

“We will tell the next generation the praise-worthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done... so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God...”

-Excerpts from Psalm 78:4-7 (NIV)

We Will Tell Devotional Guide



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Foreword

We pray that you will be as blessed in your daily study of this “Journeyman’s Handbook” as we were in the course of its preparation. As we were led to write and contribute to this resource, we began to see it as a guidebook or map that will lead us as individuals through the journey we will face as a church body this fall. Our prayer would be that as you prepare to read and pray over these daily messages, you would surrender yourself to God and present yourself as a vessel: emptying out the world and its noise and filling up with His agenda and His thoughts in preparation to enjoy His many blessings.

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Week One:

Telling God's Story



TELLING GOD'S STORY The Power of a Testimony

10/1/06

This weekend we talked about the vision of being a people who are committed to telling God's story to those we know and love. Consider the following: "The world is far more ready to receive the Gospel than Christians are to hand it out." George W. Peters

"Genuine witnessing integrates three stories: (1) God's story: the drama of his deeds; (2) My story: which isn't the gospel message but illustrates its power; and (3) Their story: how God's story relates to the person to whom we are witnessing... We usually can explain the gospel through outlines and diagrams, but can we talk about Jesus in a way that makes him come alive? ... People will be drawn to the warmth of God's fire within us even though they may not at first be able to name its source. We must continually stoke and feed the fire as we are transformed by the presence of Christ within us through prayer, Bible reading, deeper sensitivities to the Holy Spirit, and learning to walk in the Spirit and not the flesh. All are a part of the resources that make our witnessing powerful and penetrating." -*Fresh Air for Evangelism Training* by Becky Pippert from *Leadership Journal*, August 16, 2006

Today's Scripture Reading

John 4:1-42

Life Questions

1. What effect did the woman's story of what Jesus did for her have on her friends and neighbors?
2. Identify 2 or 3 things that are holding you back from telling God's story to your friends, family, neighbors and associates. Confess those things to God right now in prayer.

MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

Seeing Others Through God's Eyes

10/2/06

If Grace is going to be a church that pleases God, it must be filled with individuals just like you and me who have a heart that beats fast for our friends, family, neighbors and co-workers who don't yet know Christ. And we must train ourselves not to regard them from a worldly perspective.

We have a tendency to look at the things we see with our eyes and in our flesh and become enamored and consumed with what we see. We say: "Oh, look at the car he's driving. Look at the ring she has on." Those visible things are what we have an innate tendency to relate to. Paul says that if you are living your life on that level then you have totally and completely missed the entire point. God's perspective looks at the soul, sees the deeper needs of life, looks at the loneliness and the hurt, the joys and the small victories. If we're going to be like Christ, we must look through God's eyes at the people all around us each day. Meditate on the following scripture.

Today's Scripture Reading

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Life Questions

1. According to this passage, what things become "new" when someone decides to follow Christ? What becomes new in verse 16?
2. Make a list of your closest circle of relationships including friends, family, neighbors and co-workers. As you are praying for each person, attempt to pray for them with God's perspective. Listen to God and allow Him to give you insight into how to pray.

TELLING GOD'S STORY

What Can You Do?

10/3/06

"Any act of our hands, any thought of our heart, any word of our lips which promotes the divine kingdom, that honest effort of ours, which seemed so ineffectual shall be formed to be a brick built into that external and celestial fabric." *Charles Gore*

"Revival awakens in our hearts an increased awareness of the presence of God, a new love for God, a new hatred of sin and a hunger for His Word." *Del Fehsenfeld, Jr.*

Today's Scripture Reading

Read Matthew 6: 19-34

Life Questions

1. Am I filling my days with the comfort of helping others by sharing what God has done for me? Does my schedule reveal that God is first in my life? Ask God now to lead you in an inventory of your priorities. Does my checkbook reveal that God is my first treasure in my life? Who or what am I putting my trust in?
2. The Message of Christ and His Kingdom has now come to us. The challenge of a decision now faces us too. What will we do? How will we fit into God's story?

TELLING GOD'S STORY

Talking About God

10/4/06

"The evangelistic harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and of nations is always being decided...God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities." *Billy Graham*

"We cannot think of the name of Billy Graham without attaching the word 'evangelism' to it. He has a strong grip on the subject, but the question is do we? Most of us want to. We wish we did. We are certainly aware of the need and have taken courses to help us become better at witnessing but we still stumble. Our grip on evangelism is weak—embarrassingly weak. When we analyze our lack of evangelistic success and skill, it boils down to four primary reasons: Ignorance: We just don't know how to do it. Fear: Most of us are just plain scared. Indifference: Hard as it is to admit it, many Christians just don't care. Bad Experience: Some believers were turned off during their non-Christian years by someone who pushed & embarrassed them trying to force a decision. Because today's harvest is urgent, because we are held responsible to make Christ known to our generation, let's not let our laid-back, who-really-cares society to weaken our enthusiasm or slacken our zeal. Let's strengthen our grip on evangelism." *Strengthening Your Grip by Charles Swindoll*

Today's Scripture Reading

Mark 16:15 and Matthew 27: 18-20

Life Questions

1. Are you willing to move past your ignorance, fear, indifference or bad experiences to be obedient to the Great Commission?
2. How will you support evangelism? Will it be through tithing, prayer, your time, witnessing—or all of these? Pray for the convicting power of the Holy Spirit to move freely in Grace Baptist Church in Erie, Pennsylvania and for the people to be responsive to His call.

TELLING GOD'S STORY

We Can Have the Mind of Christ

10/5/06

"One of the subtlest burdens God ever puts on us as Christians is in this burden of discernment concerning other souls. He reveals things so that we may take the burden of these souls before Him and form the mind of Christ about them." *My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers*

Many of us have heard opportunity knocking—but by the time we have unlocked the door—the opportunity was gone! Opportunities for service, for witnessing and for giving abound! Make sure we don't meet our Lord someday in tears saying, "Why did I not give the King of Kings the best that I had?"

Today's Scripture Reading

I John 5

Life Questions

1. What one change needs to be made so that you won't have to regret missing an opportunity to serve the King of Kings? Pray that God will rouse you up to have His view about the people you want with you in heaven.
2. Are you so identified with Christ that you can easily hear His instructions about having the mind of Christ about the people for whom you are praying? Pray that you learn to intercede so wholeheartedly that Christ will be satisfied with you as an intercessor.

TELLING GOD'S STORY

We Are of Great Value to God Himself

10/6/06

"Our Lord is carried beyond Himself with joy when He sees any of us doing what Mary did, not being set on this or that economy, but being abandoned to Him. God spilt the life of His Son that the world might be saved. Are we prepared to spill out our lives for Him?" *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers

Today's Scripture Reading

Mark 14: 1-9

Life Questions

1. Have you ever produced in the heart of the Lord Jesus what Mary of Bethany produced? Pray that you would be set free from any bitterness, anger or worry. Pray that your life would be characterized by love and forgiveness with a current memory of doing something that pleased the Lord.
2. Have you ever been carried away to do something for God not because it was a duty or because there was anything in it beyond the fact that you love God? Pray that God will become the first love in your heart and that you'll have an increased desire to read and obey God's Word and to worship Him.

TELLING GOD'S STORY

Believing God's Word

10/7/06

"The Father is our teacher in this school as He was Jesus' teacher. Jesus lived by the Word of the Father and so do we. In God's school of obedience the Bible is the only textbook." *The School of Obedience* by Andrew Murray

"There is one golden rule for spiritual discernment and that is obedience. We can learn more by five minutes of obedience than ten years of study." *The Psychology of Religion* by Oswald Chambers

Today's Scripture Reading

John 8: 28-29 and John 7:17

Life Questions

1. Are you believing that God's Word is authoritative for you in order to make it truth to you? Do you observe the direct connection between faith and obedience in your daily walk with the Lord?
2. Are you believing God and what He says in His Word for your future, and for the future of Grace Baptist Church, to grow in word and in truth? Pray you can share with others to receive the Word by faith, to commit themselves to it unreservedly and then act on God's Word in love.

This weekend we talked about the amazing power of the Gospel to liberate mankind from living horribly sub-standard lives and entering eternity without a friendship with Christ. We must tell our fellow man the full truth that Christ came to set them free indeed or we have done them a most serious disservice.

"Religion today is not transforming people; rather it is being transformed by the people. It is not raising the moral level of society; it is descending to society's own level, and congratulating itself that it has scored a victory because society is smilingly accepting its surrender." A. W. Tozer

These are cutting but often times true words. As Psalm 78 declares, "We will tell the next generation...we will not hide them from their children." This is our time to tell unashamedly what God has done on man's behalf with no compromise nor softening of the truth. Man is far from God and only Christ can bridge the divide. Most men do not clearly understand this dilemma and need a messenger to bring both the news of their current peril and the solution that will turn its tide.

Today's Scripture Reading

Romans 1:7-17

Life Questions

1. Are we like Paul, consistently praying for God to open opportunities for people to hear about Christ? Prayer is truly the beginning work of reaching others in power.
2. Why did Paul say he wasn't ashamed of the gospel?

REVEALING GOD'S HEART

Freedom from Rebellion

10/9/06

The word gospel has several meanings. From the Hebrew word "besorah" we find the meaning tidings or good news. The Greek word "euaggelion" means to bring or bear good news. Gospel also describes something that is accepted as unquestionably true. The Gospel Paul describes as good news that must be proclaimed as unquestionably true, is found in these words: "... that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he rose again on the third day according to the scriptures."

When we tell others of the liberties that come with the Gospel of Christ, we not only offer them the news they can be forgiven, reconnected to the Father and live eternally with Him, we also offer freedom to live out a godly life here on Earth. Psalm 78:8 clearly shows us that one of the new freedoms is a life no longer governed by rebellion. A rebellious or defiant life is a source of great pain and ruin. Man was designed to live under God's guidance and influence while the defiant life, resistant to God's Spirit, makes for as Isaiah describes: "an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good."

Today's Scripture Reading

Isaiah 30:1

Life Questions

1. What are the characteristics of a rebellious person as defined by God Himself in this passage?
2. Pray for freedom from following "plans that are not His" in your personal life journey.

REVEALING GOD'S HEART

Free to be Courageous

10/10/06

In Genesis 3:9, "God called to Adam and said, 'Where are you?'" This piercing question did not come from God's ignorance but from His heart. God revealed Adam's rebellion, fear, unbelief, unfaithfulness, discontent and half-hearted commitment toward God. He also revealed the passion and persistence of His heart to set us free from the bondage of these tyrants.

Fear is oppressive, unrelenting and always paralyzes us. We may attempt to justify our fears but they control us with a vengeance that makes defeat inevitable and success impossible. Have we become so accustomed to fear that we now accept it as a way of life?

The heart of God compelled Him to sacrifice Jesus and purchase our freedom from the ravages of fear. God's heart is for us. He created us to be courageous, bold and free-spirited. His heart passionately and persistently calls us to this freedom. How many times did He say, "Fear not, for I am with you?" Nothing breaks the power of fear like God's presence. Yes, when we remember the sweetness of His heart and the power of His protection, our fears will melt away in the radiance of His presence. Then we will be courageous and we will gladly tell others about God's power to free us from fear.

Today's Scripture:

Psalm 78:9 and Jeremiah 29:11

Life Questions

1. Is God big enough and caring enough to handle my greatest fear?
2. If I drew closer to God's heart, would my fears become more distant?
3. How can I be more courageous today?

REVEALING GOD'S HEART

Free to Trust

10/11/06

Are you fully persuaded that God cares specifically about you and is wonderfully capable of caring for you? Not everyone believes He is powerful and personally cares about them. In Genesis 3:5, Satan declares, "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God." Satan attacked the very goodness of God and it is God's goodness that we offend by our unbelief. No wonder Hebrews 11:6 claims "...without faith it is impossible to please God."

Faith was essential for Israel's entrance into the Promised Land. Unbelief kept an entire generation out. So too, if we argue against the power or goodness of God, we will forfeit the peace He so longs to give.

It is not the quantity of our faith that matters but rather the object of our faith. The object of our faith is God's heart. He is intimately concerned about every aspect of our lives and powerfully capable of caring for us. When we remember this, the bondage of unbelief is broken and we are free to trust Him. If we remember His goodness and faithfulness, we are free to enjoy the freedom of faith and the pleasure of telling others about trusting His faithfulness.

Today's Scripture Reading

Psalms 78:7-8 and Hebrews 11

Life Questions

1. If my life were recorded in the book of Hebrews, what would I like it to say?
2. Isn't it much easier to trust God when I dwell on His faithfulness?
3. How can I trust Him more today?

REVEALING GOD'S HEART

Free to be Faithful

10/12/06

We hear the expression "He is a man of his word." It means he faithfully upholds his integrity because he values his reputation. Faithfulness is a measure of how much we value someone. Our faithfulness to God reveals how much we value Him. Before Christ redeemed us we were incapable of genuinely ascribing value to God. Concerning our most noble act, Isaiah declares that "all our righteousness are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)." Romans 3:11 declares, "...there is none that seeks after God."

Praise God! Christ has changed us. Now we can cry, "Abba, Father" as in Romans 8:15. In this new relationship to Him we can genuinely ascribe worth to God in ways that would never have been possible before our redemption. Indeed, we would never have imagined how amazingly He changes us. Now, instead of being self-serving, we can be God-serving. Now we cherish Him and are free to express our devotion to Him by our faithfulness to Him. When we recall the great changes Christ has accomplished in us, we will eagerly tell others about His inestimable value and why He deserves our faithfulness.

Today's Scripture Reading

Psalms 78:8b, 57 and Matthew 25:14-30

Life Questions

1. What does my faithfulness to God say about how I value Him?
2. If faithfulness to God were illegal, would I be found guilty?
3. How can I be more faithful today?

REVEALING GOD'S HEART

Free to be Content

10/13/06

Although the meat they craved was not forbidden, it was also not necessary. God provided all their daily food with manna. He also provides all our daily needs. Yet, we too may crave unnecessary things. The driving force behind such cravings is a heart of discontent and ungratefulness. Without Christ's resurrection power none of us could escape the grip of such cravings. They would rule our thoughts, our affections and our use of time. We would be powerless to rise above lust and covetousness if He had not set us free.

When we are deeply grateful for God's provisions we discover a remarkable degree of contentment. Indeed, the best way to deal with any sin is to acknowledge it to God and thank Him for forgiveness. I John 1:9 plainly states that when we agree with God about our sin, "He is faithful and just to forgive...and to cleanse us from our sin." Being content with what we have is wonderfully liberating and extremely rare in today's world. When we begin to live in this freedom we will be very pleased to tell others about our freedom from craving to contentment.

Today's Scripture Reading

Psalms 78:18; 106:14, 15 and Philippians 4:11-13

Life Questions

1. What ungodly craving is God addressing in my life?
2. Do I really want the discontent that comes with such cravings?
3. What can I do to be more content today?

REVEALING GOD'S HEART

Free to be Whole-Hearted

10/14/06

Israel struggled repeatedly with sin just as we do. But why do some people repeatedly go back to the same sin, while others seem to enjoy freedom from sin's domination? Is it because of compulsive or addictive personalities? Romans 8:5 states emphatically, "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires." People who are wholehearted in their affection for God are free from sin's tyranny. God's heart longs to give this freedom from sin's power.

The Promised Land was Israel's inheritance. However, God did not drive out all their enemies at once. He used the remaining enemies to test the devotion of Israel and to teach succeeding generations to do battle (Judges 2:23, 3:1). This reveals how God deals with habits of sin. To be free from sin's dominion, we must be wholehearted toward God. When we realize God offers us freedom from sinful habits, we will gladly tell others about His wondrous power to break the cycle of sin.

Today's Scripture Reading

Psalms 78:32, 37 and Colossians 3:1-10

Life Questions

1. From what sinful habits does God want to free me?
2. Do I want to live my whole life as a slave to these habits?
3. How can I be more wholehearted in my devotion today?

Week Three: God's Blessing

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S BLESSING

The Church God Blesses

10/15/06

"Even the most enormous doors swing open and closed on relatively small hinges. The door's proper operation is vitally dependent on those hinges." *Jim Cymbala*

This week we'll be focusing on God's blessing. Perhaps rehearsing the blessings of God is the most practical thing we have to tell others. Without the blessing of God, there's not much to tell. I'm convinced that God wants to bless every church. The church that's blessed is a church that makes known the blessings of God. But not every church is blessed. Not every church has working hinges. God's blessing is dependant upon those hinges.

Most doors have three hinges. And there are three important spiritual hinges that must be in working order for God to bless a church. First, the members must be in personal communion with God. That involves confession of sin as well as personal time in His presence. Second, the members must be in communion with one another. There must be an unmistakable love for each other in the church even when there might be disagreements. And third, the members must love what God loves—the lost. There must be a passion for the people for whom Christ died. God blesses churches with hinges like that! And the people of a blessed church can't help but speak about the blessings of God.

Today's Scripture Reading

Psalm 9:1-2; Psalm 34:1-3; Psalm 40:9-10

Life Questions

1. How are your hinges—your communion with God, your love for the people of Grace, and your love for the lost?
2. What adjustments might you need to make today to be sure that squeaky or broken hinges in your life will not impede the blessings of God on Grace?
3. What blessings might you want to tell others that God is pouring forth on our church?



WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S BLESSING

Blessing Others

10/16/06

"Out of my life, may Jesus shine; make me a blessing to someone today." *George S. Schuler*

In my growing up years in the church and then into Bible college chapels, I would sing with gusto, "Out in the high-ways and by-ways of life, many are weary and sad. Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife, making the sorrowing glad." So often we think in terms of blessings as those that come to us. But early in the Bible, God made it clear that the majority of blessings God wants to give actually flow through people. The reason the Dead Sea is dead is because fresh water flows into it but nothing flows out.

Since the days when I sang that song, I believe more people than ever are having difficult times. They need encouragement. They need a blessing we can provide for them. We need to think each day that we might be the hand of God's blessing to someone else. And when we bless someone, that act is like a boomerang. We give a blessing and a blessing comes back to us. Talk about a win-win situation! God blesses us so we can be a blessing to others and we're blessed again!

Today's Scripture Reading

Genesis 12:1-3; Zechariah 8:13; Matthew 25:34-40

Life Questions

1. Have you ever considered that God has called you to be a modern-day Abraham to people? In what ways can you bless the people you meet today?
2. Identify one or two people that you can touch with a kind deed or word or material blessing. Will you take the next step and bless them today?
3. When you bless someone in need, who are you really blessing?

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S BLESSING

All Blessings Come from God

10/17/06

"Everything related to divine giving is adequate, complete and beneficial." *John MacArthur*

A job you love. A friend to go to lunch with. Five dollars in the jacket pocket you haven't worn since last fall. Enough money to pay the gas bill in January. A bed to sleep in. A break in the rain right before you have to get out of the car. A baby's breath. A winter sunset. A first kiss. A last kiss. There are countless blessings you experience during a lifetime. Even before you received God's greatest and most perfect gift of salvation, He knew you and blessed you with the very breath in your chest. Why? Because, in His mercy and grace, He first loved you. Whatever difficult times you face in this life's journey, the blessings are sent to carry you and increase your faith in Him. When He's the gift-giver, it's a perfect fit. Guaranteed.

Today's Scripture Reading

James 1

Life Questions

1. Are you currently experiencing "various trials?" Take a moment to consider how these trials can produce blessings in and through you.
2. What special blessings have you received from God just today? Pray and thank God for "every good and perfect gift" He's given you.
3. Consider starting a "Blessings Journal" this week. Be amazed at how much He thinks of you. Worship Him for His boundless love for you.

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S BLESSING

It Motivates Us to Obedience

10/18/06

"If I obey Jesus Christ, the redemption of God will rush through me to other lives, because behind the deed of obedience is the reality of the Almighty God." *Oswald Chambers*

Imagine that all of your resources have been cut off. In fact, you only have enough money to purchase a couple of things at the grocery store, which you'll use to make one last meal for you and your children. Afterwards, you plan to shut the door and wait to die. But, on your way home from the store, God speaks to your heart. "That Hamburger Helper you just bought...I want you to do something for me. A man you've never met is going to come by your house. Feed him first. Trust me on this one." What would you do? Would you be quick to obey God's strange request or would you despair at the thought of feeding a stranger over your own flesh and blood? That's a tough one. Can you recount God's blessings and find a reason to obey, even when it's difficult? Keep in mind that a "full pantry" just might be on the other side of your obedience.

Today's Scripture Reading

1 Kings 17

Life Questions

1. Why did the widow in 1 Kings 17 do what Elijah asked her to do?
2. Is God asking you to do anything today that doesn't seem to match up to your abilities? Take a minute to write down what He's asking you to do. Next, write down how you plan to respond. Thank the Lord for blessing your obedience. Trust Him to keep His promises.

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S BLESSING

They Should Motivate Us to be Generous

10/19/06

When God blesses us, we should, in turn, be motivated to bless others. That means we should be compelled to be generous with our finances, time, resources, energy, talents, etc. to impact eternity instead of keeping all the good stuff to ourselves. "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." *Jim Elliott*

"You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead. If we give instead of keep, if we invest in the eternal instead of in the temporal, we store up treasures in heaven that will never stop paying dividends. Whatever treasures we store up on earth will be left behind when we leave. Whatever treasures we store up in heaven will be waiting for us when we arrive." *The Treasure Principle by Randy Alcorn*

Today's Scripture Reading

Matthew 6

Life Questions

1. Where are you currently storing your treasures? On earth or in heaven? Why?
2. In what new way can you be generous with your finances, time, resources, energy, talents, etc.? Pray for God to show you how you can be more generous with the blessings He's entrusted to you.

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S BLESSING

God Blesses When We've Already Given 10/20/06

"Oh, the differences that often are between everything we want and what we really need." *Nicole Nordeman*

Think of God the Father poised on the edge of heaven just waiting to bless you for giving of your finances, time, resources, energy, talents, etc. His riches exceed any need you may have. "...God's nature is to replenish the stores of those who strive to be faithful conduits for His kingdom work. When you participate with God in His mission, you can trust Him to reward you abundantly for every good deed. When you begin to view your wealth from God's perspective, you'll see that the thing to fear isn't giving away too much, but sowing too little." *Fields of Gold by Andy Stanley*

Today's Scripture Reading

Philippians 4

Life Questions

1. What was Paul commending the Philippians for doing? What did Paul tell the Philippians God would do for them?
2. What do you see as the differences between things you want and things you need? Does your perspective need to be adjusted?

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S BLESSING

To Be Shared With the Next Generation

10/21/06

"There are only three ways to teach a child. The first is by example. The second is by example and the third is by example." *Albert Schweitzer*

Small children are closely related to the parrot. Not so much in how they look, of course, but more in how they act. Just as a parrot will eventually repeat a word or phrase they hear, so a child will repeat what he hears, embarrassing or not. Children are also masters of mimic when it comes to repeating actions. As a recipient of God's blessings, it is your duty to teach the next generation the responsibility that comes with enjoying His favor. Little eyes are always watching and waiting for something worth mimicking. How you remember God's blessings will have a profound impact on the way your children remember God's blessings, and then the way their children remember God's blessings. In that, your legacy lives on.

Today's Scripture Reading

Deuteronomy 6

Life Questions

1. According to today's scripture reading, how was God getting ready to bless Israel? What is the greatest commandment according to Deuteronomy 6:5?
2. How are you teaching your children, the younger generation and/or someone who is a new Christian, about God's blessings? Look for an opportunity to "teach" someone today.
3. Pray and commit to love the Lord with all your heart, soul and strength. Ask Him to show you how to share with others what He's done for you.

Week Four: God's Power

An ACTS 2 CHURCH The Power of the Holy Spirit

10/22/06

This weekend we were privileged to have Jerry Sheveland, President of our denomination the Baptist General Conference, address the people of Grace. Consider these words by Jerry from his book *Fire and Reign*: "In Acts 2 the church receives what it's been waiting for: the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John 14, 'I'll ask the Father and he'll give you another counselor.' When he used the word 'another', it clearly meant 'another counselor just like the one He gave you when He gave you me.' Jesus was saying, 'When I step off this planet and ascend to the Father, you will not be left as orphans. I will come to you in the person of the Holy Spirit – not just to be with you, but to be in you.' We cannot be the witness of Christ's living, reigning presence where we live and work and spend our lives unless we know that the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit is the gift we received when we received Jesus by faith. The Holy Spirit is always a grace gift."

Today's Scripture Reading

Acts 2:1-47

Life Questions

1. How did the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit affect Peter (2:14ff); non-believers in the crowd (2:37ff); the early church (2:42-47)?
2. Spend some time in prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to empower your life again in the specific circumstances that you are in right now, i.e., in your family, at work, in relationships, at church, etc.



EMBOLDENED BY HIS COURAGE

Praying Bold Prayers

10/23/06

"Congregations often minister in the safe confines of their present circle of relationships. Those who live beyond us barely know we exist. Acts 4 and 5 tell the story of the Jerusalem church laying hold of God for a gift of boldness. Jesus wants your community to be touched by His name. His Spirit gives you the capacity to engage with folks who need Him, believing God loves to answer your prayers when you intercede in their behalf. He still wants people whose confidence is so great in Him that they're unafraid to pray bold prayers, to step into people's lives with bold ministry and then teach that Jesus is indeed the promised Christ from God." *Fire and Reign* by Jerry Sheveland

Today's Scripture Reading

Acts 4:1-37

Life Questions

1. What are some steps you can take to be a bolder witness?
2. What action steps did the early church take in response to God's presence among them as described in Acts 4:32-37?
3. Take some time to offer bold prayers for Grace, for our outreach and for your own response to God's presence in you.

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S POWER

The Power of His Love

10/24/06

The psalmist tells us to "proclaim the power of God" in Psalms 68:34. There are so many aspects of God's power, but let us consider today the power of His love. "The greatness of God's power is the greatness of His heart. His strength is the measure of His love." *David Roper*

In Kerry Dearborn's biographical sketch of George MacDonald, he said, "To MacDonald, God's sovereign power is the power of love. He saw Christ as one at work to bring all people into God's redeeming and transforming love. He came to the belief that Jesus Christ is the true revelation of God's nature. Jesus came to express God's love for humanity." This expression of love was carried all the way to the cross. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NIV) This was the ultimate demonstration of God's love. In turn, we must demonstrate the power of God's love through our lives. In order to reach the sinner, we must love them, and offer ourselves humbly and authentically as examples of what God's power can do. "Love talked about can be easily turned aside, but love demonstrated is irresistible." *W. Stanley Mooneyham*

Today's Scripture Reading

1 John 4:7-17

Life Questions

1. Why does God command us to love one another?
2. Is there anything hindering you from telling others of the power of God's love? Pray that God will remove that hindrance and free you to love in word and deed.

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S POWER

The Power of His Cross

10/25/06

Paul tells us that the cross is the central theme of the story of God's power: "For the message of the cross is...the power of God." (I Cor. 1:18 NIV). "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God." (Rom. 1:16 NIV) "That cross on which our Lord was broken, where He took our sin and suffering, where He took our alienation, where He was abandoned by all, that cross is at the heart of the gospel." *Ravi Zacharias*

World-famous Russian author Aleksander Solzhenitsyn was sent to a Siberian prison because he criticized Communism. Languishing there under intolerable conditions year after year, he decided to end his life, but he firmly believed suicide would be against God's will. So at a public assembly of the prisoners, he sat in a front row, planning to get up and walk toward an exit, compelling a guard to kill him. However, another prisoner sat down, blocking his exit. That unknown man leaned over, and to Solzhenitsyn's astonishment, drew a cross on the dirt floor. The cross! He abandoned his plans, and there in prison became a Christian. He was eventually set free to bear witness to the world of the power of the cross.

Today's Scripture Reading

Matthew 27:27-54

Life Questions

1. After seeing first hand the power of Jesus' crucifixion, what was the response of those at the foot of the cross?
2. Am I faithfully telling the power of God through the message of the cross?

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S POWER

The Power of His Resurrection

10/26/06

Proclaiming God's power would not be complete without telling of the power of Christ's resurrection. Paul prayed that the believers at Ephesus might know God's incomparably great power in them, like that "which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms." (Eph. 1:20 NIV)

"Our Lord's Cross is the gateway into His life; His Resurrection means that He has power now to convey His life to me. When I am born again from above, I receive from the Risen Lord His very life. Our Lord's Resurrection destiny is to bring "many sons unto glory." The fulfilling of His destiny gives Him the right to make us sons and daughters of God. When our Lord rose from the dead, He rose to an absolutely new life, to a life that had never been before; and His resurrection means for us that we are raised to His risen life, not to our old life. 'I would know Him in the power of His resurrection.'" *My Utmost For His Highest* by *Oswald Chambers*

Today's Scripture Reading

I Corinthians 15:12-58

Life Questions

1. What rational argument did Paul use to refute the statement of some that there is no resurrection of the dead?
2. Has belief in Jesus' resurrection changed your life? Give thanks to God that the power He used to raise Jesus from the dead is the same power at work in you.

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S POWER

The Power of His Word

10/27/06

The tool God has given us to proclaim His power is the Word of God itself. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." (Heb. 4:23 KJV) "It cost the Savior his life to make clear that God's words can be trusted, that he was dying to love us. His words have the power to bring home those who have lost their way." *Craig Barnes*

How do you get dressed each morning? Do you dress for comfort or to impress others? A friend of mine spends a great deal of time in front of her open closet, trying to decide what to wear each day. Do you consider dressing as Paul told us to dress in Ephesians 6? He challenged us to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power by putting on the full armor of God. A very important piece of that armor he describes is the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. It not only is intended for our defense, but is also an offensive weapon in our witness to others. When we speak out for Christ, we must do so boldly and clearly. This means we must be familiar with what Scripture says about sin, salvation and man's need for faith. Study God's Word. Learn its doctrines and put them into practice. That will make you a better witness.

Today's Scripture Reading

John 1:1-18

Life Questions

1. What are some of the characteristics of the Word become flesh?
2. Lord, how can I be a better witness of the living Word?

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S POWER

The Power of His Spirit

10/28/06

When God challenged His people to proclaim His power, He provided the dynamic source of power in them through the Holy Spirit. Consider his promise to the early believers in Acts 1:8: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." Paul told Timothy, "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power." (II Tim. 1:7 NIV) Jim Cymbala in his book, *Fresh Power*, says, "God didn't send the Holy Spirit to give us thrills and chills; He sent the Spirit to empower us to win lost people to Jesus."

"I believe that divine, miraculous, creative power resides in the Holy Spirit....If we want that power to quicken our friends who are dead in sin, we must look to God, and not be looking to man to do it. If we look alone to ministers, if we look alone to Christ's disciples to do this work, we shall be disappointed. If we look to the Spirit of God and expect it to come from Him and Him alone, then we shall honor the Spirit, and the Spirit will do his work. I cannot help but believe that there are many Christians who want to be more efficient in the Lord's service. It is from the Holy Spirit that we may expect this power." *Secret Power by D. L. Moody*

Today's Scripture Reading

Ephesians 1

Life Questions

1. What were the three things that Paul prayed that the Ephesians might know in Ephesians 1:18-19?
2. Are you experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit in your life? Pray that you will see the power of the gift that produces effective ministry for Christ.

Week Five: God's Greatness



WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S GREATNESS

God's Glory

10/29/06

"People are willing to be God-centered as long as they feel that God is man-centered." *John Piper*

Man is impressed with his own glory. He has done incredible things. And he has a temptation to worship himself by claiming center stage. We're far too impressed with man and his might. But God has no rivals. There is none like Him. He is Almighty and Infinite and Majesty and Everlasting. He will not share His glory with another.

We need to be impressed afresh with this great God. He created everything there is and it all holds together at His command. He leads the heavenly hosts and calls them by name. Everyday he tells the world how great He is by the sun and the heavens. He delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt through the Red Sea and He delivered us from the penalty and bondage of sin by His own Son.

What God wants more than anything else is for us to tell Him how awesome He is! It's not an ego trip for Him. It's the logical result of the sheer magnitude of His infinite glory. We see Him now dimly through the veil of our own flesh. But one day, we'll fall down before Him and eternally shout forth His magnificent wonders. It's good to practice now what we'll do forever—shout to the Lord all the earth let us sing...glory and majesty belong (ONLY) to the King!

Today's Scripture Reading

Psalms 145

Life Questions

1. List five of the greatest things you know about God.
2. What is the greatest thing God has ever done for you?
3. Do you ever compete for God's glory?

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S GREATNESS

Greatness Demands a Response

10/30/06

"Our troubles seem smaller when we ponder the greatness of God." *Anonymous* True greatness demands a response. It moves us beyond control. I remember walking to the edge of the Grand Canyon for the first time several years ago. I'd seen valleys and canyons before. But I wasn't prepared for what I saw. The view was so overpowering and breathtaking, my eyes welled up with tears and I knelt in worship before God. I couldn't help myself. In that stunning moment, all the cares of life were forgotten as I beheld the grandeur of God's handiwork.

There's nothing in the universe that compares with the greatness of God (Ps. 40:5). That's why when Isaiah saw the Lord in Isaiah 6, he felt so unclean. That's why when John saw the Lord in Revelation 1, he fell at His feet as a dead man. Our natural response to seeing God's greatness is to be overcome. We can't do otherwise. So if we're unimpressed with God, if worship is a routine formality, if other things of this life thrill us more than God, it's a warning light on our spiritual dashboard. We've missed something of the greatness of God. We need to be zealous like Moses with a great desire to encounter the life-changing greatness of God. And like Job, we'll melt in repentance. For it is impossible to truly encounter the greatness of God and not be involuntarily overcome. Afterwards, the tongue will be loosened to praise God and to speak of His greatness to all who will listen.

Today's Scripture Reading

Revelation 1:10-19

Life Questions

1. Have you ever had an experience with God in which you were incredibly overcome by His greatness? Recount that experience for a few moments and be moved afresh.
2. What steps can you take if you have been taking the greatness of God for granted?
3. Jesus told John to tell the churches what he had seen about Christ. With whom can you share the incomparable greatness of God today?

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S GREATNESS

Knowing God and His Greatness

10/31/06

"Why did Moses want to see God's greatness? Ask yourself a similar question. Why do you stare at sunsets and ponder the summer night sky? Why do you search for a rainbow in the mist or gaze at the Grand Canyon? Why do you allow the Pacific surf to mesmerize and Niagara to hypnotize? How do we explain our fascination with such sights? Beauty? Yes. But doesn't the beauty point to a beautiful Someone? Doesn't the immensity of the ocean suggest an immense Creator?" *It's Not About Me by Max Lucado*

"Forgive my effrontery, but shouldn't Moses' request be yours? You've got problems. Look at you. Living in a dying body, walking on a decaying planet, surrounded by a self-centered society. Some saved by grace; others fueled by narcissism. Many of us by both. Cancer. War. Disease. These are no small issues. A small god? No thanks. You and I need what Moses needed – a glimpse of God's glory. Such a sighting can change you forever." *It's Not About Me by Max Lucado*

Today's Scripture Reading

Exodus 33:18-23

Life Questions

1. What is the desire of your heart? Do you want to know God and His greatness?
2. Moses' life was not "problem free" after his meeting with God. In what ways did his encounter with God prepare him for the coming years?

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S GREATNESS

Next to God, Everything is Small

11/1/06

"We are halfway between immensity and that which is infinitesimally small." *Pascal*

"God has the attribute of immanence and immensity. God is immanent, which means you don't have to go distances to find God. He is in everything. He is right here. God is above all things, beneath all things, outside of all things and inside of all things. God is above, but He's not pushed up. He's beneath, but He's not pressed down. He's outside, but He's not excluded. He's inside, but He's not confined. God is above all things presiding, beneath all things sustaining, outside of all things embracing and inside of all things filling." *The Attributes of God by A. W. Tozer*

Today's Scripture Reading

Psalm 139:7-16

Life Questions

1. God is in control of His entire creation. Is He big enough, strong enough, wise enough to guide you through life? Is there a challenge that you are facing today that begs submission to Almighty God?
2. How does it make you feel to know that there is no place that you can go where God is not present?

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S GREATNESS

Be Amazed and Be Secure

11/2/06

"We will trust Him only to the extent that we genuinely stand in awe of Him." *Jerry Bridges*

"One day I borrowed one of my wife's measuring spoons to see how much water I could hold in the hollow of my hand. It was barely more than a tablespoonful. By contrast we know that slightly more than two-thirds of the earth's surface is covered with water, in places six miles deep. The total volume is incalculable...God says He holds all those waters in the hollow of His hand." *The Joy of Fearing God by Jerry Bridges*

Today's Scripture Reading

Isaiah 40:12-31

Life Questions

1. God's greatness is unfathomable, yet in His goodness God translates His greatness in words that humans can understand. How does this glimpse of God's greatness strengthen your faith in Him?
2. God's greatness does not prevent Him from caring for us. It says in Isaiah that He does not become weary or tired. Is there an area of your life that is especially in need of this truth?

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S GREATNESS

God Ensures the Victory

11/3/06

"We find one of the most impressive examples of human sovereignty in ancient King Nebuchadnezzar, who from 605 to 562 B.C. held the reins of power over the vast Babylonian Empire. Neighboring nations trembled at the mention of his name and many of them fell when his armies laid siege against their city walls. Nebuchadnezzar seemed unstoppable. But King Nebuchadnezzar collided with the only true sovereign, the King of Heaven. At the height of Nebuchadnezzar's pride, God plucked him from the pinnacle of human sovereignty, took away his authority, drove him from his people and set him down for a time to graze mindlessly among beasts of the field. No longer self-sufficient or enamored with his own powers, the king knelt to acknowledge the Most High God who was sovereign over him." *When Life and Beliefs Collide* by Carolyn Custis James

"When Gideon recruited an army of 32,000 to fight the Midianites, God whittled it down to just 300, making the odds 450 to 1 as they went out to fight 135,000 enemy troops. It appeared to be a recipe for disaster, but God did it so Israel would know it was God's power, not their own strength, that saved them." *Rick Warren*

Today's Scripture Reading

Daniel 4

Life Questions

1. God revealed his greatness to Nebuchadnezzar and Gideon, but in different ways. How is God revealing His greatness in your life?
2. Our weaknesses (sometimes disguised as strengths) plus God's power equals what?

WE WILL TELL OF GOD'S GREATNESS

Our Great Redeemer

11/4/06

"I am not advocating melodrama or theatrics that work up emotion. But I am in favor, as were the apostles, of asking God to stretch out his hand and manifest himself. People pay attention when they see that God actually changes persons and sets them free. When a new Christian stands up and tells how God has revolutionized his or her life, no one dozes off. When someone is healed or released from a life-controlling bondage, everyone takes notice. These things bear witness to a God who is strong and alive...Christianity is not predominantly a teaching religion...The teaching of sound doctrine is a prelude, if you will, to the supernatural." *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* by Jim Cymbala

"The Bible offers no specifics concerning the methodology or doctrinal statement of its founders. We are told only that 'the Lord's hand was with them.' Because of God's blessings, this church evidently led multitudes of people to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith! It didn't matter what was against these believers because God's blessings and grace were for them in a remarkable way." *The Church God Blesses* by Jim Cymbala

Today's Scripture Reading

Acts 11:19-24 and Romans 1:16

Life Questions

1. According to these verses, what is one of the main purposes of God's power?
2. Celebrate God's greatness! Read Psalm 150.