



August 2002

**For the MESSAGE OF THE CROSS is foolishness to those who are perishing,  
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).**

*Joy is healing slowly and surely from her back surgeries and staph infection. She is still quite weak, but recently has felt the best since her surgeries. She will be on IV antibiotics through September as one area of her incision continues to heal. And she is healing in a precious way from the loss of her daddy. Some days we feel stuck because we cannot be "doing" much. The world's wisdom is based on being rewarded for "doing" right things and being punished for "doing" wrong things, and that makes sense. However, the gospel of Jesus Christ is not from this world. God is graciously reminding us of our value of "being" in Christ. That's the ultimate reward that cannot be earned (i.e., grace)! That's where true healing occurs. That's the heart of the gospel MESSAGE that has been much on my mind.*

*I used to focus only on HOW to share the gospel MESSAGE, which I now realize can focus on me, my abilities, my "doing." God is humbling me to focus on the MESSAGE itself, or I should say, Himself ☺! I continue to be amazed at the glory of the MESSAGE, which is becoming richer and richer to me. I am learning that as I gaze upon the WHO of the MESSAGE (and not only the HOW), God abundantly overflows the MESSAGE from my life to others in ways I could have never devised. The MESSAGE is the very life of Christ revealed through the cross.*

### The Message of the Cross

God has one MESSAGE on His heart to communicate...HIS SON. 1 Corinthians 1:18 calls this MESSAGE the "message of the cross." Some Bible translations refer to it as the "word of the cross." You may have heard it called "the gospel of Jesus Christ." It is the theme of the entire Bible. At first, the gospel message to me was "Christ died for me on the cross so I could be forgiven of my sins and could go to heaven." And that's so wonderful. Then, God disciplined me to grow in seeing all that happened on the cross for me. Here is the heart of the MESSAGE of the cross:

**The death and burial of Jesus Christ for me,  
AND  
His subsequent resurrection and ascension to heaven,  
AND  
my identification by grace through faith in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to heaven.**

When I willingly received the gift of forgiveness in Christ, God also gave me His very life! God identified me with Christ, and I literally became one with Christ in His death and burial (the old unrighteous Gregg is forever gone) and I became one with Him in His resurrected life (the new righteous Gregg has been forever re-born)! You see, man's greatest problem is that he is born in sin separated from holy God. Even good works by men are tainted by sin. And because life is only in God, man's greatest problem is that he is dead (spiritually and actually). Therefore, man's greatest need is life, not heaven. And this life is only available through Jesus who said in John 14:6 "I am THE life." So, man's greatest need is a Person (Christ), not a place (heaven)!

Satan's goal is to get our focus off of the glorious MESSAGE of **LIFE IN CHRIST NOW** to steal the glory of Christ shining through us. I believe we are tempted to focus on the future, instead of focusing on the present life of Christ in us NOW. I used to view dying and going to heaven as future events. Yet Colossians 3:4 from the Bible says that I have already died and gone to heaven!

***"If then you were raised with Christ (past, not future!), seek those things which are above (now, not future!), where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God (now, not future!). Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died (past, not future!), and your life is hidden with Christ in God (now, not future!)."***

I don't understand this in my mind, but I believe it with all my heart of faith. [Someone has said, "I don't understand electricity, but I'm not going to sit in the dark until I do!" hee, hee ☺!] Now, this doesn't take away from the fact that a child of God will indeed physically die and go to heaven... but this will happen only as a consummation of a reality that has already taken place through the cross. Oh how vital it is to see that Christ's work for us through the cross is 100% finished! If you are in Christ, you are completely righteous, because you have all of Christ and He is all-righteous (see Colossians 2:10 and 1 Corinthians 1:30)!

Our sole "responsibility" is simply, and seemingly foolishly, to believe (trust, rest in, take God at His Word regarding) the MESSAGE of the cross that claims God has already done it all for us! This MESSAGE is the power of God (not my power) that works (He works, not me) in those who (simply) believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13)! Your life is 100% God's responsibility, because He purchased you at the price of the cross (1 Corinthians 6:20)! You can trust Him with all of your life, no matter what comes your way!

*I have witnessed many people transformed through the message of the cross (me and Joy included) because it frees us to experience the gift of Christ's Life, independent of our efforts that we have come to see as absolutely futile apart from Christ. My purpose through this newsletter is not to convince others that I'm right...my purpose is only to manifest the Life of whom this newsletter testifies. Each newsletter is intended to present another sparkling aspect of God's diamond ring to us...His MESSAGE of the cross...the very Life of Christ for us, to us, and through us!*

**Hebrews 1:3 says, "God has spoken to us by His Son WHO IS the brightness of God's glory!"**

[More on back]

## Christ Life Ministries Grace Life Workshop

August 12-17 I helped lead a 25-hour Grace Life Workshop encouraging three people to share the life of Christ. It was the first Workshop held in the little office in Simpsonville that Joy and I are leasing. We each came from diverse backgrounds, yet there was a unity and joy around the message of the cross. My heart is to grow with others in "being real" and not "doing religious things" so that others may see the reality of Jesus. It's awesome to realize that God chooses to communicate this real message through people! The message is so simple it confounds the wise of this world. I like to tell people the message is **simply profound** and **profoundly simple!** The message can be received only by God's revelation, and not by man's intellect. This message IS CHRIST Himself, not knowledge ABOUT CHRIST. The photo below from left to right is me, Harold, Debra, Joey...their testimonies from the Workshop follow.



*"I found the material that was so effectively communicated to us to be so spiritually rewarding. I have been greatly blessed."*

*"The workshop was both inspiring and challenging! I literally opened my arms, embraced my weaknesses, and allowed God to embrace me."*

*"I went to the workshop fully expecting to learn how to minister to others...but the most exciting thing that happened was that I was ministered to. This was a great experience to learn to become transparent with one another and to allow the Holy Spirit to shine through us so that we could see the different spiritual gifts that God has bestowed to each of us, and how He plans to use them to minister to others. What a blessing!!!!!!"*

Please feel free to contact me if you are interested in learning more about being encouraged through the discipling ministries of Christ Life Ministries. I would love to share more with you by mail, in your home, in your church, or in the little Simpsonville office.

## Association of Exchanged Life Ministries

Christ Life Ministries is a member of the Association of Exchanged Life Ministries ([www.aelm.org](http://www.aelm.org)). There are 24 other member ministries across the country. The purpose statement of AELM is:

*To facilitate the interaction of AELM members as they help equip members of the body of Christ to experience, mature in, and effectively communicate the message of the cross (Galatians 2:20) in their various spheres of influence so that all may know Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord, and Life.*

GraceWalk Ministries is an AELM member in Atlanta, Georgia ([www.gracewalk.org](http://www.gracewalk.org)). In the August newsletter from GraceWalk Ministries, Director Steve McVey writes a description of the Christ life as a parallel to the Land of Oz. When you enter into the Christ life, you are taken from a legalistic land where everything is black and white, and you are transformed into a land of colorful grace where Christ reveals His beauty and provides your every need. Steve McVey writes:

*"In the land of grace, it is necessary to renew our minds to a new way of life. All of the old ways of living don't fit in this new world. Don't try to apply the principles of life you knew before in this new place. Grace isn't simply a truth we add to our lives. God's grace expressed through the indwelling Christ becomes our life. He doesn't simply make the landscape of life more beautiful. He is the very air we breath. "In Him we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28)."*

Steve McVey will be teaching on the message of the cross in a series entitled "Your Identity in Christ" at the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove in Asheville, NC September 10-12.

## The Message of the Cross in the Ukraine

On the Internet, I came across encouraging testimonies centered in the message of the cross from two young men with Abiding in Christ Ministries in the Ukraine ([www.uucyc.net/aic/eng/about/about.html](http://www.uucyc.net/aic/eng/about/about.html)). I hope you are encouraged, too.

*"Hello. My name is Sergei. I live in Kiev, Ukraine. When I became a Christian in 1993, my life changed. To be correct, my life was exchanged. I got His life, the very life of my Wonderful God. Jesus Christ became all to me. I'm very happy to have Jesus as my life, who loves me and cares for me. God called me to serve discouraged Christians. I like helping people. Even though I have no resources to help somebody, I know The One who is able to help everybody. I know for sure, there is nothing in life His presence will not cure!"*

*"Hi! My name is John. I was born in Siberia and then lived in Chernobyl till 1986. After the catastrophe (nuclear plant explosion), I moved to Kiev. I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior in 1994. I was baptized in 1995. In 2000, I graduated from Kiev Theological Seminary. His Life is amazing! It refreshes me! He gives you freedom! Freedom to serve and live because you want to! And it's all natural! The dependence on Him is the blessed way of living! He is the Life! I love to let God serve others through me. Galatians 2:20! Amen!"*

Miscellaneous journal notes:

You will rest from the barrenness of busyness (Hebrews 4:1).

Frustrations will be transformed to peace (Philippians 4:6-7).

Confidence in good works will pale in relation to the glorious work of Christ (Philippians 3:8-11).

Routine living conditions will be transformed into a most exciting adventure of hope and joy each day (Philippians 3:12).

Attempts to witness a plan of salvation to a few people will be transformed into witnessing the Man of salvation to everyone (2 Corinthians 2:15).

God's Word, the Bible, will come alive (Hebrews 4:12).

The focus on future rewards will be transformed into the joy of experiencing the present-day reward of presenting Christ to others (1 Corinthians 9:18).

People who are still have some confidence in their contribution to the Christian life might be threatened by your freedom (Galatians 2:4).

You will not be burdened to defend your freedom.

You will no longer identify yourself as "sinner" but will agree with God that you are now a "son" (Galatians 3:7).

You will be prepared to naturally give a defense for the hope (who is Christ Himself) that is in you (1 Peter 3:15).

Vision of ministry will be transformed from "doing" things to "being" in Christ and trusting Him to minister through you (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

You will be entrusted to watch a person's countenance of doom and despair resurrect into one of hope and joy.

You will do things that will appear absolutely crazy to others (2 Corinthians 12:11).

God will reveal to you who you really are and how He has uniquely created you. God will introduce you to...you.

You will experience the life of Christ overflowing from your unique personality (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Your security in financial stability in this world will dissipate.

You will no longer have to feel guilty in witnessing to the lost.

God will free you to be real (and not religious) in order to witness the real Jesus to many people He places on your heart.

You will become bold to cry out from the mountain tops the pure gospel of grace: righteousness and life apart from works.