

GOD'S REVIVALIST

January / February 2023

and Bible Advocate



NEW SERIES

Discipleship



Rev. Elmer Farmer

thinking out loud

DADDY WAS A DISCIPLER

Daddy represented Christ well—to family, friends, and even strangers whom he would encounter in daily life. It could be during neighborhood canvassing, knocking on doors, talking to those he would meet about Jesus and inviting them to church. At other times it occurred midst the spontaneous conversations he had while waiting for a pizza order. His engaging, affable manner made it easy to interact with others. One specific memory is very clear to me. Hy-Vee had just opened a supermarket in our area. Daddy strode into the beautiful new store and joked with one of the managers that he really liked the store so much that he might want to buy it. “Well, everything has a price,” was the reply. Daddy quickly responded, “No, not everything. Many years ago, I gave my life to Jesus, and it is NOT for sale.” He had managed to take a frivolous comment and turn it toward his mission—to proclaim Christ. He was good at doing that!

He was also a good disciple-making leader. During several stints as a district superintendent, his character and actions were a model for fellow ministers, especially the younger ones. He would personally take some under his wing and give them the special attention they needed. Although his life pointed directly to Christ, he understood that in order to make disciples, he must first be a disciple himself and authentically live out the character and conduct of Christ. He had to be careful to model what he wanted others to follow.

Thankfully, Daddy passed some of this on to his children. No, I didn’t pick up his easy-going flair for personal evangelism. However, I did pick up the necessity for building up and empowering others to get things accomplished more effectively. I recall how other colleges paid outside consultants to complete institutional self-studies and how other chief academic officers lamented that they practically had to do such reports on their own. I smiled. Why? Because my experience at GBS was that those were robust group efforts involving even the younger and less experienced faculty and staff. Those of us in senior positions modeled the right things to fulfill the mission of GBS; others followed. In addition to the work of the school, something equally important was taking place. We were building and leading disciples—the next generation of followers of Christ who are dedicated to His mission, especially as it is accomplished through GBS! —KF ■

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COVER PHOTO: Emily Albertson currently is actively discipling high school student Alexa Arder. Photo by Kevin Moser.

the president's page



CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

by Dr. Rodney S. Loper, President

In August of 2003, the Church of the Holy Cross in New York City was broken into twice. In the first break-in, thieves made away with a metal moneybox that had been resting next to a votive candle rack. Three weeks later, vandals escaped with something much more valuable: they unbolted a 4-foot long, 200-pound plaster Jesus from a meditation area, taking the statue of Christ, but leaving behind his wooden cross on the wall. The church caretaker confessed his bewilderment at this: “They just decided, ‘We’re going to leave the cross and take Jesus.’ We don’t know why they took just Him. We figure if you want the crucifix, you take the whole crucifix.” In other words, if you want Jesus, you take His cross, too.

THE CLARION CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Peter and the other disciples faced a similar decision in Matthew 16. Peter had just declared that Jesus was “the Christ, the son of the living God” (v.16), and Jesus began to show the disciples the future plan—the plan that was formulated before the foundations of the world; the plan that didn’t involve an earthly throne, but rather a cross. Since Peter was still fixated on being in the administration of Jesus’ coming kingdom, he didn’t like the sounds of this plan. So, he pulled Jesus aside to voice his concern.

This is the context of Jesus’ clarion call to discipleship. In these words, Jesus doesn’t water down what is expected of His disciples. Neither does He temper what His disciples should anticipate when they choose to follow Him. In effect, He looks at Peter and clarifies to all listening, including us today, that discipleship in His kingdom is more than words, more than convenience, and more than casual adherence to a plan. Discipleship involves a deep commitment that affects all aspects of one’s life.

There is a thought being expressed these days that tends to ignore a wholehearted abandonment of self and a deep abiding commitment to Christ. It usually comes packaged in very spiritual sounding verbiage. We hear folks quote passages such as Ephesians 2:8-9—"for by grace are ye saved...not of works, lest any man should boast"—as a proof text that nothing but grace is required of a disciple. There is great danger in this kind of hermeneutic because the letter or message to Ephesus was to be read or heard in one sitting. That requires Ephesians chapter 2 to be understood in the light of the rest of the letter. When Ephesians is considered holistically, one can achieve proper understanding: Yes, we do get a salvation that is free—no strings attached. However, at the same time we get a love that motivates actions expressed in the way that we live! Combining

Discipleship is more than attending church on Sunday. It is a way of life. We are to live as dead men. We must take up the cross and follow Jesus—no looking back or turning around.

these two together yields true biblical discipleship. To express this another way, salvation brings you into the family of God, and discipleship teaches you how to behave after you are in the family.

THREE IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

In Matthew 16:14, Jesus provides three aspects of discipleship that are important. First, he calls the disciple to lay something down—**DENY YOURSELF**. The word deny here is the same word that is used to describe Peter's denial of Christ. It means "to completely disown" or "to separate from." It is to lose sight; to let go of our desires, wants, interest, and pursuits in order to follow Christ. This is not new to readers of the Bible. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

This commitment is countercultural! Everything in our culture today tells us to live to gratify self. If you don't

believe me, just take a moment to look at advertisements. Drive this car. Buy this house. Wear this cologne. If you do, everything you ever wanted will be fulfilled.

No, this idea of laying down yourself, of denying yourself, isn't popular theology. While we don't like the idea that we must die, according to Scripture, this is what must be done. Galatians 2:20, Romans 12:1, and John 12:24 all teach the necessity of Christ's disciples dying to self.

Second, Jesus calls his disciples to pick something up—**TAKE UP YOUR CROSS**. In our day, we have done something unusual with the cross. We have made the cross an emblem of decoration. It is hung on the wall, made into jewelry, and even tattooed on bodies. Historically, the cross was not something to be proud of—it was a symbol of death. It would be like us celebrating the electric-chair.

Cicero, the ancient Roman writer, gives us insight into how the cross was viewed by the Romans when he wrote, "Let the very name of the 'cross' be far removed from not only the bodies of Roman citizens, but even from their thoughts, their eyes, and their ears." Romans thought that the word "cross" was obscene. Why? Because it was the emblem of the worst death the Romans could dream up!

The truth that Jesus is conveying is this—we are to live as dead men. We are called to take up the cross, once and for all, and go after Jesus. We are not to look back, turn around, or lay down the cross. We are to live and to give our all for His Glory. This—being willing to let go of our lives—is the biggest hurdle people face. Why? Because it is not natural to let go of your own wants, dreams, plans, wishes, and allow HIS to define your life! It isn't natural, but if you want to be His disciple, it is necessary. You will never get anywhere with God while holding back!

Finally, Jesus calls His disciples daily to **"FOLLOW ME."** In the original language, the word "follow" has the meaning of "present activity that is required." Discipleship is more than attending church on Sunday. It is a way of life. This lifestyle affects you so deeply that the cashier, policeman, teacher, employer, employee, and family members should all know that you are a Christian—that there is something different about you.

CONCLUSION

Discipleship is more than a class, a book, a lecture, or training. Yes, each of these activities has its place and is needed. In fact, I would go so far as to say that in many churches they are missing entirely. Having said that, discipleship is truly a choice. Jesus' words make that clear—"if any man." Yes, we are all called to be His disciples. The decision is ours to make. My desire is for every reader to experience the joy and freedom of denying self, taking up his/her cross, and following Christ! ■

Introduction to Discipleship

by Nathan Brown

*When our kids were small, we would have them listen to Bible stories and then create something from the story using Lego blocks. One day my wife asked them to illustrate Jesus' famous call, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt 11:28-30 ESV). After spending a few minutes in his room, our son Alex came out and proudly presented his creation: it was a little Lego man holding an egg yolk. **This is a great illustration of what can happen when we're given orders but we don't really understand what to do!***

One of the last things Jesus did during his earthly ministry was give his disciples this command: "Go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19). All of us would agree that this command is fundamental to our mission as the people of God. But what is a disciple? How do you go about making a disciple? And what exactly is discipleship? If we are to be effective in our obedience to Christ's command, we must know and understand the answers to these questions.

The theme for this *God's Revivalist* series is discipleship, and, over the next several issues, we'll be discussing this topic in-depth. We'll begin by looking at what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, and we'll gain an understanding of discipleship, both as a picture to visualize and a definition to consider. Then we'll talk about how to put this into practice personally, for **each of us must be a disciple ourselves before we can make disciples of others.** Along with this, I'll give you a set of tools that will help you do the daily activities that are vital to being a disciple. Then we'll look at the disciple-making home and talk about how to disciple your family effectively. Last, we'll discuss how the Great Commission relates to the Church and how the Church can fulfill its mission of making disciples.

Now, before we dive into what discipleship is, let's first pause and spend a moment talking about **WHAT DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT.** This is important because it's easy to confuse the various pieces and parts of discipleship for the whole. Discipleship is...

- **Not just a series of study guides or lessons.** When many people think of discipleship, they think of the *Design for Discipleship* series by NavPress or the *Truth-Seed* series by Victor Books. While these resources are helpful and play an important role in discipleship, they are only tools. Discipleship is not a curriculum. It's not like we work through some lessons and then we're disciplined.

- **Not just a small group meeting.** Small groups are great venues for discipleship, but having small groups doesn't automatically mean that discipleship is taking place. First, the small group leader may not lead very well. Second, people can attend a small group and never really connect with others or grow spiritually. And third, some people simply will not attend a small group for a variety of reasons. Also, it's not like you can say, "Well, I went to a small group meeting for six months, and so I'm done with discipleship."

- **Not just a program.** Some churches have a program called "Discipleship." That's great, and it can be a very positive experience, but discipleship is not an event. It's not like we go through a program and come out saying, "Well, I can put a checkmark on discipleship." Discipleship is not something that we stop doing. Discipleship never ends!

- **Not only for new converts.** Many people think of new converts when they think about discipleship. And yes, new converts need to be disciplined, but don't think that discipleship is just for new converts. Discipleship is for everyone!



- **Not done only by pastors.** While pastors are called to disciple those under their care, discipleship is not an exclusive activity which can only be carried out by elders or pastors or church leaders. Indeed, parents are charged by God to disciple their children.
- **Not only about evangelism.** Evangelism is the first step in making disciples, but it's only the beginning of the journey. We should never lead someone to Christ and then walk away thinking we've done our job. We must also make sure they are rooted and grounded in the faith, and this involves time and effort.

We've spent some time looking at what discipleship *is not*, and over the next several issues, we'll be looking in-depth at what discipleship *is*. But let me give you a brief summary of **WHAT DISCIPLESHIP IS ALL ABOUT**. Discipleship is about...

- **Becoming like Jesus.** As children of God, our goal is to become more and more like Him. We need to learn to think like Jesus, believe like Jesus, value like Jesus, have attitudes like Jesus, react like Jesus, behave like Jesus—in short, be like Jesus! We need to ask ourselves every day: What would Jesus do? What would Jesus think? How would Jesus react? What would Jesus believe?
- **Developing relationships and becoming part of a community of disciples.** We are not Lone Ranger disciples; rather, we're part of a living, growing body of disciples called the church. We help each other apply God's Word to our lives so that our minds and hearts and hands are transformed into the image of Christ. We coach each other, showing each other how to be like Jesus. This is where lessons and Bible studies and programs and small groups play such an important role.
- **Persuading others to follow Jesus.** We all have a responsibility to reach out to others with the good news of Jesus. We need to be godly examples to our families, our friends, our coworkers, our neighbors, and others we encounter in daily life. We need to be looking for opportunities to share our testimonies and explain how Jesus transformed us. We need to be active in our churches and communities. We need to be involved in global missions, praying for our fellow workers in other parts of the world.

Discipleship is a lifetime journey in which we live each day as disciples of Jesus within a community of disciples, the local church. Discipleship is the daily process of being transformed into the image of Christ and helping others to do the same. Discipleship is the great task of calling a lost and dying world to become disciples of Christ and then establishing those new believers as mature, healthy disciples who make disciples. Discipleship is for all, and discipleship never ends. Join us as we explore the exciting journey of discipleship! ■

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Letters should be emailed to revivalist@gbs.edu or addressed to the Editorial Office, 1810 Young Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202. Letters reprinted here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editor of God's Revivalist nor those of the administration of God's Bible School. Names and locations of writers will be withheld at their specific request or at the discretion of the editor. We reserve the right to edit and condense.

Greetings from Alabama! Ruth and I continue to enjoy *God's Revivalist* and, additionally, feel that it keeps us connected to our great GBS family. Blessings on the editor, my dear friend; his ministry; and family.

DR. & MRS. MICHAEL WILLIAMS
Seale, AL

Our grandfather, Charles H. Cox, worked at the GBS print shop way back in the early 1900s. We love *God's Revivalist*. It is a joy!

GAIL B. COX
Sellersburg, IN

I really enjoyed the alumni news section about Irene Maurer—and the photos, too. Thank you, and blessings to your family, Kevin [Moser], for producing such wonderful believers!

MICHELLE ULE
author, biographer of Mrs. Oswald Chambers
Santa Rosa, CA

I so appreciate *God's Revivalist*. It is an encouragement, inspiring, and great teacher of God's Word. May you all be blessed and encouraged as you work in His fields.

CHERI BENFIELD
Independence, KS

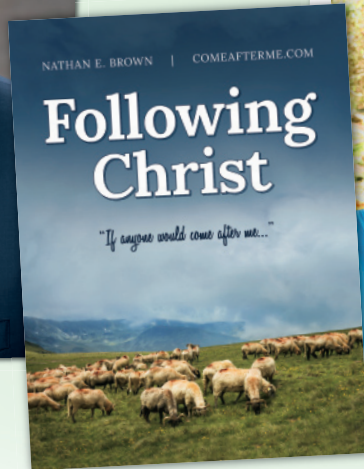
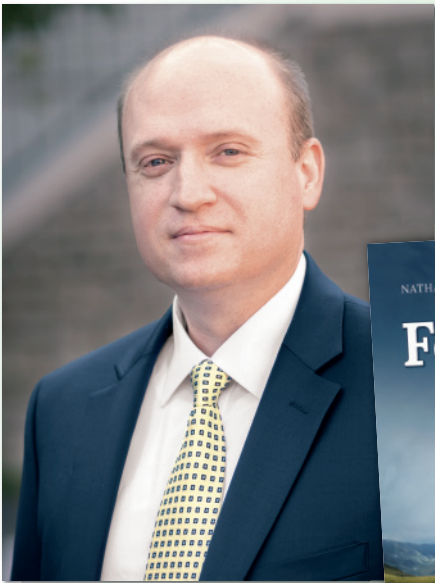
I do enjoy *God's Revivalist* and what GBS stands for! My prayers are for the college each day.

WALTER COOK
Preston Hollow, NY

We enjoy the beautiful magazine. Thank you very much.

MR. & MRS. BILL J. CASE
Colorado Springs, CO

About Nathan Brown



The Revivalist Press welcomes Nathan Brown, the main contributor for this five-part series on “Discipleship.” The following background information on Nathan explains how his discipleship ministry developed.

In May 1992, Nathan Brown, the son of Drs. Allan and Nadine Brown, graduated from Hobe Sound Bible Academy, having attended kindergarten through 12th grade. He then enrolled at Hobe Sound Bible College and signed up for all of his father’s courses that he could (e.g., Pentateuch, Christian Beliefs, Romans, etc.). This special course load was basically designed for him, as the Brown Family was preparing to move to Alabama in the summer of 1993.

Following the move, Nathan attended the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, graduating in May 1998 with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. One month later, he was hired by Southern Company Services, Birmingham, Alabama, a leading producer of clean, safe, reliable, and affordable energy. He currently serves as a senior engineer in the Resource Planning department. In this position, he runs a generation forecasting model which helps the company estimate how much coal, oil, and gas the generating fleet will need to meet the demands of its customers (e.g., Alabama Power, Georgia Power, Mississippi Power) for up to 35 years into the future. This data is used by the Fuel Services department to procure and transport the needed fuel to the generation plants.

This very complex technical work might raise a few questions. “How did this interest come about?” “When did Nathan realize he wanted to be an engineer?” “Were there any expectations on him to be a teacher or preacher?” Nathan gives the following insight.

My dad was a Bible teacher, but my mom was a science teacher, so science was an important part of my world growing up. We also lived in southern Florida, and, from an early age, I was fascinated by NASA; the space program was located only two hours north of us at the Kennedy Space Center on Cape Canaveral. I actually wanted to be an aerospace engineer and build spacecraft like the space shuttles and the Apollo 11 lunar module. However, when I started university, I was told by my advisors that NASA was on a hiring freeze and that I should major in something more generic in order for it to be easier to find a job when I graduated. So I ended up in mechanical engineering. Yes, a lot of people did expect me to follow in my dad’s footsteps, but my mom provided enough “cover” so that I could point to her, and my choice made sense to people.

Following the Browns’ move to Alabama, Nathan met Charity Frederick at the Bible Methodist Youth Camp in Pell City. After dating for several years, they were married April 7, 2001. They live in Trussville, Alabama, and have two children: Kathryn (17) and Alex (15). Charity works remotely as a bilingual production editor for Classical Conversations MultiMedia, which produces classical Christian curriculum and ancillary products for an increasingly global homeschool community. Her remote work allows her to stay involved in her own children’s home education. She also is involved in working for Nathan’s website. ComeAfterMe.com’s Spanish materials are the

result of her work alongside that of native editors. You can see this by clicking on the Español link at the top right of the website. The Browns attend the Pell City Bible Methodist Church. Charity is currently helping out by facilitating an adult Sunday school class.

How Nathan became so involved in discipling and developing discipleship materials relates to his affiliation with the Bible Methodist Connection...and a specific event. Nathan explains:

My dad was ordained with the Bible Methodists around 1970. When we moved to Alabama in 1993 to pastor East Lake Bible Methodist in Birmingham, I formally became a member that year. I've done a variety of things in various Bible Methodist churches: adult Sunday school teacher, fill-in preacher, and worship leader. However, it was when Greg Makcen, the former pastor of Tuscaloosa Bible Methodist Church, died in 2003, that we had two couples saved as a result of his death. I immediately started a discipleship ministry with them in their homes. Charity and I would take turns with them in hosting the group meeting each week, and I started teaching them the basics of what it means to be a Christian. We did this until we moved to Birmingham in 2006.

*Later, in 2009, my friend Brian Miller, who was pastoring the Fairview Wesleyan Church, Cottondale, Alabama, asked me to start a discipleship class on Sunday evenings at his church. That was when I started writing up all my material and began the website (it was originally called *Discipling New Converts*). The site started with just a few lessons (basically just one page). I continued to add material over time until it is what you see today. I moved to the comeafterme.com domain in May 2015.*

In 2015, Nathan was elected as the Bible Methodist Discipleship Director. All of the core discipleship materials and Bible-Prayer system were created after that. Since then, Nathan has been the Bible teacher at camps and has spoken about discipleship at many churches around the conferences. He does admit, however, that most of his time is spent working on material for the website.

Although Nathan will get into more detail of the discipleship tools on his website, for right now he would simply say this:

I want people to think of my website as a platform for personal, family, and church discipleship. Personal discipleship in the sense that it can help you build and grow your relationship with God on a daily basis. Family discipleship in the sense that it has the tools to help you disciple your children as well as foster a devotional time in which families can discuss and learn about God and the Bible. Church discipleship in the sense that it has material which can be used to train people in how to be disciples who can in turn train other disciples.

Enjoy this series! —KF ■

Being Jesus'

In his book *Following the Master*, Michael Wilkins relates that when he speaks on discipleship, he asks people, "How many can say with confidence that you're a true disciple of Jesus?" When he asks this question, many people are hesitant or confused and don't raise their hand. But when he asks, "How many can say with confidence that you're a true Christian?" most immediately raise their hand. No hesitation, no doubt. Isn't that interesting?

The Great Commission is the mission statement of the Church, yet many don't understand what it means to be a disciple. How can we "go and make disciples" if we don't know what a disciple is? How can we be an example to others if we're not sure about what we're doing ourselves? So that's where we're going to start in this series. We're going to start by answering this question—What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

While there are many good ways to answer this question, I'm going to try to capture the essence of discipleship using five verbs, and the first one is *commit*. Being a disciple of Jesus means committing to Him alone.

COMMIT

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He faithfully preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Mark tells us that Jesus was saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15*). Jesus eagerly welcomed all who believed, but when large crowds began to follow Him, He turned to them and urged them to consider what they were doing. Let me give you two examples.

One of them took place in the villages of Caesarea Philippi, after Peter confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God. Mark tells us, "And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it'" (Mark 8:34–35).

Another happened at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, just a few months before his death. Jesus was in Perea, an area on the east side of the Jordan River, and Luke tells us, "Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple'" (Luke 14:25–27, 33).

Disciple

by Nathan Brown

Imagine a politician or leader today turning to his followers and saying something like this. It would never happen! Yet Jesus consistently urged the crowds to consider seriously what it meant to follow Him. This shows us that being Jesus' disciple is different from being anyone else's disciple. We can see this in the following ways.

Being Jesus' disciple involves a commitment. When Jesus talked about hating father and mother, He meant that we must love God more than we love anyone else (not that we must literally "hate" or despise our family). Our loyalty to Jesus must come before our loyalty to our country, our church, our family, our spouse, and our children. Are we willing to love God more than anyone else?

Being Jesus' disciple involves a cross. In those days, the cross was an instrument of humiliation and death. If we want to follow Christ, we have to die to ourselves. This means we have to give up the right to control our own fate and choose our own way.

There was a song back in 1969 that was made popular by Frank Sinatra. It was called, "My Way," and here are

some of the lyrics: *I've lived a life that's full / I've traveled each and every highway / And more, much more than this / I did it my way.* The song goes on to say: *For what is man, what has he got? / If not himself, then he has naught / To say the things he truly feels / And not the words of one who kneels / The record shows, I took the blows / And did it my way.* This song is played, if you can imagine, at funerals across the country, to summarize how persons lived their lives! This is what Jesus was talking about—if we want to be His disciple, we have to give up being the master of our fates and the captain of our souls.

Being Jesus' disciple involves a cost. Jesus warned that those who didn't consider the true cost of their endeavors would find themselves unable to complete them (Luke 14:28–32). He did this by telling the story of a man who tried to build a tower and then was unable to finish. Recently, I heard the story of a building that was being constructed in Tianjin, China. At the time, it was going to be the fifth tallest skyscraper ever built. By 2015, the structure made it to 1,959 feet, and then, the project was put



on hold due to a lack of money. Today, it sits there empty, a skeleton against the sky, and they call it a ghost-scraper. If we want to be Jesus' disciple, we have to consider carefully the cost of following Him.

The first verb we've looked at is commit, and we've seen that to be Jesus' disciple, we must make the serious commitment of loving Him more than we love anything else. The next verb I'm going to use to capture the essence of discipleship is *follow*. Being a disciple of Jesus means following Him.

FOLLOW

Throughout the Gospels and Acts, the word "disciple" referred to those who followed after a rabbi or teacher in order to learn from him. John the Baptist had disciples (e.g., Matt. 9:14), Jesus had disciples (e.g., Matt. 5:1; 8:23; 11:1), and even the Pharisees had disciples (Mark 2:18). Being a disciple meant entering into a relationship with the one you were following. You committed to follow him, learn from him, and obey him.

Many people, when they hear the word "follow," think of Facebook. When you follow people on Facebook, their posts float to the top of your news feed. Whenever they put up something new, you're immediately going to see it. But I could follow you on Facebook and never have a relationship with you. You might not even know I follow you! And so that's not what it means to follow Jesus.

When we're saved, we enter into a master-disciple relationship with Jesus. Our calling as Jesus' disciple is to follow Him, learn from Him, and obey Him. We see an example of this in the upper room. Jesus told His disciples, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:13–15).

The master-disciple relationship sounds a little strange to us today. Perhaps a modern equivalent with which we can better identify is the coach-player relationship. In Paul's day, the Roman world was consumed with sports and athletic activities, and Paul often used sporting metaphors to get his point across. He talked about running a race, fighting the good fight, receiving the prize, and he told the Corinthians that every athlete exercises self-control in all things in order to win (1 Cor. 9:25).

American culture is also very sports oriented, and so I think it's appropriate to use the coach-player illustration when it comes to discipleship. When you join a sports team, you become a "disciple" of your coach. You place yourself under his authority and agree to do whatever he

tells you. Your goal is to learn to think about the game like your coach. You are subject to his correction and discipline, and you work hard to earn his praise and respect.

Here in Alabama, where I live, people are very interested in a sport called football. You may have even heard of the Alabama Crimson Tide, the official football program of the University of Alabama.

Discipleship is about character formation, and that takes time and commitment. We must build relationships with our new converts if we want them to grow into disciples who can make other disciples.



The coach of this program is a man by the name of Nick Saban. Saban has something he calls "the system," and it's all about training his players to be the best. Nick Saban is the master of that football program. When he says to do something, you do it! All the players are his disciples. They've come to Alabama and deliberately sought out Nick Saban so that he can train them to think and act and respond like they should so they can compete at the highest level. They want to learn all they can from him.

That's what it's like to follow Jesus. When we become a disciple, we place ourselves under His authority and do whatever He tells us. Our goal is to learn to think about life and living the way He does. We welcome His correction and discipline, and we long for His approval.

The second verb we've looked at is follow, and we've seen that being Jesus' disciple means having a relationship with Him in which He is our Master and Lord. The next verb I'm going to use to capture the essence of discipleship is *imitate*. Being a disciple of Jesus



means imitating Him and those who follow His example.

IMITATE

While the word “disciple” is used in the Gospels and Acts, the word “imitator” is used throughout the rest of

the New Testament. This word does a great job of expressing the heart of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus—being like Him. As Jesus told His disciples, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). Let's take a look at several examples of how this word is used.

First, Paul told the Ephesians, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Eph. 5:1). Children naturally imitate their parents. They watch us with fascination, and whatever we're doing, they want to do it, too. In the same way, we must imitate God. We need to have our eyes fixed on Jesus, watching Him work and then joining with Him through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Second, Paul told the Corinthians, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). This means that we are called, not only to imitate Christ, but also to imitate those who faithfully follow Christ. Now, you might think that only someone like the apostle Paul could say something like this, but that's not true, as this next example shows.

Third, Paul told the Philippians, “Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us” (Phil. 3:17). Lest we think that only apostles qualify to be imitated, Paul calls us to imitate all who walk according to his godly example. Have you ever been in a service and heard people testify about an answer to prayer or what God had been doing in their lives, and thought, “I want to be like that!” Or, “That encourages me!” I remember a friend who used to stand up and testify about how grateful he was for the Holy Spirit being faithful to correct him. Such people are worthy of being imitated.

Fourth, Paul told the Thessalonians, “For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate” (2 Thess. 3:7–9). This is an example of how Paul limited his liberty in order to set an example for the Thessalonians. This illustrates what kind of behavior we should imitate, as well as what kind of example we should be for others.

Fifth, Paul also told the Thessalonians, “You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia” (1 Thess. 1:5b–7). As we imitate godly men and women, we, in turn, become examples for others. This is how discipleship should work within the Church.

Sixth, the author of Hebrews said, “And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may

not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:11-12). The Bible is filled with people whose faith and righteousness stands as an example to us today. It doesn't matter when the person lived—we can imitate the faith of Noah, Job, Daniel, and many others.

Last, the author of Hebrews said, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7). Our spiritual leaders should be obeyed and imitated, for they watch over our souls (3 John 1:9-12).

Now, the good news is—we don't have to be perfect to be worthy of imitation. Aren't you glad of this? King David committed adultery and then lied and murdered to cover it up, yet we still imitate his sincere repentance and many of his other good qualities. Solomon appears to have ended his life in idolatry, but we still read Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, and we can imitate much of the good that Solomon did.

The third verb we've looked at is imitate, and we've seen that being Jesus' disciple means imitating Him and those who follow His example. The next verb I'm going to use to capture the essence of discipleship is *coach*. Being a disciple of Jesus means coaching others in how to follow Him.

COACH

There are four key aspects to coaching others—**invest, teach, show, and exhort**. First, we must **INVEST** in the lives of fellow believers. All too often disciple-making has been understood as merely preaching the gospel, leading the lost to Christ, or making a compelling case for faith. While disciple-making includes these things, its true goal is Christian maturity. Discipleship is about character formation, and that takes time and commitment. We must build relationships with our new converts if we want them to grow into disciples who can make other disciples.

Second, we must **TEACH** others what it means to be a disciple. Jesus said, "Make disciples...teaching them to observe all I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). While some are called to the office of teacher, Jesus wants all of us to be able to explain the basics of how to follow Him. Paul left an example of obedience to this command. When he was in Corinth, "he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11; cf. 2 Tim. 1:13). People won't know how to follow Christ if we don't teach them. I'll never forget, one of the first converts I discipled told me, "Now I don't know much, but I do know that God led His people around in a forest for 40 years." Clearly, he needed to know a little more about the Bible!

Third, we must **SHOW** others how to be a disciple. Sound teaching is essential to discipleship, but our personal example is the foundation on which disciple-making is built. Paul taught his new converts to follow Christ,

and then he showed them how to be disciples by the example he lived before them (e.g., the example of hard work that he gave the Thessalonians). If we aren't living a life that can be imitated by others, our efforts to make disciples will fail.

Last, we must **EXHORT** others to grow in discipleship. Paul told the Corinthians, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Once we've taught others how to follow Jesus and showed them by example, we must urge them to take action and live it themselves. As they put into practice what they've learned, we can then encourage them and help them grow. Nick Saban, in post-game interviews, will often say something like this: "We didn't do a good job of executing. We're just not doing the basics, the fundamentals." What is he talking about? He's saying that he can spend time with the players, he can teach them all he knows, he can even demonstrate what he's talking about, but unless they actually do what he says, they won't become better players (better disciples). We must encourage and exhort others to be disciples of Christ.

The fourth verb we've looked at is coach, and we've seen that being Jesus' disciple means coaching others in how to follow Him. The next verb I'm going to use to capture the essence of discipleship is *persuade*. Being a disciple of Jesus means persuading others to follow Him.

PERSUADE

When most people think of discipleship, they think of evangelism, outreach, bus routes, knocking on doors, passing out tracts, witnessing in the park, VBS, and inviting people to church. All these things are definitely part of discipleship, but I deliberately put this part last. Why? Because if we don't have everything else first—if we don't have the right foundation in our lives and families and churches—then when others are persuaded to follow Jesus, they won't have the right environment in which to grow and develop in Christian maturity. Let's look at three examples of persuading others to follow Jesus.

The first example is found in John 1—Jesus is calling His first disciples (Peter, Andrew, and John are already following Him), and the next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. "He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow Me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'" (John 1:43-46). Did you notice what happened? Jesus called Philip, and then what did Philip do? He went and found his friend Nathanael and said, "Come and see." When we're saved, what's the most natural thing to do? Tell others! This is the core of what it means to persuade others to follow Christ. We must be saying to those around us, "Come and see!"

The second example is found in Acts 17—Paul is on his second missionary journey, and he’s in Athens waiting on Silas and Timothy. “Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:16–17). Paul’s example in Athens challenges us to become “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:18–19). If we can get people to come to church—to come to us—that’s great, but we must also go to where they are. For those with unsaved loved ones, this may mean going no farther than their house. For those with unsaved friends and co-workers, this may mean going to the ballfield or park or mall. If we’re willing to go around the world as

missionaries, then we should certainly be willing to go across town to persuade others.

This third example is found in 1 Corinthians 9—Paul is talking to his new converts in Corinth, and he tells them, “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its

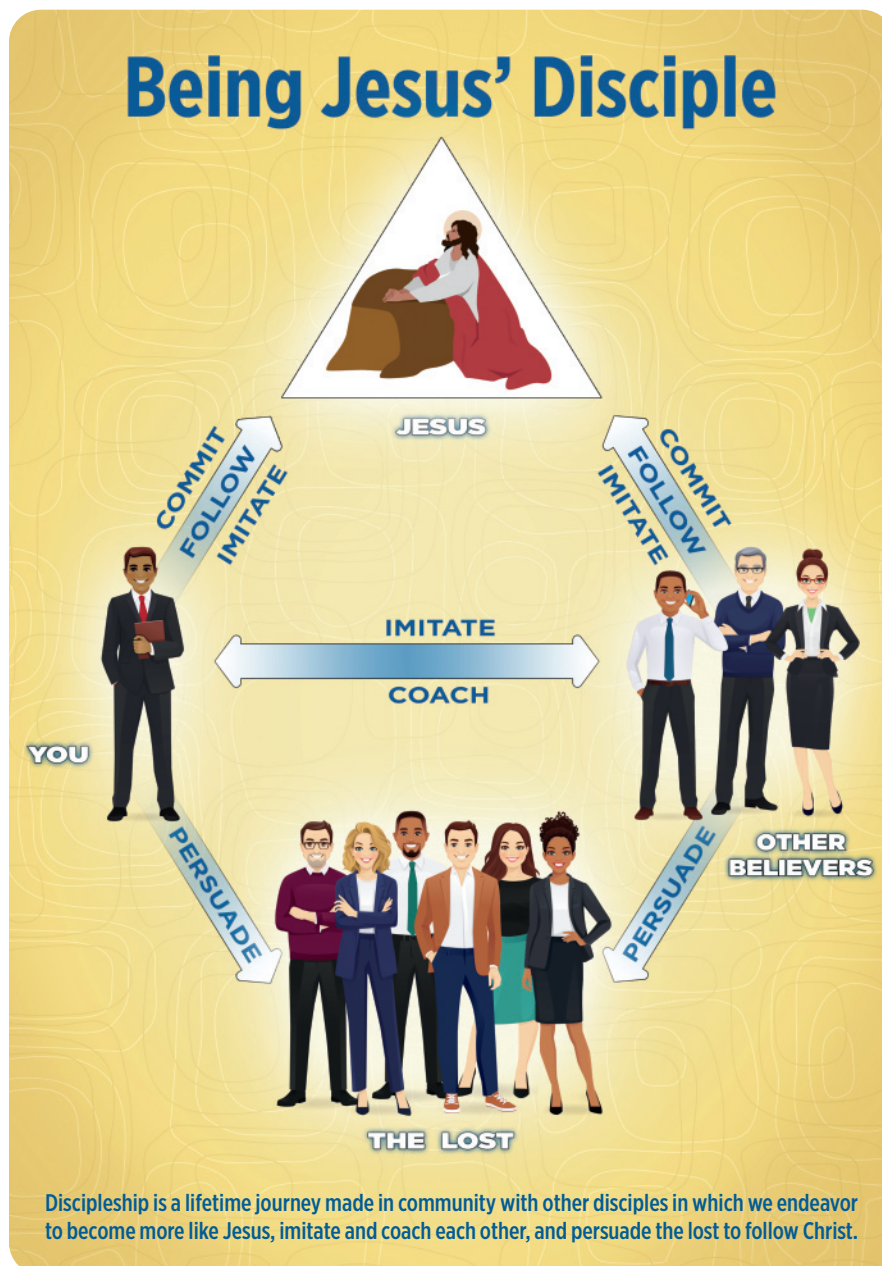
blessings” (1 Cor. 9:19–23). What’s this all about? Not only did Paul “go and make disciples,” but he also lived in such a way as to persuade as many as he could to follow Christ. Are we living out our witness each day? Do we conduct ourselves in a manner which calls others to follow Jesus?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let’s summarize what we’ve learned about discipleship. Being a disciple of Jesus means we must:

- **Commit.** We must die to ourselves, dedicate ourselves to Christ, and live committed to Him each day.
- **Follow.** We must cultivate a relationship with God, learn all we can of His Word (Jesus is the Word), and obey what He commands.
- **Imitate.** We must imitate the example of Christ, and we should follow the example of other godly men and women.
- **Coach.** We must show others how to be disciples by teaching them and setting an example for them to follow.
- **Persuade.** We must call the lost to repentance and faith in Christ, and then nurture them and help them become disciples who can make disciples.

At the beginning of the article, we mentioned that the goal of this series is to give you a solid understanding of what discipleship is, both as a picture you can visualize, and as a definition on which you can meditate. On the left is that picture and definition, and, hopefully, it will help discipleship come alive for you. ■





HONDURAS MISSION TRIP

On the Saturday before Thanksgiving, GBS faculty members Lyle Witt and Jessica Smith, along with students Dasha Sobie and Diana Sobie, traveled to Honduras on a short-term mission trip. They spent the weekend in San Luis with the Daniel and Tiffany Melton Family, EFM missionaries who have been serving there since 2002. The team toured the mission property and attended

church in Piedra Negra, a small village in the nearby mountains. Although currently without running water, Piedra Negra will soon be blessed with a well that's paid for, in part, by

the funds raised during the recent GBS Missionary Convention.

After returning to San Pedro Sula, the mission team worked alongside the Meltons, local pastors, and local youth to distribute evangelistic booklets written and designed by Gospel Publishing Mission. Over the course of three days, the whole group distributed over 18,000 booklets at a variety of locations, including an orphanage, a transit station, a university entrance, a city square, a factory complex, and a shopping mall. With the ex-



The team that distributed gospel tracts in a park



A policeman (L) is excited that Daniel Melton (C) and Lyle Witt (R) have a team passing out gospel tracts in a park.

ception of some initial resistance from security personnel at the transit station and some inclement weather

REVIVALIST FAMILY

On these pages, we feature items about GBS alumni, significant events scheduled throughout the "Revivalist Family," and brief news notes from across the Holiness Movement.

BIRTHS



To **Kayla (Hayes) and Tyler Mitchell (AA '15)**, a son, **Landon Lank**, born November 21, 2022, at The Christ Hospital, Cincinnati, OH. Tyler works as a manager for Collins Painting, and Kayla is a registered nurse who works from home for Humana. Landon was greeted by his big brother, T.J. (Tyler James), who is three years old. The family lives in Cincinnati, OH.

Landon Lank is named after his late great-grandfather, Lank Sechrest, who was a long term GBS board member (1979-2000). Grandparents are David and Kay

(Sechrest) (GBS 1985-89) Ackerson; and Gary (BRE '84) and Denise (Pratt) (BA '83) Mitchell. Gary works in the facilities department at GBS and Denise managed the Resource Room from 2014 to 2022.



To **Caslyn (Rice) (BA '17) and Tyler Edwards (BA '21)**, a daughter, **Sophia Grace**, born December 10, 2022, at The Christ Hospital in Cincinnati, OH. Tyler worked as GBS grounds supervisor for a year and a half. He now works for Easley Surveying and pastors two churches in Northern Kentucky. Caslyn served as resident assistant for three years while a student. After graduation in 2017, she taught for one year in Aldersgate Christian Academy before returning to Student Affairs in 2018 to accept the position of dean of women. The family lives in Cincinnati, OH. Also of note, Rev. Daniel Edwards, a member of the GBS Board of Trustees, is a proud grandfather of Sophia.

that changed their plans, the distribution efforts went smoothly, and the booklets were readily accepted. By the time the team left Honduras on Wednesday before Thanksgiving, three people who'd received booklets had called the local pastor for prayer, including one who prayed to accept Christ. "We rejoice in the opportunity to join others on mission in Honduras!" —**Lyle A. Witt, Chair, Division of Professional Studies**

EMPLOYEE CHRISTMAS DINNER

The annual Christmas Dinner for GBS employees was held Thursday, December 8, at Higher Ground Conference and Retreat Center, West Harrison, IN. As the 242 attendees assembled, they were favored by music from Michael Yancey, Tim Crater, and Jessica Smith. After opening greetings and prayer by President Loper, dinner was served featuring prime rib and pecan chicken, accompa-

nied by salads, vegetables, and a choice of dessert.

President Loper and Duane Quesenberry served as MCs for the evening. Entertainment featured specials by the Arender siblings (Anthony Arender, Melissa Loper, and Katrina Rehfeldt) and the Facilities String Team (Dustin Muir, Jonathan Valentine, Jeff Moore, Anthony Paulus, and Scott Loper, directing). Christmas "dad jokes" and trivia questions for adults and children were interspersed throughout, with gift cards presented to the winners. Duane Quesenberry led in a singalong of traditional Christmas songs and carols. Children were further occupied with coloring pages, puzzles, and guessing the number of candies in a candy jar. Rachel Pohl took family and group photos

throughout the evening in front of the beautifully decorated fireplace. The children were blessed with ➡



DEATHS



Roy Thomas Frampton, 86, of Blue Knob, PA, passed away peacefully at home on October 12, 2022. Roy was born in Friedens, PA, on June 15, 1936, to the late Albert and Alma (Miller) Frampton. He was one of eleven siblings. He married the love of his life, Theresa E. Kankula on February 25, 1956, in Nanty-Glo, PA. Roy was a sawmill sawyer and truck driver for much of his career. For many years, he taught Sunday school and led the singing in the church he faithfully attended. He consistently shared his deep faith with others. He was a GBS donor and a subscriber to *God's Revivalist*. "Pap," as he was fondly called, made many fond memories with his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and friends stomping through the woods, or fishing out of a boat or along a stream.

Roy is survived by Theresa, his wife of 66 years; five children, James, Judy Jackson, Terri Roberts, and Roy D.; 15 grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren. A funeral service was held at the Mt. Sinai Chapel, Portage, PA. Burial followed at the Mt. Sinai Chapel cemetery.



Carroll Stewart, 89, of West Chester, OH, went to be with the Lord on December 2, 2022. Carroll was born June 2, 1933, in Hillsdale, MI, to Russell and Helen Stewart. He married Donna Watchorn on August 6, 1955. They both attended GBS, with Carroll receiving his BA and ThB in 1956, and Donna her Christian Workers Course certificate in 1954. After marriage, they lived in a fourth-floor apartment in the GBS Women's Residence Hall. During their years at GBS, Carroll worked in the boiler room and drove the truck for Mrs. Rowand, who purchased groceries for the school. Donna was a secretary for ➡

➡ Christmas gifts presented by President and Mrs. Loper. A gift was given to each member of the Loper family, with a standing ovation for their commitment and love for the GBS family. It was a wonderful evening!

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

The GBS Christmas program was presented three times at two separate locations: the Adcock Chapel of God's Bible School and the Answers Center at The Ark Encounter in Williamstown, KY. Guests arriving for this year's campus productions, December 9 and 11, were welcomed by festive Christmas lights, main campus Christmas trees, and a free coffee, hot chocolate, and cookie bar.

Guests attending the production at the Answers Center enjoyed both the beautiful "ChristmasTime at the Ark Encounter" and the GBS Christmas production free of charge. Special thanks to Ken Ham and his team of amazing people for so graciously hosting the event.

The Wonder and the Miracle, a musical drama written by music faculty member Michael DeStefano and developed by the music faculty team, was a personal invitation to encounter the incarnate Christ. The audience followed the story of Alice, a young woman studying philosophy at an American university in the 1890s, and watched her discover that the beauty of the Incarnation was not just a miracle for the whole world, but that it was a miracle offered to her and all of us.

The performance group totaled approximately 150 people and included members of the College Choir, Christmas Choir, High School Choir, Symphonic Wind and String Ensemble, and drama cast. Assisting Producer Jana Pop were David Hartkopf and Timothy Crater, music directors; Michael DeStefano, drama writer and director; and



Scene from the Christmas Program

REVIVALIST FAMILY continued

➡ President Day's wife, Dixie. Their daughter, Deborah was born in 1956 before Carroll graduated. They later had a son, Paul, and took in another boy from age 11 whom they claimed as a son. In 1961 they both took positions at Procter and Gamble in Cincinnati—Carroll as an inspector and Donna in quality control. They retired after 35 years in 1996.

Carroll is survived by his loving wife of 67 years, Donna; adopted son, John Bramer; and grandson, Paul Dean Hart. Carroll donated his body to science. There will be a memorial service at the West Chester Church of the Nazarene, March 18, 2023.



Ronald David Linville, 84, of Sylvania, OH, formerly of Dundee, passed away at Charter Senior Living, Sylvania, on December 7, 2022, surrounded by his loving family. David was born on March 24, 1938, in Fleming County, KY, one of Claude and Nannie (Ellison) Linville's nine children. He graduated high school and proudly earned his Bachelor of Arts from God's Bible School in 1962. While attending GBS, David met his future wife, the former Grace

Kneal (BA '61). They married at the Lower Light Church in Petersburg, MI, in 1961 and were blessed with the birth of two daughters, Frances (Fran) and Faith.

David was employed by Ford Motor for many years. A great conversationalist, he could chat with complete strangers. He was a man of devout Christian faith placing ministry for Christ at the forefront of all he did, taking every opportunity to share the gospel.

David was active in the Lower Light Mission Association. He served as a pastor of the Adrian, MI, Church and associate pastor of the Petersburg, MI, church. He also served as general superintendent for 24 years and was in that capacity at the time of his passing. Wherever ministry led David, mentoring youth was always at the forefront. David cherished the time he spent with his daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He also loved to travel, and he and Grace went on cruises and visited loved ones whenever they could.

Surviving David are his beloved wife of sixty-one years, Grace; two daughters, Frances Nichols and Faith Trussell; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and a brother, Ben. A worship service celebrating David's life

support staff: Tanya Crater, Timothy Long, Martha Miller, Nicolae Pop, Jessica Smith, and Lane Webb. Each performance was well received by those who packed the chapel on

Friday and Sunday, those who joined via livestream, and by guests at the Ark Encounter. The campus family invited many friends, family, and acquaintances, including those

in the community. We thank the many volunteers who helped make our Christmas celebration so special. We hope that you make plans to attend next year! ■



was held at Merkle Funeral Service, South Monroe, MI. A private interment was scheduled for the following day, at Pleasantview Cemetery in Petersburg, MI.



Patricia Evelyn Plemmons, 81, of Tipton, IN, died December 16, 2022, after a short illness. She was born on February 4, 1941, in Taylor, MI, to Alex and Mattie (Taylor) Welch. At the age of 15, she met Ernest B. Plemmons, who was serving in the U.S. Marine Corps. They fell in love and married September 7, 1957. To this union, five children were born.

Together, the Plemmonses pastored in Indiana, Tennessee, Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Evelyn was the parsonage queen and a stay-at-home mom, caring for her five children. In 2019, as her husband worked through memory loss issues, they moved to Tipton, IN. It was a joy for them to live with their daughter, Kathie Manns, and her family during this transition period. Ernest preceded Evelyn in death on December 9, 2021.

Evelyn is survived by two daughters, Cheryl Watters and Kathie Manns; two sons, Ernest and Paul "Dan";

brother, Alex; sisters, Dalis Wallace, Edna Avery, and Lelah Steinmetz; 20 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews. Funeral services were held at the Pilgrim Holiness Church, Noblesville, IN, with Rev. John Forsee officiating. Burial followed at Summit Lawn Cemetery, Westfield, IN.

Several of Evelyn's family have attended and worked at God's Bible School. Her daughter Cheryl Watters is the executive assistant to the president and human resource director, employed in these roles since August 2011. Her grandson, Jason Watters, graduated from GBS in 2020, and Jason's wife Karalynne (1999-2000) is currently employed as the cashier. Her grandson Ryan Watters (BA '11) was a member of the Student Affairs staff while a student and remained as the Dean of Men and Student Affairs Director until 2018. Ryan is currently an adjunct for the college and is a counselor in the campus Counseling Center. Both of Evelyn's sons and a daughter attended GBS, Ernest, Jr. (1985-87; 1995-96), Kathie (Manns) (1985-86), and Dan (HS '87; 1987-89); and four great-grandchildren are currently enrolled in Aldersgate Christian Academy. ■

Follow the Trinity by Following Christ:

Discipleship in a Trinitarian Key

by Fred Sanders



There is no more straightforward way of describing the Christian life than to call it discipleship. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is the core, the focus, and the form of what it means to be a Christian. Answering Jesus' call to be His disciple is what gives the Christian life its simple, life-shaping power. It makes all the difference between reading the four Gospels as episodes from Bible-story time and reading them as the reality of knowing Jesus by following Him as a modern disciple.

But sometimes, captivated by the simplicity of this relationship, Christians can be tempted to contrast it with the more complex-sounding affirmation of believing and serving the triune God. Anti-trinitarians, of course, portray this as an absolute contrast: rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, they claim simply to follow Jesus. But even Christians with sound doctrine can still feel the tension between simple Christ-following and complex Trinity-worshiping.

GOD'S REVIVALIST and BIBLE ADVOCATE

In reality, the two belong together, and always have. In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity provides the deep foundation for what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

TRANSPOSING DISCIPLESHIP INTO A NEW KEY

Think about the nature of discipleship. When Jesus called the first disciples to follow Him, He meant “follow” in a direct and literal way. He was walking down the road and they were to walk along with Him. He went to the next town, and so did they. The point was “that they would be with Him” (Mark 3:13 NKJV) to hear what He said and see what He did, so they could in turn be sent out in His name.

But the gospel story that starts with that call also ends with Jesus’ ascension to the right hand of God. To put it bluntly, following an ascended, enthroned Lord is bound to look different from following an itinerant, pedestrian Master. The whole theme of discipleship, even for the first disciples, had to be transposed into a new key. And that new key was trinitarian.

Jesus put discipleship into trinitarian perspective when He taught that He would ascend to the right hand of the Father, from which He and the Father would send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 14:26; 15:26, 16:7). It was the Spirit who would enable these first followers to complete their discipleship to an ascended Lord—precisely because, as Jesus promised, “He will not speak on His own authority,” but “He will glorify Me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine” (John 16:13-14).

The intimacy of direct, personal discipleship is completed in this threefold movement. All that the Father has belongs to the Son, and all that belongs to the Son is declared to us by the Holy Spirit. The unity of these three is so profound that we shouldn’t think of ourselves as being shuttled back and forth between three different heavenly committee members, but as being ever more fully at home in the reality of the Son’s identity precisely because of the involvement of the Spirit. The Spirit explains to us all that belongs to the Son and the Father (who is the principle and source of all that the Son has). What the disciples had in personal fellowship with Jesus, they came to have even more fully by having it in the Father and by the Spirit.

All the trinitarian substructure of discipleship becomes gloriously apparent at this point in salvation history. To mark its meaning, the Christian calendar places Trinity Sunday immediately after celebrating the ascension of Christ and the descent of the Spirit (Pentecost Sunday). These events mark the consummating work of the Son who has gone to the Father, and the Spirit who is sent from Them. Disciples are Christ-followers not just because of the Son, but because of the Father and the Spirit. Jesus meant it when He said, “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away” (John 16:7).

On the basis of this great fulfillment, we should take a moment to notice two more things.

REVEALING WHAT WAS ALWAYS THERE

First, seeing discipleship fulfilled and completed in the coming of the Spirit reveals to us that discipleship was a trinitarian reality all along. The dramatic events of Christ’s ascent and the Spirit’s descent changed the way those first followers experienced discipleship from that moment on, but also revealed the trinitarian structure of the discipleship they had already been living. None of them had come to Jesus without being drawn by the Father, and none called Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit (John 6:44, 1 Cor. 12:3).

Once you notice this, you begin to see that the Gospels are full of moments when Jesus’ teaching about the Father and the Spirit soars right over the heads of His followers. The evangelists, writing after Pentecost, can tell readers “they did not understand that He had been speaking to them about the Father” (John 8:27), or “this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). Discipleship always was and always will be trinitarian all the way down.

ENCOUNTERING THE WHOLE TRINITY THROUGH JESUS

The other thing to notice about discipleship’s trinitarian fulfillment goes even deeper and reaches back even further.

The ultimate reason that the Father and the Spirit are not distractions from the Son, or displacements of Jesus from His central place in our lives, is that God is One. The unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a deeper, stronger, more intimate union than anything in creation. It’s simply not possible to know One Person of the Trinity without the Others. Any experience of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit is strongly, inwardly bound to the fullness of triune deity. In that perfect triune oneness above all worlds, which would have eternally been itself in divine blessedness whether disciples existed or not, the Son is never without His Father and Their Holy Spirit.

This is why, when we live as disciples of Christ, we can focus our attention on Jesus and in that very event encounter the Father and Spirit. This is why, if you follow Jesus, you follow Him **to** His Father **by** the Spirit. ■

Fred Sanders teaches in the Torrey Honors Institute at Biola University. He has written and contributed to a number of books, including several on the Trinity, e.g., The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything, 2nd Edition (Crossway, 2017). This article is from thegospelcoalition.org. Scripture quotations are ESV except where otherwise noted.



JESUS WRITES LONG STORIES.

Take the Long View of Discipleship

by Susan Hunt

I grew up in church and was very religious but didn't know Jesus. In my early 20s, the Holy Spirit opened my blind eyes, and I saw the redemption story in Scripture. I was awestruck that God chose me in Christ before the foundation of the world to praise His glorious grace (Eph. 1).

One of my first reactions was: "I don't want any child to grow up in church and not hear the gospel." So I immediately began teaching children. Within a few years, the Holy Spirit pressed Titus 2 into my heart, and my passion expanded to include discipling women. There was passion, but my vision of their stories was no longer than my lesson plan and their observable response.

LONG DISCIPLESHIP

Now, at age 82, I see more clearly that discipleship is entering into those long stories Jesus is writing, and trusting Him to put His law within people and "write it on their hearts" (Jer. 31:33). I have lived long enough to see the Lord do immeasurably more than I could have imagined asking in my 20s (Eph. 3:20).

The long-story perspective of discipleship helps me persevere even in old age. The prayer of an old man in Psalms 71:17-18 resonates with me:

*God, from my youth You have taught me,
and I still proclaim Your wondrous deeds.
So even to old age and gray hairs,
O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim Your might to another generation,
Your power to all those to come.*

The old man does not deny the "enemies...accusers...troubles and calamities" (Psa. 71:10,13,20), even as he embodies the promise that the righteous will "flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, to declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him" (Psa. 92:13-15).

DISCIPLESHIP IS COVENANTAL

Discipleship happens in the courts of our God. Our salvation is personal, but God adopts us into His covenant family. In that context we participate in the Great

Commission together, our stories entwine, we experience the joy of covenantal connections and say to one another, “Glorify the Lord **with me**; let us exalt His name **together**” (Psa. 34:3 NIV, emphasis mine). This protects us from becoming possessive of “our” disciples. We see the need for each other. We rejoice that discipleship is multi-layered. And we remember that the fruit of discipleship ultimately comes from God:

Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building.

—1 Corinthians 3:7-9

DISCIPLESHIP IS GENERATIONAL

Discipleship is not only multi-layered, it’s also multi-generational. The old man’s prayer in Psalm 71 is not short-sighted. He sees beyond the generation he wants to tell to the ones they will tell—“all those to come” (v.18). Of course, as we share the gospel with the next generation and they do likewise, we see a generational pattern of discipleship. But prayer also enables us to take part in the discipleship of generations we will not know on this side of eternity.

I don’t know all of my story, but I do know there was a great-grandmother I never met who prayed for future generations. My imagination soars as I think of the generations of prayers that preceded her, and of my prayers mingling with theirs as I pray for my grandchildren and the generations to come until Jesus returns.



DISCIPLESHIP IS INFORMATIONAL, RELATIONAL, AND TRANSFORMATIONAL

Effective discipleship demonstrates the importance of both information and relationship. Consider Paul’s captivating and comprehensive description of his discipleship of the Thessalonians:

We were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

—1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

We’re called to share the content of the gospel in the context of relationships that reflect God’s relationship with us. If we only share the information, our discipleship will be academic. If we only share our lives, it will be anemic.

Note Paul’s motive: the Thessalonian believers had become dear to him. They may or may not have been dear, easy-to-love people, but they had become so to Paul. They were the ones the Lord entrusted to him. And as he shared the gospel and his life with them, he grew to love them.

We may not know the outcome of our investment in the lives of those we disciple, but as we obey Jesus’ Great Commission, He is with us (Matt. 28:18-20) and He transforms us. We begin to love those He loves. Even if we see no fruit in their lives, we pray with confidence, not in them but in Him:

*The Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have **confidence in the Lord about you**, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.*

—2 Thessalonians 3:3-5, emphasis mine

PRAYERFUL PATIENCE

In this season of old age, I don’t fret as much about what I don’t see. I increasingly wait and watch with anticipation, knowing God is moving His story, in my life and in those I pray for, at the proper pace to accomplish His predetermined purpose. Prayerfully waiting stretches my trust in the Lord and my love for the ones I’m discipling.

Jesus writes long redemption stories. His stories are good and true and beautiful. His stories are full of the wonder of eternal things. ■

Susan Hunt is a mother and grandmother, widow of a pastor, and the former Coordinator of Women’s Ministries for the Presbyterian Church in America. She has authored and co-authored several books for women and children. This article is from thegospelcoalition.org.

Dear Phil

DISCIPLESHIP: AN IMPERATIVE OF CHRISTIANITY

Can you be or remain a Christian without being a disciple? Can you be or remain a Christian without discipling others? —Ken

Dear Ken,

That's an interesting question. It makes me wonder if you've met a "minimalist" Christian—someone who wants to know the least they have to do to be a Christian? To their way of thinking, discipleship is the "above-and-beyond" version of Christianity.

To avoid misunderstanding, let's make sure we're using the same definitions of the key words in your question: Christian, disciple, discipling.

Let's start with "Christian." According to the NT, "Christian" is a term for a disciple of Christ (Acts 11:26). A disciple of Christ is a Christian; a Christian is a disciple of Christ. The NT knows no distinction between a Christian and a disciple of Christ.

So, then, what's a "disciple?" A disciple is a follower—a full-time, whole-life student-apprentice-imitator-follower. Jesus describes His disciples as people who...

- accept Him as their teacher (John 13:13) and learn from Him (Luke 11:1).
- identify as His followers both publicly (Mark 8:34-38) and privately (Luke 14:26-27) by denying themselves, taking up their crosses daily, and living like Him (Luke 9:23).

- submit to Him as their Lord (John 13:13) and obey Him (Luke 6:46).
- aim to be just like Him in how they think, talk, and live (Matt. 11:25; Luke 6:40).

Disciples idolize Jesus—literally! He is their God! They worship and adore Him. They are "all about" Jesus.

In other words, disciples seek to become and be as much like Jesus as possible. Do disciples learn God's Word? Sure. Do disciples practice God's Word? Definitely. Do disciples try to act like Jesus? Yes! But in contrast to actors who learn to think, speak, and act parts without committing to leave the real them behind, disciples don't have an "off-camera" life. Disciples commit to leave the old them behind and inhabit the Christ-life 100% of the time.

What does this mean practically? It means we prioritize our identity as Christ-followers (aka Christians) above all other identities. We're Christ-followers before we're teachers/mechanics (job identity). We're Christ-followers before we're Americans (national identity). We're Christ-followers before we're Southern/Latino (geographical/ethnic

identity). We're Christ-followers before we're Methodists/Baptists (denominational identity). We're Christ-followers before we're Democrats/Republicans/Independents.... You get the point. Practically, the most important thing about a Christian is his/her follower-relationship with Jesus.

It also means that we are practicing our identity all the time, everywhere, with everybody. In my case, I'm a Christ-follower who seeks to husband like Jesus, to father like Jesus, be a brother like Jesus, to teach like Jesus, be a friend like Jesus, be a neighbor like Jesus, be a citizen like Jesus, preach like Jesus, and make disciples like Jesus.

Can we be like Jesus without studying Jesus? Hardly. Can we do that without other people helping us see ourselves? Not a chance. Becoming like Jesus in all the dimensions of our lives requires community, cooperation, support, critique, and lots and lots of grace and humility. We need others to help us become more like Jesus.

What about "discipling?" Discipling is helping others to become more like Jesus. Can we be Christians without discipling others? No, we can't. Why not? First, because Jesus commands us to disciple others (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus-followers obey Jesus. Second, since Jesus disciplined others, we can't be like Him without seeking to disciple others as well. Therefore, becoming and being a disciple means becoming and being someone who helps others follow Jesus.

Does helping others follow Jesus have to look like a small-group meeting? Not necessarily. It can take that form. But it can look like a text-message thread, a card, an email, a coffee-conversation, a mentor-mentee relationship, an edifying friendship, family worship, and so much more. Is church attendance part of being and making disciples? Definitely. Is it sufficient?



student focus

AFTER SCHOOL SATAN CLUB

A California elementary school will introduce an "After School Satan Club" to its curriculum. Its students will soon be able to attend the club, sponsored by the Satanic Temple and Reason Alliance. Lucien Greaves, spokesman for The Satanic Temple, a group of political activists who identify themselves as a religious sect, says they are seeking to establish such clubs as a counterpart to Christian Good News Clubs.

CHRISTIAN FLAG CASE UPDATE

The city of Boston permits private groups to fly flags of their choosing outside Boston City Hall but rejected a Christian flag from Camp Constitution. The case was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court, which returned a unanimous deci-

sion that the city had engaged in viewpoint discrimination and ordered them to pay the Christian civic organization \$2,125,000.

NORTH CAROLINA CHURCHES VOTE TO LEAVE UMC OVER HOMOSEXUALITY DEBATE

During a recent special session of the North Carolina Conference, UMC delegates voted 957-165 in favor of the disaffiliation of 249 churches from the mainline United Methodist Church denomination over the denomination's increasing acceptance of homosexual lifestyles, including blessing same-sex marriages and ordaining gay clergy.

In May of 2022, theologically conservative Methodists launched a new denomination, The Global Methodist Church, in response to this schism in the UMC. ■

No, it isn't. Whole-life followership requires more than a few hours of corporate worship and preaching. Oh, and it doesn't happen by accident! Becoming more like the Master and helping others become more like the Master require intentionality.

Do disciples have to mature before discipling others? No. New

followers recruit new followers. Followers help followers. Bottom line: Christians are disciples who disciple others.

Blessings,
Philip ■

Dr. A. Philip Brown II is the Graduate Program director and a member of the ministerial faculty at God's Bible School and College.

Since coming to GBS as a student, **AUDREY RECTENWALD** says that her view of God has become more accurate. "I used to think that God was just waiting for me to mess up. Now I know that He has my best interest at heart and has a great plan for me. The safest place for me is in the center of His will."

She enjoys the GBS community and appreciates the practical experience received by sharing the gospel through the Prayer Station ministry. "It taught me to see the person rather than his or her problems. Everyone is made in God's image and needs His grace."

Audrey is pursuing a BA in Elementary Education and an AAS in Music Ministry with plans to graduate in 2024. She is considering running a home for foster children. As a licensed teacher, she could also teach children at home, if needed. She may also teach in a more traditional classroom, or in a foreign country while spreading the gospel. "I'm open to going wherever God leads!" ■

Seventy-five percent of our students receive some form of financial aid which enables them to attend GBS. If you would like to support students with financial needs, you may send a gift to:

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[A FOCUS ON MISSIONS]

Gospel Outposts in a Hostile Land

by Stephen Gibson

Many denominations exist in Africa. Some claim several thousand affiliated churches. Many denominations were started by foreign mission work and still have some relationship with a mission organization.

Innumerable independent churches exist throughout Africa. The term independent means that the church is not part of a denomination or a foreign mission organization. An independent church is usually started by a pastor who is striking out on his own after assisting another pastor for a while. Most of these entrepreneurial pastors have had little academic ministry training, and many have not been ordained. They simply observed an experienced pastor in ministry until they felt that they could carry on in a similar manner.

Many independent churches would affiliate with a foreign mission organization if offered the chance. Mission affiliation gives credibility to the church and pastor and provides a way for the pastor to be ordained. Financial support is also an attraction of affiliation. Whether for credibility or financial support or both, many churches would not balk at nominally embracing a statement of doctrine. That does not mean they are hypocritical; it may just be a lack of concern about details.

Independence means that the church is free from the imposition of external authority and culture, but also from accountability in finances, morals, and doctrine. Good exceptions exist, especially where the pastor has sought training or has been mentored well, but deplorable con-

ditions exist in many independent churches, though not with the same details in all churches in all countries.

Most independent pastors lack training that would help them guide and teach the church. The church is influenced by religious television programs and will tend to imitate the sensational and showy. A church that lacks musicians may hire guitar and keyboard



players who also play in bars. Dances may be deliberately sensual. Much service time may be taken up with testimonies of dreams and visions by people who seem to crave spiritual status.

Pastors may follow their own biblical interpretations and professed revelations without concerns about orthodoxy. With personal charisma, apparent spiritual power, and confident leadership, a pastor may build a following that will be loyal to him even if he teaches new doctrines and does not submit to ordinary Christian morality.

Giving to the church to receive financial blessing may be a constant theme of preaching. A pastor or crusade preacher may put prices on prayers for various blessings such as employment, healing, or marriage. The church may sell charms to ward off evil spirits or bring other benefits. Women in the church called “mothers” may offer blessings and curses for a price.

Because of accountability and nurture, denominational and/or mission-established churches are much more likely to have consistent Christian behavior and appropriate worship styles, though they face the same challenges.

Historically, mission organizations entering Africa assumed that they should start their own new churches where their values would be modeled. They barely acknowledged the presence of the churches that seemed so far below the biblical standard of Christian behavior.

But before we dismiss the chaotic independent churches, let’s remember the issues in the churches started by the Apostle Paul. Churches of converts from paganism led by untrained pastors inevitably have prob-



A Church Building Made from Local Materials

lems. And even in the scenarios where the worst Christian examples exist, there are also people who have a passion for God and a hunger for biblical truth that could make us ashamed of our lukewarmness.

There is an opportunity for missions today among the African independent churches, but wisdom is needed. First, let’s not start another church in an area where churches abound. Let’s multiply the influence of biblical truth through the churches that are there. Secondly, let’s not go in with money to buy their attention. That is harmful and unnecessary. Let’s meet the real needs, which are doctrinal stability and credibility for the church and pastor. Many of them feel those needs.

But if you want to help independent churches, you should build a sustainable relationship with them or support someone who already is doing that. Missionary tourism won’t do it. Neither will the spiritual impact of a brief visit, even if the altars are lined. To help a church build doctrinal stability and credibility, you must build trust, patiently work for gradual reform, and invest in the oncoming generation with time and training. ■

Dr. Stephen Gibson is president of Evangelistic Faith Missions and Holiness Pilgrim Mission. He has taught at several Bible colleges, served on mission fields, pastored a diverse inner-city church, and written courses for Shepherds Global Classroom. He and his wife Stephanie live in Williams, IN, and are the parents of six children.

A Liberian Congregation

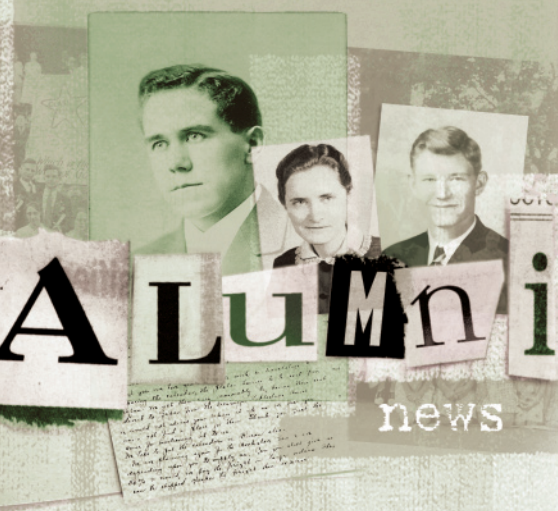


A Worship Dance Group



Ministering in a Primitive Village





GBS alumni are encouraged to submit updates on their lives and current ministries. —KF

AMAZING STORY OF GOD'S PROTECTION AND JUDGMENT

by Dan Glick

In September, my wife Martha and I had the privilege of being in Zakopane, Poland, with our Ukrainian friends, Stephan and Vita (Vasilevna) Kohutka. Vita is a graduate of the missions division of God's Bible School and College (BA '08), and she and Stephan are engaged in Christian ministry near the city of Uzhgorod in southwestern Ukraine.

Stephan is a godly, mild-mannered, 35-year-old deacon/preacher of his local church and the director of Mercy Farm,

which grows organic food and feeds up to 2,000 people a day (lots of gypsies and refugees from the war in Ukraine). Mercy Farm is part of a larger ministry that includes an orphanage, a youth campground, and a ministry to elderly people. This is a joint ministry between Norwegians (they provide much of the financial support) and Ukrainians who staff the ministries. Stephan oversees 60 employees who grow, process, and distribute the food. Recently, for three months in their home, Stephan and Vita hosted 11 refugees who were fleeing the war in eastern Ukraine. Stephan and Vita know ministry like few people I know. While together, they calmly told us the following story.

In the fall of 2021, Mercy Farm was in the process of purchasing some additional nearby property to build a retirement center for the care of the elderly when another man in the area became extremely angry about the purchase because he was not given a chance to purchase the property. This man had some serious character issues and was connected to the dark world of the mafia.

He met with Stephan on a Friday and said that Stephan had to pay him \$100,000 or give the property to him by the following Thursday or "something would happen to

Stephan." The man told him he would bring in mafia members from eastern Ukraine, and they would carry out the dirty deed. He also told Stephan that he knew him to be a Christian and that his Christian faith would not allow Stephan to respond negatively.

Stephan told him that the property was not his but God's—that the property would be used to serve the elderly and infirm. This made no difference to the man.

Stephan was troubled because he knew a man like this could easily carry out his threats. On Sunday, two days later, he told his wife about the ultimatum, and together they brought the matter before the Lord.

Thursday came, and Stephan kept trusting God. He said, "I am the Lord's, and if He wants something to happen to me, I am in His hands." Friday came, and Stephan kept going about his business. The weekend passed, and on Monday, he received a call from the man who sold him the property.

"Have you heard what happened?" he asked Stephan.

"No, what?" Stephan replied.

"The angry man who threatened you died on Thursday of a heart attack, and they already buried him two days ago on Saturday."

Yes! He died on the very day he promised to destroy Stephan if Stephen didn't give him the property or \$100,000. Draw your own conclusions, but I believe God was angry with a man threatening the "servant of the Lord."



Stephan and Vita continue to go about their ministry, and God continues to bless them and their four children. Their oldest is an adopted child from the orphanage. He was severely handicapped at birth. His mother received state payments for him until he was three. When the money quit coming, she threw him in a nearby river. Someone witnessed what happened and went and rescued the boy from drowning. Sometime later, Stephan and Vita felt directed by God to adopt him. Before the adoption, Stephan and Vita were unable to have children. After the adoption, God has given them three beautiful children of their own.

Currently, Stephan and his fellow believers are endeavoring to purchase a piece of property for a new church building and educational center in their village of 2,500 just outside Uzhgorod. They have outgrown the house where they have been meeting. Lots of young families are attending, and they very much need to expand. Please pray for their continuing ministry in Ukraine. ■

Dr. Dan Glick is the former chair of the GBS Missions Division (2001-17) and a current adjunct professor. He runs a travel company, "Tribe of Dan Tours" and can be contacted through his website, TribeofDanTours.com.



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by **Sonja Vernon**

PRAYING IN THE DARK

"I am Yours, save me; For I have sought Your precepts." —Psalm 119:94 NASB

Sometimes my faith is frail. Sometimes it's hard to pray. Sometimes the living words of Scripture fall on dry and dusty ground. Sometimes, in the dark night of the soul, I wonder what is true. Perhaps you've never walked this road, and these words sound heretical. But my guess is that some of you know exactly what I'm talking about and understand a mind and body broken by The Fall. Some of you are there now. In those moments of confusion, in the midst of the darkness, I cling to the Scripture quoted above, "I am Yours, save me." I pray it—sometimes over and over again. I pray it when I don't know what else to pray. It is my cry for help, my declaration of faith, my lifeline to truth. When I cannot find Him, I cling to the unchanging fact of His presence (Job 23:8-10). My heart is set to follow Him and walk in His ways, and whether I can feel Him or not, I choose to rest in His grace and lean on His promises.

Friend, are you in the dark today? I'm not speaking of darkness brought about by willful sin. If that is the problem, repent today and be restored! I'm addressing you who love Jesus and have been walking in fellowship with Him, but the darkness has overtaken you. Maybe your body or your mind has betrayed you. Maybe you're weary. Whatever the case, don't lose heart. He knows where you are. And when no other words will come, remember that you are His, and He will save you. Cry out to Him. He hears. He knows. He is with you. ■

Sonja Vernon is Vice President for Student Affairs at God's Bible School.

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Wednesday, February 22, 2023 | 7:00 PM
Mackey Church of the Nazarene
9612 East Main St., Mackey, IN 47654
Pastor Jared Henry | (812) 795-2708

Thursday, February 23, 2023 | 7:00 PM
Talladega Bible Methodist Church
120 Brecon Access Rd.
Talladega, AL 35160
Pastor Andrew Durst | (217) 390-8392

Friday, February 24, 2023 | 7:00 PM
Faith Community Chapel
345 Faith Chapel Rd.
Thomasville, NC 27360
Pastor Jonathan Heath | (336) 472-6881

Saturday, February 25, 2023
Travel Day

Sunday, February 26, 2023 | 10:00 AM
Light and Life Free Methodist Church
5730 Deeson Rd., Lakeland, FL 33810
Pastor Chuck Frankenfeld
(863) 858-6361

Sunday, February 26, 2023 | 2:30 PM
Florida Holiness Camp
at Lakeland Florida
3335 South Florida Ave.
Lakeland, FL 33803
Dr. Ted Lee, President | (863) 646-5152

Monday, February 27, 2023 | 7:00 PM
Avon Park Holiness Camp
1001 W. Lake Isis Ave.
Avon Park, FL 33825
Dr. Tom Hermis, President
(863) 453-6831

Tuesday, February 28, 2023 | 7:30 PM
Easley Bible Methodist Church
855 Gentry Memorial Hwy.
Easley, SC 29640
Pastor Jonathan Slagenweit
(864) 395-7247

Wednesday, March 1, 2023 | 7:00 PM
Franklin Bible Methodist Church
6000 S. Dixie Hwy.
Franklin, OH 45005
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