

GRACE

Great Good News!

December 2003

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the
FELLOWSHIP of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:9).

This month a friend who ministered to me and Joy helped me to re-focus on this foundational calling...a call into fellowship with the living Jesus. *Fellowship* means *relationship* and *communion*. I realize now that this is all I have (and all I need) to offer other people...a living relationship with Jesus. Even each monthly newsletter is written out of many hours of my relationship with Christ...a sweet, healing time for me. These newsletters are not out of my own wisdom and good efforts. Sometimes I am tempted to feel awkward in doing the newsletters, but truth prevails and I just do what's on the heart God gave me.

Over the past few years, I have been given many opportunities through my daily walk and through Christ Life Ministries (CLM) to disciple precious people. CLM is often perceived as a "counseling ministry," and there is nothing wrong with that. However, CLM is more accurately a discipling ministry, or a teaching ministry. I do not give counsel (advice) to people based on a bunch of knowledge I have obtained through college and seminary. Hurting people don't need knowledge and advice...hurting people need life and hope...life and hope that only the living Jesus is and can provide. I disciple out of my own personal relationship with Jesus. People are drawn to that relationship. I know of nothing more joyful than when someone encounters the living Jesus through the apparent foolishness of my teaching, and responds to the call to genuinely fellowship with Jesus! I am not the counselor...Jesus truly is the Wonderful Counselor through me. And He can counsel through you, too.

And each and every person to whom God reveals the living indwelling Jesus shares this living hope with others. This sharing is the natural overflow of Jesus from that person's life. Following are two recent testimonies that I hope are encouraging to you.

MIRACLE AT BREAKFAST

A friend met another lady at breakfast in Opryland Hotel in Nashville. My friend struck up a conversation as she is gifted to do, and this other lady was almost immediately drawn into a trust relationship with my friend. The other lady began to share with my friend her burdens of trying to live the Christian life. My friend listened with empathy, and when she sensed God's timing she began to encourage the other lady that the Christian life is not by trying but by trusting Christ living in and through her. The lady said that she just did not feel worthy enough for Jesus to live in her. My friend lovingly replied, "Of course you're not worthy, that's why it's called GRACE!" My friend told me that this stopped the lady in her tracks (so to speak) and tears began to flow ...tears of joy...tears of revelation that she no longer had to try to be worthy...tears of freedom...tears of hope. My friend did not share advice with the lady...my friend genuinely related the living Christ to the lady.

MIRACLE AT SUPPER

I received this note from a friend who I am discipling at CLM: "Just wanted to let you know that I received a wonderful Christmas gift yesterday. A friend came over and we had dinner and talked for 4 hours. She is in a lot of pain...I shared truth...she is coming to know Jesus!!! Whew, hallalejuh!!"

UPDATE ON JOY

The doctors are pleased with the progress of Joy's healing from the staph infection. The incision in her back from the November surgery was left open to heal from the inside out, which it is doing well...the incision should be closed in about a month. Joy may also taken off the IV antibiotics in about a month. Although she is resting much better now, her stamina is the lowest ever. Also, she periodically has sharp leg pains and burnings, we think from the healing of nerve ends. But we never really know for sure...we pray that the spinal fusion is indeed strong without the screws. So, this is a critical transition month for Joy. After this month, she should be able to re-start physical therapy and other things in life she enjoys so much. God continues to teach me to share His life and hope with Joy in my relationship with her. On the back are truths that I hope encourage you in your relationship with God and with others.

GRACE NOTE

God doesn't call us to do good things...His call on us to relate with Christ IS the good thing!

Gregg Gibbons

Christ Life Ministries

864-228-HOPE

gjeggrace@earthlink.net

Last summer, I had an opportunity to give a 30-minute presentation on the “Deity of Christ” at Luther Rice Seminary in Atlanta. In preparing for the presentation, I learned about a certain heresy that manifested in the early organized church. [Note: Don’t be alarmed about some big words coming up!] The church had long used the Greek word *homoousion*, meaning “same being,” to describe the deity of Christ, meaning that Jesus is God. Around 325 AD, a young man in the church named Arius gathered a following and began to use the word *heteroousion*, meaning “different being,” to advocate that Jesus is not really God. The organized church denounced this truth, so Arius and his followers then attempted to be more acceptable by subtly using the word *homoiousion*, which means “similar (but not same) being,” but which still denied the deity of Christ. The only difference between *homoousion* (“same being”) and *homoiousion* (“similar being”) is the addition of the single little Greek letter *i* (*iota*). Thus, here is the root of the saying, “It doesn’t make one *iota* of a difference.” But it really does make a difference!

I also learned that the meaning of the word *heresy* is “to cause division.” The first heresy was initiated by Satan in the Garden of Eden. Satan challenged the character of God (as Arius did years later) in his encounter with Eve (see Genesis 3:1-5). Adam and Eve fell for the temptation to believe Satan’s one *iota* of a difference regarding the truth about God, and as a result, a division resulted between man and his relationship with God. All of us inherited this division, this separation. Jesus the Truth came (John 14:6) to eliminate that division by exposing all *iotas* in order to make us one in relationship with God (John 17:21).

Believing little *iota* changes in God’s truths can subtly and significantly impact my relationship with God. The following table presents some examples from my life. Most often the difference is only one word. God’s revealed truth nurtures my genuine communion relationship with Him. However, just a little *iota* of difference in the truth tempts me to view myself as separate (divided) from God...tempting me to relate to Him as a separate Helper rather than my intimate Life. When I fall for this temptation, stolen from me is the joy of experiencing the intimacy (oneness) that my relationship with God really is. The undivided truth sets me free to genuinely, not religiously, relate to God and others (John 8:32, 36).

THE ONE <i>IOTA</i> OF DIFFERENCE		
A temptation that steals the joy of my fellowship with God	The truth that reveals the joy of my fellowship with God	Foundational Biblical Truths
God wants me to do good.	God wants me!	<i>Jesus said, “If I am lifted up from earth, I will draw all men to Myself” (John 12:32).</i>
I’m on fire for the Lord.	I’m on fire with the Lord!	<i>You are light IN the Lord. Walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8).</i>
I just hope for the best.	I already have the best hope!	<i>The Lord Jesus Christ IS our hope (1 Timothy 1:1).</i>
I witness for Christ.	I witness of Christ!	<i>Thanks be to God...who through us diffuses the fragrance of HIS KNOWLEDGE in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14b).</i>
I am a product of my past.	I am a product of Jesus’ cross!	<i>I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20a).</i>
I’m not as valuable as Billy Graham.	I’m as valuable as Jesus Christ!	<i>Jesus loved ME and gave His life for ME (Galatians 2:20b).</i>
I know about Christ.	I know Christ!	<i>Grow in the grace and knowledge OF our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).</i>
I strive for victory.	I strive from victory!	<i>Thanks be to God who ALWAYS leads us in triumph in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14a).</i>
I work for God.	God works through me!	<i>I preach Christ...striving according to HIS WORKING which works in me mightily (Colossians 1:29).</i>
My love for Christ compels me.	Christ’s love in me compels me!	<i>The love OF Christ compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14).</i>
I am a sinner based on what I do.	I am a saint based on what Jesus has done!	<i>To those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called SAINTS (1 Corinthians 1:2).</i>
Jesus gave His life for me so I could go to heaven later.	Jesus gave His life for me to give His life to me on earth now!	<i>We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, we shall be saved by HIS LIFE (Romans 5:10).</i>
God points out my sins for me to deal with.	God points out my sins already dealt with on the cross!	<i>God has made you alive together with Him, having forgiven you ALL trespasses (Colossians 2:13).</i>
I feel so guilty...so I know that I must do better.	I feel so guilty...but I know that’s not the truth!	<i>There is therefore NO CONDEMNATION to those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).</i>
I live a good, moral life.	I live an abundant, Christ life!	<i>For to me, to live is Christ (Philippians 1:21).</i>
I want others to follow my example.	I want others to follow my Christ!	<i>I labor...until Christ is formed in you (Galatians 4:19).</i>
My passion is to serve Christ.	My passion is Christ!	<i>I count all things loss...that I may know Him (Philippians 3:8, 10).</i>