

I AM CERTAIN

REMEMBERING 2021 / IMAGINING 2022

GRACE CHURCH





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throughout this magazine as printable PDFs – our gift to you!*



This book is a gift to you.

That's a bold statement for something that's traditionally just a run-of-the-mill annual report. But as we walk through the ways Grace has added hope, joy, love, and peace to our city this year, we also wanted you to feel and know more of these beautiful things as you read.

In these pages, you'll get to know Grace a bit more. You'll see some of our history and a lot of our heart. You'll also get a clearer picture of what we're doing now, and where we're going in the future.

There are places to pray, reflect, and participate here, too – right in this book.

We hope this not only encourages you about our mission, but that you are inspired to join it. Because, above all, Grace wants to see hope, joy, love, and peace come to all of Central Florida as we show them how to know and love Jesus, and we want you to be a part of it.

Believe it: Good is ahead.

Pastor Mike



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Why Am I Certain?

BY MIKE ADKINS

THIS BOOK

is organized by the themes of each week of Advent, but *Hope, Joy, Love, and Peace* are what we're about all year long.

At Grace, we bring hope by grounding everything we do in the finished work of Christ. We celebrate joy because the gospel has freed us to live unafraid in genuine relationship with one another. We champion love through extraordinary servanthood and radical hospitality. And we live as agents of peace, called as one body, under Christ, to help people take their next steps toward Him.

How does uncertainty impact the human psyche? In 2016, researchers at a London university set out to answer this question. Their idea was simple – create a video game that gave the player an electric shock every time they overturned a rock with a snake under it. By adjusting the odds of a snake appearing, scientists could control the level of uncertainty in the video game. And, by monitoring pupil dilation and perspiration, they could measure a player's stress level.

Here's what the study found: *Uncertainty causes more stress than guaranteed pain.* People who knew they were going to be shocked weren't nearly as stressed as people who had a 50% chance of being shocked. It was the uncertainty – not the pain itself – that induced anxiety.

In 2016, the results were pioneering. It was the first time a quantifiable relationship between stress and uncertainty had been established. Five years later, the results are surprising to exactly 0% of humanity.

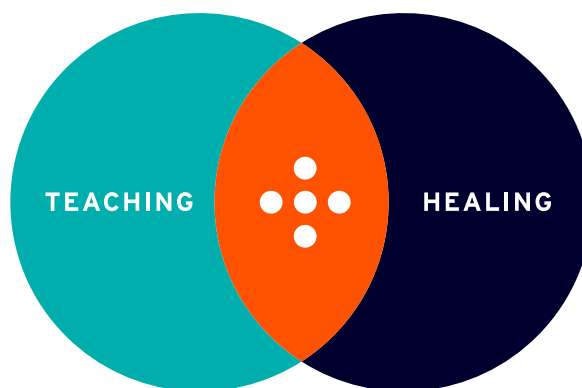
We know uncertainty is a special breed of torture. We know it skyrockets anxiety, depression, and rage. We get it because we've lived it, both individually and collectively. The past two years, we saw everything pulled out from underneath us. Things we believed to be immovable moved. Relationships we thought were unbreakable broke. Comforts and routines disappeared as everything was stripped away.

Everything changed – except Jesus.

True to His identity as the Rock Eternal – the Cornerstone for a sure foundation – Jesus has remained steadfast (Isaiah 26:4, 28:16). Perhaps the greatest problem of the past two years is not that we have had too little certainty, but that we have sought it in the wrong places. Looking forward to 2022, I see the need for unshakeable certainty – for wisdom to ground ourselves not in opinions or emotions, but in things that are actually certain.

“

Perhaps the greatest problem of the past two years is not that we have had too little certainty, but that we have sought it in the wrong places.



What am I certain of as I move forward?

I am certain of the gospel. I'm certain that "it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). And I do mean everyone. The older I become, the more convinced I am that everyone is desperately messed up and in need of Jesus.

As a young counselor, I used to sit down with exceptional business people and think, "Wow, this is going to be such an interesting conversation," only to realize they struggle with exactly the same things everyone else does. Just because you're gifted in one area of your life doesn't mean another area isn't a total mess. You know the area I'm talking about – that uncomfortable place of pain and weakness; the one you avoid, hide, and relegate to the shadowlands.

We are all profoundly broken.

For this reason, **I am certain of our mission.** I'm certain that you cannot heal unless you're first taught, which is why I want Grace Church to be known throughout Central Florida as a place of teaching and healing, where anyone can come and take their next steps toward Christ.

Psalms 107:17-18 describes a spiritually starved people, who through apathy and disregard for God have drawn near to the gates of death. Verses 19-20 say, "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble and He saved them from their distress. *He sent out His Word and healed them.*"

Now, more than ever, people are crying out in their distress, and I believe God wants to teach them through the church and heal them through His Word.

And yes, despite her failings and her suffering, **I am certain of the Church.** I'm certain she will prevail, not because she's perfect, but because she belongs to Jesus (Matthew 16:18).

I didn't always feel this way. In fact, years ago I experienced a season of profound disillusionment. I remember thinking, "I'm out. I'm done with church." Then God dealt severely with me. He issued a rebuke that shook me to the core – a word of warning and reproof that was, for me, a grave mercy.

From that point on, I no longer viewed church as something optional or negotiable. I realized it was a commitment as sacred as any marriage vow. A commitment to Christ's own bride – for better or worse, in sickness and health, until the day God brings me home.

Finally, more than anything else, though the mountains may fall into the heart of the sea, **I am certain of Jesus** (Psalm 46:2). I'm certain He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), but will Himself sustain, renew, and carry us into glory.

I am certain.

A close-up photograph of three ripe oranges and a cinnamon stick. The oranges are vibrant orange with a textured peel, and the cinnamon stick is light brown and slightly curved. The background is dark, making the fruit stand out.

I AM CERTAIN OF



hope

WE HAVE THIS AS A

SURE AND STEADFAST
ANCHOR
OF THE SOUL

A HOPE THAT ENTERS INTO
THE INNER PLACE BEHIND
THE CURTAIN...



Hebrews 6:19

Messiah, who was and is and is to come,

Redeem us. Rescue us. Reveal to us Your salvation.

Anchor our souls in the hope that You have come and You will come again.

We confess how often we ignore the anthem of hopeful redemption
that creation joyously sings.

All things are being made new.

This is the promise. Of this we are certain.

In the despair that envelops us, lift our eyes to our future.

Awaken in us a desire for the more beautiful story.

With eager anticipation, we look ahead to the good on the horizon.

We stand sure and steady in Your imminent deliverance.

In the here and now, may Your hope be our song.

Amen.

The Story of Grace

BY KELLY ADKINS

We met at a friend's Bible study one summer when we were home from college. I thought he was a geek. He thought I was boring. That weekend, we each went on a date with other people we met that evening. But in just a few weeks, Mike was on his way to becoming my best friend.

We each had just broken off serious relationships and weren't looking for another one. But we walked, and we talked. We debated theology and politics and everything else we could think of all summer. He often lamented the recent marriage of a girl he always thought he might end up with. I promised him there was someone else out there for him, not knowing that it was me.

One thing we never talked about? Church ministry.

My dad was a pastor; I'd seen enough of that for a lifetime. Mike was going to be a doctor. Medicine felt like his destiny, in a way. His grandfather had been a physician, and the only adult who really cared for him as a child. Medical school just seemed right, too, for someone who'd been a high school dropout until Jesus found him at age 17 in the dark loneliness of a friend's garage. Becoming a Christian changed everything about Mike in an instant – the drinking, the desperation, the dead-end trajectory. God transformed him from the inside-out, including giving him a new love for learning. Wouldn't the pinnacle of education – medical school – be a completion of God's work in his heart?

Many times, God has worked in our life through “hard right turns” – days in which we were headed one direction, and God sent us in another overnight. In

our call to ministry, however, God showed a steady kindness to us. He knew we would need it.

First, He nudged us together: the “geek” and the “boring” stood at the altar nearly three years after that night at the Bible study. Then, He began His work in our hearts. I had been admitted to law school, but I felt God pulling me into writing and communication – and yes, some kind of ministry, but I didn't really know what.

Mike was still going to be a doctor – a thoracic surgeon. Another nudge shifted him to psychiatry, though, when he felt like the former would take him away from the spiritual life of our family. Then, as he explored that path, he knew he didn't want to just be a doctor who handed out pills – he wanted to integrate medicine and theology to care for his patients' souls. So, yet another nudge: Mike applied to seminary, writing his application essay about how this degree would be so meaningful to his future practice.

Perhaps the biggest nudge of all was a literal one in my belly: we found out we were expecting our first son in Mike's second year of seminary. My pregnancy was perfect until it suddenly wasn't: at 29 weeks, I entered the hospital, gasping for breath. My asthma had gone haywire, and my body followed suit. Over the week, I was put on life support and into a coma, and in just six days, the doctors gave Mike no hope that I would survive. Perhaps, if I held out a little longer, the baby could make it.

God intervened in what even the doctors termed a miracle. Clayton Bradley Adkins weighed 2lbs, 9oz, born while I slept and a machine breathed for me. I woke up the next day, and we both began to recover.



Two weeks later, while I was still lying in the hospital, Mike got another nudge: a call asking him to become the Pastoral Care Intern at Northland, our home church in Orlando, with the goal of ordaining him as a pastor there when he graduated from seminary.

Our lives had just been upended in every way. We were at God's mercy, and had always been. But with my near death, and a new baby I had barely held, we knew it afresh. We both surrendered to whatever He had planned for us, holding hands and obeying God's call to ministry, as the monitors beeped and whirred by my hospital bed.

Mike eventually became the Pastor of Pastoral Care – first at a church in Indiana and then back at Northland. He ran the care ministries, the singles' ministry, and the counseling centers both at Northland and at his alma mater, Reformed Theological Seminary.

He cared personally for so many people, and he truly loved it. He knew he was helping people find freedom, he was learning to lead teams well, and he was living out the gospel that had changed his life. He often felt sadness and longing at leaving medicine behind, and wrestled with the sacrifice of his dreams on the altar of ministry. He knew that he had been obedient to God, but he often felt there was something more out there.

And then, he preached.



How you can pray FOR US AND FOR THE FUTURE OF GRACE

Pray for our leadership.

Pray that we will stay in God's will and His wisdom. Pray for our holiness before the Lord.

Pray for our marriage.

We are aware that our faithfulness is a sacred trust which matters almost as much to others as it does to us.

Pray for our kids.

Clayton, Connor, and Katy aren't exempt from the pressures of leading the church; pray that God will guard their hearts.

Pray for our pastors and staff and their families.

We have an amazing team, and they are all in for Jesus and for Grace. Pray for protection over their lives, their kids, and their godliness.

Pray for the people of Grace to be rooted and grounded in love.

We long for a community that resists the political and popular messages of the age and embraces the gospel of Jesus, which is so much better than anything the world offers.

He was invited to teach one weekend at Northland, on that lazy weekend between Christmas and New Year's Day. He told me he "felt God smiling at him" when he came out from behind the pulpit, and that was that, though we didn't know it at the time. God lit him up from the inside-out with a desire to preach God's Word.

He began to preach regularly at Northland, and people responded. His ministry grew because of his preaching, and his words began to transform both him and his listeners into people who wanted to know God in fresh ways. When we shared that Mike thought he had found his calling as a teacher, however, we were asked to leave.

We are so grateful for Northland's influence in our lives and in this city over the years. But we were devastated. In one of those "hard right turns," we'd lost our place, our friends, and all our income, and we felt that, perhaps, we'd lost our calling, too.

We're young, we told ourselves. We could do anything. Mike considered going back into medicine, or just turning one of his other hobbies – real estate or financial planning – into a career, but every idea tasted like ashes. We drove away with our pain to another state to think and pray.

The oddest thing began happening. People showed up at our door, offering us money if we'd use it to plant a church. Calling us to tell us they'd go with us if we'd plant a church. Writing us to say how God told them we should plant a church.

At this point, I figured we were probably supposed to plant a church. But Mike was reluctant – even hostile – to the idea. "We don't know anything about starting a church! I don't even want to start a church!" he'd say. And he was right. We knew nothing about it, and had never even considered it. But God had nudged us again. This was the direction He had prepared for us.

We decided to test it out by sending letters in an attempt to raise an amount equal to Mike's former pay. We wanted to pour anything people gave to the future church into building a ministry, not paying ourselves. I wasn't terribly optimistic; I'd been a part of support-raising teams before, and I knew how much work and time it took to bring in enough income.

In just four weeks, we'd raised Mike's former salary, almost to the penny.

“We were devastated. In one of those “hard right turns,” we’d lost our place, our friends, and all our income, and we felt that, perhaps, we’d lost our calling, too.

Ultimately, we found our answer: we were convicted that we'd be disobedient if we turned our back on the Church. But we had no idea where, or what, or how. We came home with no real direction, and not even much hope for one.

So there we were, planting a church. It was nearly Christmas by now – not a good time to do it, we thought; we could just wait till after the holidays. We held no core team gatherings. We had no church to launch us. We had no one to coach us. We sent some emails, held one meeting in late January, and had a few people sign up to watch kids, play a couple of instruments, and bring snacks. And we opened the doors to Grace Fellowship (our original name) at the Longwood Community Center the following Sunday, February 2, 2003.

The TIMELINE OF GRACE

Grace begins.

We're called Grace Fellowship when we launch at the Longwood Community Building in February 2003.

First big move.

A little more than two months later, we find a long-term home at the Florida Hospital Church in College Park. Here we'll grow, and change our name to Grace Church.

Second big move.

In 2011, after eight years of growth, Grace moves to Edgewater High School to meet our city right where it lives.

The campus vision is born.

That same year, we decide to spread the gospel further by opening more locations of Grace throughout the city.

If you know anything about starting anything, the former paragraph displays the depth of our ignorance. This became the hardest year of our lives, and the few that followed weren't much easier. The organizational challenges were endless, and the spiritual opposition to church planting was more intense than anything we could have imagined.

But God was always faithful. When one of us felt like quitting – at least a thousand times over – the other one held on in God's strength. When one of us collapsed in despair, God helped the other one stand.

Church became a family affair – Mike teaching and developing vision, me leading worship and administrating, both of us loading up baskets and boxes on top of our kids each weekend to head together to set up a worship service.

And little by little, Grace grew, and we grew, and God showed up in the lives of the people who called it home. We baptized more and more people each year, and we started to learn who we were. When we were burdened that there was still something more that God wanted us to do, He answered with the idea of planting campuses.

We had planted a church once, and we had no desire to do it again. But God brought Pastor Rick Garrett and his wife Christie into our lives in 2009. They'd asked for advice on planting another church in our neighborhood, and having done it all alone, we were glad to give that and anything else we had. Rick jokes now that he showed up to sit in on staff meetings and use the copier, and he just never left. In the end, we couldn't imagine doing ministry without them, and the idea of other locations was born.

That opened our hearts to the real thing – the lasting thing –

“

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that God wanted us to be about, helping develop others to reach this city beyond what we alone can do. Now, through the campuses, we have more opportunities to pour into leaders of all kinds – younger preachers and teachers and family ministry teams and worship leaders – to ensure that the gospel goes forward in Orlando long after we're gone. That means everything to us.

It's been almost 19 years now, and God has brought so much beauty from all the ashes. In 2017, He blessed the Orlando campus with a long-prayed for facility, and He's opening doors now for the campuses, too. He's given Grace an identity and a purpose in the community, and He's focused us on Christ's mission of teaching and healing.

For me, perhaps most beautiful of all, God is redeeming and restoring the hard sacrifice of obedience Mike made so long ago – giving up his dream of becoming a doctor. Back then, he wanted to heal people while teaching them.

Now, through his powerful, practical messages and through his vision for the Grace Counseling Center, it's all come full circle: he gets to teach people while healing them.

Redemption. Restoration. That has always been the beautiful story of Grace.

Grace Oviedo launches.

This campus opens its doors to serve the northeast corner of the Orlando area in September of 2012.

Grace Winter Garden opens.

We go west and welcome people to the new Winter Garden campus in September of 2014.

The Grace Orlando building opens.

After 14 years of 100% portable church, we hold our first service in our first permanent facility in April 2017.

Grace Counseling is born.

A long-held dream of Pastor Mike's, the Grace Counseling Center welcomes its first clients in December of 2019 on the Orlando campus property.

Grace Online begins.

We were planning to go online in a few years, but COVID "helps" us launch Grace Online in March 2020 – with about 30 hours notice.

Choosing Hope

BY JEANNE HARRISON

Exalting Christ in HEBREWS



Author: Unknown

Era: Hebrews was most likely written in AD 64–68 to Christians living under the persecution of Emperor Nero.

Central Theme: More than any other book of the Bible, Hebrews connects the dots between the Old Testament and the life and work of Christ. It repeatedly uses the Greek word *Kreitton*, which means “more excellent,” to exalt Christ and His new covenant as “more excellent” than the old.

Glance at the sidebar to familiarize yourself with the book of Hebrews.

After warning against forsaking true faith in Hebrews 6:1–8, the author turns his attention to true believers to express his certainty of better things ahead. Read verses 9–12 below. Underline every expression of “certainty” in these verses:

“ Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for His name in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Weary and persecuted, these believers needed full assurance to shake off their sluggish faith. Where do you feel weary and in need of assurance?

LOOK BACK

The author of Hebrews promises that God will not “overlook your work and the love you have shown for His name in serving the saints.” Reflect on the “work” you have done for the sake of the gospel. Think of two moments in your life when you knew with certainty that God had not overlooked your work. Perhaps He blessed it with fruitfulness, used it to mature you, or simply sustained you in the midst of it. Write about those moments in the space to the right.

01.

Reread the last line of the verses on the opposite page. What are the two avenues through which we inherit the promises of God? Put a box around these two words.

When our faith is tested and our patience wanes, we need hope. We need assurance that God is trustworthy and His promises are certain. Beautifully, that’s exactly what He offers us. Read verses 13–18:

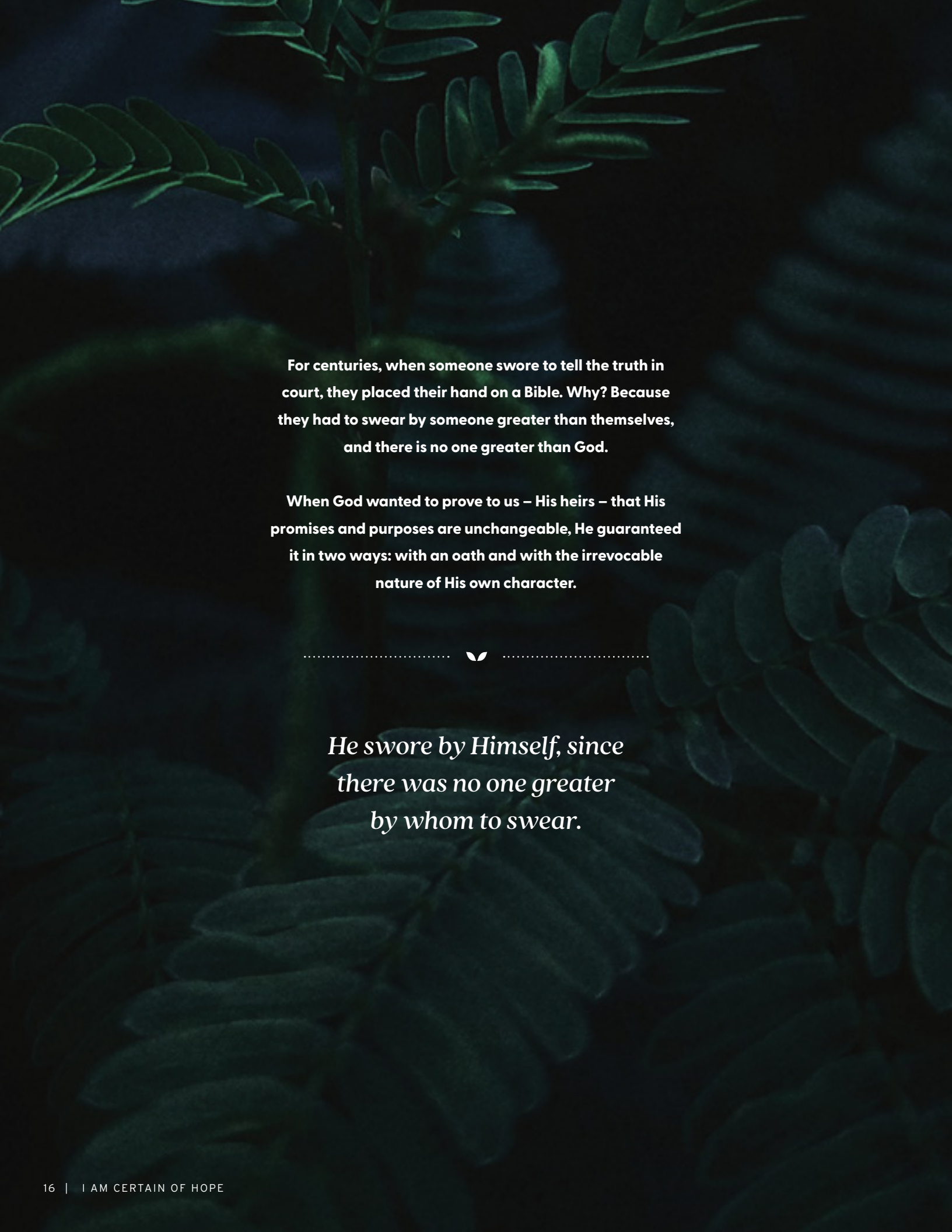
“ For when God made a promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

It’s normal to doubt the promises of God from time to time. They sound so tantalizing – eternal life, supernatural peace, unconditional love. Is it too good to be true? If you’ve ever struggled to take God at His word, you’re not alone.

Abraham and his descendants were the first “heirs” of God’s promises, and they certainly experienced seasons of doubt. Because of Christ, all believers are now heirs of God’s promises, and just like Abraham (and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the way back to Adam himself) we, too, struggle to believe God.

LOOK FORWARD 02.

As you look to the future, which promises of God do you doubt the most?



For centuries, when someone swore to tell the truth in court, they placed their hand on a Bible. Why? Because they had to swear by someone greater than themselves, and there is no one greater than God.

When God wanted to prove to us – His heirs – that His promises and purposes are unchangeable, He guaranteed it in two ways: with an oath and with the irrevocable nature of His own character.



He swore by Himself, since there was no one greater by whom to swear.

“ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever...

Not only is our hope in the character of God, it's in what God has done for us through Christ. The word for "forerunner" in Greek is *prodromos*, and it refers to a small group of soldiers sent ahead of an army for reconnaissance. Jesus is our *prodromos*. He is the One who goes ahead of us, enters into the Holy of Holies, and prepares our way to glory.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

A Haven of Hope

2021 saw Grace Church becoming a haven of hope for people throughout Central Florida. We sat down with teaching pastors Mike Adkins, Clint Harrison of the Oviedo Campus, and Grant Nixon of the Winter Garden Campus to discuss how God is working at each Grace campus.

Q: You guys are in the trenches. What are you hearing and sensing from people who come to Grace? What are their felt needs?

A: **Mike:** What I see right now is that people are coming in really hurt. They feel unsafe in church because they've had leaders make poor decisions. And the greatest tragedy is not the people who stick around in church that need to recover; it's the ones who will never come back to the church again.

Clint: Yeah, I'm finding that when I meet with people, what they're saying is multi-layered. So they may start out saying, "We just want something that's consistent. We want to see that you are who



you say you are." But when you peel the layer back, what they're really looking for is, "Can I trust you?" And then behind that, "Can I trust God?" And that's what we need to unpack with them. That's their felt need – to regain trust in God and His Church.

Grant: And I think it's not just church trauma that's done this to people, but COVID. And what's happening is, all of the things that we've used to distract ourselves and cover up our wounds have been stripped away. And so people are coming fully exposed.



Q : What advice do you have for people who are coming to Grace with hurt?

A : **Mike:** Listen, number one, way to not quit on the Church! We're so glad you're not giving up. But don't stop there. If you're here now and you're like, "This is something I want to invest in," first invest in yourself, and make sure you're getting healthy. And number two, make sure you don't bring old baggage into the church. Come to participate, grow, and be part of what makes the church beautiful. Don't spend the rest of your life being suspicious.

Clint: I'd also say, make sure you and your spouse are on the same page. Maybe one of you is ready to dive in, but the other one needs more time. Don't just jump in and totally skirt what's going on between you. The most helpful thing you can do is to get healthy together.

Grant: I've been telling a lot of people, "Hey, if you're coming in hurt, we don't want anything *from* you. We want something *for* you. We want what God has for you, which is healing and wholeness." The truth is, for centuries Christians have been marked by a relentless hope. We all have hard seasons, but the Spirit of God is one of power, love, and self control. It's not a brittle Spirit. It doesn't break because a leader broke, or the world broke. So come receive healing, and be hopeful. Because that's who you are in Christ.

How to Pray for THE CHURCH IN OUR CITY

Unity

Pray for a restoration of unity, that the world would know we are Christ's disciples by our love for one another. *John 13:35*

Purity

Pray for the moral integrity of church leaders, that they would be holy as God is holy. *1 Peter 1:16*

Perseverance

Pray for spiritual endurance, that we would not grow weary in doing good, but through faithfulness would reap a gospel harvest. *Galatians 6:9*

Giving Hope

Changing Lives Through Community

We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. Hebrews 6:11

01. By the Numbers



4

Grace Locations

In addition to reaching more people at all of our Grace Campuses this year, Grace Online grew and expanded to reach more people than ever before.

**Times people walked
into a Grace Campus**

88,571

**Times someone or a
household viewed an
online service**

94,000+

15%

**More people attend Grace
now vs. before COVID**

1,800+

Online viewers each week

360

People gave their lives
to Christ in a Grace
service this year

182,571

Times a person or
household heard
the gospel at
Grace this year

816

People were an active part
of a Grace Community

Want to join them?
Head to discovergrace.com/connect

2,500+

People participated in
Night of Worship and Prayer

We were reminded that we *are not who we are,*
we *are who we are becoming*...thanks to Jesus!

Bible study and class registrations
this year

1,793

New staff members hired

We added more team members to love and serve you better.

6

3x

The number of
groups Grace
has now vs.
2019.



02. Next Steps



546



Households increased their giving amount this year



28%



Of our core giving households give less than \$1,000 a year

Every step you take in giving counts to make the mission happen.



33

Services specifically devoted to helping people to take their *first* step toward Christ

These First Step Weekends provide opportunity for you to invite friends and family who are far from God.

Number of people that came to Next Steps Weekend to start connecting to the life of the church

409

11 Discover Grace Membership classes

Where awesome people show up to say, "I'm in, let's do this thing."

Number of in-person and online services Grace opened its doors to this year

491

(Huge answer to prayer: Covid didn't cancel any of them!)

Number of verses preached

502

6

Sermon series preached



We began one of our most ambitious sermon projects so far in 2021: teaching through the entire book of Romans. We also taught the whole book of James this year (Practical Faith), and went line by line through the Lord's Prayer (Your Kingdom Come). We also hosted 3 special weekends – New Year Prayer and Communion, Palm Sunday, & Easter.

Articles written for our Grace Magazine

66

Find the latest issue at
discovergrace.com/magazine

**Take your first
step of hope and
belonging.**

Learn more and save your
spot today at

discovergrace.com/next-classes

SEE YOU AT NEXT STEPS WEEKEND.

A high-angle photograph of a woven basket filled with a mix of bright orange oranges and pale yellow lemons. The basket is placed on a dark blue, horizontally-planked wooden surface. The lighting is warm and directional, coming from the upper right, which creates strong highlights on the right side of the fruit and deep shadows on the left. The oranges have a textured, dimpled skin, while the lemons are smoother. The basket's rim is visible at the bottom and left edges.

I AM CERTAIN OF



joy


FOR I AM CERTAIN OF THIS

THAT HE WHO STARTED
A GOOD WORK IN YOU

WILL CARRY IT ON TO
COMPLETION UNTIL THE
DAY OF CHRIST JESUS.



Philippians 1:6



Christ Jesus, Light of the World,

You stepped into our cold existence
and brought everlasting light and abundant joy.
You authored this grand work of redemption.
You set in motion our eternal freedom.
You spoke divine harmony into the dissonance.
Make us certain of the fulfillment of all things in You.

We confess that we neglect to live in joy.
Our hearts are brittle with superficial sorrow.
We center ourselves on our circumstances,
rather than Your Kingdom.

Give us confidence that You will complete the good You began.
Carry us forward through this life
to be beacons of Your light and joy.
Amen.



Celebrating God's Goodness

CAMPUS & MINISTRY UPDATES

"I remain certain of this: I will see the goodness of God in the land of the living"
(Psalm 27:13). Like King David, we remain certain good is ahead. Join us in
celebrating glimpses of all the good to come, as we reflect on what
God has done across Grace campuses in 2021.

Grace Orlando

The Orlando Campus is home to our online, livestream worship service, which evolved this year to reach more than a thousand people each weekend with the hope of the gospel. As our hub for Care and Counseling, Orlando also expanded our counseling ministry, enabling us to offer refuge and healing in a time of immense spiritual need (Psalm 46:1). More reasons to rejoice? New groups and classes, record numbers in family ministries, and the launch of “Next Steps Weekend” – now implemented across campuses – connecting more people than ever to the life of Grace and the heart of God.

Grace Oviedo

At Oviedo we're celebrating big evidence of the next generation “setting an example in love, faith, and purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). Praise God for passionate students, who are breaking attendance records weekly, with recent grads plugging back into student ministry to lead. Over 50% of students now serve throughout ministry areas. This year Oviedo also saw adult groups double, launched a Young Adult Connect ministry, and transitioned into the gym – a larger gathering space, which allows Gracekids to use the cafeteria for live, student-led worship.



Grace Winter Garden

More people than ever are taking next steps toward Christ at Grace Winter Garden. In a season of rebuilding throughout the Church and nation, Winter Garden was able to add a second Sunday service, surpassing their pre-Covid attendance with a return rate of 125% – proof that the God of all grace will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish us after seasons of hardship (1 Peter 5:10). We also saw record-breaking numbers in Gracekids. Moreover, Winter Garden has doubled their adult groups and expanded their influence into the city of Clermont. Surely, the future is bright for each one of us, across all campuses and in every walk of life. He is faithful!

FAMILY MINISTRY

There is no greater joy than to know that our children are walking in the truth (3 John 1:4). This year, we served 1,192 kids and 588 students across all campuses, with 379 of those joining us for the first time. We were also able to send supplies to worship and learn at home to 76 families each month. Praise God for the extraordinary servanthood that's inspiring the next generation to take simple steps toward Christ!

GROUPS & CLASSES

Like the Apostle Paul, we long to share not only the gospel, but our very lives with one another (1 Thessalonians 2:8). At Grace, we gather in groups to cultivate genuine family, and we take classes to develop biblical maturity together. In 2021, we're celebrating a 68% increase in groups, almost 1,800 study sign-ups, plus weekly theology classes at every Grace campus!

CARE

There's never been a greater need for care individually and corporately. Two thousand years ago, Jesus said that all people would know we are His disciples, if we love one another (John 13:35). From the parking lot to the pulpit, we're prioritizing care at Grace – with better training for our frontline volunteers, new prayer teams to pray over our pastors and every prayer request submitted, and 4,500 appointments kept at our counseling center in 2021.

NEXT STEPS

This year we shifted our approach to helping people take next steps by launching "Next Steps Weekends," with a greater focus on connection. After sharing a meal with pastors and learning about the mission of Grace, we challenge people to join Team Grace as a first step toward community and the life of the church. Next Steps Weekends increased volunteer engagement by roughly 80% across campuses. That means 80% more community, more next steps, more reasons for thanksgiving and joy!

OPS

We rebranded Grace in 2021 to begin making our "outside" feel like our "inside" – a welcoming spiritual family. Whether setting up pipe and drape at our portable campuses (over one thousand feet of it!), arranging signs in our parking lots, or creating a worshipful atmosphere, GraceOps is on the front lines of putting out the face that says "you belong here."

WORSHIP & CREATIVE

We celebrate the beauty and creativity of God through constant innovation – things like thoughtful graphic design, writing, videography, and the book you're holding in your hands! This year we've been more intentional than ever in our liturgies, service flow, and even the timing of our songs to create space for the Holy Spirit to teach and heal. After 18 months, we hosted our biggest ever Night of Worship – the first one to be streamed live online! We work with wow-making excellence in all that we do, because the mission of God deserves nothing less.



Choosing Joy

BY JEANNE HARRISON

Imitating Christ in PHILIPPIANS



Author: Paul

Era: Paul planted the church of Philippi around AD 51, during his first missionary journey. His letter to the Philippians is believed to have been written during his first Roman imprisonment in AD 60–62.

Central Theme: The letter of Philippians is considered by many to be Paul's most personal and heartfelt letter. Wrought with emotion, Paul expresses his deep affection for the believers at Philippi, while exhorting them to remain committed to Christlikeness.

Glance at the sidebar to familiarize yourself with the book of Philippians, then read verses 1:1–5 below:

“ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Circle the word “joy” above. Read through Paul's letters and you'll notice he rarely thanks God for things, choosing instead to thank God for people. This brings Paul joy – to pray for the body of Christ, to remember their partnership in the gospel. The Greek word for partnership is *koinonia*, which means “fellowship” or “friendship.”

Who brings you joy? Write a brief prayer of gratitude for the people in your life who walk alongside you, point you to Jesus, and fill you with joy.

Paul continues in verse 6:

“ And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

LOOK BACK

Look back on your journey with Jesus. How did He begin a good work in you? Think about the circumstances He divinely orchestrated, the people He wove into your life at just the right time. List every evidence of His sovereign faithfulness in beginning a good work in you.

01.

Go back and underline the word “you” in verse 6. While this verse can be applied to an individual, the beauty of this word is that it actually refers to a people. It points back to *koinonia*, to the collective people of God who share in gospel partnership.

God will finish the work He began in you, and He will finish the work He began in the Church. He will bring us to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Hallelujah!

In verse 9, Paul gets to the actual “prayer” he alluded to in the opening lines of his letter. Read verses 7–11, pausing to put brackets around Paul’s prayer, beginning in verse 9:

“ *It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.* ”

The essence of Paul’s prayer is total sanctification. He wants these believers, whom he dearly loves, to fully experience the identity that is already theirs in Christ. More love. Greater discernment. True purity. Overflowing fruitfulness. All for the glory of God.

LOOK FORWARD

02.


Close your eyes and consider the future. Imagine yourself five years from now. Ten years. Fifteen years. Who do you want to be? What kind of relationship do you want to have with God and His people? Is there a simple step you need to take today to move in this direction?

RESPOND

03.

Reread the last line of Paul's prayer in verse 11 and fill in these blanks: "The fruit of righteousness comes _____ Jesus Christ and results in the glory and praise of _____."

How are you trying to achieve righteousness through your own strength or for your own glory? Close by writing a prayer of surrender. Confess any vain attempts to better yourself apart from God. Relinquish your life to Him – your failures and triumphs, joys and sorrows – all for His glory.



God will do the work of sanctification – He will complete the good work He began in us – but we have to show up, which means gospel partnership begins now. It begins with your heart surrendering to the good work God wants to do in your life.



*This is the path to true joy, and
it's yours for the taking.*

SIMPLE IDEAS TO

Find Joy in 2022

Notice

Practice the art of awareness. Ask God for eyes to see every evidence of His beauty and goodness in creation.
Psalm 19:1

1

2

Abide

Accept the invitation to linger in Christ's love. Build prayer and meditation into the rhythms of your day. Stop. Rest. Refocus. *John 15:9*

Simplify

Your calendar. Your expectations. Your clutter, both internal and external. Be intentional with the time and resources God has given you. *Psalm 90:12*

3

4

Laugh

Live with the relaxed confidence of knowing you are fully accepted by God. Secure in His sovereign love, you can laugh at the days to come.
Proverbs 31:25

Relinquish

Become a person of relentless grace. Give yourself permission to fail. To accomplish less. To rest in God's sufficiency. Then lavish that grace on others. *2 Corinthians 12:9*

5



Giving Joy

Changing Lives Through Family

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. 3 John 1:4

01. Hospitality

32

Pop-up events and celebrations across campuses

It's one of our best ways to connect people and celebrate the joy of knowing you, Grace family.



13,644,000

Calories worth of donuts served

That's enough to fuel a walk around the equator 7.18 times.



Balloons inflated

Balloon arches, balloon walls, balloon artists: we know how to have contagious fun.

1,257

Flowers ordered

Radical hospitality in bloom.



1K

Good Is Ahead
Frisbees shared
with friends

1,500

Good Is Ahead
magnets put on your
cars, refrigerators
and more

Good Is Ahead shirts sold to support Grace Counseling

300



● Want one?

Head to discovergrace.com/merch

Good Is Ahead signs scattered throughout the city

500



02. Family Ministry

Heard the gospel in Family Ministry this year:

KIDS

1192

5TH-6TH GRADERS

286

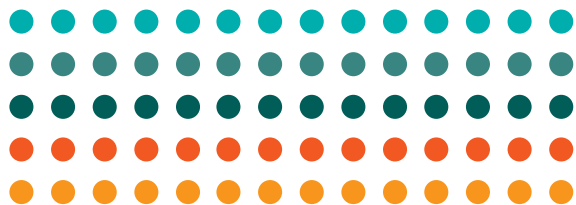
7TH-12TH GRADERS

302

800

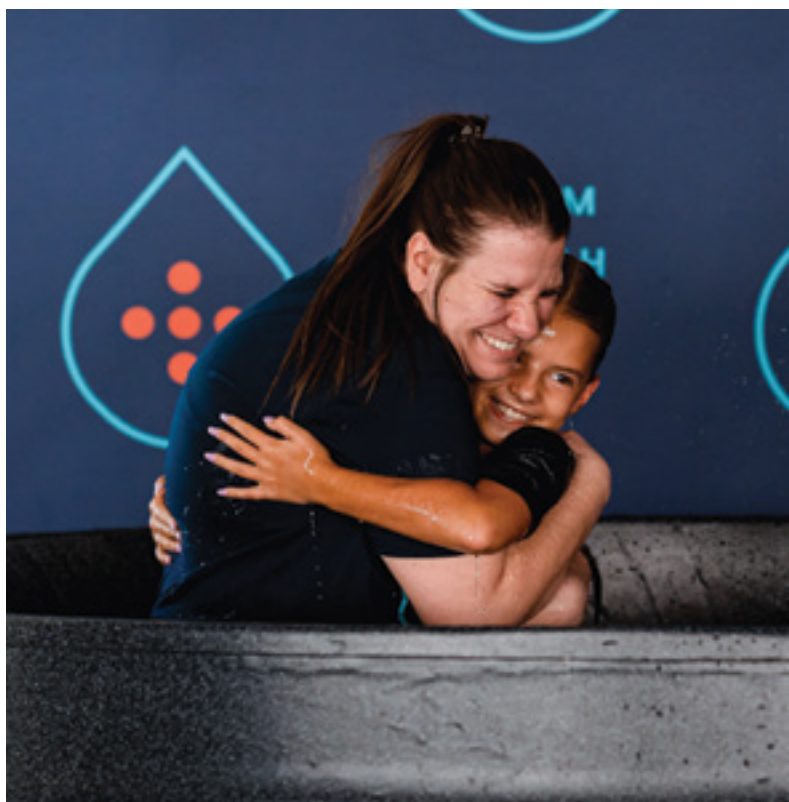
Free Advent boxes for families

This annual Grace tradition helps parents countdown to Christmas and focus on Jesus during the season.



54

Kids and students baptized this year



• 700 **Free Lent Card packages given away**

Family devotionals and countdowns for the Easter season.

2021 saw our first ever:

- CAMP HELD AT THE BUILDING
- PARENTING SEMINAR
- ORIGINAL GRACEKIDS WORSHIP VIDEOS



Original Gracekids and Gracestudents teaching videos created to help kids learn and worship

76

Family ministry box subscriptions

Provided to at-risk COVID households through spring of 2021: everything needed to teach the gospel lessons to kids who needed to stay at home.

4

Parent Connects

These brand new quarterly sessions on relevant parenting topics brought practical truth to the home.

Want to find more joy? Move forward, a little at a time.

Discover your next step at

discovergrace.com/next

PROGRESS OVER DESPAIR.



I AM CERTAIN OF

A close-up photograph of several bright orange fruits, likely oranges or tangerines, hanging from a branch with dark green, glossy leaves. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on the fruit's textured skin and deep shadows in the foliage. The word "love" is superimposed in a large, white, elegant script font across the lower half of the image.

love

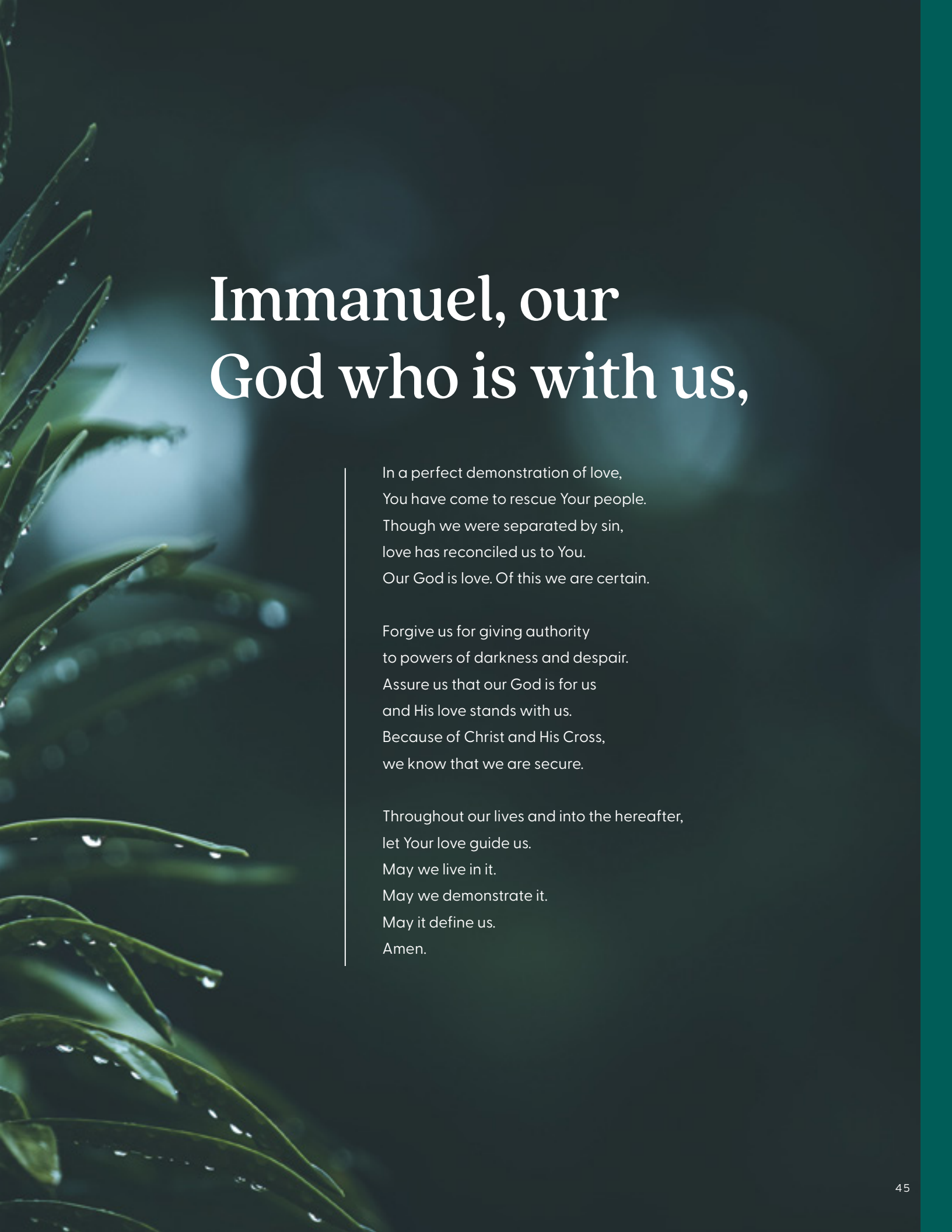
FOR I AM CERTAIN

THAT NEITHER DEATH NOR LIFE,
NOR ANGELS NOR RULERS,
NOR THINGS PRESENT NOR THINGS TO COME,
NOR POWERS,
NOR HEIGHT NOR DEPTH,
NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN ALL CREATION,

WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US
FROM THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST
JESUS OUR LORD.



Romans 8:38-39



Immanuel, our God who is with us,

In a perfect demonstration of love,
You have come to rescue Your people.
Though we were separated by sin,
love has reconciled us to You.
Our God is love. Of this we are certain.

Forgive us for giving authority
to powers of darkness and despair.
Assure us that our God is for us
and His love stands with us.
Because of Christ and His Cross,
we know that we are secure.

Throughout our lives and into the hereafter,
let Your love guide us.
May we live in it.
May we demonstrate it.
May it define us.
Amen.

Our Annual Christmas Offering 2021

Grace's Christmas Offering is an annual tradition which expands both our influence on our city and our faith in God. Through giving, we reach more, we trust more, and we love more. Here's why we do a Christmas Offering each year:

To remind us that God's kingdom is the most worthy investment. Money can't save you, but what if it could save someone else — forever? We believe eternity is worth a great cost.

“

We believe eternity is worth a great cost.

To help us become more like God. The Advent season shines a light on God's radical compassion for us in the gift of His Son, Jesus. He is endlessly generous and lavish in love. As we give, we become more like Him.

To increase our faith. Money is never about money, it's always about trust. This “famous” phrase from Pastor Mike challenges us to examine our hearts: what are we not giving, and why?

To prepare our church family for the next season. God has given us a vision and work to do. We wisely plan and prepare for the days ahead as we help people take their next steps toward Christ and expand our ministry of teaching and healing. Turn the page for this year's exciting projects.

See what it's all about.



OUR GOAL:

\$1.5
MILLION

How the CHRISTMAS OFFERING WORKS



The \$1.5 million goal for the Christmas Offering comes from two places:

YOUR REGULAR GIVING

This is what our generous church already gives in their regular tithes and offerings during the month of December.

YOUR ADDITIONAL GENEROSITY

We are asking you to pray about giving a generous gift in addition to your regular giving before the year's end during the Christmas Offering.

We'll count any gifts given during Advent through December 31st toward the Christmas Offering, and we'll report on the results at every campus in the first week of our January sermon series, the weekend of January 8th & 9th.

All gifts to the Grace Christmas Offering are tax-deductible, and you can download your complete giving statement for your 2021 records as early as January 4th.

Projects Supported in 2021

Support the ministry of Jesus in Orlando by giving to these projects through this year's offering:

- **Securing an office, counseling, and ministry space for Grace Oviedo.** Our Oviedo campus, portable since 2012 and reaching people for Christ like never before, will lease its first office and ministry building in 2022. This will provide the campus with a more permanent location throughout the week and give them both room for classes and students and local space for Grace Counseling. The Christmas Offering helps us prepare and furnish the space for ministry in the Oviedo-Winter Springs area.
- **Moving to a more flexible worship location for Grace Winter Garden.** A local Christian school is partnering with our Winter Garden campus, giving them a chance to move out of the public school they've rented since 2014 and into a semi-permanent and visible home. They'll also have use of the facility during the week for gatherings and classes. The Christmas Offering will provide new and upgraded equipment needed for this move to help us reach more people in Winter Garden.
- **Expanding Grace Counseling.** Since we opened the doors of Grace Counseling in late 2019, our monthly counseling appointments have increased by 3267% (yes, more than 3,000 percent!) – we're often on a few-weeks wait. People are desperately in need of hope and healing; a gift to the Christmas Offering will help us begin to expand and dream bigger dreams for this vital ministry.
- **Establishing all-new Grace Teaching and Healing Scholarship Grants.** In line with our heart for the teaching and healing ministries of Jesus, Grace will develop and fund application-based grants for people entering degree programs that focus on teaching scripture or gospel-centered counseling.
- **Supporting the foster family-centered ministry of Commission 127.** Grace will provide financial support and resources for the mission of C127, which works to equip churches to love foster and adoptive families, to give every child a well-supported home, and to reach them with the love of Christ. Read more about their work at C127.org

A New Way to Give

Grace has recently moved our giving systems to a new church software called Planning Center. Planning Center is used by more than 60,000 churches, and it's safe and secure.

You can give to the Christmas offering in several ways — choose the best option for you:



➤ Online

discovergrace.com/give

➤ By text

Text your gift amount to **84321** and follow the prompts

➤ On the new Church Center App

Download it here: discovergrace.com/app

Open it up and it'll walk you through choosing Grace Church and setting up your gift

➤ By check

Drop it in the offering basket after service, or mail it to Grace Church, 2300 Pembroke Drive, Orlando, FL, 32810

IF YOU HAVE A GIFT OF STOCK OR OTHER NON-CASH GIFT

Visit discovergrace.com/give where you'll find a form to tell us all about it, email us at financial@discovergrace.com, or call 407-418-1300.

Choosing Love

BY JEANNE HARRISON

United with Christ in ROMANS



Author: Paul

Era: Paul wrote the book of Romans in the spring of AD 57, while in Corinth at the end of his third missionary journey.

Central Theme: In his letter to believers in Rome, Paul presents one of the most detailed and theologically rich explanations of the gospel and its practical implications for Christians. Central themes include universal sin and guilt, justification by grace through faith, union with Christ, and the Spirit's work in believers.

Get familiar with the book of Romans by reading the sidebar.

In Romans 8:26–30, Paul describes three reasons believers can live with unshakeable certainty: the Spirit's help in our weakness, the guarantee of future glory, and God's sovereign ability to use every circumstance for our ultimate good – to make us more like Jesus. These three realities form the basis for Paul's impassioned Q & A beginning in verse 31. Read Romans 8:31–34 below:

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

After writing, “What, then, shall we say in response to these things?” Paul poses five powerful questions. The first four are in the verses above. Underline each question and label it 1–4, beginning with #1: If God is for us, who can be against us?

Rewrite these four questions in your own words below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

LOOK BACK

Each question exposes a real cause for concern: opposition, lack of provision, guilt, and condemnation. Look back on your journey with Jesus. Which of these questions strike a nerve, and why? Have you faced opposition from which you've never fully recovered? Have you experienced a season of scarcity that continues to affect the way you view God, yourself, or the world? Are you haunted by guilt or the condemning voices of your past? Journal to the right about which question(s) resonates the most and why.

01.

Now read verses 35-37.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Underline the 5th question, marking it with a number “5.”

This is the real question. It's the heartbeat that pulses beneath every other question: Can I really count on the love of Christ? Is it truly unbreakable? Is it strong enough to sustain me? Is it certain or not?

Christians have experienced hardship, pain, and persecution throughout every age in history. In verse 36, Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 to validate the reality that in many ways we “face death all day long.”

Take a moment to have an honest conversation with God. Tell Him about the troubles and hardships in your daily life – the small and big ways in which you “face death all day long.” Confess your unbelief and ask God to renew your faith in His unbreakable love.

Read verses 38-39 aloud. Declare these words as a promise of absolute certainty, spoken over your life and future:

..... “

*For I am convinced that neither death
nor life, neither angels nor demons,
neither the present nor the future, nor
any powers, neither height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation, will be
able to separate us from the love of God
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

For I am convinced that neither _____

”

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.

[illegible]



The Rules of Love

The greatest of these is love. I Corinthians 13:13

It is easy to do the right thing for a little while.

You can stay good for a time to get attention, to please people, or to avoid pain. You can be motivated by guilt, or culture, or crowd.

But in 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul and his fellow missionary, Timothy, tell us that they keep doing the right thing — preaching and serving despite imprisonment and opposition — for just one reason: *For Christ's love compels us* (2 Corinthians 5:14). Christ's love for them, and the kind of love He

displayed with His life and ministry, is the thing that keeps them going. Jesus loved His Father, and He loved people enough to give Himself away. He even told us those two things were the most important things to do in the whole world:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:37-40).

LAYING THE RIGHT FOUNDATION

A few years back, we asked dozens of staff and key volunteers a question: *What do you think makes Grace... well... Grace?* We wanted to write down what we loved about the church family God was creating here so that we'd have a better chance of sustaining the best parts of who we are.

We got hundreds of words and phrases back. Then, we brainstormed and whittled them down to the 25 words that make up the 11 Grace House Rules you'll find on this page.

These Rules are guardrails for our culture – the “personality” of Grace – and they have kept us who we are through seasons of huge growth and change. But they don't work because they are some corporate gimmick or organizational trick. They don't even work because they are helpful principles.

They work because they are rooted in love.

We practice *radical hospitality* and *extraordinary servanthood* because we want to love well. We live with *big-hearted generosity* and are a *genuine family* because we care for each other. We focus on *Biblical maturity* and *simple steps* because we have deep affection for people, and we want them to grow.

LOVE IN ACTION

The House Rules are really just love in action. Indeed, our entire lives as followers of Christ must always be about love in action. Like Paul and Timothy and Jesus, we know that any other motivation to act will always run out in the end.

That's because love is the true language of heaven, and there's a reason for that: love is the last and only fruit of the Spirit we'll need one day. No more hope; our longings will be fulfilled. No more faith; what we waited for will have all come true. No more patience or kindness or perseverance, for sin and sorrow and stress will pass away.

We root our lives, and our church, and our House Rules, in love, because love is the greatest of these – the thing that lasts forever.

OUR HOUSE RULES



Grace-Centered Truth

We challenge people to be their best and love them at their worst.

Modern Liturgy

We build history into modern services because we are called to carry an ancient faith into the future.

Contagious Fun

We enjoy our work and each other.

Radical Hospitality

We go the extra mile to care for others because people's stories matter.

Extraordinary Servanthood

We serve sacrificially, giving up things we love for the people we love even more.

Wow-Making Excellence

We honor God and inspire people with our very best work.

Biblical Maturity

We expect to grow. We teach through the Bible verse-by-verse because it is the best way to know the Bible, and the Bible is the best way to know Jesus.

Genuine Family

Grace frees us from performance and lets us live unafraid.

Simple Steps

Everyone has a next step, and we make it easy to find yours.

Constant Innovation

To reach people who are far from God, we hold a loose grip on our methods and a tight grip on our beliefs.

Big-Hearted Generosity

We prioritize giving to God's work over protecting ourselves.

Giving Love

Changing Lives Through Outreach & Care

Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Jude 21

01. Grace Online

We loved our city and beyond by investing and developing our online worship experience.

94,000+

Household views of our online services this year

Could be one person watching, could be a whole family watching together! We love reaching people this way.

25-34 yrs

Largest demographic worshipping with us online

Online ministry is so important to reach younger generations.



Viewers

MEN



56.7%

WOMEN



43.3%

35

**Countries that participated
in Grace Online this year**

Second most popular after the US? India.



02. Grace Counseling

\$424,584

**The amount Grace saved the community
by offering reduced-cost counseling**

3267%

**Increase in
annual counseling
appointments
since the launch of
Grace Counseling
in December 2019**



9



Professional therapists serving others

(And we're in the process of adding more,
including online therapists!)

4,340

**Hours of
Professional
Therapist
Counseling**



03. Care

\$388,698

Given away to people in need, to our counseling ministry, and to our ministry partnerships

Grace cookies delivered to first-time guests 1,646

Needed to make them?

CUPS OF FLOUR	<div></div>	176
CUPS OF SUGAR	<div></div>	70.5

Hours of Pastoral & Benevolence Counseling 386

People assisted 869

People prayed for by name by our prayer teams 3,590+

- As part of our process of care, our prayer team prays for each first-time guest by name in addition to the prayer requests we receive each week. Let us know how we can pray for you at discovergrace.com/pray



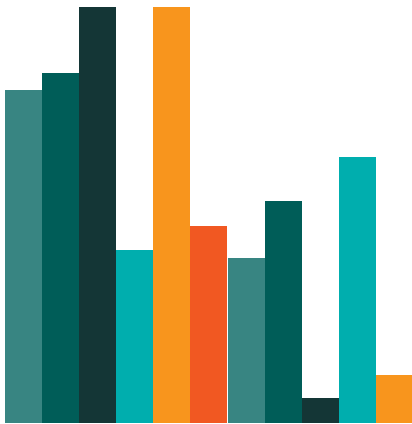
04. Team Grace

1,285

**Volunteers
on Team Grace**

Where our volunteers serve

COMMUNION	11%
GRACE COMMUNITY	12%
GRACEKIDS	23%
GRACESTUDENTS	4%
GUEST SERVICES	23%
GRACEOPS	5%
PASTORAL CARE	4%
PRAYER TEAM	7%
WEEKDAY VOLUNTEERS	1%
PLATFORM AND CREATIVE	8%
BIBLE STUDY TEACHERS	2%



1,350

**Total volunteer hours
served each week
across campuses**

You rock, Team Grace.

**Join Team Grace
and help us change
lives through love.**

SERVING IS BELONGING.

Head to our website to
explore all the opportunities.

discovergrace.com/team-grace



— — — — —
I AM CERTAIN OF



peace

KNOW THIS FOR CERTAIN



THE KINGDOM OF GOD
HAS COME NEAR.



Luke 10:11

Prince of our Eternal Peace,

Your reign spans the universe, yet it resides in us.
Though we were far away, You came near.
In our absence, You are present.

We confess our doubt and distrust.
How we long for certainty!
How we long for assurance!
In our desperation,
we cry out and You are right here.
Reveal Yourself to us as all we need.

Draw us near to You, Jesus.
Quiet the chaos and confusion around us.
Give us peace.
Amen.

Fighting Anxiety with the Gospel

As Christians, we want to be exempt from the worries of this world, but we're just not. Our children still get cancer, our spouses still cheat, pandemics break out, cars break down, bosses fire us, and bills don't get paid.

We are broken, and we live in a broken world, which is why it's important to remember that God didn't leave us to do this on our own. We have the gospel, and it gives us weapons to fight back against anxiety.

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is the natural response to fear and potential threats, designed to evoke a fight or flight response for our safety. Throughout history, humans have faced life-or-death situations, and anxiety served a positive purpose in saving us from wild animals, drought, disease, and starvation.

Now, however, anxiety rules over people who don't face immediate life-or-death situations, but rather the fear that they might happen. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety is the most common mental illness, affecting 18.1% of the adult population and impacting 25% of children. It's increasing rapidly and most commonly driven by three issues: safety, health, and finances. Anxiety costs \$300 billion annually in medical bills and lost productivity, with \$2.1 billion spent on anti-anxiety meds per year.

ANXIETY AND THE CHRISTIAN

Anxiety is rooted in fear – the belief that God does not have good in store for us, and isn't powerful enough to bring good from all things. Anxiety is not from God, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). 1 John 4:13-19 puts fear into context by teaching that God is love, and there is no fear in love because fear has to do with punishment. Jesus accepted the punishment we deserve. Therefore, perfect love casts out fear – if we are in Christ, the victory is ours. Sin and death have already been defeated. We know the brokenness of this world will not last forever, because someday everything will be restored.

It is in His love for us that we will feel safe and secure. God did not promise we would be free from trouble; however, He did promise to be an ever-present help in times of trouble (John 16:33, Psalm 46:1). Understanding the root of fear enables us to ask God for help. Do you fear losing control? Pain and suffering? Dying or losing a loved one? Being rejected or unworthy of love? Identify your fears, and you can face them with powerful spiritual weapons. "For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh" (2 Corinthians 10:3).



What is the GOSPEL?

The gospel is the “good news” that leads to salvation. It’s best understood within the larger narrative of the Bible:

Creation. God created the world and everything in it. He created man and woman in His own likeness. He blessed them and gave them dominion over everything on the earth. *Genesis 1:26*

Fall. When Adam and Eve rejected God’s rule, sin entered the world. The result is physical and spiritual death. *Genesis 2-3*

Redemption. God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue and redeem the world by dying on a cross to satisfy God’s holy wrath against sin. *John 3:16*

Restoration. One day Jesus will return to fully and finally restore all things. *Revelation 21*

We currently live amidst the brokenness of the fall, but with our eyes fixed on restoration. Jesus Christ has redeemed us, and we can live free from the weight of sin and eternal death.

Satan wants us to be occupied with what can happen – fear lies in the unknown – but that’s only half the story. We don’t know the future, but there is One who does – and He is Lord and Creator of all. Not only did He send His Son to walk the earth and be our example, He gives us His living Word to guide us. Moreover, He left the Holy Spirit to be alive in us, no matter where we go or what we do.

Sometimes offering up your anxiety in persistent prayer is enough.

Sometimes meditating on God’s Word and celebrating who He is and what He’s done is enough.

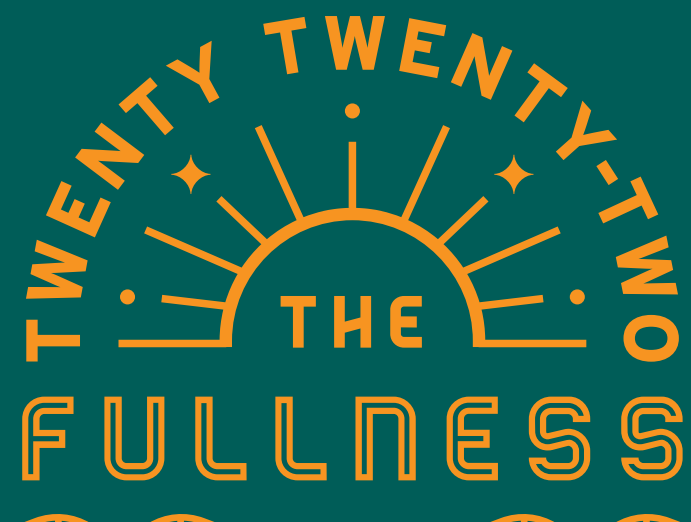
Sometimes anxiety is the Lord’s way of drawing you back to Himself, reminding you of your need for His peace that surpasses all understanding.

Sometimes, God brings along Biblical counsel – someone who can work with you to uncover those roots and point you back to Jesus.

Sometimes, you continually do all of the above and still find yourself clouded in anxiety. This is a battle that might not be won on this side of heaven, and because of the evil and brokenness of this world, your anxiety might have roots that are deeper than you can see. Keep fighting.

There is no one path to overcoming anxiety, because overcoming anxiety is not a promise for this life. The good news is that someday we will be home, where anxiety cannot exist, because there will be no more brokenness. So we wait in expectation for that glorious day, and in the meantime, we remember we are not fighting this battle alone.

Article written by Julie Hotalen, a Registered Mental Health Intern at Grace Counseling. To learn more, visit discovergrace.com/cc



The Fullness of God

OUR MINISTRY THEME FOR 2022

By Mike Adkins

Ask a Westerner to define “peace,” and chances are they’ll say something to the tune of “no more fighting.” Webster would agree. The dictionary definition of peace is “freedom from civil disturbance; a state of security or order within a community; harmony in personal relations.”

There’s a reason we view peace primarily as an absence of conflict. The word itself has a fascinating history. It comes from the Latin *pax*, who was the Roman goddess of peace. When Augustus came to power, he built his political empire around *pax*. He raised statues and ordered that she be worshipped. He minted coins with his face on one side, and an image of *pax* on the other – the idea being that Augustus alone could bring peace. How? Through military brutality. Through the power of the emperor to defeat every foreign threat and usher in the era of the *Pax Romana*, the Roman peace.

The political and militaristic overtures of our English definition of “peace” run down to its very roots: an ironic history of violence. The problem is not that our western understanding of peace is inaccurate. The problem is that it’s too small. To define peace as “not fighting” is like defining love as “not killing.” It’s not wrong; it’s just woefully insufficient.

The Jewish people had a richer perspective of peace. They didn’t see it merely as the absence of conflict, but as the presence of beauty, abundance, wholeness, and completion. To them, peace was *shalom*, the root word for *Jerusalem* (the “City of Peace”), and the word from which we derive the Hebrew *shalom*.

“

The problem is not that our western understanding of peace is inaccurate. The problem is that it’s too small.



UNDERSTANDING SHALEM

Put simply, *shalem* is the fullness of God. In Ephesians 3:18-19, Paul prays that the believers in Ephesus may have strength together with all the saints to grasp the depth of Christ's love – a love which defies knowledge – so that they may be “filled with all the fullness of God.” Interestingly, Paul isn't urging them to be independently whole, but rather, to experience the fullness of God within the broader context of the church – “together with all the saints,” or we could say, the people of God.

We won't grasp the fullness of God's power or the depth of His love living in isolation. We were made to experience these things together with God's holy people. But how do we know a love that transcends knowledge? This is an experiential knowing, akin to David's cry in Psalm 34:8, “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!”

LOOKING FORWARD

I believe that over the next few years people need to be hearing about the fullness of God. They need to know that God has more and better for them. I would love for people in Central Florida to hear “Grace Church” and think “help.” I'd love for them to know that if their life is unraveling, there's a place where they can find biblical teaching and healing.

No matter how we define peace, at the end of the day, we're longing for more than just an absence of conflict. In counseling, when a couple has stopped fighting because they just don't care anymore, it's not a sign of peace. It's a sign the marriage is over. The absence of conflict isn't the goal of a marriage, church, society, or an individual's private life. The goal is *shalem*. It's belonging. Virtue. Vulnerability. Trust. Completion. Blessing. Connection. Anticipation and satisfaction. It's the fullness of God for which we were created.

Imagine an entire city of Christians who lived the more beautiful story of *shalem*. Who didn't just tell people to stop cheating or drinking, but who pointed them in

”

Imagine an entire city of Christians who lived the more beautiful story of shalem. Who didn't just tell people to stop cheating or drinking, but who pointed them in the direction of Jesus.

the direction of Jesus. A city of Christians who grasped not only the power of God but the surpassing love of Christ, and poured that love – the very fullness of God – over every single person they met. The whole city would be changed. The whole world would be changed.

January Teaching Series: Living in the Fullness of God

Giving: How sacrificing empowers us

*What does your giving say about
what you believe about God?*

JANUARY

8/9

JANUARY
15/16

Belonging: How connecting sustains us

*How can the love of others help us
know the fullness of God?*

Serving: How giving our lives away heals us

How does helping others help you?

JANUARY

22/23

JANUARY
29/30

Gathering: How teaching changes us

How do teaching and worship heal you?



Big Dreams in the **FULLNESS OF GOD'S TIMING**

As we press into the fullness of God, He frees us and encourages us to serve Him more. Here are just some of the big dreams I imagine for Grace in the future – no dates, no deadlines right now, just dreams – as we follow His lead:

Training more counselors and pastors in the grace-centered truth and teaching and healing vision of Grace.

Expanding ministry impact and facility resources at all the campuses. We have great teams in place who help change lives every weekend. I want to give us the tools we need to be even more effective and transform neighborhoods for Jesus.

Through Grace Counseling, establishing recovery ministries for addictions and trauma that will help us meet the needs of a dying and hurting world in the name of Jesus.

And of course, always, that we will see more and more of your friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers come to know the good news and salvation of Christ and be baptized in His name.

And many more dreams, too! Let's see what God will do.

Choosing Peace

BY JEANNE HARRISON

Identifying with Christ in

LUKE



Author: Luke

Era: Luke is one of the four gospels to recount the life of Christ, from 5 BC to AD 33. It was most likely written in the early AD 60s.

Central Theme: The gospel of Luke is known for being thorough and meticulous, with 35% of its content being entirely unique. As a doctor, Luke paid particular attention to the humanity and suffering of Christ.

Get familiar with the book of Luke by reading the sidebar.

In Luke 9 and 10, Jesus trains and commissions His disciples to share the message of Christianity. Toward the end of chapter 9, just before sending them out, He teaches them that their attitudes should reflect humility, cooperation, mercy, and sacrifice. Read Luke 10:1-2 below:

“After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others, and He sent them ahead of Him in pairs to every town and place where He Himself was about to go. He told them, ‘The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’”

Pause and pray. Ask God to send “workers” of His own choosing to Grace, to partner with us in a gospel harvest.

Now read verses 3-9.

“Now go; I’m sending you out like lambs among wolves. Don’t carry a money-bag, traveling bag, or sandals; don’t greet anyone along the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this household.’ If a person of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they offer, for the worker is worthy of his wages. Don’t move from house to house. When you enter any town, and they welcome you, eat the things set before you. Heal the sick who are there, and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near you.’”

LOOK BACK

We, too, have been sent like lambs among wolves to bring a message of peace to a wounded world. Reflect on how God has used you to bring peace and healing to others. List every adjective (positive or negative) that comes to mind to describe what it feels like to be an agent of peace in a world of wolves.

01.

Read verses 10-12.

“When you enter any town, and they don’t welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ‘We are wiping off even the dust of your town that clings to our feet as a witness against you. Know this for certain: The kingdom of God has come near.’ I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.”

Underline the message Jesus tells his disciples to urge people to “know for certain.” In verse 9 the same message is spoken as a word of comfort to the sick, but here it is a warning. The Kingdom of God is the culmination of hope, joy, love, and peace for all who are in Christ Jesus. But for those who reject the gospel, the coming Kingdom brings judgment not rejoicing.

LOOK FORWARD

02.

Where will you spend eternity? If you’re uncertain, check out p. 64-65 to learn more about the gospel. If you’re certain of a better day coming, then glance back at any negative adjectives you wrote above. How will these words be re-written in eternity?

RESPOND

03.

What needs to happen in your life so that you are ready to be sent out to proclaim a message of peace and truth? Do you yourself need to receive healing? Do you need to surrender an idol or repent of an ungodly attitude? What’s hindering you from fully living “on mission” for Jesus? Lay it before God, claiming His love and forgiveness.

Now, go in peace, knowing He will never fail you. He will love you for eternity. He alone will be your certainty, now and forever.

Starts and Ends

BY HILLSONG UNITED

*My soul thirsts for things I can't explain
In my bones a beckoning to pray
If my heart is a battleground
My defenses run both ways
The flesh is a beggar and thief
But there is a Spirit-man awakening me*

*When real life and peace won't make amends
When all these starts
Start feeling like these ends
Like the world is unravelling
And I'm bound to come undone
There is a Shepherd, a Priest
There is a Comforter who comforts me*

*And my soul finds rest
Where it makes no sense
There the blood sets me free*

*All my old regrets
All my brokenness
All my failures redeemed*

*And it feels like grace
Where I stacked my shame
There the Cross stands for me*

*All the things I've done
All the times I've run
All my dead ends redeemed*

*And it looks like hope
Where my heart was broke
And His heart broke for me*

”

*My heart, which is so full to overflowing,
has often been solaced and refreshed by
music when sick and weary.*

MARTIN LUTHER

*Lay your burden down upon
Down upon Him
Lay your burden down (x8)*

*Jesus my rest in peace
My reconciler
You're my every good thing*

*I surrender all
All I'm living for
You're my every good thing*

*You're my amnesty
You're my split-wide sea
You're my every good thing*

*All my days and nights
You're my death to life
You're the wonder I breathe*

*You're my can't explain
First and last refrain
You're my every good thing*

Every GOOD THING

We live our lives a year, a day, a moment at a time. Able to recount what we've been through, but unable to relive it, for better or for worse. This song reminds us that God stands outside of time. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He is there when our hearts are awakened to Him, and He will be there at the end of time. Lay your burden down – down upon Him – because Jesus is our “every good thing.” He goes before us. He is God with us. He is the good that is ahead.



Listen to this song on Spotify!

Giving Peace

Changing Lives Through Generosity

Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered. Proverbs 11:25

01. Grace Giving Stats

FROM OCT 1, 2020 - SEP 30, 2021

Households that gave for the first time

430

Overall increase year over year

NEW CORE GIVERS



11%

TOTAL GIVING



16%

Ways people give

ONLINE 78%

IN-PERSON/BY MAIL 18%

STOCK 4%

Considering a gift of stock or leaving a legacy to Grace in your will? Email our Executive Business Director, Adrian Lenti alenti@discovergrace.com

Households who give vs. households who do not give



GIVE 66%

DO NOT GIVE 34%

21% give \$1,000-4,999

= 18% of total giving

9% give \$5,000-9,999

= 21% of total giving

8% give >\$10,000

= 58% of total giving

Percent of Total Giving by Campus

ORLANDO	73.3%
OVIEDO	21.5%
WINTER GARDEN	5.2%

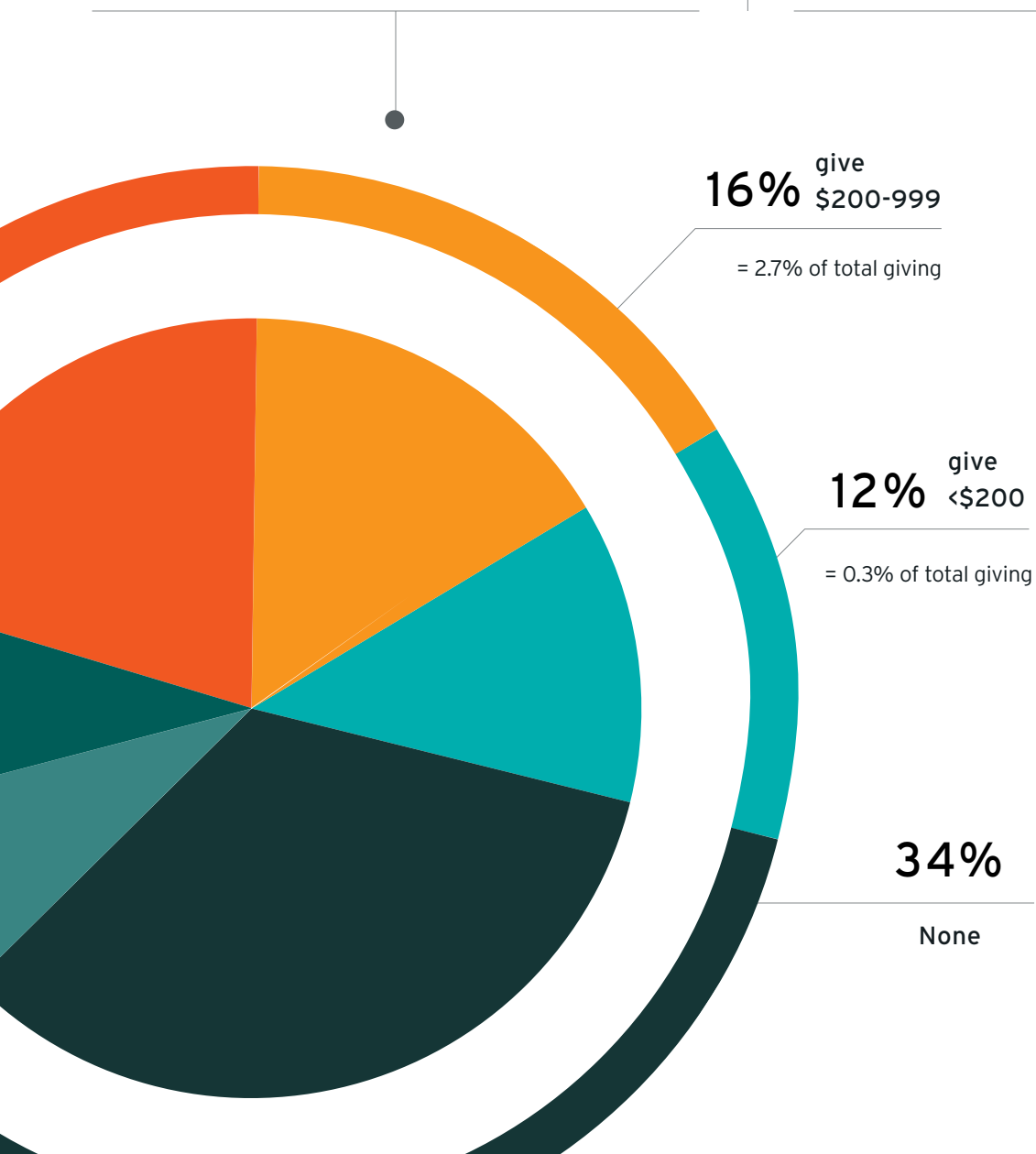


Percent of Total Attendance by Campus

ORLANDO	68.2%
OVIEDO	22.1%
WINTER GARDEN	9.7%



Annual Giving Range of Grace Households



Age Range of Core Givers



Under 20	1%
20-29	14%
30-39	27%
40-49	21%
50-59	19%
60-69	13%
70+	5%

02. Income & Expenses

FROM OCT 1, 2020 - SEP 30, 2021

Tithes and Offerings

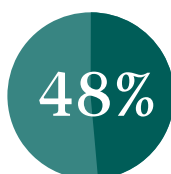
\$5,863,472.50

Expenses

ADMINISTRATION & OPERATIONS	\$467,410.00
ADULT DISCIPLESHIP	\$218,493.92
BENEVOLENCE, COUNSELING, & PARTNERSHIPS	\$388,698.12
COMMUNICATIONS	\$84,025.44
FACILITIES	\$638,202.10
FAMILY MINISTRY (Kids & Students)	\$170,661.60
STAFFING & STAFF DEVELOPMENT	\$2,799,256.46
VOLUNTEER CARE & DEVELOPMENT	\$315,150.76
WORSHIP SERVICES	\$517,334.20

Total Expense

\$5,599,232.60



Grace Staffing is 48% of budget and includes salaries, benefits, and staff development. The average church invests 52% of budget in staffing. This number can range from 46% to 60% (*Leadership Network/Vanderbloemen Search Group*).

Ben Habeck from Dime Accounting functions as Grace's CFO Consultant. He and his team offer advice and oversight, assuring Grace's expenses align with appropriate standards. He also helps us on how to best organize the church's finances to accomplish its mission.

03. Grace Church Facility

Original Purchase & Renovation	\$6,600,000
AMOUNT OF DEBT REDUCED SO FAR	(\$3,263,614)
CURRENT LOAN BALANCE	\$3,336,386
CASH ON RESERVE FOR DEBT REPAYMENT	\$464,082

Financial responsibility
AND FUTURE
OPPORTUNITIES

Grace is committed to financial responsibility, leveraging assets for ministry, and paying off debt.

Income beyond expenses is either used for this purpose or saved for it, so that we are well prepared for future ministry opportunities.

Be a part of the 2022
annual report.

GROW IN GENEROSITY. GIVE TODAY.

Give to Grace's mission in less than five minutes on our free app:

discovergrace.com/app

or on our website:

discovergrace.com/give

Finding Peace through Generosity

We find the most peace when we have the right priorities. Walk through these questions about giving, taking the time to talk with God about the things He wants first in your life in this season and in the year ahead.

“

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to

*Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.
Colossians 1:15-23*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Do I give in such a way that places Christ as first in all things? Practically speaking, does my giving affect my saving and spending decisions, or do my saving and spending decisions affect my giving?

01.



In light of the gospel's transformative power in my life and who Christ is, am I giving in a way that changes me, or has it become comfortable and stagnant?

02.

Would others look at my life and see that God is the page on which all of my priorities are written? Or is God merely a number on my list of priorities, even if a high one, on my own page? Whose page is it? (Be as honest as you can.)

03.

What things currently hold the top spot in my life that sometimes cause changes in my giving? Is it my kids? My spouse? My job? My house? How can I better let my priority of Christ drive those things rather than the other way around?

04.

A large indoor event, possibly a church service or a concert, featuring a stage with several performers and a large audience. The stage is lit with blue and white lights, and a large screen displays the text "ALL HAIL THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD". The audience is silhouetted against the stage lights, with many people raising their hands in the air. The ceiling is high with visible stage lighting rigs and equipment.

ALL HAIL THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD



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