

## A PERSONAL JOURNEY

One year ago on Mother's Day, my mother reminisced about her love for her cousin Neil Chrisley, with whom she grew up in the small textile mill town of Calhoun Falls. Neil played textile league and major league baseball in the glory days of baseball following World War II, from 1947 through 1964. Neil never talked much about his baseball career, so much of it has been unknown by most.

As a little boy while visiting my grandparents, I remember gazing at one of Neil's major league baseball cards taped to the window of an old gas station in Calhoun Falls. That memory came back to me last year, which set me on a journey of researching Neil's baseball career. I spent 100s of hours last year researching newspaper archives on the Internet and in small town libraries.

I also sought out old textile baseball fields in the upstate. Old photos show these fields had majestic wooden grandstands for nearly 1,000 at every game. I now appreciate how textile baseball helped solidify communities and was the stage to show the country the value of mill workers called "lint heads." I even discovered the field (now abandoned) in Anderson where Joe Jackson received his nickname "Shoeless" around 1907. Neil played on this same field in the late 1940s.

Following are just a few findings from my research on Neil:

- Three homeruns for Calhoun Falls Mill Clippers versus the Chiquola Mill Chicks in Honea Path, SC was watched by 9 major league scouts in 1950.
- Calhoun Falls Mill Clippers beat the Clemson University Tigers 14-3 in 1950.
- Took batting practice with Ted Williams of the Boston Red Sox before a game in Fenway Park one week after high school graduation in 1950.
- Voted to Minor League All-Star team with Roger Maris in 1956.
- Caught President Eisenhower's opening day pitch as a rookie for the Washington Senators in 1957.
- Hit homeruns in his first two at-bats in Yankee Stadium in 1958.
- Caught several 400-ft drives by Mickey Mantle while with the Detroit Tigers.
- A member of the original 1962 New York Mets.
- Last hit was with the Milwaukee Braves in the line-up with Hank Aaron.

I learned so much about my mother and her roots, and spent precious times with her. The research also led to a family reunion to honor Neil where I testified how we loved Neil unconditionally, and not for his baseball achievements. Below are old photos of Neil. To the right is Joy with Neil at the reunion. It's quite a journey!



# Grace Journal

A pilgrim's testimony of the way of the cross.

February/March/April 2008

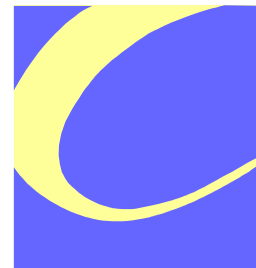
I do not count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

I am excited to share with you the unfolding of a discipleship counseling ministry *Journey in Christ*! This ministry is a fruit of two ministries, *Christ Life Ministries* in Hendersonville, NC and *Grace Life International (GLI)* in Charlotte, NC. Michael Chalmers, a counselor with *GLI*, recently moved from Charlotte to Greenville. We joined to form a board with Kellie Boggs, a counselor/bank manager in Greenville. My wife Joy is also an integral part of establishing *Journey in Christ*. This newsletter presents a biblical basis for the name of this ministry.

Acts 20:24 (above) reveals that ministry belongs to the Lord and is received from Him. The verse also reveals the foundational objective of all ministries: TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD. This newsletter testifies of the vital importance of knowing the heart of the gospel.

My heart is for this ministry to provide transformational encouragement and equipping to individuals and local churches. Doors have already been opened to meet with several people, including pastors. I am also continuing to serve with other volunteers as chaplain of the *Boys Home of the South*.

I am tempted with many fears and anxieties, but I am choosing to "foolishly" step out in faith as I witness these opportunities unfold, while working as an engineer. I look forward to sharing much more with you soon. My heart is that we all minister together. Below is new contact information.



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**More than Counseling**

## THE JOURNEY IN CHRIST

*But those that wait on the Lord shall exchange their strength for His strength.  
They shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).*

What The Journey IS NOT	What The Journey IS
Progressively becoming a better and holier person.	Growing in recognizing your completed righteous identity in Christ. <i>You <u>were</u> sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).</i>
The safe route.	A promise to suffer and to be persecuted. <i>I count all things loss...that I might know Christ in the power of His resurrection and in the fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:8, 10).</i>
A search for success.	A faith-confident walk in Christ's completed victory. <i>Now thanks be to God who <u>always</u> leads us in triumph in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14).</i>
A path that ends in heaven.	An eternal (ever-beginning and everlasting) walk with Christ. <i>Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life (Romans 6:4).</i>
A walk with God's help.	A walk from the source of Christ's indwelling life. <i>As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him (Colossians 2:6).</i>
A venue for good works.	A privilege to sow seeds of Christ's life with the promise of a multitude of fruit throughout the world. <i>He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world. (Matthew 13:37, 38).</i>
To be walked alone.	A sharing with the body of Christ for the glory of God. <i>Walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called...with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love (Ephesians 4:1, 2).</i>
Becoming blessed with health and wealth.	Being blessed with Christ all of the time. <i>I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content...I can do all things through Christ (Philippians 4:11, 13).</i>

## THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel (Galatians 1:6).*

When I depended on other "more qualified" people to define the gospel, I struggled with sharing the true hope of the gospel, because the gospel was only second-hand information to me. That made me religious, and not genuine.

So, God the Father lovingly led me in brokenness to increasingly open my spiritual ears to His personal voice. I began to put more faith in His ability to personally speak to me more than in my ability to understand the gospel. He is still in the process of sharing with me how He sent His beloved Son to identify with me and to die in my place FOR my sins and AS my sin nature (2 Corinthians 5:21)...and now how the risen Christ lives in all of His children.

Our personal identification with Christ in His cross and resurrection is the heart of the gospel. I believe the deceiver tempts us to miss the heart of the gospel. Following are just a couple deceptions I have experienced. Although each statement contains the truth that Christ died for the forgiveness of sins, the statements in total are not biblical.

**"Invite Jesus into your heart."** However, God does not want to make us (our hearts) better, He wants to make us brand new. Our only hope is death...death of our sinful heart in Christ on the cross so that we can receive a new heart indwelt by the risen Christ.

**"Accept Christ as your Savior."** The issue, however, is God's acceptance of us, not our acceptance of Him...and we, by God's grace, are re-created totally acceptable through identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

I share this to encourage all of us to be free to personally seek God the Father's heart and voice regarding the glory of the gospel...to grow in the grace and personal knowledge of Jesus Christ Himself (2 Peter 3:18).

*The saved man's relation to Christ has been made contractual instead of personal. The work of Christ has been stressed until it has eclipsed the beauty of the Person of Christ. What He did for me seems to be more important than what He is to me. (A.W. Tozer)*

Dudley Hall helpfully notes: "The gospel not only delivers believers from the ultimate penalty of sin (eternal separation from God), but from every other damaging effect of sin. There is no one beyond the reach of the Counselor who lives in us." Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor at *Journey in Christ*!