



January 2002

Often times I think, "Why in the world am I trying to send out a newsletter like this? This just isn't the way things are done. I shouldn't bother people with what I am doing and learning." ☺ And then when I get my focus off of myself and I honestly seek my heart of Christ, I am encouraged to keep sharing this way! ☺ Acts 20:24,27 was a special affirmation to me this month of why I do this newsletter:

But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, TO TESTIFY SOLEMNLY OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

I hope this newsletter helps free readers to surrender preconceived ideas of life and ministry, and then to allow Christ to minister through us in ways He has perfectly designed just for each of us. When Jesus says, "Go, make disciples," I understand Him to say, "As you go in your everyday affairs, allow my Life through you to teach others the full richness of what it means to be My disciple." Here I GO by writing.

Ministry through Training

I spent a week with 25 men at Luther Rice Seminary being trained to share the gospel message. Each of us was assigned a passage of Scripture to teach or preach in front of everyone. I was assigned Philipians 4:4-7. Here is briefly what I shared.

**REJOICE in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice!
And the PEACE of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.**

The original Greek word for "rejoice" in this verse is the same root word as for the word "grace"! I truly rejoice when I consider the beauty and freedom of God's grace, and I experience true peace.

Grace means that God is 100% responsible for my living.
Faith means that my responsibility is 100% surrender to Christ's life in and through me!
Grace gives...faith receives.

Anxiety and frustration occur whenever I don't receive (surrender to) God's grace and I try to work things out for me, others, and God. Jesus is our perfect standard of surrender: "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do," (John 5:19). And I have been given the miracle of a new life in Christ that is fully dependent on the Father through the Holy Spirit!

So, true rejoicing is IN THE LORD, not in circumstances, not in accomplishments, etc., but IN CHRIST ALONE. Always. Rejoicing (joy) and peace are fruits from Christ's life in a Christian (Galatians 5:22)...we cannot control conditions to create joy and peace.

I will never forget a Kenyan pastor hugging me and telling me after my teaching session, "Oh, thank you, I needed that...I love you brother!" And during that moment, I caught a vision of how the message of Christ is carried around the world in ways I could never have planned. It's called grace. ☺

Ministry through Suffering

My wife Joy and I were informed that she needs to have her back restructured through surgery later this year. This need was found after her chronic pain intensified this past year. We immediately thought about having gone through a similar operation 20 years ago and the long recuperation. We will be flying to San Francisco February 25th to find out details.

If, even as a Christian, I thought the burden was on me to work all of this out, my attention would be on me doing things...a terrible, frustrating load...I have been there before. By God's grace, I can now focus on Jesus and know that this is 100% Jesus' burden...and I can hear Jesus in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." This doesn't mean it won't be hard at times, but Christ is still our source of life in all situations.

We do not rejoice whatsoever in having to go through all of this...but we do rejoice in Christ being our life...and we are willing to trust Him...Lord, not our will be done, but Yours. Although our emotions vary a lot now, we have His peace...a peace that is not a feeling...but a peace that is a knowing...knowing our Father is in complete control...knowing He has our best interests in His heart...knowing He is lovingly working His grand purposes in ways we simply cannot see with our eyes right now. God will heal Joy in His perfect way.

I will be putting some things on hold to be with Joy during this time...but I will still be in full-time Christian ministry – and so will Joy! We desire that all Christians would realize they are in full-time ministry because CHRIST IS THE MINISTRY and He lives in us full time! The verses on the back affirm true life is a life of grace...Christ is the only source of life, and we are called to a sweet surrender to Him each moment.

GRACE NOTE (by Jim Minker on www.eternitynow.org)

Jesus wasn't obedient because he tried, but simply because the life within Him was the Spirit of God. Your obedience does not come from trying, but because the life within you is the Spirit of God. Is it any surprise that true obedience is greater, more miraculous than we have understood it to be?

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GRACE - the call to surrender to Christ as the source of all life

(Note: This is only a partial listing of many, many verses.)

Ezekiel 36:26-27 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

John 7:37b-38 If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me (Jesus) and drink. He who believes in Me (Jesus), as the Scripture has said, from his inner most being will flow rivers of living water (the Holy Spirit).

John 15:5 I (Jesus) am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me (Jesus), and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me (Jesus) you can do nothing.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him (God) who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He (God) who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

2 Corinthians 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him (Christ) in every place.

Galatians 1:15-16a He (God) who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in Me.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; no as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Him (Christ) who strengthens me.

Colossians 1:27,29 God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of the mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory...to this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

1 Thessalonians 1:5a, 2:3 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

1 Timothy 1:12,14 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me...putting me into the ministry...and the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.

Hebrews 12:1b-2a Let us lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.

1 Peter 5:10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and settle you.

2 Peter 1:2-3 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

1 John 5:12a He who has the Son has the life.