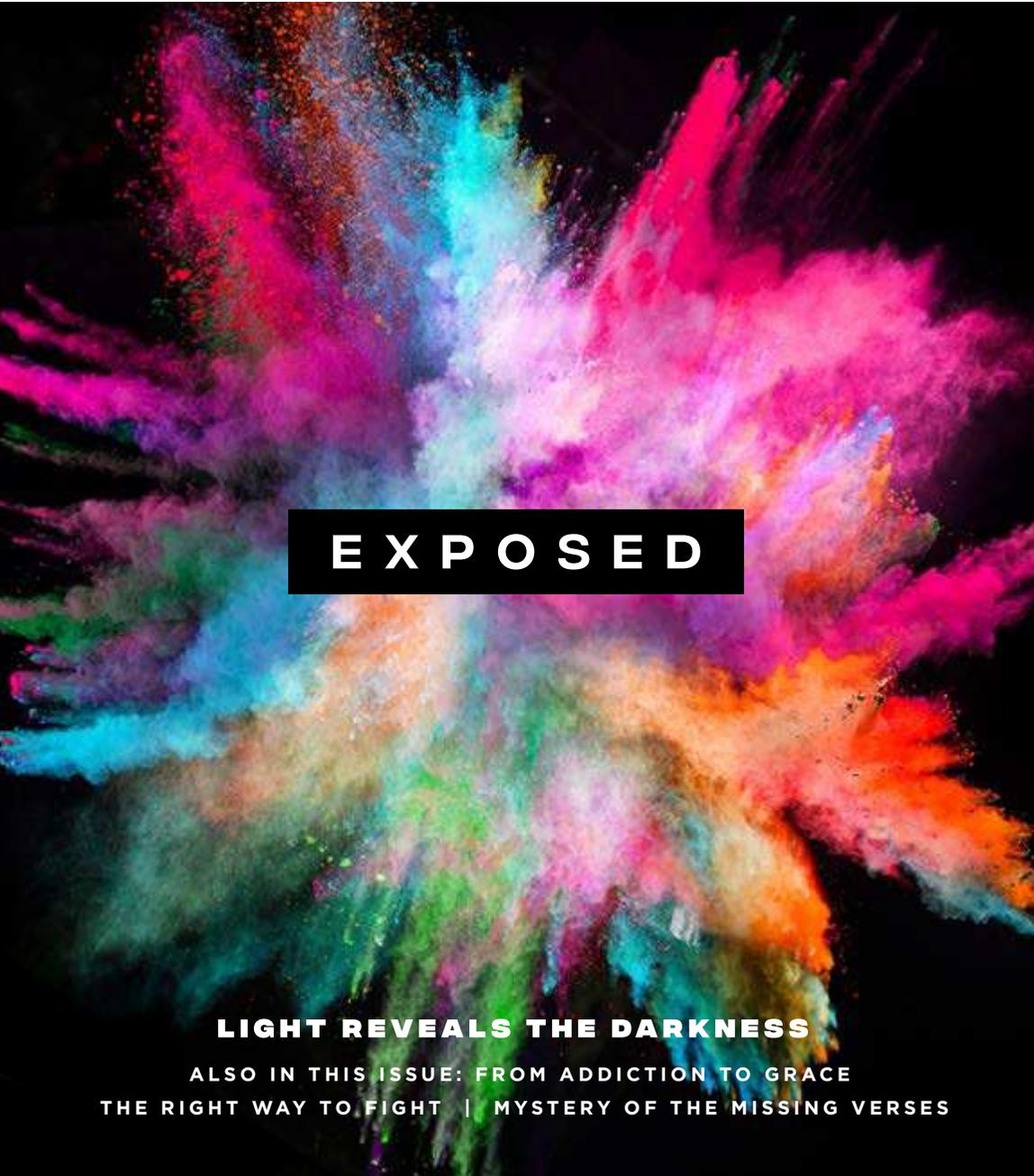


SUMMER 2017

# GRACE MAGAZINE



EXPOSED

**LIGHT REVEALS THE DARKNESS**

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: FROM ADDICTION TO GRACE  
THE RIGHT WAY TO FIGHT | MYSTERY OF THE MISSING VERSES





*Pastor Mike on stage  
at our very first event  
at the new Grace  
Church building:  
last fall's Advance  
Commitment  
Night for the  
ONE Initiative.*

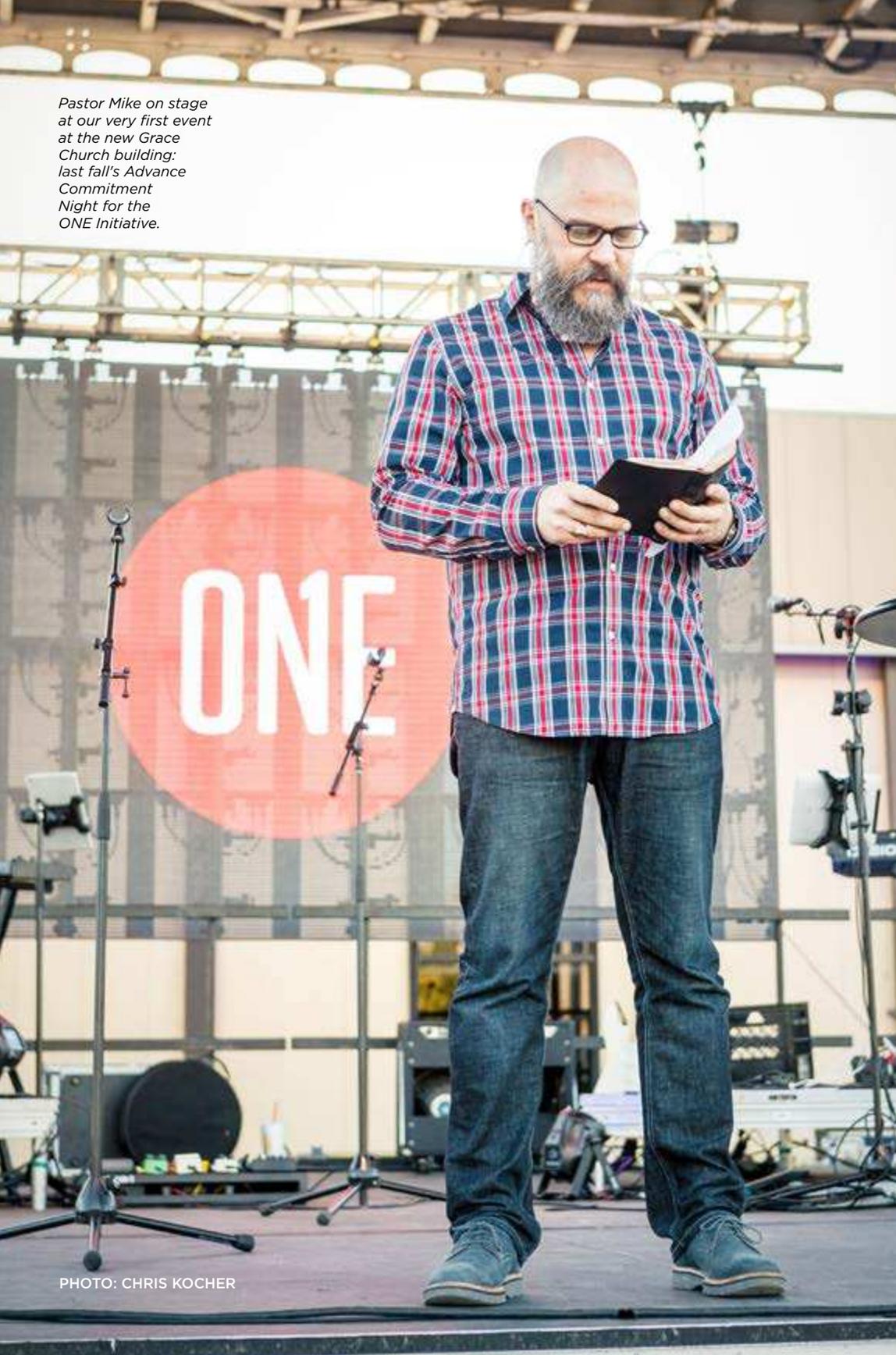


PHOTO: CHRIS KOCHER

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## A LETTER FROM PASTOR MIKE

**T**his summer, we continue our walk through the gospel of John in the series *Exposed: Light Reveals the Darkness*. This section of scripture focuses on Jesus as the Light of the World, come to illuminate the darkness of the human heart. He spares no one in these chapters — neither the sinner nor the supposed saints. He exposes, He corrects, He gives grace, and He restores what is true.

There is good, and there is evil, and there is truth. That's a decreasingly popular idea in our time, as people redefine the fitness of everything they do by how they feel about it. Over time, our minds and our culture can distort the truth to shape to our perception.

You can see it even in small ways. We'll tell ourselves we're just having a "cup" of coffee, but our Venti from Starbucks is actually 3.75 cups. We "don't watch much" TV in a week, but our Netflix history reveals we've made it through six seasons (that's six years!) of our favorite show in a month. We'll check "moderately active" on the doctor's form, but our Fitbit shows we take fewer steps than a sleepy toddler.

In *Exposed*, we'll see that Jesus doesn't mind confronting us — especially those who claim to follow God — with our false beliefs and ideas. We'll see that as He reveals who He is, it reveals who we are. I'm excited about teaching it!

I also wanted to take the opportunity to tell you that we just passed the six-month point of ONE — we're 25% through our two-year initiative. Last November, many of you made commitments to the one number we'd give over the next 24 months toward the vision of Grace.

Kelly and I did this, more than doubling our giving each year toward the mission Grace has of helping people take their next steps toward Christ. I cannot tell you the small ways in which God has poured out His blessing on us over and over in all areas because of that. We didn't do it because we expected it or even wanted it, but because we wanted to be obedient. He just delights in showing mercy and giving good gifts to His children, and we've seen His love for us in tangible ways.

We've also seen ONE make a lot of things possible at Grace in the last six months — hiring three new staff members and preparing to hire two more, supporting the ministry of our Winter Garden, Lake Nona, and Clermont campuses, and, of course, opening the Grace Church facility to the community. Your generosity supports everything you see on the pages of this magazine — from Bible teaching to inspiring life change. If you're new to Grace this year and want to learn more about ONE, check out [onegracefamily.com](http://onegracefamily.com).

His and yours for the mission,



## LOCATIONS

### GRACE CLERMONT

Meets at Grassy Lake Elementary School  
1100 Fosgate Drive, Minneola  
Service Sundays at 10a  
Pastor Caleb Brasher

### GRACE LAKE NONA

Meets at Eagle Creek Elementary  
10025 Eagle Creek Sanctuary Blvd, Orlando  
Service Sundays at 5p  
Pastor Dr. Ben Bailie

### GRACE EDGEWOOD

Serves Edgewood Children's Ranch  
1451 Edgewood Ranch Road, Orlando  
Service Sundays at 3p

### GRACE ORLANDO

2300 Pembroke Drive, Orlando  
Services Sundays at 9:15, 10:45, & 5:30p  
Senior Pastor Mike Adkins

### GRACE OVIEDO

Meets at Indian Trails Middle School  
415 Tuskawilla Road, Winter Springs  
Services Sundays at 9:15 & 10:45a  
Pastor Bobby Raulerson

### GRACE WINTER GARDEN

Meets at Whispering Oak Elementary  
15300 Stoneybrook W, Winter Garden  
Services Sundays at 10a

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# GRACE LIFE

NOTES & NEWS FROM OUR ONE CHURCH IN MANY COMMUNITIES



1

## OVIEDO LOVES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

In May, Grace Oviedo presented \$6,700 to serve students at its campus location, Indian Trails Middle School (Pastor Bobby Raulerson and Administrative Director Karen Thomas are shown above with Principal Lesley Sileo). The donation will help supply the food pantry, support financially struggling parents and families with students at the school, and help provide opportunities for students to participate in activities on campus. This money comes from the portion of Grace's budget we set aside each year

for serving our community, especially the schools in which we gather on Sundays.

The campus has also recently partnered with The Pregnancy Center of Oviedo; a baby bottle campaign netted \$1,002 for the Center, and Girls' Night Out collected diapers, toiletries, and car seats for the women it serves when Director Kristen Barnett came to speak to their monthly gathering. The Center offers pregnancy tests, counseling, ultrasounds, and support for women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy.



2

**LAKE NONA MOVES TO NEW LOCATION SUNDAY AUGUST 20TH**

Starting on Fall Kickoff Sunday, August 20, Grace Lake Nona will move from its current location and time at 5p to a new home and a morning service: 10a on Sunday mornings at Laureate Park Elementary School. This neighborhood is the epicenter of the Lake Nona area.

"This move places us in the heart of the neighborhood we want to serve," says Pastor Ben Bailie. "The traditional time slot on Sunday mornings is much more conducive for young families, the primary demographic of the campus. We are excited that it will also open up time for community for our people after the service."



3

**CLERMONT COMES TOGETHER IN PRAYER AND COMMUNITY**

In June, Clermont hosted a night to pray for the city and the campus. "We are striving to be a community devoted to prayer and the ministry of the word, as it says in Acts 6:4," says Pastor Caleb Brasher. "It was one of the best things we've ever done." Grace Clermont also hosted a picnic at Waterfront Park on Summer Kickoff Sunday, with people inside and outside the church joining the event. "Grace Clermont feels like family," says Pastor Caleb. "The people here continue to inspire me. One of the joys I get as a pastor is watching people give so much for the church and the growth of the kingdom; it is humbling and challenging to see the way people are stepping up and jumping in for the church in this neighborhood."

WRITER: CLAYTON ADKINS  
PHOTOGRAPHERS: DAN MACDONALD, STAN SUTRICH



*Ricky and his wife, Leah, recently relocated to the downtown Winter Garden area to fully engage in the neighborhood of the campus.*

5

**WINTER GARDEN CAMPUS  
WELCOMES RICKY ORTIZ AS  
WORSHIP DIRECTOR**

Ricky Ortiz joins our staff this summer as the Worship Director for the Winter Garden Campus. "I have always held a strong love for the local church and a desire to serve the church in whatever way I can," Ricky says. "Music was always one of those avenues where I could serve, and I have been doing so since I was around 14 years old. In college, I felt the call to pursue full-time worship ministry."

Ricky plays piano, drums, bass, and guitar, and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music degree from Nyack College. To deepen his theological knowledge and preparation for ministry, he attended seminary and recently graduated from Reformed Theological Seminary with his Master of Biblical Studies degree.

Ricky has been a musician since the age of 10. He taught himself to play piano by ear, then eventually studied music formally. Prior to college, he toured with several professional bands, for many of them as the music director. He has shared the stage with Grammy Award-winning artists including Phil Wickham, Switchfoot, and Cece Winans.

Ricky will work alongside Grace's team of worship pastors and directors to help people take their next step toward Christ in worship. "We are thrilled to be joining the Grace Winter Garden family!" says Ricky. "Thanks to all who have already given us such a warm welcome. Our prayer is to see the gospel of Christ transform the city of Winter Garden for God's glory. We look forward to being a part of what God has in store for this community!"

6

### GRACE EDGEWOOD SERVES THE RANCH STAFF AS WELL AS STUDENTS

Our Edgewood campus is a ministry of Grace's pastors and staff — creating a church community on Sunday afternoons that serves the students, their families, and the staff at this live-in school for kids and teens in crisis. We've seen many students follow Christ, and their families, too, with siblings and parents baptized alongside their kids at Grace.

Houseparents at the Ranch are especially grateful, as living with and supervising students under their care does not allow them to be a part of another local church. Here's part of a letter we received from Jeremiah Gordon, who has been a boys' houseparent at Edgewood for more than 15 years. He and his wife Erika are moving to the northwest to work at a retreat center.

*We haven't been able to participate in our local church, and this was an area we struggled with and yet had to accept as a sacrifice as part of the ministry here. When Grace began coming to Edgewood for Sunday afternoon services, we were so excited. Sundays became something to look forward to. Pastors Mike Price and Chad Wyatt asked if I would run slides for the Edgewood service, and I eagerly accepted*

*that task. I felt in a small way I was for once taking part in church. I also began to do both video and audio production. Man, I looked forward to Sunday afternoons at 3pm. Then I started to serve at least once or twice a month at the Winter Garden campus to help with sound and video. My wife, Erika, stepped up so I could serve. I would take two boys from our house with me to lighten her load, and she would bring the rest of our house to church for the 10a service.*

*Seeing the dedication of people at the campus was inspiring, and Erika and I and our kids fell in love with the Winter Garden campus and its people. Our ranchers loved coming out, too, and the two boys I would bring quickly volunteered to help in any way they could. For the first time in 15 years, we were able to be a part of a church family — to build relationships, encourage others, and give back to the local church. It changed our lives.*

*We felt so blessed to be a part of Grace. Being at Edgewood on Sundays and helping with production at Winter Garden gave me the opportunity to work with the many people who lead all the campuses. We love you guys and will miss all the people we have met who make up the body of Grace.*



*Jeremiah and Erika Gordon with their kids, Shannon, Heidi, and Forest.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW SERIES**

Join us for one-night conversations around modern spiritual questions.

**July 23:** Is there more than one way to God?

**August 6:** How could a good God allow evil and suffering? Each night starts at 7p in Room 100 at Grace Church. Register: [discovergrace.com/cwv](http://discovergrace.com/cwv)



**FALL KICKOFF AUGUST 20**

Join us as we kick off fall with our annual day of Grace family fun and a new teaching series! Sunday August 20th.



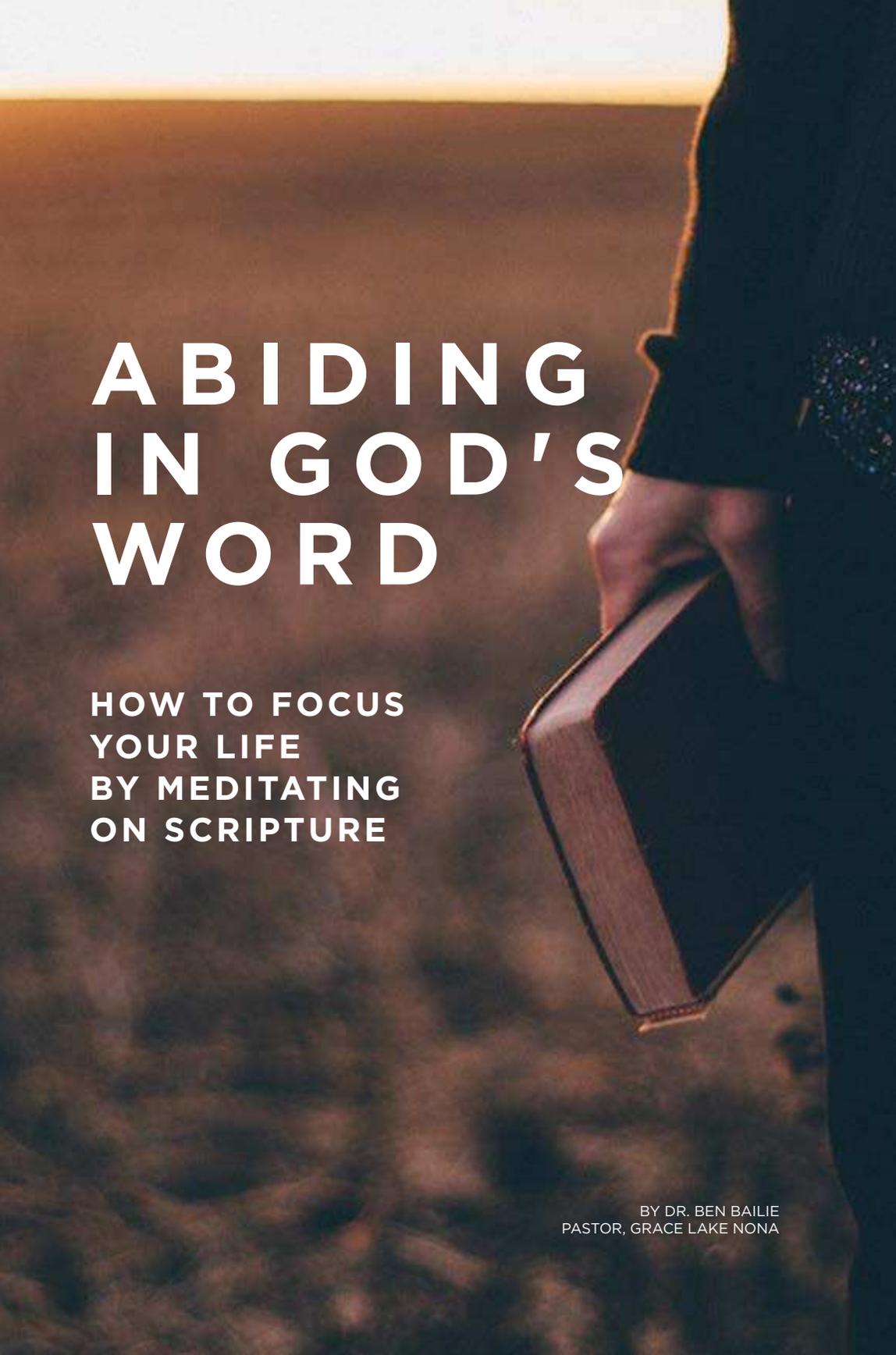
**NIGHT OF WORSHIP IN SEPTEMBER**

Our all-campus Night of Worship is one of the best gatherings of the year, and this will be the first in our own very own space. Coming in September to Grace Church — watch for it!



**COME ON IN.**

**Grace Communities are small groups of people that meet regularly in homes around the city for study, friendship, and a meal. They're one of the best ways we make Grace feel like family. If you're interested in joining or hosting a Grace Community, stop by the Info Center today or email [connect@discovergrace.com](mailto:connect@discovergrace.com).**

A person is shown from the side, holding a Bible. The background is a sunset or sunrise over a body of water, with a warm, golden glow. The person's hand and part of their dark clothing are visible on the right side of the frame.

# ABIDING IN GOD'S WORD

HOW TO FOCUS  
YOUR LIFE  
BY MEDITATING  
ON SCRIPTURE

BY DR. BEN BAILIE  
PASTOR, GRACE LAKE NONA

**I** *f you abide in my word, you are my true disciple...whoever obeys my word will never see death* (John 8:31, 51).

One of the central themes of the Gospel of John is the power of Jesus' word. His word is His living presence and provides His life-sustaining power. His word is life, and His true disciples live in it and off of it. Jesus says His true disciples abide in His word and have His word abide in them.

But what does that mean? How can we have the word abide in us?

One of the best ways to have Christ's word abide in you is through the spiritual discipline of meditation.

Christian meditation is different from other forms of meditation that are popular today; Jesus is not advocating a baptized form of transcendental meditation or a new-age mindfulness.

In Christian meditation, we are not seeking to empty our minds, but to fill them. There is an object: His word. We fill our minds with it, feast upon it, drink it in, chew it, digest it, dwell upon it. We are not passive, but active. It is a way of reading the Bible that is seeking to make the truth clear in our minds so that it can delight our hearts and change our lives.

True meditation is more than reading the Bible for information — it is reading for formation. It is reading in such a way that we experience His

presence and hear His voice. It is reading with the mind, but also with the heart. In meditation, we seek to think deeply about a text, to turn it over and over in our minds, to probe it for significance, and then seek and pray to be transformed by it.

The classic passage on meditating on God's word is Psalm 1, where we are encouraged to delight in His word by meditating on it "day and night." The psalmist compares the person who meditates on the word to a tree that is planted by streams of water, fruitful in every season, always growing, never withering. Meditating on Christ's word makes us like a strong, fruitful, stable tree. Think about that image; meditation is like the life of a tree in that:

**1. It takes time** — in terms of minutes and of years. You simply can't meditate deeply on the word if you only give it five minutes. Deep roots and large trees don't grow overnight.

**2. It will lead to depth and stability.** Meditating on the word is what will make your mind strong and stable, and your emotions alive yet anchored.

**3. It is about tasting.** The tree is to drink deeply from the stream. It is to seek the water, absorb it, delight in it, and be refreshed by it. True meditation helps you see and sense the beauty of Christ, His word, and His ways.



**IN CHRISTIAN MEDITATION, WE ARE NOT SEEKING TO EMPTY OUR MINDS, BUT TO FILL THEM. THERE IS AN OBJECT: HIS WORD.**

**4. The result is fruit.** It produces spiritual fruit for every season. It results in more love for God and His people, more joy in His word and His work, peace in the midst of troubles, patience in the midst of aggravations, kindness in the face of aggression, goodness in the midst of evil, gentleness in the midst of hostility, faithfulness in a world of duplicity, and self-control in a world that seems out of control. These are fruits the Spirit produces, and the primary way He produces these fruits is through meditating on Christ's word.

**So How Can You Do It?**

The best way to begin is by channeling your inner spiritual four-year-old and ask lots of questions. Begin by reading a passage of Scripture, then pick out a verse or two to focus on, and then ask as many who, what, when, where, why, how questions as you can think of.

On the following page, we provide some ideas to get you started.

## HOW TO ABIDE IN AND MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD.

Once you read scripture, here are some thoughts on what to do next.

### **Ask What...Why...How.**

What truth is this passage teaching?

Why is God teaching us this?

How would my life be different if I really believed this?

### **Write It Down.**

What strikes you about this passage?

What would you ask the author if he was sitting next to you?

What do you think God is asking you to do through this text?

### **Brainstorm Responses.**

What does this text tell me about God or Christ that should lead me to praise Him?

What does this text tell me about my fallen condition that I need to confess?

What does this text tell me about how I should live, rejoice, trust, or change?

### **Go Deeper.**

What do these words actually mean?

What is the author's original purpose in this passage?

What light do other Scripture passages shed on this text?

Where and how does it fit into the total biblical revelation?

What truths does it teach about God and about man in relation to God? How are these truths related to the saving work of Christ, and what light does the gospel of Christ throw upon them?

What experiences do these truths delineate, or explain, or seek to create or cure? For what practical purpose do they stand in the Scripture?

How do they apply to myself and others in a current situation? To what present human condition do they speak, and what are they telling us to believe and do? How would I be different if these truths were genuine realities in my life?

# THE RIGHT WAY TO FIGHT



## THOUGHTS ON GODLY CONFRONTATION

BY BOBBY RAULERSON  
PASTOR, GRACE OVIEDO

**F**ew people enjoy controversy or conflict; most go out of the way to avoid uncomfortable situations altogether.

Certainly, following Jesus does not mean seeking enjoyment from disagreement, yet taking the gospel seriously ensures confrontation arises. To understand how to handle these inevitable moments, look to Jesus.

In John's gospel, Jesus reveals himself as the light of the world. In the incarnation, God takes on human flesh and exposes the sinfulness of humanity through Christ. This process was not enjoyable for most, and resulted in tension-filled confrontations.

Imagine waking up from a night's sleep, exposed to bright lights immediately. It would be painful. In the same way, the Jewish leaders who continually engaged with Jesus did not appreciate his direct approach, his willingness to shine his light into the dark corners of their hearts, questioning their beliefs.

Despite what our culture thinks, the Jewish leaders would not have described Jesus as "meek and mild." That said, his deliberate tactics and inclination to confront were out of love. Biblical confrontation should not be viewed as an obstacle to avoid, but an opportunity to love. This means that the emotive love depicted by Hollywood must be put to the side, and a selfless, sacrificial love embraced.

To sincerely confront both Christians and non-Christians from love, it's imperative that Christ's followers comprehend what it will require. These moments are opportunities to imitate Jesus, and must be enveloped in prayer. If loving confrontation cannot happen in the church, it won't happen as Christians engage with the world.

Gospel-centered conflict provides us with the opportunity to grow in several ways.

#### **WE LEARN TO DENY SELF.**

Given the choice, most would rather experience comfort than deny self. Central to the gospel lies an understanding that those who profess Christ realize their sinfulness and need for a savior. To repent and believe is to fundamentally deny one's self. The believer must reject the thought that he or she can fix what is broken. The gospel proclaims that despite our attempts at righteousness, no one can merit salvation. If this is clear, why is it that so many live in such a way that conflict is naturally avoided?

Husbands and wives avoid necessary conversations for the sake of side-stepping discomfort. Patterns of sin are left unearthed because uprooting entrenched transgressions would bury a friendship in distress. How is this the case? If the primary basis of the Christian life is a freedom to admit that those following Jesus are sinners in need of a savior, why is it that many

give into the temptation to live as if that didn't apply? An unwillingness to challenge others or be challenged personally mutes the gospel and masks pride. Jesus calls us to a life of self-denial, not self-comfort.

**WE CAN ILLUMINATE THE GOSPEL.**

The gospel is illumined in relationships when men and women are keen to trust the transformational power of Jesus' good news. In a way, an unwillingness to confront out of love, or address a hidden problem, reveals a lack of faith in just how big the gospel truly is. Whatever one might

where intimacy blooms. By addressing disagreements and sin biblically, it actually forges a deeper intimacy than personal comfort could achieve. It is in the risk that one reaps the largest reward.

Husbands and wives can work through heart-wrenching moments in marriage with the potential to see greater intimacy achieved on the other side of struggle. Even in the face of hostility, a believer can improve his or her relationship with a non-believing friend through embracing gospel humility. No matter where conflict is found, handling it in love gives all in-

**IF LOVING CONFRONTATION CANNOT HAPPEN  
IN THE CHURCH, THEY WON'T HAPPEN AS  
CHRISTIANS ENGAGE WITH THE WORLD.**

be facing, the gospel is big enough to handle anything thrown in its direction. Trusting the power of Christ while in the midst of conflict, testifies to the life-altering nature of his good news. May believers nurse a grudge or hide behind fear of rejection. Rather, may boldness in the gospel lovingly lead to confrontations that are for God's glory.

**WE CAN PURSUE INTIMACY.**

Healthy conflict within any relationship can cultivate an environment

involved an opportunity to take another step toward Christ.

**WE LEARN TO EMBRACE  
PROVIDENCE.**

Failing to address conflict calls into question a Christian's view of providence. If God is truly upholding and governing all things, then what are we to say about conflict? Through his providence, God is permitting these opportunities for his glory and his children's good.

Too often, the church utilizes the world's methods and hope for heaven's results. It simply won't happen. Muting the gospel will never produce blessing. It is never wise to second-guess God's providence and hope for the best. Avoiding any type of discomfort will never result in genuine community. After all, if the requirement for entry into the church is admitting brokenness, pretending like everything will work itself out stunts Christian growth and ruins relationships.

In love, Jesus was not afraid to take a stand when appropriate. He did not pursue comfort over an opportunity to help others face spiritual reality. Whether he was confronting a religious leader in a straight-forward manner, or gracefully dealing with the woman at the well, Jesus was always driven by love. Conflict can drive those involved apart or close together, depending on whether or not the good news of Christ is applied.

## 6 VERSES TO HELP YOU THINK THROUGH CONFLICTS

### **Philippians 2:3-4**

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

### **Luke 17:3-4**

Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him.

### **Hebrews 12:14-15**

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.

### **Proverbs 12:18**

There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

### **James 1:19-20**

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

### **Matthew 18:15**

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

# WHO ARE THE TRUE PEOPLE OF GOD?



BY CALEB BRASHER  
PASTOR, GRACE CLERMONT



**P**rivilege. It's a loaded word in our times, shrouded with overtones of social and ethnic implications. But this issue didn't begin in 21<sup>st</sup> century America; we see it back in the 1<sup>st</sup> century as well, right in the midst of Jesus' ministry.

In John 7, Jesus confronts some people who are following him, and not just following him around — John writes that these people “believed in [Jesus]” in verse 31. But as we've seen throughout the book of John so far,

there are large groups of people who have false belief. They are following Jesus for what they think he can do for them, not for who Jesus is.

In this chapter, Jesus tells these people how they can be set free: they must “abide in [his] word” (v. 31-32). But their response reveals privilege in their hearts: “We are the offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’” (v. 33)?

So the people heard what Jesus said but almost scoffed at his claim, “How could we, the fine people of the Abrahamic lineage and Jewish heritage possibly be enslaved to anyone?” Their ethnic pride actually kept them from being able to hear the words of Christ.

Jesus goes to confront them again, and they respond with the same refrain, “Abraham is our father” (v. 39). Then, Jesus gets really personal and reveals something about the true

Jesus is setting up a truth that is unpacked multiple times in the rest of the New Testament, particularly by Paul: that the children of Abraham (and therefore the children of God) are not made children by being *born*, but by being *born again*.

Paul says this most clearly and simply in his letter to the church in Galatia: “Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7). Paul also says this in Romans 4, “That is why [salvation]

**IF YOU BELIEVE IN JESUS, THEN WE ARE A PART OF THE  
SAME FAMILY. THAT SHOULD SEASON HOW WE TALK TO  
ONE ANOTHER. HOW WE PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER. HOW  
WE FEEL ABOUT ONE ANOTHER.**

nature of Abraham’s children. He responded, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are doing what your father did” (vv. 39-41).

So Jesus is telling them something that doesn’t really make sense: he says that they are not actually descended from Abraham, even though they could pull out their lineage and prove it. He then says that they have another father, and he defines who their true father is in verse 44, “You are of your father the devil.” Things just got real.

depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring — not only to the adherents of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all” (Romans 4:16).

So Jesus and Paul both turn these traditional worldviews upside down. Many of the Jewish people looked down their noses at people of other ethnicities and races. Their pride clouded their ability to see the heart of the very gospel that God was bringing to the world and that he even promised Abraham in Genesis! This wasn’t new; it had always been there

from the beginning. God promised Abraham back in the first book of the bible: "I have made you the father of many nations" (Romans 4:17, quoting Genesis 17:5).

God's mission has always been to create a global family that consists of varying tribes, tongues, ethnicities, cultures, and races. It is in this beautiful mosaic of humanity that his church is built, and we get a taste of it in Revelation:

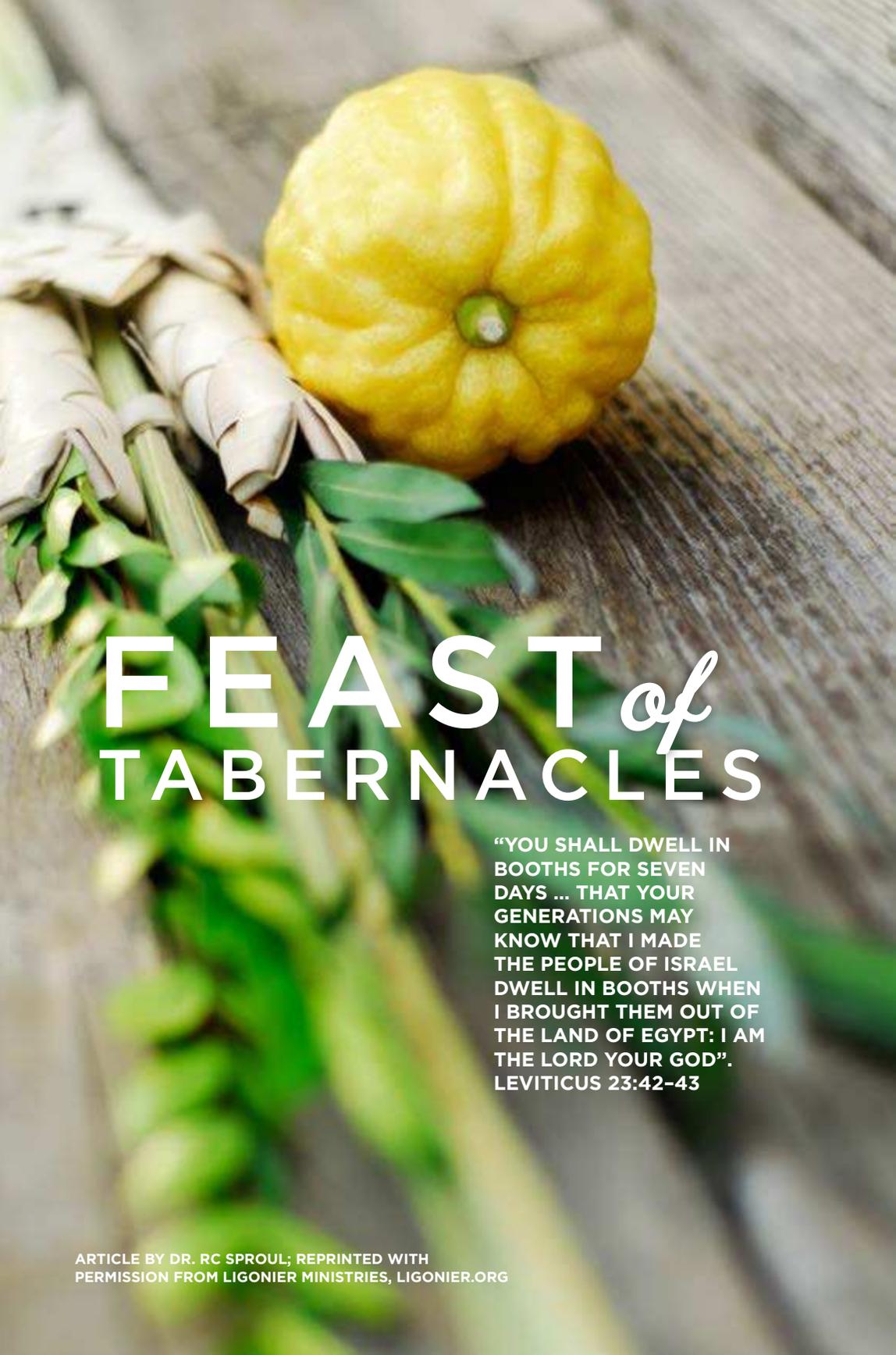
"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Revelation 7:9-10)

The implications of this are almost limitless, but one in particular for our church is simply this: if we believe in

Jesus, then we are a part of the same family. That should season how we talk to one another. How we pray for one another. How we feel about one another. There are no classes within this family.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring" (Galatians 3:28-29). God has a global and diverse church. He is creating a beautiful mosaic of people that are becoming brothers and sisters. There is no room for privilege. So no matter your earthly heritage, if you are a Christian then you are a part of a much bigger lineage, tracing back all the way to Genesis.

Welcome to your family. The children of Abraham. The Church.

A photograph of a yellow pumpkin and a bundle of green herbs, likely representing the Feast of Tabernacles. The pumpkin is round and ribbed, with a green stem. The herbs are green and appear to be a type of grass or reed. They are resting on a dark, textured wooden surface. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the pumpkin and the wood.

# FEAST *of* TABERNACLES

“YOU SHALL DWELL IN  
BOOTHES FOR SEVEN  
DAYS ... THAT YOUR  
GENERATIONS MAY  
KNOW THAT I MADE  
THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL  
DWELL IN BOOTHES WHEN  
I BROUGHT THEM OUT OF  
THE LAND OF EGYPT: I AM  
THE LORD YOUR GOD”.  
LEVITICUS 23:42-43

Few of the feasts that were a part of old covenant worship were as joyful as the Feast of Booths. Also known as the Feast of Tabernacles or by its Hebrew name, Sukkot, this celebration was the last of the fall festivals and was held at the end of the agricultural year when the grapes and olives were harvested in Israel. This was a time to thank God for all of the preceding year's provision and to pray for a good rainy season, which lasted from October through March.

lemon, and a lulav is a branch of palm with two myrtle branches bound to one side of it and three willow branches to the other. Furthermore, in keeping with Sukkot's purpose to remember the wilderness journey, later Israelites added a water-pouring ceremony to recall those occasions when the Lord gave Israel water in the desert (Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20: 1-13). The officiating priest would draw water from the pool of Siloam and pour it into the basin near the altar in the temple.

**AT THE START OF OUR SCRIPTURE PASSAGE  
IN THIS SERIES, JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES FIND  
THEMSELVES AT THE START OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES,  
ALSO CALLED THE FEAST OF BOOTHS. SO, WHAT IS IT?**

Primarily, however, Sukkot was designed to remember the wilderness journey from Egypt to Canaan, when God made the people live in booths (Lev. 23:33-43). During the time of the feast, each Israelite family was supposed to construct a booth, or sukkah, and live in it for a week (vv. 42-43). These booths were small, temporary shelters with thatched roofs of palm fronds and other plants, and according to one interpretation of verse 41, they were decorated with different kinds of fruit that grew in Palestine. Later generations obeyed the command to rejoice with fruit and foliage (v. 40) by having men carry an etrog, or citron, and a lulav in joyful processions. A citron is a citrus fruit native to the Middle East that looks something like a large

Moses often warned the Israelites not to forget the God who redeemed them from slavery once they were fat and happy in the Promised Land (Deut. 8).

This reveals another purpose of Sukkot. It could be tempting for the Israelites to sit in their houses after a great harvest and say, "Look at what we did and how we have profited." Living in booths for a week reminded them that their success in Canaan was wholly on account of the Lord's grace. He had brought them to the good land and could just as easily take them out of it. A tangible reminder of His provision in the wilderness during Sukkot showed the Israelites they must always trust Him alone for their supply.



ARTICLE: KELLY ADKINS  
PHOTOS: JAY AND KELLIE CANALES

# HOLDING ON TO FAITH

**A HARD PAST, A BRUSH WITH DEATH, AND A CHRONIC ILLNESS LED THIS SINGLE MOM TO CHRIST AT GRACE.**

**K**risten Mead had been in a church only three times in her life before her boyfriend invited her to Grace Orlando in the summer of 2014.

"My mom was spiritual, but she had abandoned the church and told me to find my own way," Kristen says.

"I always viewed church as a judgmental, hypocritical place full of people who would never accept a girl who had lived the life I had. But Grace was the most warm and welcoming place I had ever been."

From Kristen's early teens to early 20s, her life had been marked by desperation. "I had wonderful parents who would give me anything, but I had felt

empty," she says. "For years I searched for anything that would fill that 'void' I had felt for so long. Spiritually, I had a basic faith in God, but I did not know Him or understand Him at all."

And the little faith she had was shaken to the core in one horrible weekend. "My brother died when I was 15, and that same weekend, I attempted suicide," Kristen says. "I felt like I lost any faith that I had, because I didn't understand why God would take him and not me." From that point, her life was defined by bad choices and hopelessness.

Then at age 25, Kristen says that God gave her a beautiful and amazing gift: her son, Liam.

"Becoming a mother changed me completely," she says. "But I didn't know then that the Holy Spirit is how we truly grow into the person God meant for us to become and that God bringing Liam into my life was Him working to start my beautiful journey towards my relationship with Christ."

When Kristen came to Grace, grace-KIDS was the first thing that started to help change her life. "I brought Liam, and he loved it," she says. "But more importantly, he started learning

place and made sense that day," she says. "I had been trying to control my whole life by being a perfectionist. Suddenly I saw that I didn't need acceptance from anyone, because I had been accepted by Christ. And all of the things that had happened to me suddenly became ways that God had brought me to Himself."

She started to grow in her faith. "As long as I stay focused on Christ and what He has done for me, it takes that weight off your shoulders of

**I SAW THAT I DIDN'T NEED ACCEPTANCE FROM ANYONE, BECAUSE I HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY CHRIST. ALL OF THE THINGS THAT HAD HAPPENED TO ME SUDDENLY BECAME WAYS THAT GOD HAD BROUGHT ME TO HIMSELF.**

that even though he doesn't have a good relationship with his earthly father, he has a father in God, and he'll be safe with him.

"I cannot tell you the anxiety that took away from me, being a single mom," Kristen says. "I was always fearful and wanted to control everything in Liam's life. The second I realized I could give Liam to God and know he would be cared for was so freeing."

On Easter Sunday 2015, after coming and listening and experiencing God's love in community at Grace for months, Kristen gave her life to Christ. "It all became real — everything I've gone through just fell into

people-pleasing, anxiety about doing things wrong," she says. "I handle things in a totally different way with God's help, and I share that with others, too."

She has also learned to pray. "The *How to Talk to God* message series was unbelievable," Kristen says. "I knew nothing about it — talking to God was scary, and I felt silly. But Pastor Mike had a way of explaining it where it made sense and felt like a normal part of life. Now I pray with Liam, and he will talk to God on his own, too. That's incredible to me."

Kristen still faces big challenges, and one of her biggest is living with

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## GRACE STORY

Rheumatoid Arthritis. "I was actually diagnosed about the time I came to Grace, and it was a big part of me coming to seek God," she says. "My hands and my hips have been most severely affected; I often struggle to walk or write. I couldn't give Liam a bath, which was devastating. You grieve the loss of part of yourself. But now I face my struggles with God. Since finding Christ at Grace two years ago, I have finally felt whole."

Kristen spent her first months at Grace writing prayer requests about her disease each week during communion. "If I couldn't be healed, I at least wanted to move toward understanding," she says. "And God has answered. A few months ago, I found myself in that 'low' place anyone who suffers from chronic pain or disease will know. This time was very different, though. Before, I wouldn't know where to turn for comfort or love or

advice without judgment. But this time, I had Christ in my life, and knew exactly how to get myself out of this funk I was in. My entire body had been aching and in shooting pain for weeks. I hadn't slept in what felt like months. I was lying on the bathroom floor one night, when I realized that for weeks, I hadn't done what I knew would relieve this stress.

"I immediately began praying, asking God to tell me that the pain would not always be this bad and to show me a sign that He was really with me," she remembers. "I was hysterical, but at that very moment, I felt this unexplainable peace come over me. Then for the first time in my life, I felt like God was really speaking to me. I know God gave me this to help people somehow, and I'll find it. I'm willing to suffer to help others find the faith that I have found. Pain is not the end."



*Kristen hangs out with her son Liam in The Foyer at Grace Church. She and Liam have both chosen to follow Christ since coming to Grace in 2014.*



# THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING VERSES

THE SCIENCE OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM  
AND THE RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE

BY DR. BEN BAILIE  
PASTOR, GRACE LAKE NONA

As we walk through John, you will notice that John 7:53-8:11 is either in parenthesis or brackets in your Bible. Why?

The story of the woman caught in adultery is one of the most famous and beloved stories in the Bible. Truly one of the most dramatic displays of the radical grace of God and compassion of Christ we have, but it is also one of the most difficult passages for translators and textual critics to know what to do with.

### **Textual critics? Who are they?**

Textual critics are academics who engage in textual criticism. Textual criticism is the science that gathers and compares all known copies of an ancient document in an effort to trace its compositional history, highlighting variations in an attempt to recover, as much as possible, the original form of a document. Think one-part expert in ancient languages, one-part archaeologist, and one-part Bible scholar. A text-critic is kind of like an Indiana Jones who only focuses on ancient manuscripts.

### **Why are they needed?**

The need for textual criticism of the New Testament is due to three key realities:

1. The original manuscripts written by John, Paul, Matthew, Luke, etc. were written on papyrus and have perished.
2. For over 1,400 years the New Testament was copied by hand by professional scribes and many errors crept in, both intentional (with a view of “correcting” the text) and unintentional.

3. There are over 5,500 Greek manuscripts of the whole New Testament, over 2,300 copies of each of the gospels, as well as thousands of copies of ancient translations, quotations from church fathers, and no two manuscripts are exactly alike.

As New Testament scholar Gordon Fee says, “The task of textual criticism is to sift through all this material, carefully collating (comparing) each MS (manuscript) with all the others, in order to detect the errors and changes in the text, and thus to decide which variant reading at any given point is more likely to be the original.”

### **Key Points to Remember**

Sometimes when Christians first hear about textual criticism it shakes their faith and confidence in the trustworthiness of the Bible. Then academics like Bart Ehrman make a name — and a small fortune — for themselves by trying to shock uninformed evangelicals with the reality that we don’t have any of the “original” copies of the New Testament. Thus the acids of skepticism are poured upon the foundation of our faith; but here are a few key things to keep in mind:

1. **When Christians are challenged by skeptics by the fact that we don’t actually have any of the “original” New Testament books, they are right. But they are also being very disingenuous.** We don’t have the “original” of any ancient document ever written in the history of the world. None. All ancient works, meaning every book written in the world before the printing press, have a textual tradition, or a history of being copied by hand and passed by scribes from one generation

to the next. Therefore, if someone expresses skepticism about the New Testament simply from the reality of a textual tradition, then, if they are intellectual honest and academically authentic, they must be skeptical about every ancient work in the world written before the invention of the printing press.

**2. Text criticism is a necessary reality for every ancient document we possess, and there is simply no document on earth that has as many texts as the New Testament.** Nothing in the world compares to the textual

criticism for classical and related authors.

Again, we possess no works in all of ancient literature that have the sheer volume of manuscripts — thousands — so close to the date of composition as the New Testament. Strictly from a textual critical standpoint, we can have more confidence in the reliability of the New Testament than any other work of ancient literature in the world.

**3. The fact that we don't have any of the original copies of the gospels is an act of God's good providence.** He is wise. He knows what we need. Can

**STRICTLY FROM A TEXTUAL CRITICAL STANDPOINT,  
WE CAN HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE IN THE RELIABILITY OF  
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evidence we have for it. F.F. Bruce, in his excellent *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* compares the number of manuscripts of other ancient works:

For example, for Caesar's *Gallic Wars* there are numerous manuscripts, but the oldest is around nine hundred years later than the date of composition (58–50 B.C.). Thucydides' history is known from eight manuscripts, as well as a number of papyrus fragments, but the earliest of the manuscripts is dated to about A.D. 900, around thirteen hundred years after the date of composition, although some papyri are from the Greco-Roman era. The same is generally true of Herodotus's history. These examples are indicative of the state of textual

you imagine if there was, say, a copy of John's original gospel, what would have become of it in the Middle Ages — a time when people were traveling across the world to glimpse a nail said to be from the cross in an attempt to have their sins forgiven, or selling fortunes to have a strand of the blessed Virgin Mary's hair? We would always be at risk of worshiping the manuscripts instead of the God they reveal.

**4. The overwhelming majority of text issues revolve around extraordinarily minor discrepancies.** Differences like "Jesus, the Son of God" instead of "Jesus, God's Son." Or an "a" when one manuscript has "an," or not having "the" in one manuscript and having it in another. (This is a prominent issue, because the definite article functions

differently in Greek than in many of the languages into which the New Testament was translated.)

**5. There are no significant theological truths that are dependent upon a disputed text.** The three largest and most controversial textual issues are found in our text here in John, the ending of Mark, and 1 John 5:7-8. No major doctrine hangs on the authenticity of these passages. We don't need this story in John to tell us that Jesus is compassionate — we know this from the testimony of His entire ministry.

We don't need Mark's version of The Great Commission to know that mission matters to God — it is one of the central plot lines throughout the Scriptures. And we don't need the trinitarian reference in 1 John 5 to believe in the Trinity — the entire Bible assumes and argues for the reality of it.

**So what about this story?**

There is nearly a universal consensus among scholars that this story of the woman caught in adultery is not a part of the original version of the Gospel of John. It is absent from all of the pre-fifth century manuscripts. But when it does appear, it appears in several places in John and near the end of Luke; and no church father directly cites it. On the other hand, we should remember that Jerome, the first great textual critic and translator of the Latin Vulgate in the late 4th century said that the story was in many of the manuscripts he encountered. Both Augustine (d.430) and Ambrose (d. 397) believed that the story was often omitted because it was feared that it

would encourage adultery. Perhaps, Christ's scandalous grace has always been controversial.

My personal opinion is that even though it most likely was not a part of John's original edition, it is a true story that circulated widely and early in the early church. It is a beautiful picture of our Lord's mercy. Remember, John said himself that if all of Jesus' great deeds were written down that all the books in the world could not contain all of His stories. Perhaps this was one story they thought too good to leave out.

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If the issues of the reliability of the New Testament, or its history of composition and transmission are of interest to you, check out the following:

1. Start with the blog of Michael Kruger, the president of RTS Charlotte, entitled *Canon Fodder* (michaeljkruger.com) Begin with his excellent introduction, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).
2. The standard seminary level text is by F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (5th ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1960).
3. The best introduction to the advanced academic issues is by K. Aland and B. Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).



ARTICLE: MATT MCDANIEL  
PHOTOS: RUTHY STORRS

# FROM ADDICTION TO GRACE

## HOW CHRIST FOUND GRACE OVIEDO'S BRETT SINNICKI AT HIS LOWEST POINT

If you've been to Grace Oviedo, there's a good chance you've seen Brett Sinnicki greeting worshipers or passing out the offering baskets. Brett always has a smile on his face. But few know his current pain — or his troubled history.

"I struggled with addiction for a long time. Mostly with alcohol, but the alcohol would lead to drug use," Brett says. The 48-year-old began drinking in the sixth grade, and was an alcoholic by his sophomore year of high school.

Brett grew up in Bayonne, New Jersey, just outside of New York City. He graduated from high school in 1988 and found entry-level work at a foreign-exchange bank in Manhattan. It was Wall Street in the late 1980s: Bon Jovi and The Boss blared out of boom boxes, the stock market made millions

for many, and drugs flowed freely on street corners and in corporate conference rooms alike.

"My supervisor introduced me to cocaine," Brett recalls. Eventually, he began going to work mostly for the after-work parties. "I was in some very dark places. I hated the addiction, but I didn't want to give up the lifestyle."

Despite his demons, Brett met and married his wife, Jessie, in 1994. She soon realized the depths of Brett's addiction. The two would go out with friends and Brett would drink heavily, only to stop for more beer on the way home. Jessie would refer to this as "the one-man party" after the party.

"I never knew when to stop," Brett says. And as a result, he became depressed, and the only salve for that was another bottle.



*Brett Sinnicki serves as a greeter and usher on Sundays at Grace's Oviedo campus.*

In 1996, Brett's stepson Javy was 6 and his daughter Arielle was born. At 27, he was working two jobs, making his work week too full for drinking more than a couple beers a day. But the weekends were different: a constant party from quitting time on Friday through Sunday night. Brett stayed in a binge-induced stupor the entire time.

Working diligently at two full-time jobs to support his family, Brett convinced himself he had earned the right to enjoy his weekends. Although the family appeared to have it together on the outside, Brett was falling apart. Year after year, Brett's addiction progressively worsened.

In 2007, Brett was at his lowest, hiding stashes of liquor around the house and passing out drunk in his living room. He felt like he had no one to turn to for help. "I was at the end of my rope," Brett states. "I believed in God, but I didn't know Him at all."

One Saturday night, Jessie drove the couple home after an evening of

drinking with friends during which Brett had passed out, completely drunk, on his hosts' kitchen floor. But Brett was still looking forward to more drinking, and asked Jessie to stop at a convenience store to pick up a six-pack of beer -- but she uncharacteristically decline to do so. She had had enough.

Brett remembers little from the remainder of that evening. That Sunday morning, however, is forever seared into his memory.

"I woke up on the bedroom floor, and the burden of addiction was lifted."

It was nothing short of miraculous. At that moment, Brett no longer had any desire to drink. He knows that, somehow, his decades-long ordeal is finally, and completely, over. "It's unexplainable, but I remember it as vividly as if it were yesterday."

But Brett had no explanation for the sudden change, so he walked into a local Alcoholics Anonymous meeting looking for answers -- something he

had never done before. He walked out with even more questions, but noticed a church across the street and decided to see if he could find answers there the following Sunday.

The words coming out of the pastor's mouth that next Sunday morning changed Brett's life: *You are no longer dead in sin, but rather alive in Christ, if you believe he has redeemed you.*

Brett realized that he now belonged to Christ. "It started to make sense. The

A year after the accident, his son Matthew came into the world. Brett was hospitalized soon afterward due to Crohn's Disease and could not see his unvaccinated newborn son, which was devastating. He again battled depression. "That week long stay was as dark as my days of addiction," he says. "Thank the Lord for his Word and my Pastor who came everyday to pray with me. Without God's Word and prayer who knows where that would have led me."

**THE WORDS COMING OUT OF THE PASTOR'S MOUTH THAT NEXT SUNDAY MORNING CHANGED BRETT'S LIFE: YOU ARE NO LONGER DEAD IN SIN, BUT RATHER ALIVE IN CHRIST, IF YOU BELIEVE HE HAS REDEEMED YOU.**

pastor talked about being born again in the Spirit and God working and living in you." Brett began to see that what had happened to him the past Sunday was a work of Jesus. "That had to be it," he realized. "How could I wake up a changed person with no desire to drink? I get chills every time I think about it."

While Brett no longer struggles with addiction, that doesn't mean his life is without challenges. In May 2010, he shattered his ankle in a work-related accident. He was unable to walk for two months and is permanently disabled because of the pain and lack of mobility.

Through his pain and struggle, Brett learned that following Christ is not about health, wealth, and everything going right, but about knowing more of Christ and becoming like Him in the process. "Believers who are not grounded in the gospel can easily be misled and fall away from the church when life falls apart," Brett says. "The goal of the Christian life is not health and wealth — the One and only true blessing is Jesus Christ."

At the AA meeting all those years ago, the facilitator told him "You have to change your life."

"But I didn't change my life," Brett beams. "God did."





# EXPOSED

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & MESSAGE NOTES

**THIS WEEK'S BIBLE VERSES**

**John 7:1-36**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION**

**Why would Jesus not travel to Judea if people wanted to kill Him? As God, wouldn't He be able to keep Himself safe?**

**According to John 7:7, Jesus claims the world hates Him but not the disciples. How have you seen this played out when you've shared your faith with non-Christians?**

**What are one or two new insights from these verses that are important to you? How do these insights challenge or strengthen your view of Christ?**

**Jesus challenges the crowd to "not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment" in verse 24. Are there prayers for certain circumstances you'd like to share with your Grace Community?**

**In verses 25-27 there are many who are questioning if Jesus really could be Christ. Pretend you're a first century Christian in the crowds. What would you want to explain to them?**



**THIS WEEK'S BIBLE VERSES**

**John 7:37-52**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION**

**How does Jesus make good on his promise to quench our thirst?**

**How is the Holy Spirit like a river of water?**

**Read Isaiah 55:1-5 out loud. In what ways do we see Christ fulfill this prophecy in these verses?**

**List the different ways in which people respond to Jesus throughout these verses. How do they compare to people's reactions today?**

**Why would Nicodemus risk his reputation to defend Jesus? Can you think of times when you've done the same?**



**THIS WEEK'S BIBLE VERSES**

**John 7:53-8:11**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION**

**Begin by reading the article in this magazine about this section ("The Mystery of the Missing Verses," Page 32). How should this impact the way we read these verses?**

**Can you remember a time when you felt shame and guilt for wronging someone and they forgave you? How did that impact you?**

**How was this question designed to trap Jesus? What was the impact if Jesus chose to let her go? What if He chose to punish her?**

**Why do you suppose the older leave first and then the younger?**

**How should we correctly apply this lesson today? Are we to never mention sin in those around us?**



**THIS WEEK'S BIBLE VERSES**

**John 8:12-30**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION**

**How does this passage help us to understand Jesus' "time?"  
What will his "time" achieve?**

**Verse 24 summarizes why Jesus is having this dialogue with the religious rulers. Imagine your coworker has never heard the gospel before. How would you explain this verse if it was the first time he or she heard it?**

**What are "above and below" symbols of? Do you think the Jewish leaders are understanding it this way?**

**What does it mean that the Son of Man will be "lifted up," and how will that help them know that Jesus is who he claims to be?**

**Everything Jesus does is pleasing to the Father (v 29). If the Christian life is to lead us to be more Christlike, in what areas of life are you pleasing the Father? In what areas are you not?**

**What next step can your Grace Community pray for you to take toward Christ?**



**THIS WEEK'S BIBLE VERSES**

**John 8:31-59**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION**

**What does it mean to abide in Jesus' word? How does that look in our day-to-day lives?**

**What is the difference between the Jews Jesus is talking to and Abraham?**

**The people react very strongly to what Jesus is saying. What are the statements to which they react so strongly?**

**What option does this passage leave us as far as forming an opinion of who Jesus is? Can we see Him as just another prophet or a really good teacher?**

**What must we include in our evangelism if we are to be consistent with John's presentation of Jesus and His message?**



**THIS WEEK'S BIBLE VERSES**

**John 9:1-7, 9:35-41**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION**

**Why was this man born blind? Do you think this a 'fair' reason?**

**Why do you think Jesus used the clay and spit to heal the man instead of just his words?**

**Jesus says "as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (v 5). Does this mean that Jesus, no longer physically in the world, is no longer the light?**

**Why do you think John includes this passage in his gospel?**

**How does the blind man react to Jesus at the end of this passage?**



**THIS WEEK'S BIBLE VERSES**

**John 9:8-34**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION**

**Very often we fear a new Christian falling away from the faith due to persecution. What can this passage teach us about our worries?**

**How does the blind man's understanding develop throughout the story?**

**Have you found yourself in the shoes of the parents — afraid to take a stand for Jesus in the face of ridicule or adversity?**

**What lessons can we learn about our own life of faith from the story of the blind man?**

**Jesus appears to be absent during this time of the story. What can this tell us about 'the work of God'?**







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