

Grace


Living testimonies from a pilgrim's journal.


MAY/JUNE 2005

*Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."
(John 15:5)*

At first glance, it appears Jesus is encouraging us to do something to "abide" in Him. But then He says, "without Me you can do nothing." How do we make sense of this? The cross! These words were spoken before the cross to prepare us for the miracle of the cross...now they are spoken to our hearts after the cross. "The cross" refers to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and each Christian being united with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection (*Romans 6:1-14, Colossians 2:12, Galatians 2:20*). Through the cross, I have been re-created to forever abide in Christ, as a branch naturally abides in a tree to simply receive life from the tree.

Therefore, Jesus Christ is now my source of life! This is the *message of the cross* I have witnessed to be so powerful and transforming. "The message of the cross... is the power of God" (*1 Corinthians 1:18*). Following are some relationships being nurtured through the message of the cross. On the back is my testimony of the message of the cross being worked out in my life.

	<p style="text-align: center;">RELATIONSHIP WITH IN-TOUCH MINISTRIES</p> <p>In-Touch Ministries in Atlanta receives 50+ crisis calls each week from people across our country (800-789-1473). Over the past few years, In-Touch has referred 18 local families to Christ Life Ministries for follow-up. I was so encouraged to have the opportunity to meet the In-Touch counseling staff in person for the first time on May 10. They so graciously welcomed me.</p> <p>I was also given a copy of Lay Counseling training materials by the counseling staff of First Baptist Church Atlanta, based on the <i>message of the cross</i> and the same materials used by Christ Life Ministries. My heart is to support people and churches in nurturing lay counselors, or disciple-makers. Please feel free to contact me for more information...I would love to share more with you.</p>
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	<p style="text-align: center;">RELATIONSHIPS AT A GRACELIFE CONFERENCE</p> <p>I hosted a special and interactive GraceLife Conference May 20-21. Attendees included a banker, a teacher, a student, a homemaker, an employment manager, a missionary, a pastor. Here is a testimony from one that I think expresses the hearts the others: <i>What a blessing! I continue to be encouraged by the truths that were impressed upon my heart this weekend. I thank the Lord for each of you, and how He is using you to reflect His glory to the world! I am still in awe of how clearly His promises were echoed during this conference – the very truths He has been revealing to me. It was truly a joy to once again witness His loving and faithful hand! Thank you for allowing me to open up my heart.</i></p> <p>My wife Joy (photo center) wanted so much to prepare flowers and refreshments for the Conference. She had a delightful time, and exhausted herself to spend the next several days in bed. It is taking a long time for her to build up stamina, but she is able to do some things that are on her heart. Her chronic pain level is now amazingly low when she is up. Her biggest challenge now is good sleep; most of her discomfort occurs when she lies down to try to sleep.</p>
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I feel saddened to move out of the one-room office Joy and I have leased since November 2001 in Simpsonville, SC for individual discipleship counseling and group conferences. The new owner is unable to lease the office. ☹ It's been a blessing to share this office for discipling 30+ people for 300+ hours, plus hosting six 12-hour GraceLife Conferences. Although I have only been able to use the office sparingly, it's amazing to look back on the ministry opportunities given to me, in addition to discipling in Hendersonville, NC one day a week and at the Boys Home one evening a week. I am truly humbled.

If you know of any space in the Simpsonville area for this ministry (rental or loaned after hours), I would dearly love to hear from you. ☺

<p style="text-align: center;">LIFE IS A RESPONSE</p> <p>Dudley Hall, a friend with Successful Christian Living Ministries (www.sclm.org) has helped me realize that in His earthly ministry Jesus did not initiate anything on His own. Jesus said He only spoke what He heard the Father say and He only did what He saw the Father doing in Him (<i>John 5:30, 8:26-29, 10:38, 14:10</i>). Dudley writes, "Jesus did not feel under any responsibility to produce or to be successful. Every detail of His life was initiated by God the Father. He simply responded." Wow! I hope this helps you see the truths I am learning and trying to share on the back.</p>

New mailing address ☛

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Transforming Grace

by Gregg Gibbons

The left column describes ways I personally am subtly tempted to think and, consequently, deceived into trying to initiate all on my own. There are grains of truth in these descriptions. However, these ways of thinking and acting become totally self-centered when tainted by the original lie, which is rooted in Adam being subtly tempted to initiate something all on his own apart from the fullness of God's provisions.

The right column describes who I really am...who God re-created through the cross to be in the fullness of Christ. God has me on a life-long journey lovingly breaking me from the old habits of self-initiation (left column) for me to increasingly experience Christ's indwelling life initiating my true life, thereby revealing His glory to this world (right column). I believe this is what Jesus means by "take up your cross daily and follow Me" (*Mark 8:34-35*). I follow Him by responding to His precious life. God is transforming my mind from thinking about the original lie subtly under cover in the left column to thinking about the living Truth gloriously revealed in the right column (*Romans 12:2*).

The great good news of the gospel is that Jesus is alive! And the real me is not a separate, all-alone "self." I have been wondrously united with living Christ (*Romans 6*)! As the deceiver tempts to divert my hope from this glorious Truth, God even uses these temptations to reveal the reality and beauty of Christ in me. For remember, there is no longer a separate "me" to be tempted...that's the bluff of the evil one, for he knows he has already been defeated through the cross. Christ is alive and is forever my life!

It's ok if you feel like you have the initiative to do things. I hope this *Transforming Grace* table encourages you to see that your life is actually much more greater than that. ☺

“Self” initiation (flesh) The perversion of me (a false identity) Temptation through the lie (selfish pride)	Christ initiation (grace) The real me (my true identity) Transformation through the Truth (God’s glory)
Is a moral person.	Is a miraculous person. <i>2 Corinthians 5:17</i>
Is subtly judgmental of others.	Is sincerely Jesus to others. <i>Acts 7:59-60</i>
Critical of himself to be paralyzed by discouragement.	Entrusts his failures to be redeemed by God. <i>Philippians 3:7-11</i>
Knows Scriptures.	Knows hope. <i>1 Peter 3:15, 1 Timothy 1:1</i>
Reacts sporadically.	Acts spontaneously. <i>Colossians 1:28-29, 2:6-7</i>
Seeks to lead some people to Christ.	Joyfully brings Christ to all people. <i>Matthew 28:19-20</i>
Proudly overhears of his commitment to God.	Humbly overwhelmed by God’s commitment to him. <i>Romans 8:38-39</i>
Becomes defensive when misunderstood.	Stands in God's grace when misunderstood. <i>2 Timothy 1:12, 2:1</i>
Listens to complaints from others.	Listens to others with compassion. <i>Matthew 9:36</i>
Prays maybe a total of 10 minutes a day.	Prays without ceasing. <i>1 Thessalonians 5:16-18</i>
Relates to God as servant.	Relates to God as son. <i>John 1:12-13</i>
Motivated to perform for future rewards.	Compelled to love through Christ now. <i>2 Corinthians 5:14</i>
Is in bondage to self-consciousness.	Is free to be genuine. <i>Galatians 5:1, 6</i>
Humor used to build himself up at expense of others (life of party).	Humor used to build others up (imparting of life). <i>Ephesians 5:2-4</i>
Worship is an event.	Worship is a lifestyle. <i>John 4:24</i>
Articulate composure in public is important.	Is willing to feel awkward while being molded by God. <i>1 Corinthians 2:1-5</i>
Victory is being rescued from bad circumstances.	Victory is experiencing Christ <i>in</i> all circumstances, good and bad. <i>1 John 5:4-5</i>
Ministry is an important part of his life.	Ministry <i>is</i> his life (Christ is his ministry). <i>Colossians 3:4, 12, 13</i>
Confesses sins <i>for</i> God's forgiveness.	Confesses sins <i>from</i> God's complete forgiveness. <i>Colossians 2:13</i>
Prays for more patience be given to him.	Prays to experience more of the patience of Christ already in him. <i>Galatians 5:22</i>
Peace is a <i>feeling</i> only when everything is going well.	Peace is a <i>knowing</i> his Father is in control of everything. <i>Philippians 4:6-7</i>
Anger is a failure on his part.	Anger is God's gift pointing to a deeper issue to be healed. <i>Ephesians 4:31-32</i>
Tears are a sign of weakness.	Tears are a sign of strong hope just before a resurrection. <i>Luke 22:44</i>
Has power to change God by making Him sad or glad.	Trusts God's power to perfectly accept him in Christ alone. <i>Ephesians 1:3-6</i>
Some aspects of his past haunt him.	He has a glorious new past in Christ's eternal life. <i>1 John 5:11-13, 20</i>
Afraid of grace (views grace as license).	Embraces grace (knows grace as life...the very life of Christ). <i>Romans 6:1-9</i>

*I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.
(2 Corinthians 11:3)*