



# Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational  
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Pittsfield, MA 01201

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Welcome to the August/September edition of the Grace Church newsletter. Send any suggestions or submissions for next month's newsletter to [secretary@gracecongregational.org](mailto:secretary@gracecongregational.org)





## From the Pastor's Desk

*I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For anyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks*

Perhaps you have prayed for something and not had your prayer answered. If you are like me, you find yourself asking, “Why are someone else’s prayers answered while mine aren’t? Have I done something to offend God? Do I not have access to God’s ear like someone else? Didn’t Jesus say, ask, seek, and knock, and your prayers would be answered?”

As I mentioned in our last newsletter, our Friday evening Bible study has been reading Bryan Chapell’s, *Praying Backwards*. It is helpful to remember that Jesus is encouraging us to be persistent in prayer. Jesus had just told the parable of a man who bangs on his neighbor’s door late at night asking for bread because he had visitors arrive unexpectedly and didn’t have anything to feed them. (None of us relish the idea of being awakened from a sound sleep by a neighbor who hadn’t planned ahead) The neighbor reluctantly gives him some bread so he can get back to sleep.

It might seem God would get tired of us pestering him. Besides that, God is not hard of hearing, nor is his memory short. But the point that Jesus makes is not that God will relent to our wishes because he is tired of us pestering him, but that God, in contrast to the reluctant neighbor, actually delights in answering our prayer. But that begs the question, as Chapell asks, *Why does the sovereign God, who is able to control all things, who miraculously answers prayer in Scripture, and who tells us we will receive whatever we ask in Jesus’ name, still want persistent prayer?*

For one thing, what may seem like a good thing to us may not be as good as a better thing that God wants to reveal to us in the long run. For example, God could, *convert millions in an hour, move mountains in a minute, provide rent money in a second, and heal before we ask* as Chapell writes, so why does he require us to be persistent in prayer? The problem lies in what we think God ought to do. We identify the absence of difficulty as good when God’s greater good is to conform us to the likeness of his Son.

Tied closely tied to this is our propensity to distraction. Chapell says, *If we could snap our fingers and get God to perform on cue, our prayers would promote self-indulgence rather than holiness*. By feeding our appetites we would be all too easily distracted from God himself. As Chapell writes, *The key to spiritual happiness is not the Midas touch, but trust in God. The fulfillment of the soul is not earthly gain but enjoyment of the Savior. Thus persistent prayer in all circumstances keeps these perspectives fresh and exercises the faith that keeps them strong*. That’s why he says, *persistent prayer makes us more Christlike by tempering our human selfishness and by strengthening our divine dependence*.

Instead of discouraging us to persist, Jesus encourages us. If we understand prayer rightly, what we come to realize is that prayer actually has more to do with what God is doing in us, and our relationship with our him as our Heavenly Father, than it has to do with the things we pray for. Not that the things we pray for are not important, but what he really wants is for us to know him. After forty-five years as a Christian, this is something I feel like I’m just now beginning to understand.

Pastor Tom Bridgman



Note: Italicized quotes are from Bryan Chapell’s *Praying Backwards* (Baker Books)

# Missions Corner

Tuvia Zaretsky (excerpts from August 2017 newsletter)

Blessings to all at Grace Church Congregational. I hope you are all getting recharged this summer. Ellen joins me in sending thanks to you for your prayers as we pursue God's salvation plan for our Jewish people. We appreciate your partnership with us in reaching Jews for Jesus.

This month is the total solar eclipse that will track across the United States on August 21<sup>st</sup>. I know that for many people, it is exciting to witness something new as it is happening. That's why I enjoy sending out these monthly updates. Current news about what the Lord is doing among our Jewish people is encouraging. And I'm seeing validation of my enthusiasm about Jewish hearts as a new generation is opening to the Gospel.

My parents and my generation (the baby boomers) were taught that the only religion for Jewish people was Judaism. I came to faith during a spiritual wave that brought many young American Jews of my generation to faith in the Messiah Jesus. You can see a 9-minute video, as I share the story on YouTube at, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIBzoWqzdco>

Well, there is a new openness growing among Jews in America. Earlier this year, the Barna Group completed research on the spiritual interests of American Jewish millennials (aged 18-31). Our ministry helped craft the survey but had no control over the collection or presentation of the data. We suggested a few Jewish scholars, rabbis and public policy shapers who could comment on the survey findings in a series of essays. Most of their reaction was dismay and frustration, because the findings reveal a spiritual interest – but not strictly for Judaism.

In contrast, we are incredibly excited by the changes in attitude taking shape among this group of younger American Jews. After three decades of intermarriage, more than half of all American Jewish millennials have just one Jewish parent. And they are the primary identity of the next generation of American Jewry. The Barna study found nine out of ten Jewish Millennials are spiritually interested. 73% of them want to learn about religion, and not just Judaism. In fact, almost two thirds of them said they were interested in learning about Judaism and Christian faith!

My interest is missiology, so I was honored to be invited to write a short paper about the implications of this Barna study for Jewish evangelism. It should be available when the study is published early this fall. I'll let you know when it's available online. Meanwhile, these findings have been a cause for excitement and have bumped interest in our Jewish-Gentile couple ministry up a notch. Right now, only the Behold Your God Campaign in Israel next year has higher priority. But after that... 😊

There's another bit of exciting news on the way. This weekend, I submitted my final edit for the new Jewish-Gentile Couples outreach booklet. The working title is, *Finding Spiritual Harmony in your Jewish-Gentile Relationship*. Yup, I'm pretty pumped about this one too. Please pray for wisdom as we push to release it next month.

I know that you will continue praying with us for the Jewish-Gentile couples to whom I'm currently ministering. I was traveling on ministry matters during the last two months. So, now I'm back and catching up with many of them, like Kyle and Leah, who I hope to see in a couple of weeks. I'm especially eager to see his spiritual progress over the past two months. I have no doubt the Lord has been working.

Thanks for your prayers and financial support for our Jews for Jesus efforts. My verse for the coming solar eclipse is Isaiah 9:2, "The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined." Matthew 4:16 celebrates Messiah Jesus as that great light! Hallelujah!

## LEARNING & ARRIVING: CHOOSING OUR KING

*By Doug Rose*

*The Lord said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. 1 Sam. 8:7*

I am blessed and honored to once again have been asked by the Elders to lead the adult Sunday school class for the Fall semester studies. We will endeavor to read, ponder, and discuss the Old Testament’s first book of Samuel. Our study and discussion guide will be *Choose Your King*<sup>1</sup> by Dr. Tim Chester, the pastor of *Grace Church* in Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire, U.K. The Elders have assisted the class by acquiring a dozen of the workbooks: available first come, first serve. The workbook is also readily available from your favorite Christian book distributors for about \$9.00. Dr. Chester has also authored a longer textbook, *I Samuel for You*<sup>2</sup>, which your study leader will be using to moderate the discussions. I can also recommend John MacArthur’s study guide, *I Samuel: The Lives of Samuel and Saul*<sup>3</sup>, to further inform us on some discussion topics, and I am using a longer commentary from the “Reformed Expository Commentary” series called *I Samuel*<sup>4</sup>, by Richard D. Phillips, for more extensive preparation materials.

Our goal, as in all of our Bible studies, is to trace out our redemptive history, thread by thread, strand by strand, as it has been woven by the Holy Spirit into the fabric of Scripture and the Word of God. No single page or episode in this first book of Samuel fails to remind us that in our race’s search for an earthly anointed king, “the history of the first christs [the anointed ones] leaves us longing for the rule of the ultimate Christ.”<sup>5</sup> In all Scripture, “[w]e are being shown who God is and how he rules his people; and we are being shown Jesus, His Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

I have prepared a syllabus dividing our study of the book up into thirteen segments, along the lines of Chester’s commentary. I once again intend to build with you a covenant believing community from the Sunday School class – a group of disciples of Christ committed to learning the wisdom, beauty, and meaning of Scripture – so, as has been our practices in classes past, we will commence *promptly* (that means at 9:30 a.m., not 9:34 or 9:41 a.m.), adjourn *timely* (that means at 10:30 a.m.), attend *regularly*, prepare *thoroughly*, participate *vigorously*, interact *courteously*, and learn *prayerfully*.

<sup>1</sup> Epsom, Surrey, U.K.: The Good Book Company; 2014. ISBN 1909919594.

<sup>2</sup> Epsom, Surrey, U.K.: The Good Book Company; 2014. ISBN 1909919578.

<sup>3</sup> Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson Books, 2016. ISBN 0718034724.

<sup>4</sup> Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing; 2012. ISBN 1596381973.

<sup>5</sup> Chester, *I Samuel for You, supra*, p.8.

## An Open Letter to Those Apathetic about Their Sanctification

Dear friend,

How can I light a fire and get you engaged and active in wanting to grow when you don't really seem that interested? You're "eh," "meh," and "whatever." What could shake you out of apathy and indifference? What could shake you out of plodding along through life, going through the motions in your Christianity?

There's no magic answer of course. But let me share a couple of things that I've found that have affected my own lethargy and apathy. First of all, I often look at myself in light of the seven deadly sins. (These are actually the seven *daily* sins, things that are endemic to what it means to be a human being!) The one that always gets me is sloth (Latin: *acedia*). Sloth doesn't just mean you're just sitting around watching TV all day, popping bonbons. Sloth also means indifference. Feeling apathetic. Sloth says, "I don't really care. It doesn't matter. What's the use? Whatever." It's a pretty accurate characteristic of the modern era, a mild cynicism that questions whether or not anything really matters.

The thing is, everything actually does matter. It matters a whole lot. The tiniest things we do, the most careless words we say, the smallest act of kindness towards another person—all these things actually count. We live in God's world. From God's perspective, there's nothing we do that's outside his concern or gaze.

Think of how Jesus chose to single out giving a glass of cold water to somebody who is thirsty, and talked about how you won't lose your reward in heaven when you do something that small. He thought that spotting someone else and serving them in some small way really, really mattered. It's the opposite of indifference because someone else's need matters to the point that you put yourself out.

Also, let's think about the way in which people who are apathetic also often complain and grumble. We can become negative, mildly sour, skeptical about stuff that happens. You know, in the Bible, the people of Israel were killed for grumbling! It was a death-sentence crime to grumble, because God is truly good, and we lose sight of that when we become absorbed in our own needy desires.

We forget, but God doesn't forget. Grumbling matters before him. He is continually calling for us to wake up and remember. He reminds us not to fall asleep or lose sight of what it's all about. He says, "Don't forget who you are, and don't forget who I am." Don't forget that everything we do and say actually matters. Every careless word or unthinking comment actually matters, and our God is committed to touch us right down to the throw-away comments, the casual bad attitudes and "whatevers" that can so degrade our lives into apathy.

Human life—every choice, every thought, every word, every deed, and every attitude—really, truly matters. As you awaken to that, you awaken to the fact that you really need help. You're able to say, "God, I really need you. I need your strength. I need your forgiveness. Give me the grace to care about things that really matter."

—David

## Searching for Truth

by [Burk Parsons](#)

Whenever people ask me what I do for a living, I respond by telling them I am a pastor. When I tell them I am a pastor, people appear to be instantly filled with a range of emotions as they try to figure out how to respond. Depending on their spiritual state and their relationship to Christ and the church, their responses range from fear to comfort, from anxiety to delight. Some people attempt to change the subject as quickly as possible, some want to tell me all about their spiritual journey, some want to unload all their burdens, some talk about why they left the church, and others rejoice in our common faith in Christ. But more often than not, when I tell people I'm a pastor, they have questions—questions about our church, about what I believe, about the Bible, God, and the afterlife. All people have questions. We are inquisitive by nature. And in this age of pluralism, atheism, and skepticism, many people are searching for truth and the answers to life's ultimate questions.

In some ways, pastors have more opportunities than other Christians to proclaim and explain the gospel and do the work of an evangelist and apologist. It is one of the joys of being a pastor. By the very nature of what we do, pastors are theologians and apologists. But in truth, every Christian is a theologian and an apologist. The question for all of us is whether we are good theologians and apologists and whether we are serious students of Scripture and the theology and answers that come from Scripture. Every Christian is called to be ready to give an answer for the hope that's within us, as Peter commands us, and never to forget that we are to give our answers with "gentleness and respect" ([1 Peter 3:15](#)).

As we do our good works before the watching world—not to be seen by men in order to get glory for ourselves, but so that the world might see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven—people will naturally ask us why we do all that we do, why we believe what we believe, and why we hold to the hope that is within us. And when they do, we must not be afraid, for Christ has promised that the Holy Spirit is with us to give us the courage and compassion to speak the truth in love. For this is one of the chief ways we shine as lights in the darkness of the world, knowing that people can only see the light if the Holy Spirit opens their eyes, expels the darkness, regenerates their hearts, and makes them alive to the light of the glory of Jesus Christ.

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from Tabletalk online : <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/searching-truth/>

Dr. Burk Parsons is copastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Fla., a Ligonier Ministries teaching fellow, chief pub-



# GRACE CHURCH NEWS



## FALL SCHEDULE

Our fall schedule will resume on **Sunday, September 10th**, with **worship at 10:45 a.m.** and **Sunday School** for children and adults at **9:30 am**. The adult class will be studying the book of I Samuel.



## WOMEN AT PRAYER

Women are invited to come together at the church on **Wednesday evening, August 30th, from 7:00-8:00 p.m.** for a time of prayer for friends and family who do not yet know Jesus as Lord and Savior. We anticipate Christ's presence with us as we pray for the advance of His Kingdom!



## LIVE COALS PRAYER

Our monthly time of corporate prayer now takes place on the first Sunday of each month. Join us on **Sunday, September 3rd, and again on Sunday, October 1st, from 5:00-6:00 p.m.** for a time of concerted prayer before our Heavenly Father. Come a bit earlier for a time of singing together before we enter into prayer.

## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD FULL CIRCLE SPEAKER

Elizabeth Henry, who received a shoebox as a child in a Ukrainian orphanage, is going to share what God did in her life through that shoebox gift. Join us on **Sunday, September 10th at 4:00 p.m.** Refreshments will be served.



## MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Men of all ages are invited to meet for a monthly time of study, discussion, and prayer **Saturday, September 16th, from 7-8:30 a.m.** at Doug Rose's home in Stockbridge. The men are using Bryan Chapell's *Unlimited Grace*. Breakfast is provided.

## CELTIC REVIVAL

The Sky family from Prince Edward Island will present a high energy music, dance, and gospel production on **Sunday, September 24th at 6:00 p.m.**, at First Congregational Church, 46 North Main Road, in Otis. A free will offering will be taken.



## LOOKING AHEAD



## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Women of all ages are invited to a time of study, discussion and prayer on **Saturday, October 7th, from 9:30-11:00 a.m.** at the church. The women are beginning a study of I Peter.



# August/September 2017



Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
20 10:00 Worship	21 7:00 p.m. Addictions Victorious	22	23	24	25 6:30 pm Young Adult Bible Study	26
27 10:00 Worship	28 7:00 p.m. Addictions Victorious	29	30 7:00 p.m. Women at Prayer	31	1 SEPTEMBER 6:30 pm Young Adult Bible Study	2
3 10:00 Worship 5:00 p.m. Live Coals Prayer	4 7:00 p.m. Addictions Victorious	5	6	7	8 6:30 p.m. Young Adult Bible Study	9
10 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 4:00 Operation Christmas Child	11 7:00 pm Addictions Victorious	12	13	14	15 6:30 pm Young Adult Bible Study	16 7:00-8:30 am Men's Prayer Fellowship
17 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship Congregational lunch and meet- ing	18 7:00 pm Addictions Victorious	19	20	21	22 6:30 pm Young Adult Bible Study	23
24 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	25 7:00 pm Addictions Victorious	26	27	28	29 6:30 pm Young Adult Bible Study	30 