



GRACE

Great Good News!

July 2003

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,
which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

A friend recently sent me a poem about the unfolding of a rose that helps remind me how God faithfully unfolds His plans for His children. I often find myself striving to make things work out the way I perceive they should work out. But God tenderly leads me to surrender my preconceptions and to trust Him as He unfolds His plans. There is wonderful freedom in that. I yearn to grow in resting in His abilities to lovingly unfold His perfect plans instead of me striving to help Him unfold my inadequate perceptions of His plans. Here is the poem I hope encourages you.

The Unfolding of a Rose

*It is only a tiny rosebud, a flower of God's design; but I cannot unfold the petals with these clumsy hands of mine.
The secret of unfolding flowers is not known to such as I. God opens this flower so sweetly, but in my hands, they die.
If I cannot unfold a rosebud, the flower of God's design, then how can I have the wisdom to unfold this life of mine?
So, I'll trust in Him for leading each moment of my day. I will look for His guidance each step of the Pilgrim's way.
The pathway that lies before me only my Heavenly Father knows. I'll trust him to unfold the moments...
...just as He unfolds the rose.*

One testimony of God's unfolding plan is the ministry with the Boys Home. Back in March, I received a call from the Boys Home. The directors were burdened for each boy to know the love of God, and they were looking for outside support to teach this truth. I really was not in a good position to take on anything else at the time. But I had a desire to find out more, so I went to meet with the Boys Home. The directors requested I help teach the boys the gospel of grace that I testified of in my newsletters. I was really drawn to that, but again I was hard pressed to take on another task. I could have rationalized that it wasn't wise to do this, and I could have even found some Scriptures to prove my rationalization (which would have been using the Scriptures backwards!).

But I was still drawn to this ministry. I wondered if my desire could be from the indwelling Christ. Psalm 37:4 does say, "Delight yourself also in the Lord (remain pliable in God's hands), and He will give you the desires of your heart (God's very desires)." I thought about God molding my heart by giving me a younger brother and two younger nephews, who are heroes to me. Could I trust God now with my heart?

The director of Christ Life Ministries encouraged me not to see this as a responsibility for me to bear, but as an opportunity to enlist and nurture others in ministering Christ's life to the boys. And my wife Joy encouraged me to try it. So, with this counsel and encouragement affirming my heart's desire, I stepped out in faith...not faith in my faith, nor faith in my abilities, nor a blind faith, but faith in the indwelling Christ.

And the unfolding of His ministry has been awesome. *On the back are just a few of the aspects of the unfolding.*

GRACE NOTE

A Christian (a Christ-one) no longer has to strive FOR victory; Jesus has already secured victory for us through the cross!
We can now live FROM victory as God unfolds our part of His victory parade here on earth.

*"Now thanks be to God who ALWAYS leads us in triumph in Christ,
and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place" (2 Corinthians 2:14).*

Here are some aspects of God's unfolding plan at the Boys Home I could never have planned (*cont'd from front*):

- (1) A friend from work is learning that he can minister to the boys in genuine, down-to-earth ways God gives him.
- (2) Another friend developed a Bible study where we give the boys questions to journal answers from the Gospel of John during the week. The boys come back one evening each week to share the answers with us and with each other. It's special to watch the boys grow in receiving truths personally from the Bible and being willing to share.
- (3) I have been so encouraged to meet a lady volunteer who loves the boys and helps with Bible studies and fun learning activities. She and her fiancé recently attended a GraceLife Conference I helped teach in Simpsonville.
- (4) Two teenager participants in the ministry invited all the boys to a week-long youth week at Holly Ridge Baptist Church (Simpsonville, SC) in July. That was a great week for the boys to interact with other youth and youth leaders, and their lives were changed forever as a result.
- (5) A church in Easley has expressed an interest in being nurtured in this Boys Home ministry.

I have no idea where this is going, or how long I am to participate. But it is a great experience to watch this ministry unfold by the One who does know. If you know of anyone who might be interested in this ministry at the Boys Home, please contact me. I hope this is encouraging to you in your life's situations...and it doesn't have to be "ministry" situations like I have described...God faithfully unfolds ALL aspects of our lives.

Unfolding of Testimonies in Local Churches

I have been provided special opportunities with Christ Life Ministries to teach the gospel in several local churches.

We were invited to share our testimonies and ministry at [First Presbyterian Church \(Hendersonville, NC\)](#) in July. It was a great sharing time. Afterwards, a man described how his career was similar to mine as an engineer, and that he was so conditioned to see everything in life through rational formulas. We had a delightful discussion of how we came to testify of a gospel of grace (no formulas) instead of a gospel of law (formulas). We both have discovered formulas are appropriate for temporal physical matters, but not for receiving and enjoying eternal life now.

I also have had a tremendously encouraging time helping teach the GraceLife Conference four consecutive Thursday evenings at [Saluda United Methodist Church \(Saluda, NC\)](#) in July and August. The pastor and members so welcomed being reminded of their miraculous lives in Christ by His grace.

Christ Life Ministries is teaching a GraceLife Conference at [Horseshoe Baptist Church \(Horseshoe, NC\)](#) in August.

I helped teach GraceLife Conferences earlier this year at [Emma Gray United Methodist Church \(Woodruff, SC\)](#) in January and at [Brevard Community Church \(Brevard, NC\)](#) in May.

It has been so amazing to receive affirmation that the simple gospel of grace is not just another doctrine with denominational distinctives. The pure gospel is foundational for everyone, for only the pure gospel provides true life that everyone yearns for. The GraceLife Conference is not just another conference; it presents the foundational truths of why the gospel means "the great good news that makes you want to jump for joy!"



Saluda (NC) Methodist Church where we have been sharing the gospel weekly through the GraceLife messages.



GraceLife Conference in Simpsonville, SC July 25-26.