has there been in our city?

Let's shift our focus from the building to the people within it. Over Pastor Mark's long tenure, he has seen a vast variety of God moving in the lives of the congregation at Grace. What if we could quantify it? Let's do a math problem. Take the breadth and width of what Pastor Mark has seen and experienced in his long ministry at Grace and add the ministry of Dale Barrett while

he was Pastor. Then add the value and impact of all the ministries of all the pastors and ministry leaders. Then multiply that kind of potential across every person of Grace. What do we have? I guess my point is that no one can know the true value of one person's ministry. Even the person themselves can't know the true value of it or its true cost or its reward for they all are far reaching.

God, however, does not take His people or the place where they worship for granted. For He knows every nuance and every cost and impact that takes place in ministry long before our history came to be. He has ordained it. Now, take whatever number you came up with as a result of our math problem and multiply it across every church and every person that God has used today both in the past and in the future. Very quickly we get a sense that God is very deliberate and intentional in His decisions, with specific plans for His people.

Life, and everything we are blessed with, everything we have, should be appreciated and not taken for granted. Developing a mindful awareness of this kind of perspective and actively practicing gratitude can help us cultivate a deeper appreciation for the richness of our lives.

Gratitude helps us ask the questions, Am I enjoying each day God has given me? Am I loving Him? Am I loving others? Am I loving my life? Am I doing something with this life I have been blessed with? Am I following my heart, pursuing my dreams, and finding pleasure in my life? Am I influencing my world? Am I making a difference? Or am I taking all of this for granted?

Think about it.

Pastor Jonathan Casas

Missions Conference 2024

Give That Others May Live

"Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share."

1 Timothy 6:18

- Saturday, February 24: 8:30 AM Men's Breakfast
- Sunday, February 25: 10:30 AM Haiti Focus
Various Speakers
- Sunday, March 3: 10:30 AM
The Hopkins, Missionaries to Uganda
Keith Ancar, Across Nations
Sue Allred, Amador Pregnancy Center



DECEIVED

The first thing most of us think about when we hear or see the word 'deceived' is the devil and Eve in the garden (too bad Adam went along with it). Wouldn't that be great if it all ended there? Unfortunately, we are deceived just about every minute or hour of the day.

As one writer said "the key to understanding spiritual deception is the fact that we often choose what we want to believe rather than what we should believe." Notice the word 'choose'. We'll often choose to disobey God as we seek out pleasure and personal satisfaction which leads us down the path away from Him. Can you picture a person and their addictions? Please don't get me wrong. We have to be careful in finger pointing because there are always three fingers coming back at us when we point.



Simply stated, satan is the master of deception. John 8:44 tells us that he is the father of lies *"You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."*

I ran across the following by an unknown author "The Bible presents a consistent picture of how sin and deception are related. What's revealed is that the way we tend to think of deceit as, well, a bit deceived. Spiritually speaking, deception is

deeper than merely being tricked or lied to. In order to be saved, one does not need any particular level of intelligence, philosophical ability, or wisdom (Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 1:20, 26). In fact, mankind has an unfortunate habit of using increased knowledge to develop more sophisticated ways to sin." The possibility of our attempt to, what I call, *wisdomize* an action or inaction on our part that borders on deception is asking for trouble.

Have you stopped in the middle of thinking or doing something that you know doesn't align with our Father or will give us satisfaction? Then the issue pops in as we ponder what's in our minds and might even rationalize that, oh well, it's really not a big deal and it'll make me happy. Wouldn't it be great if at any moment we questioned the right or wrong of our thoughts or actions that a loud buzzer went off in our brain which tells us 'The devil is back'.

By giving in to our self-satisfaction, satan gains a stronger foothold on us and we dishonor God.

Alright already! So, we get deceived often but we have the tools to stay aligned with Him. The choice is ours. What are those tools? Stay tuned for more on this next month.

In the meantime, when you have the slightest inkling that deception might or might not be occurring, talk immediately to God and the Holy Spirit will reveal the truth.

-Duke Foster



PRIME TIMERS LUNCHEON



PRIME TIMERS



FEATURING:

THE MUSIC OF WWII - BIG BAND & JAZZ

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10TH

SIGN UP TODAY!



WOVEN

Colossians 2:2a

"That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love..."

Women's Ministry is pleased to announce the creation of a new networking group just for the ladies of Grace. The goal of Woven is to ensure all ladies of Grace feel welcome, connected and loved. If you choose to join, you will receive a monthly communication about upcoming activities. There will be opportunities to serve as well as information regarding ways to participate.

You will be receiving an invitation to join Woven. There is no pressure. You can receive the information via email or text. Pam Seago will be the point person for all communication through the group.



Paul's Traveling Seminary

Children's Ministry

The fire's crackling under the moonlight as Silas and Timothy listen to Paul expound on what he said in synagogue that day. As is his custom (Acts 13), Paul has given a brief history of the Israelite people. Then, he explains how Jesus fulfills the prophecies and shows them He's the Messiah, their Savior.

But, for the men he's training around the campfire, while on his missionary journeys, he's going into depth, so they will understand the Truths of the Cross and be able to teach it to their future congregations. Our children, in the fifth and sixth grade, have been "sitting there, too," listening and learning as the Holy Spirit uses Paul's words to explain the doctrines of Salvation. Why study this? Because, Paul will write all this down in his letters, like Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. And, when our children open their Bibles and read all that God wants them to know, it helps to understand the words Paul used.

Soteriology is the study of the depth of the love our Savior has for us, and what it cost Him to pay for our sin, provide forgiveness, and give us new life, both now and forever. So, we listen, ask questions, and begin to appreciate our Lord's sacrifice for us, and we learn some big words.

First we learned, if Jesus is to provide for our salvation, He Himself must be qualified. He'd have to be perfect. He'd have to live His entire life in absolute obedience, without one single sin (Heb 4:15). The big word is IMPECCABLE. He'd also have to be born without a sin nature, which is one of the main reasons for the virgin birth (Rom 5:12).

Another requirement is - does He have the payment, the "money"? For, you can't "pay for" something if you don't have the funds. The payment God required is called THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. We learned that blood represents life (Lev 17:14a). Jesus would

have to pay with His life (John 15:13).

Then, the question arises, how can His perfect life pay for my sinful life, which is under the judgment of spiritual death? Paul will write about this in Romans 5:8 where he tells us that Christ died for us. It's the concept of substitution, and is called SUBSTITUTIONARY SPIRITUAL DEATH. The conclusion? Yes! JESUS is QUALIFIED!

The next big question is - was His sacrifice effective? Because, if it isn't, we're in big trouble! He has the "money, but is He willing to pay it? ATONEMENT is the actual act of making the payment. The Old Testament picture of atonement is the blood of the animal sacrifice being poured out (Lev 17:11). It pointed to the real payment that was to come. Jesus' "blood" is about much more than His physical blood; it's His spiritual death, when all our sins were poured out and eternal condemnation came down on Him. Then came those precious words, "It is finished!" (John 19:30) - atonement has been paid!

Did God the Father accept the payment? Was His Righteousness and Justice satisfied? Yes! That's PROPITIATION! God's perfect character is thoroughly satisfied with Jesus' sacrifice (Rom 3:25)!

Wait a minute! What about us? We are slaves to sin. Are we still stuck? Are we still held captive to our sin natures? The good news is Jesus' payment also buys our release. The door of the Slave Market of Sin is no longer locked up tight. His "blood" has purchased our freedom. This is REDEMPTION! We have been redeemed (Eph 1:7)! JESUS' sacrifice on the cross was EFFECTIVE! He made the payment, God was satisfied, and our freedom from sin has been purchased!

Now we need to know - how is this gift of salvation received? First, there is a legal issue. Picture standing before the court of heaven and God is the Judge.

Accusing us is Satan, who ever brings our sins before the court (Rev 12:10). Next to us stands our defense attorney (1 John 2:1), Jesus Christ, who steps up and declares to the Judge that He Himself paid our debt, which was eternal condemnation. God pounds the gavel and says, "Justified," and we are no longer considered guilty, for all our sins have been removed as far as the east is from the west. This is JUSTIFICATION (Rom 3:24, 8:1)!

How wonderful! But eternal life in heaven requires perfect righteousness and we don't have it, so we still aren't qualified. That's when the "IMPUTATION Ceremony" occurs. Imputation means to put something where it does not belong. On the cross, God officially put our sins on Jesus, and now He's officially putting Jesus' Righteousness on us, (2 Cor 5:21). We now are declared righteous before Him!

The question then arises - For whom has this been done? Jesus smiles and repeats what He told Nicodemus, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life," John 3:16. And, 1 John 2:2 also tells us - it's for everyone, for ATONEMENT is UNLIMITED!

Can you believe there's still more to the doctrines of our salvation? Jesus' resurrection and victory over death secures so many things. First, RECONCILIATION! The sin barrier, which separated us from God, has been removed and our relationship with Him is restored, Rom 5:10.

We also get new life. We're born again, John 3:3. This is REGENERATION.

And, what is the great result of Jesus resurrection? We, too, will be resurrected to ETERNAL LIFE, for death has no victory over us. For, nothing can separate us from the love of God - nothing!

There is one more little thing - you must want it! It takes a contrite heart, one that knows it's own sinfulness and pending judgment. Look up! Jesus' hands are outstretched with this indescribable gift of

Love for you. Believing is faith in Christ. Put your trust in Him, and all this, that He has done for you, will be yours, forever! Acts 16:31

This is where we've been in fifth and sixth grade over the last several weeks, sitting in on Paul's Traveling Seminary, learning the doctrines of Soteriology. Do we expect that our children will remember each of these words and all that they mean? No, but in the future, when they read passages like Romans 3 or Ephesians 1, the words will be familiar. And, who knows? Perhaps God the Holy Spirit will bring all these things to mind, as He has promised!

Our next adventure on the Amazing Grace Race journey - Canonicity and Inspiration.

by Debbie King



Cardo Maximus
One of the roads Paul and
Timothy walked

February 2024

Happy Birthday

1st: Celia Peckinpaugh

3rd: Jared Seago

3rd: Bonnie Edell

3rd: Samuel LaSavio

9th: Julie Doty

10th: Lucia Altermatt

11th: Kaden Cavalli

12th: Jonathan Kuntz

14th: Karen King

16th: Matthew Hooper

20th: Courtney Pera

21st: Randy Hall

22nd: Brandie Wilson

23rd: Duke Foster

24th: Val Laolagi

25th: Janet Humphrey

26th: Lois Johnson

26th: Steve Louwaert

27th: Ashley Cranfill




Happy Anniversary

14th—Michael & Janissa Boesch

14th—Michael & Valerie Cavalli

16th—Jeremy & Wendy Chadwick



For God 
SO LOVED THE WORLD
THAT HE GAVE HIS
ONLY 
BEGOTTEN 
SON SO 
THAT WHOEVER
BELIEVES
IN HIM SHALL
HAVE EVERLASTING
Life 

CONNECTION



FEBRUARY 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 6:30pm Men's Ministry Video Series	2 6:30am Men's Prayer Meeting	3
4 9am All Church Annual Meeting No 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv 3pm Boy Scouts	5 6:00pm Women's Growth & Support Grp	6 9:30am Men's Bible Study 10am Women's Bible Study	7 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	8	9 6:30am Men's Prayer Meeting	10 11:00 am Prime Timer's Luncheon
11 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv 3pm Boy Scouts	12 6:00pm Women's Growth & Support Grp	13 9:30am Men's Bible Study 10am Women's Bible Study	14 Ash Wednesday 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	15 6:30pm Men's Ministry Video Series	16 6:30am Men's Prayer Meeting	17
18 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv 3pm Boy Scouts	19 6:00pm Women's Growth & Support Grp	20 9:30am Men's Bible Study 10am Women's Bible Study	21 10:00am Rest Home Ministry 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	22 6:30pm Men's Ministry Video Series	23 6:30am Men's Prayer Meeting	24 8:30am Men's Breakfast
25 Missions Conference Sunday 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv 3pm Boy Scouts	26 6:00pm Women's Growth & Support Grp	27 9:30am Men's Bible Study 10am Women's Bible Study	28 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	29 6:30pm Men's Ministry Video Series		