

# CONNECTION

*to inform & inspire*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | GRACE FELLOWSHIP | APRIL 2026

## Unfettered Dreams

~Pastor Mark Johnson

As a boy, I often dreamt about what I would be when I grew up. An astronaut? A professional athlete? A guitarist in a famous rock band? But, as I became an adult and the years passed, my dreams began to shrink. Reality, disappointment, hurt, loss and, dare I say it, even skepticism began to limit what I believed was possible for myself. I know I am not alone in this experience.

Yet, when I consider my future, I have too many years ahead to confine my dreams to mere maintenance. I want to grow, to continue to dream, and to make some of those dreams a reality. I have been asking myself this question: "What do I believe is possible for God to accomplish through me?"

In the latter years of his ministry, the Apostle Paul penned a prayer that stunned me when I read it. In Colossians 1:9-14, Paul uses language that reflects a profound faith that God knows *no limits* regarding his power to transform lives. Consider some of these adjectives: "We continue to ask God to fill you...through ALL the wisdom that the Spirit gives...to please him in EVERY way...bearing fruit

in EVERY good work...being strengthened with ALL power...that you may have GREAT endurance... giving JOYFUL thanks." This is a prayer that seems to know no boundaries for believers.

Similarly, Paul prays for the Ephesians, that they would be "FILLED to the measure of ALL the fullness of God" (Eph 3:19). And... lest his readers think that there can be no greater experience, Paul adds, "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably MORE than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work with in us..." (v.20).

Paul is not limited to superlative prayers on behalf of his readers only. He also believes in these things for himself as he strives toward goals that in some ways feel unrealistic. For example, Paul writes, "Christ is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching EVERYONE with ALL wisdom, so that we may present everyone FULLY mature in Christ. To this end I STRENUOUSLY contend with ALL the energy Christ so POWERFULLY works in me" (Col 1:28-29).



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Can I just put all the above statements in context? He wrote both Ephesians and Colossians while under house arrest in Rome. Mic drop. Paul is IN CHAINS! But clearly, he is *unfettered* in what he believes God can accomplish.

Again, I ask myself: "What do I BELIEVE is possible for God to accomplish through me?" Lord, I DO believe...help my unbelief. Grow my faith to understand just what is possible when I trust in you. Help me to understand your desire to fill me and use me in ways that are beyond what I ask or even imagine. I want to dare greatly and love deeply. "To you be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen!" (Eph 3:21).

~Pastor Mark Johnson

HE IS NOT HERE  
He has risen  
JUST AS HE SAID

*Matthew 28:6*

### **Refinancing Our Property**

The term with our current lender, CDF Capital, is coming up for renewal later this spring. The board of Elders have been working closely with the finance board and a specially appointed refinance team to attempt to secure a loan with better terms. We have some promising alternatives! Please be praying for God's guidance and wisdom through this process.

We will report back as things progress!



## The Sweetest Music Comes from Broken Keys

~Pastor Jonathan Casas



There's a story about Miles Davis that has always stuck with me.

He was playing the trumpet in a crowded room with his band - tight, focused, and in the groove. In the middle of

an instrumental section, the bass player hit a note... and it was *wrong*. Not just slightly off, *really* wrong. The kind of note that makes a room tense up instantly. You can almost feel everyone thinking, "*Uh oh... that shouldn't have happened...*"

For a brief moment, everything hung in the air.

And then Miles did something remarkable.

He paused, just for a second, and instead of correcting it, ignoring it, or reacting in frustration, he leaned in. He began to play something that *fit* that wrong note... something that complemented it. What could've been an embarrassing mistake became something beautiful. Something intentional. Something right. That moment wasn't ruined; it was redeemed.

So many times in life, we experience our own "wrong notes." Moments that feel off. Situations that clash. Words we wish we could take back. Things done to us, or things we've done to others, that leave a lingering discomfort in the room of our hearts. And if we're honest, our first instinct is often fear... or frustration... or even shame. But what if those moments aren't the end of the song? What if they're an invitation?

An invitation to pause?  
To breathe?  
To respond differently?

Sometimes those moments are there to teach us. Sometimes they call us to forgive.

Sometimes they invite us to extend grace, to others or to ourselves. Those dissonant notes, the ones that don't seem to belong, may actually be the very places where something new, and beautiful, can begin.

I'm often reminded of King David, being described as "a man after God's own heart."

And yet... David's life included failure, deep failure. He sinned. He hurt others. He made choices that carried real consequences. So, what made his heart so special? What gives? Is ours any different? It wasn't perfection that mirrored God's heart, it was David's response of knowing where his heart was, and his choosing to turn back to God that made the difference. He allowed himself to be broken over his sin. He acknowledged it fully, felt the weight of it, and brought it honestly before God. That posture of being humble, repentant, and open, is deeply aligned with God's own heart.

Being quick to repent, willing to be corrected, open to God's voice and surrendering even when it hurts, is what makes our hearts look like God's. Not perfection... but a heart that stays tender toward God, and turning toward Him; especially when we feel ashamed or don't think we deserve His love.

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Where is your heart today? Not your performance. Not your track record. Not your worst moment. Your heart?

Is it still open? Still willing? Still turning toward God?

Because here's the truth: God sees beyond our broken notes. He sees the posture of the heart. And, He is the Great Musician, and we are His broken keys. In His hands, even the most dissonant moments can be reshaped into something meaningful... something redemptive... something beautiful. But we must choose to turn toward Him.

Maybe today you're sitting in a moment that feels "off."

Something didn't go the way it should have.

Something feels unresolved.  
Something still echoes in your mind.

Take a page from Miles.

Pause. Acknowledge it. And then, instead of letting it define the rest of the song... begin to move forward with grace.

Because the sweetest music isn't made from perfect notes.

It's made when broken ones are redeemed.



## The Interfaith Food Bank

The Interfaith Foodbank is the only source of groceries for the “food-insecure” people in Amador County. In 1996, with a Community Development Block Grant from the Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency (ATCAA), original director Karen Giacalone and 16 local churches formed the Interfaith Council of Amador County. Once established, the Council turned to local grocers, businesses, and individuals to initiate the opening of the Interfaith Food Bank on April 6, 1998— completely *debt-free*.

Today we are thriving and have developed that humble thought into a great source of assistance for the seniors, families and school children. Thanks to an extremely generous community, our local partner supermarkets, and the Emergency Food Assistance Program, we have been able to supply an average of 85 families

daily with enough food for three to five days. In 2025 we served over 2,450 households for a whopping total of 35,318 distributions, that equals 6,183 individuals, 85,584 individual distributions. We served 1,315,000 pounds of food.

We are always looking for volunteers— just a few hours a week makes a huge difference in someone’s life.

Sincerely,

Beth Stanton,  
CEO & Executive Director  
Interfaith Food Bank & Thrift Store of Amador County  
605 Broadway, Jackson, CA 95642  
Food Bank 209-267-9006  
Thrift Store 209-267-5970  
Cell 209-608-2205  
Tax ID #68-0363653  
The Interfaith Council of Amdor is a 501c3 charitable organization

*Our hours:*

**Monday 12p-4p**  
**Tuesday 11a-3p**  
**Wednesday 11a-3p**  
**Thursday 2p-6p**  
**Fri, Sat, & Sun CLOSED**

12181 Airport Rd., Jackson CA 95642 | (209) 267 - 9006

## Food Donations

**Accepted**  
**Monday – Thursday**  
**8 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**  
***Not on Fridays.***





# PUT ON LOVE



GRACE WOMEN'S MINISTRY  
GATHERING

**SATURDAY, MAY 2, 2026**  
**9:00 AM TO 12:00 PM**

DOORS OPEN AT 8:30 AM  
CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST PROVIDED  
SPRING BLING IS BACK!

Grace Fellowship: 8040 S. State Hwy 49, Jackson, CA 95642



WOMEN'S MINISTRY



Ladies are you looking for an opportunity to connect with other ladies?

Join us

**Thursdays at 3:00 for Tea**

At Martha Johnson's home  
30 S. Pioneer Circle Jackson

Come any time between 3 and 5pm

*Sharing our Lives and Faith  
over a cup of Tea*

## LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE FOR SINGLE LADIES OF ALL AGES



**CALLING SINGLE WOMEN OF ALL AGES.**

**PLEASE JOIN US ON THE FIRST TUESDAY OF THE MONTH AT 6PM FOR DINNER AT NANCY JOHNSON'S HOUSE**

**WE WILL HAVE DINNER, BIBLE STUDY, FELLOWSHIP, AND FUN!**

**81 PIONEER CIRCLE JACKSON**



# *Grace Fellowship Church*



## *Easter Week Services*

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**Good Friday 7pm Service**

**6am Sunrise Service**

(Followed by a Continental Breakfast)

**10:30am Worship Service**

8040 S. State Hwy 49 Jackson, CA

[graceofamador.org](http://graceofamador.org)

209-223-1971

# April 2025



- 4/04:** Ray & Barbara Brusatori
- 4/12:** Thomas & Sharon Driver
- 4/10:** Russ & JoAnn Richard
- 4/21:** Marcus & Karyn Perry
- 4/24:** Harry & Barbara Richardson

**Our Vision:**  
*"We are seeking to become a community of generous lovers of God and others as wholehearted disciples of Jesus."*



- 4/04:** Alexa Kerr
- 4/05:** Etienne Pieterse
- 4/06:** Janet Foster
- 4/10:** Anthony Parkyn
- 4/12:** Kim Conley
- 4/12:** Mike Stromberg
- 4/17:** Eleanor Haight
- 4/19:** Gilbert Gonsolis
- 4/20:** Jake Pera
- 4/22:** Rick Haight
- 4/24:** William Gough
- 4/25:** Noah Lewis-Young
- 4/27:** Caleb Ancar
- 4/30:** Caitlyn Cranfill



# April 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Easter Sunday</b> <b>5</b> 6am Sunrise Srv Continental Breakfast 10:30 Worship Srv	<b>6</b> 6:00pm Women's Study & Support Grp 6pm Finance Board Meeting <b>Office Closed</b>	<b>7</b> 9:30am Men's Bible Study 9:30am Ladies Bible Study 6-8pm Living Your Best Life	<b>1</b> 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	<b>2</b> 7:00am Men's Bible Study @ Duke Foster's 3-5pm Tea @ Martha's	<b>3</b> 7am Men's Prayer Meeting <b>7pm Good Friday Service</b>	<b>4</b> 9:00am Grace Outdoors Hike Calaveras Big Trees
<b>12</b> 9am Adult Equipping Hour 10:30 Worship Srv	<b>13</b> 6:00pm Women's Study & Support Grp	<b>14</b> 9:30am Men's Bible Study 9:30am Ladies Bible Study 7-8pm Newcomers Dessert	<b>15</b> 10am Rest Home Ministry 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	<b>16</b> 7:00am Men's Bible Study @ Duke Foster's 3-5pm Tea @ Martha's	<b>17</b> 7am Men's Prayer Meeting	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b> 9am Adult Equipping Hour 10:30 Worship Srv	<b>20</b> 6:00pm Women's Study & Support Grp	<b>21</b> 9:30am Men's Bible Study	<b>22</b> 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	<b>23</b> 7:00am Men's Bible Study @ Duke Foster's	<b>24</b> 7am Men's Prayer Meeting RCP Women's Retreat-----	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> 9am Adult Equipping Hour 10:30 Worship Srv	<b>27</b> 6:00pm Women's Study & Support Grp	<b>28</b> 9:30am Men's Bible Study	<b>29</b> 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	<b>30</b> 7:00am Men's Bible Study @ Duke Foster's 3-5pm Tea @ Martha's		