

# GRACE

## Great Good News!

July/August 2004

Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it (Colossians 4:17).

When I started working part-time 4 years ago to become more involved in this discipling ministry, I had preconceived ideas of how a ministry was to work out. However, a good friend helped me see that all ministry is rooted in the life of Christ. And, for married people, ministry to the spouse is the priority. Marriage is a testimony of a person's miraculous oneness in Christ. All ministry flows from the foundation of oneness. The ministry of Christ cannot fail; the ministry of man will always fail, even if such a ministry achieves man's preconceived expectations. So, when Joy took three ambulance trips in July, although this monthly newsletter was interrupted, the ministry was not...it just took on a form I could never have planned, but that was ordained from eternity past.

Joy had a severe gall bladder attack in early July, and after an agonizing week in the hospital, her gall bladder was removed. A week later, Joy got dizzy at home...I caught her in my arms as she stopped breathing and passed out, and I laid her on the floor, desperately screaming for her to breathe again. Several seconds later she resumed breathing and an ambulance was on the way. We found out later that a part of a large blood clot in her leg broke off and lodged in her lungs. Joy arrived at the hospital just in time for the doctors to treat the clot (pulmonary embolism) with blood thinners.

It is so amazing now that Joy is feeling the best she has felt in several years! A compassionate physical therapist is working with her and friends encourage her. Her stamina is still low, but finally improving. Her chronic pain level is the lowest it's been in years. She has a long way to go, but her demeanor now more fully radiates the Joy that she really is beneath the pain.

These physical complications stem back to three years ago when Joy's doctor diagnosed a hairline fracture in her back fusion and the loosening of her spinal support rods. The only thing that keeps Joy and me going is *grace*...not the religious concept of grace...but the living reality of the gospel...that Jesus is alive and well, and that He is alive and well in us...that the purpose of ministry IS being fulfilled, which is "that God might display the exceeding riches of His grace" (Ephesians 2:7) and "that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:11). The fulfillment of ministry is not *results*, but *revelation*...the revelation of the living reality of Jesus Christ to, and in, people (see Galatians 1:15-16). Results are the fruit of this revelation, not vice versa.

### THRONE OF GRACE

*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:12).*

I used to think this verse was sort of a vague "spiritual pit stop" where I could somehow get some help so that I can be on my way trying my best again. However, last month clearly reaffirmed to me and Joy that we need so much more than help...we need a spiritual life source that won't give out...and that life has been supplied to us in Christ...and this is the very essence of grace.

This "throne" is a picture of life and royalty and rest. It is the Father resting in the finished work of His dear Son Jesus. We now share His life (Galatians 2:20), we now share His royalty (1 Corinthians 1:30), and we now share His rest (Hebrews 4:10). So, it is not a **throne of judgment**, but a **throne of grace!** The Father gazes with pleasure on His children. I believe many of us are timidly trying to relate to God because of a temptation to focus on our sins instead focusing on the One who took away all our sins; as a result, many of us feel guilty and discouraged. However, we can come BOLDLY to the throne, and we will never BOLDLY sin just because all our sins are forgiven...on the contrary, we will BOLDLY live, continuously sharing with Christ His life, His royalty, and His rest...standing strong in His grace (2 Timothy 2:1)...and marching in His triumphal procession (2 Corinthians 2:14)!

When precious people first *come to Christ Life Ministries* (CLM), they are seeking help in their circumstances. That's how I first came. And that's a beautiful picture of the body of Christ reaching out to each other. Seeking help tempts us to view ourselves as separate from the life of Christ. This ministry meets people where they are and then to encourages them to *come to the throne of grace*. Grace anchors us in the truth of being united to the very life of Christ. My prayer is that people will find grace through the "foolishness" of my teaching...and that our desperate cries for *help* will be transformed by *grace* into an inward *living hope* (1 Timothy 1:1), even if our outward circumstances don't change. "I have learned in whatever state I am in, to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

### GRACE NOTE

Ministry is not necessarily well organized and poised...ministry can be expressed in tears, screams, and yes, sweat drops of blood (see Luke 22:44).

*The first Great Good Newsletter from four years ago is on the back. ⇨*

*Here is the first monthly newsletter I sent to a few family and friends four years ago.  
This newsletter is now issued to over 200 families. I hope to issue newsletters on a web-site soon, too.*

## July 2000

All of this is new to me. You have helped me see that God wants me to focus on the message, and that the Message is a Person – Jesus Christ. In that light, I would like to share testimonies of God and His Word each month in a little newsletter like this to you, and anyone else to whom you think it would be encouraging.

I have been thinking a lot lately of God's will for this ministry. Most of all, God has me anchored in *Colossians 4:17*, "Take heed to the ministry which you have *received* in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." A ministry *received* from God will be fruitful and fulfilling. A ministry that is sought to be *achieved* will be unfruitful and frustrating. I pray that I will rest in His ministry, and trust Him.

Here are some highlights of God's ministry through me in July

- I shared my testimony from *John 14:6* to fifteen men at a Henderson County (NC) prison to whom I helped teach a GraceLife Conference. The men passionately shared their testimonies of becoming free in Christ, too.
- I disciplined a woman who was feeling quite disillusioned about the Christian life. It was evident that her attempts to live by the law (expectations to do right) was condemning (*Romans 2:12*) and deadly (*Romans 5:20-21*). It was amazing to see healing in her life through the gospel of grace.
- I continued discipling a married couple to whom God revealed each spouse was setting up expectations (the law) for each other to meet. This has resulted in each spouse trying their best, apart from Christ, to meet those expectations of each other. We are praying for each spouse to focus on his and her individual relationship with Christ as Life that will lead to each one bestowing grace (not law) upon each other.
- I started discipling a 15-year old boy whose father has left home. He is open to God's truths. In our first session, I suggested he read a few verses from the gospel of John...he went home and read the whole book of John!

I look forward to sharing with you more in the months to come.

### GRACE NOTE

We are loved by God not because we are valuable, we are valuable because we are loved by God! (Adrian Rogers)

## *More News*

### GRACE LIFE CONFERENCE

I was not able to host and help teach the GraceLife Conference in Simpsonville on July 9-10, 2004 as I had planned, however, my friends Bob and Cindy graciously led the conference as scheduled, and four special people attended. Each attendee feels called to become further equipped to teach others the healing truths of the gospel.

A GraceLife Conference will be held in Hendersonville, NC in September.

### BOYS HOME MINISTRY

I was not able to attend any Boys Home ministry activities in July. However, my friends Florence, Bruce, Dawn, Phyllis, Richard, and Beverly continue to graciously lead the weekly chapel programs. Also, Dawn helped equip some of the older boys in job interviewing skills. Also, several boys were specially nurtured during Youth Week at Holly Ridge Baptist Church in Simpsonville.

I was able to visit a young boy who was in the hospital at the same time as Joy. This boy is being treated for sickle cell anemia. He is out of the hospital and is in a foster home now. There are so many stories regarding these boys that I wish I could share. You are so very welcome to visit the chapel any Tuesday evening (7:00 to 7:45) to meet the boys. The chapel is a quaint stone chapel nestled in a grove of trees, and was constructed about 25 years ago with a donation from Jim Nabors (a.k.a. Gomer Pyle).

Since this ministry was *received* (i.e., was not planned by me or anyone) at the Boys Home of the South starting in March 2003, about 40 boys have left the home and 40 new boys have come. This statistic surprised the ministry team because the turnover of boys has been so subtle. It now makes us more aware of multitude of boys who can be impacted with the gospel of Christ each year.

### ONE-ON-ONE DISCIPLING

I have several opportunities to disciple people in Simpsonville starting again in September. Whenever I meet with a woman, I have a third person with us. If you are interested in learning about this role, please feel free to contact me. I would love to talk to you.

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