

GOD'S REVIVALIST

December 2023

and Bible Advocate





thinking out loud

CREATING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

My father had recently retired from pastoral duties when he received a call from a church whose pastor had abruptly left for another church. They asked if he would consider filling out the remainder of the church year. He agreed to do so and left West Virginia for Overland Park, KS. He ended up staying there four or five more years. The church was located at the top of a hill in the small community of South Park. Daddy was always walking up and down that hill, visiting with the neighbors. Even those who didn't attend his church knew that he was a pastor who was concerned for all the people of the community. They referred to him as "the Mayor of South Park."

When I began attending Mt. Auburn Community Council back in the early 1980s, those in attendance were predominantly African American and of a different political persuasion than mine. I wondered if there would be a place for me. However, as I kept attending and got more involved, I realized that we shared a common goal—to accomplish things for the good of the community. I also became actively involved in several other community organizations which focused on health care, housing, development, etc. I was happy to represent GBS in giving back to the community.

When the Mt. Auburn Community Council met for its monthly meeting in November, I was not there. Another GBS staff member had agreed to begin attending. This marked the end of an era for me. As of now, the Mt. Auburn Development Corporation is my only community involvement. That too will cease when a suitable replacement is identified. You may wonder why I am bailing on all of these opportunities for community involvement. Two reasons: getting old and living with MS (multiple sclerosis). President Loper has been very supportive of me as I have reduced my workload and my involvement in these community groups as my health/mobility difficulties have increased.

Why am I sharing this? Because I think Christians OUGHT to be involved in their communities. Does your community know you? Do you know your community? Why not make a resolution for 2024 to have a better connection with the community in which you live! It need not be extensive, and the specifics may be different from those mentioned above, but as you have opportunity, "do good to all people." Your community will thank you. —KF ■

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COVER PHOTO: Campus siblings Brennan, Jared, and Alessandra Muir on the steps of the Standley Administration Building. Photo by Isaac England.

PAGE 2 PHOTO: Ken Farmer (center) at a MACC meeting. Former Cincinnati Mayor David Mann is on the left.

the president's page



THE SECRET OF HOLY LIVING Part 3

by Dr. Rodney S. Loper, President

The previous two installments of this series on the opening verses of Romans 12 discussed how the prescription for holy, consecrated living was made possible by the change in the way holy people live—relinquishing control over their own lives and placing that control into the hands of God. Holy people are careful not to be conformed to this world, but are rather transformed by the renewing of their minds. Why? Let's pick it up here with the Scriptural response: "that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2b).

Don't miss the order. As I suggested earlier, there are many people living miserable existences because they are trying to prove something that doesn't exist. They are trying to live a holy life without making a complete surrender. The good news, however, is this: If you follow the admonition of Paul in the first two things—do not be conformed...be transformed (v.2a)—the proving will take care of itself. It may help if we change the sentence structure a bit to make it more readable for us. "Because you are living your life as a sacrifice and renewing your mind, the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God will be proved in your life." Yes, the will of God will be demonstrated in how you live.

A DESCRIPTION OF GOD'S WILL

Paul uses three identifying adjectives to describe the will of God—good, acceptable, and perfect. These are all descriptive words used to help us understand the scope of God's will for our lives. Let's look at each of these.

Good. One reason our world is in such a mess is because "good" has been divorced from an objective, absolute standard, and is therefore defined

by the whims of society. “Good” here must be understood in the context of not being conformed to the world, but rather being conformed to God. So, in Christ, we seek to do good things: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; do good, live justly. Based on Christ’s teachings, we should ask, “What is good?” and then do it. That is the Christian way of walking in the will of God.

Acceptable. This must also be seen in the Scriptural context—“acceptable” as it relates to the will of God. In other words, is what I am doing acceptable to God?

Perfect. No matter what, God’s will is good, even in the bad times. No matter what, God’s will is acceptable, even when it doesn’t line up with my plans. No matter what, God’s will is perfect. There is nothing that could be added to God’s plan for you that would improve it. It is perfect in and of itself. God sees the end of the matter before the matter begins. He knows the path we will take, and He knows the obstacles we will face and the valleys through which we will pass. He knows where the provisions are that He has already placed along the way. His plan cannot be improved! We can be in no better place than the perfect will of God for our lives!

A DEMONSTRATION OF GOD’S WILL

By yielding our bodies and our minds to God, we will be able to “prove” or “live out” God’s will before a world that is watching. The word “prove” means to demonstrate. When you have made a complete sacri-

fice, you will know that God knows what He is doing. But as long as you keep insisting on your way, your wants, your ambitions, your dreams, your future, and your desires, you are proving that you are conformed to this world. You will never discover the joy and contentment that comes from letting God control your life! It is at this surrender that you find God’s will for your life.

CONCLUSION

In the first two verses of Romans 12, we see the secret to holy living: (1) Present yourself to God as a living sacrifice, giving Him complete control over your life. (2) Do not allow yourself to be conformed to this world. (3) Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Doing these three things will allow you to know the will of God for your life.

Many people seem caught up in trying to find God’s will. Friends, I have good news for you! You don’t have to find God’s will for your life! If you will make a complete surrender and allow God to transform your mind, His will *will* find you!

Following these two verses we have looked at, you will find identifiers of a surrendered life; for example: Don’t think more highly of yourself than you ought (12:3); use your gifts by faith (12:6), etc. I counted 21 in chapter 12 alone! Let me give you a “homework” assignment. Make a list of these identifiers of a surrendered life you find in chapters 12–16. Prayerfully read your completed list. How do you measure up? ■



Silent Nights

by Karen Wade Hayes

One December evening, while home alone eating dinner, I suddenly became aware of how quiet the house was. I hadn't been by myself much for 25 years because I had four kids, a husband, and a dog to fill my home with noise and activity. But my kids were grown, my youngest was away at college, my husband was on a business trip, and our dog had recently passed away. And although I had experienced quiet moments before, this silence seemed different—louder and longer. It had a new quality I hadn't sensed before—a permanence. It rattled me a little bit.

Silence can be strangely powerful—maybe because in the void created by quiet, the things we've tried hard to suppress tend to emerge, like demons creeping out of the shadows. If we linger too long in silence, the anxieties or fears that were carefully hidden by layers of distraction often bubble up to threaten our precarious and precious equilibrium—that health concern we've tried to pretend doesn't exist, the stressful conversation we've put off, the wounds and sorrows we've refused to face. In my case, the quiet house was an unwanted reminder of a new season. Sometimes silence can feel overwhelming.

My first impulse was to pick up my phone to turn on some music—to forget my sadness over the changing season. But I stopped short, curiosity overcoming the desire for distraction. Setting down the phone, I decided to marinate in the silence rather than fill it. Maybe I needed to get comfortable with the lack of noise in my house, like breaking in a new pair of shoes.

As expected, while I stared out the window into the gathering darkness, my first thoughts were nostalgic—I missed all the people who had filled the house for so many years. Listening in the stillness, I could almost hear them. The sounds of laughter,

crying, running footsteps, clattering dishes, and shouts of "MOM!" played like echoes in my mind. I could even hear the dog barking, her tiny claws clicking on the hardwood floor.

I keenly felt the absence of those sounds. Like the ghost in *A Christmas Carol*, the silence seemed to be showing me a glimpse of the future—a noiseless gong, tolling the end of a marvelous chapter and ushering in the unknown.

Still, I remained in the void, with my emotions heightened. Eventually, as the sun set and the room began to darken, I noticed the Christmas tree in the next room, peacefully glowing. Slowly, my mournful thoughts began to settle like dust bunnies. Staring at the tree, the words to the old hymn "Silent Night" came to mind. Soon, the worries that were born in the tomb-like quiet of my house began to fall away, and an air of expectancy replaced them as I finally remembered God.

I thought about the first Christmas night, wondering what was on the shepherds' minds as the quiet blanket of dusk began to cover the fields and flocks outside of Bethlehem. Were their hearts heavy with nostalgia like mine as the Savior of the world was being born nearby? Were they weighed down with health or financial concerns when that heavenly being broke the silence with a shocking, history-changing announcement from God Himself?

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will bring great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord." —Luke 2:10-11

That night in my kitchen, gazing at the tree, those words rang again in my heart. And the silence of the house no longer seemed foreboding but peaceful. God was with me. Hope flooded my spirit.

We live in a time marked by noise and the rush of constant activity. But when we allow the world to grow still long enough to push past our thoughts and emotions and listen, God reminds us of His love and reveals His glory. He speaks to us the same message He spoke into that silent field of sheep herders 2000 years ago: "I am here."

In those rare moments when silence falls around us like snow on a winter night, what if we lingered in it? Better yet, what if we carved out time for silence? What if we waited patiently, still and quiet, for God to take us beyond our earthly woes and concerns to a place where we can truly hear the good news: Christ is born! Immanuel, "God with us," the gift of hope given to all because God spoke on a silent night in Bethlehem.

Merry Christmas! ■

Karen Wade Hayes is a writer, blogger, and speaker. This article is from her blog, karenwadehayes.com, where she shares her thoughts, experiences, and adventures as she works out how to live Christianly in the world and draw nearer to God each day.

GOD'S REVIVALIST and BIBLE ADVOCATE

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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.



I want to say a big thank you to those who contributed to the exceptional job of honoring Dad in the October 2023 God's Revivalist. Your kind words, reflections, and selection of pictures provided a wonderful memorial for a man who deeply loved God's Bible School. Even as his health and memory deteriorated over the past years, Dad never lost his interest and love for the school. It is my prayer that each of you feels God's strength holding and guiding you as you lead the institution forward for His Glory. Blessings!

MICHELLE (DEETS) HINGL (HS '82)
Email

I really enjoyed the last issue on Sam Deets. I was inspired by Chancellor Avery's telling of Sam's investment in GBS. The editor's piece was a nice touch, as always.

RANDY HUFF
Email

Thank you for God's Revivalist. I am just retired, and I look forward to studying each issue to help me grow more deeply and closely with my Lord.

ANNA CRISSINGER
Howard, PA

We have enjoyed God's Revivalist so much! May God continue blessing His school!

JOHN & ELIZABETH ENYART
Port St. Lucie, FL

My husband and I are both 96 years old, and we still love reading your paper.

WANDA & HOWARD DIEHL
Waynesburg, OH

While Mortals Sleep

by Andrea Sanborn

The heavens tore open that night as a peasant girl labored in darkness. Music flooded the space between heaven and earth.

A flaming, blazing ball of gas appeared from nowhere, pulsing, burning overhead, while magi watched, puzzled, in a distant country.

Awestruck shepherds ran to find their Creator—suckling, needy.

And we, the citizens of Bethlehem, awoke in the morning, unaware. Eyes fixed to the ground instead of lifted to the light.

God With Us. The blazing, fearful Holiness before Whom men and angels fall, came to us. Humble. Ordinary. Waiting 30 years to reveal Himself while we worked and fought, laughed and mourned beside Him.

We still sleep and wake, not perceiving. Waiting—wishing for a rescue that already happened, for Someone who already came.

The unspeakable miracle of God With Us is drowned out by parties and shopping and scrambling to keep up. We strain to give our children a magical Christmas, yet gloss over the unfathomable, joyous reality of it.

It is easier to tell the story than to live in its promise.

So we cling to our idols of self-determination and refuse to see that we are embodied miracles of stunning complexity. Our pride drives us to claim rationality, yet all of science trumpets irreducible infinity, and we choose to look the other way.

Come in, come in from the cold night of unbelief. See not the babe of lullabies, but the God Who gave everything to join us here in the dirt and darkness of our stables—the One who wears the wounds of love and longing even now. Come expectantly, like the shepherds. Seek honestly, like the magi. Accept humbly, like Mary and Joseph.

Lift your eyes from the dark alleys of Bethlehem to the shining courtyards of heaven and rejoice. 🕯

Andrea Sanborn is an author and blogger who writes about the beauty of faith and the God who loves beyond reason. This post from her blog andreasanborn.com is used with permission.

*O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting Light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.*

*For Christ is born of Mary,
and, gathered all above,
While mortals sleep the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King,
and peace to men on earth.*

—Phillips Brooks (1868)





from the Hilltop

FRIEND AND SIBLING DAY

Friend and Sibling Day was a great time for friends, siblings, and students alike to enjoy each other's company and share what life on the Hilltop is like. We were honored to host around 50 potential students along with their families for the event. Guests participated in a number of activities on Tuesday evening, October 24, including volleyball tournaments, 4-way volley-

ball, basketball, 9 Square, and sing-along around a fire. Everyone enjoyed pizza and specialty sodas out of the snack bar on campus. The following day, the students enjoyed a local coffee shop, sat in on some classes, and participated

in a mini-golf campus tour. The day ended with the annual harvest party hosted by the Student Government. The GBS family was happy to give prospective students a taste of college life at GBS in the great city of Cincinnati!

HARVEST PARTY

The annual Harvest Party was held at the Justice Farm on the evening of October 25. Bill and Janet Justice and their son and



A group of "friends and siblings" prepare to go on a "coffee run" to a local café with Chris and Samantha (Ryan) Castle.



Bill and Janet Justice

daughter-in-law Randy and Laura have been very gracious to open

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.

DEATHS



Willard Wayne Dunn, 86, passed away October 29, 2023, at his home in High Point, NC. He was born on February 18, 1937, in Alamance County, NC, to Rev. Rudy Willard (R.W.) Dunn and Ruby Mae (Bartley) Dunn. Wayne's father, Rev. R.W. Dunn, began his GBS tenure as a field representative in 1965, and business manager the following year, serving in that position until his retirement in 1983. He was also a member of the college faculty (1966-1980) and was bookroom manager (1968-1978, 1983). Wayne's mother, Ruby, also served in various capacities in the bookroom and business office during that same period.

Wayne earned a number of college degrees: BA, Mt. Union College (Alliance, OH); BMus, Houghton College (Caneadea, NY); and MEd, University of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, OH). He served in various capacities at GBS from 1965 to 1980: college faculty (1965-1972, 1974-1980); high school principal (1967-1969, 1970-1971); administrative assistant to the president (1968-1970); and music director (1975-1976).

He then earned a PhD in Counseling from Regent University (Virginia Beach, VA) and served for over 30 years as a counselor at Covenant Counseling Center in High Point, NC. He also taught at John Wesley College, High Point, NC, and Indiana Wesleyan University, Marian, IN. For 33 years, he was the minister of music, pianist, and organist at English Road Baptist Church, High Point.

Surviving Wayne is his sister, Priscilla Smith; three nephews; three nieces; and numerous great-nieces and great-nephews. A funeral service was held at the J.C.

their farm and home to our campus family for many years. Highlights of the evening included hotdogs over the fire with all the fixings, a bonfire, a pumpkin painting contest, hayrides, and other activities. Interacting with the farm's horses was an added bonus. The attendees, which included visitors from Friend and Sibling Day, also enjoyed playing various games, such as Cornhole, Spikeball, and 9 Square.

HOMECOMING

The theme for Homecoming 2023 was "Faithful Hands—Serving Hearts." In the runup to this exciting two days (October 13-14), the campus was bustling with activity as we prepared to welcome home our special visitors—individuals who have been students, staff, or both at GBS, especially focusing on those who graduated in 1973 and 1998.

Friday Night Supper

Alumni arrived to a cafeteria beautifully decorated by Joy Barnett (BA '00) and Adrian Arender. GBS music from the digital archives was played throughout supper. Music playlists were hung on the wall so guests could request favorite songs to be played. Everyone who attended was entered into a drawing and over 20 GBS-branded items were given away.

Welcome Home Service

Pre-service and Opening. To accommodate families, a "Future Alumni Service" (for young children) took place in the level below the chapel auditorium at the same time as the main event. Campus children's workers prepared a special event for the future GBSers!

The pre-service music included songs from two of the new public relations groups: Inspiration Trio sing-

ing "Worship the Name of the Lord," and Cornerstone Quartet singing "That's the Power of an Empty Tomb." Then, the Symphonic Wind and String Ensemble (SWSE), under the direction of Michael DeStefano, played several beautiful selections.

At 7:00 PM, Duane Quesenberry (BRE '94) welcomed alumni "back home," noting that home is a place "where you are known and loved." After opening prayer by Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Robert England Jr. (HS '88, BA '93), Tim Crater (BA '89) led the congregation in "The Solid Rock," "Family of God" (with Matt [HS '89, 1989-99] and Joy Barnett [BA '00] singing the verse), and "My Tribute."

Guest Alumni Quartet. Duane introduced Assurance, which traveled for Public Relations from 2003 to 2005. Three of the four singing members of the original group were present: Mike Mater (AA, BA '07), Nathan Dahler (AA, AA '07), and Bran-

Green & Sons Funeral Home Chapel, Thomasville, NC, with Pastor Daniel Downing and Dr. Jim Summey officiating. Interment followed in the Heath Church cemetery, Lexington, NC.



Maynard E. Harris, 74, of Sabina, OH, passed away peacefully on November 6, 2023, surrounded by his family. Born December 15, 1948, he was the son of Maynard R. and Estelle (Mullins) Harris.

Maynard is survived by his wife of nearly 55 years, Connie (Pratt) Harris. The two were united in marriage on November 21, 1968. For many years, Maynard was owner/operator of Harris Auto Sales and Harris Automotive in Sabina. He was active in church and supported many ministries, including Christian schools.

In addition to his wife, Maynard is survived by a son, Jason; daughter, Jacqueline Glenn; nine grandchildren; fourteen great-grandchildren; sister, Jeanette Fitzpatrick;

brother, John; and sisters of his wife, whom he reared as his own children, Denise Mitchell and Ginny Grove. A funeral service was held at Littleton Funeral Home, Sabina. Burial followed at the Milledgeville-Plymouth Cemetery, Washington Courthouse, OH.

Maynard's informally adopted daughter (sister-in-law) Denise (Pratt) Mitchell is a graduate of GBS (BA '84) who managed the GBS Resource Room/The Commons from 2014 to 2022. She says: "Maynard was more like a father to me than a brother-in-law. When I got saved at age 14, my alcoholic father told me to leave his house. My sister, Connie, and her husband, Maynard, took me in, along with my 12-year-old sister, and finished rearing us. I don't know where I would be today if the Lord hadn't brought them into my life the way that He did. They were like grandparents to my children, and my children are grieving as well." Denise's husband, Gary is also a GBS graduate (BRE '84) and he has worked in the school's Facilities Department since 2014. ■

don Hilligoss (BA '09). Joel Hood (BA '07) filled in for Brandon Mills (BA '06) who was not able to attend. Accompanying the group on piano was Martha Miller (BSM '82) in place of their original accompanist Amanda (Shipman) Bovard (AA '06, AA '07). They sang one of their well-known selections, "I am the Bread of Life."

Honored Classes. Duane introduced the class of 1973 (50-year graduates) as well as the class of 1998 (25-year graduates). Those present from those classes stood and were recognized with a round of applause. The 25- and 50-year grads were all invited to return on Saturday morning to a special breakfast with President Loper in the Martin Dining Room.

Recognitions. Duane gave special thanks to Jack Hooker (BRE '74), who chairs the Alumni Relations Committee of the Board of Trustees, for all his work in making this Homecoming special. Also recognized were Dr. Matt Hallam (BA '06), Vice President for Enrollment Services, and his crew who played a critical role in the planning and execution of all aspects of Homecoming.

Alumni of the Year Award.

Duane then introduced Rob Ryan (BA '99) from the board's Alumni Relations Committee to present the Alumni of the Year Award to Henry (BRE '77) and Janan (Agan) Miller (1968-70).

In August of 1968, "Jan" Agan and Henry Miller enrolled at GBS. That November, Henry and Jan met while getting their class pictures. He bought her an orange Crush in the Rec Room Snack Bar, but she did not seem to get the hint. However, their friendship developed during the next school year. They dated, got engaged on July 4, 1969, and were married on June 27, 1970. At that point, they took a break in their education and began their ministry of teaching at Bible Methodist Christian School in Pell City, AL, and pastoring the Bible

Methodist Church in Jasper, AL. Henry returned to GBS in 1974 and graduated with a BRE degree in 1977. Across the years, they pastored six churches in Alabama and four in Ohio. Henry has held several leadership positions in the Alabama Conference of the Bible Methodist Connection and is currently an Elder in the Heartland Conference. They traveled in full-time evangelism as the Henry Miller Family through the USA and several foreign countries. God allowed them to enjoy 52 years in full-time ministry. They retired on April 30, 2022, and are living in Massillon, OH. They continue in ministry as health allows and opportunities are given.

As Rob presented the 2023 Alumni of the Year Award to Henry and Janan Miller, the congregation gave them a standing ovation.

Campus Update. After Assurance returned to sing "At the Name of Jesus," President Loper came to the podium to give the Campus Update. He began by expressing his hope that all returning alumni could look back at their student years at GBS as a time that had significantly marked them for a lifetime of service to the King. He noted that, like many of them, he could point to a spot at the altar in the chapel where he nailed things down for time and eternity—a transformational moment. As many visiting alumni no doubt wanted to know what was currently happening at their alma mater, the president gave an insightful accounting of the school "by the numbers."

Facilities Department. This important group takes care of our physical plant comprised of 72 residences, 7 major buildings, 25 acres, and 117 dorm rooms. Last



Homecoming Quartet



Henry and Jan Miller are honored as "Alumni of the Year."

year they responded to 1,960 "fixit" requests and completed 12 major projects.

Student Life (Sonja Vernon). We have nearly 200 on-campus students and 300 online. The resident deans have responsibility for the students living in the 38 men's dorm rooms and the 79 ladies' dorm rooms. We only had to conduct 4 disciplinary meetings this last year. We serve about 600 meals per day or around 130,000 meals per school year.

Academics (Dr. Aaron Profitt). Last year (Fall 2022-Summer 2023) we offered 461 classes. Those classes had 4,093 enrollments. Already this fall (FA23) we have 229 classes with 2,290 enrollments. Our retention rate is 90%, much higher than the average of all ABHE (Association of Biblical Higher Education) schools, which is 62%. We have 30 on-campus professors this semester, 11 with doctorates and another 3 working on doctorates. We currently have 39 adjuncts teaching for us. Last year, our students were involved in more than 5,000 hours of



50-year Graduates at Saturday Breakfast (L-R): Vicki Truesdale Damon, Cora Case Wells, Celeste Coy Hobelman, Lois Ryan Kelly, Paul Lincoln, Joyce Voss Downing, John Burroughs, Brenda Hodge Miles, Randy Wetherald, Bonnie Toothman Wetherald



25-year Graduates at Saturday Breakfast (L-R): Aaron Marshall, Lyndi Weingard Booth, Loretta Montgomery Dulau, Daniel Huskins

ministry! This includes nearly 2,000 hours by our online students and over 3,000 hours by students on campus.

College degrees. We now have CAEP certification (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation) for various education and music degrees which lead to Ohio teacher certification which, through reciprocity agreements, can lead to teacher certification in nearly every state. We are currently working on a bridge program to help those already involved in teaching to get certified through CAEP. We are also working on expanding our current Master of Arts offerings.

Academy (Tim Makcen). We have 215 students in Aldersgate Christian Academy, 141 in the elementary grades, 74 in high school, and a growing waiting list for those who wish to attend. We have 18 teachers and 8 support staff.

Finances (Beth Stetler / Mike Yancey). Our annual operating budget is \$5.5 million. We have to raise \$1.8 million outside of room/board/tuition to cover costs. We have about 2,700 unique donors. We have 255

people in the 1810 Sustaining Donor Program, bringing in \$102,000 each year. However, we are behind in donations so far this year and would appreciate your help, especially with year-end giving.

Public Relations (Duane Quesenberry). The Public Relations Department currently has 5 Public Relations teams traveling for the school: the 65-voice College Choir, a 45-piece orchestra, 2 ladies' trios, and 1 men's quartet. Last year our PR music groups ministered and represented the college at 57 churches, 11 youth conventions, 5 Christian schools, 6 pastors' conferences, 7 church conventions, and 31 camp meetings and para-church events. Our College Choir and orchestra (Symphonic Wind and String Ensemble) provided 29 services. As a former pastor, our director (Duane) provides support to pastoral and church leaders through Pastor to Pastor (P2P). Last year, this ministry blessed pastors with more than 250 gift cards, recognizing their faithful ministry by treating them to a cup of coffee at a coffee shop or ice cream at a local dairy stand, and by having one-on-one encouragement and confidential conversation appointments with more than 25 pastors and church leaders.

Enrollment Services (Dr. Matt Hallam). This department is fully staffed with 5 employees. On average they host 45 campus visits per year, as well as make 35 visits to other schools. They respond to more than 1,400 inquiries. They had nearly 300 unique VIP-day participants this year.

Preparing the next generation. GBS is passionate about raising the next generation of Christian workers. Think of your pastors, teachers, church musicians, missionaries on the field, and the saints that influenced your life. Who will replace them? God has been helping President Loper set some goals concerning this. During his tenure as president of GBS, with God's help he wants to see the following from our student body: 100 people entering pastoral ministry; 50 teachers taking their places in classrooms; 50 missionaries answering the call to evangelize the world; 50 musicians serving their local church; and hundreds of others who will enter the workforce with a deep stamp of ministry-mindedness that marks the rest of their life!

President Loper closed with an appeal for people to partner with us, saying we need people to pray, promote, and invest.

Offering. Duane returned to the podium and announced that he was not going to "take" an offering,

but rather give the congregation the opportunity to invest in the lives of the students GBS is preparing for their work in the whitened harvest fields. In addition to regular cash and checks, he noted the other options available for giving: online, giving.gbs.edu; text GIVE2GBSC to 321-316-6362; and Cash App at \$GodsBibleSchool. During the offering, SWSE played a stirring medley of hymns.

Employee of the Year Award. President Loper called Tim Makcen to the platform to receive the Employee of the Year Award and made the following remarks:

Tim Makcen has been a GBS employee for 15 years. During his student days in college (2002-06), he was active in student government, worked on the summer Youth Camp Team, and assisted with VIP Day and other youth-oriented events. When he graduated in 2006 (BA in General Studies), he was offered a full-time position in Student Recruitment. He had always enjoyed working with teens, and this was an opportunity to do that. After four years, he began to feel a change was needed.



Tim Makcen

In May 2010, academy teachers for both social studies and Spanish were leaving, so he stepped into a teaching position that fall. He had always thought about working in education, but his inclination was toward the “administrative side” more than the classroom. Over the years, he became involved in many activities beyond his actual teaching assignments, and during the 2016-17 school year, he was named assistant principal and began learning administrative responsibilities from Principal Marshall.

In 2017 he was appointed as principal of the academy. One of the concerns he sought to address was establishing an identity for ACA in a way that communicates the goals they are trying to accomplish. He developed the following mission statement for Aldersgate Christian Academy: “To help students excel academically, grow spiritually, and serve compassionately.” Under his leadership the academy has grown nearly 70% from 135 to 215. Tim is married to Arlette (Silva) (BA '05) and they live on campus with their four children: Aliyah (9), Abella (7), Alivia (5), and Tristan (3).

The congregation gave Tim a standing ovation as President Loper presented him with a plaque in recognition of his years of excellent service.

College and Alumni Chords. The College Choir, under the direction of Timothy Crater, sang a medley of songs of redemption: “Since I Have Been Redeemed,”

“Redeemed How I love to Proclaim It,” and “I am Redeemed by Love Divine.” Next they sang “Whenever I Hear His Name” featuring two soloists, Chris and Samantha Castle.

Then all those who had ever sung in either the college or high school choirs were invited to the platform for the closing number directed by Music Division Chair Emeritus Garen Wolf I, who had directed the GBS choir from 1976 to 2010. The platform filled as alumni joined the College Choir in singing “There’s Still Power in the Blood.” The Welcome Home Service may be viewed on our Facebook page (posted on October 13).

Afterglow

Following the service, numerous activities happened around campus. At the intersection of Young and Channing Streets, people gathered around a fire and awaited turns for a ride around the neighborhood in their choice



The alumni choir joined the College Choir in singing “There’s Still Power in the Blood.”



The Loper Family—one of many groups who provided music for the outside afterglow.

of a horse-drawn buggy, a hay wagon, or a Model T Ford. Guests on main campus sat at patio tables and enjoyed “Music, Memories, and Worship” organized by Dr. Matt Hallam and his enrollment team. This involved a variety of alumni, students, faculty, and staff.

In the Administration Building, guests went on self-guided tours of the visions GBS has for the future.

Each vision was displayed in artistic form in a different room or area of the Administration Building. Information sheets beside each display provided more information about the vision and finances needed to accomplish it. These visions and descriptions can be viewed at www.giving.gbs.edu.

The cafeteria was set up as a "Time Machine." On display were a variety of yearbooks, class schedules, syllabi, and other items from the past. Returning alumni could review the materials and reminisce about their pasts at GBS. Music from the GBS archives was played upon request, and people could listen to clips of various voices from the past, including J. Wesley Adcock, R.G. Flexon, Kenneth Stetler, and Wingrove Taylor. These voice clips can be accessed at www.gbs.edu/voices.

Children had a special "Kids Zone" created just for them on the patio. They were able to joust, jump in a bounce house, run a real lemonade stand, or join in playing mini-basketball or 9 Square. A highlight of Kids Zone was a machine blowing soap bubbles.

In the gym, generational alumni basketball and volleyball tournaments took place. Teams were assigned based on the decades the alumni had attended GBS. Four teams participated in both volleyball and basketball. The tournament was double elimination with the championship games for each sport held on Saturday. At various locations, snacks and drinks were available for a donation. GBS students served soft pretzels, nachos and cheese, cookies, and specialty sodas. Staff from Coffee Emporium served a variety of hot drinks in The Commons.

Saturday Activities

Breakfast. Alumni from the honored classes met in the Martin

Dining Room for breakfast. President Loper welcomed the participants and opened the floor for questions. Director of Development Mike Yancey gave an overview of various ways the alumni could support the school.

Fun Fest. Young Street between Channing and Ringgold was closed to automobiles in order to accommodate Fun Fest. The campus family and guests mingled while visiting various attractions along the street and on the main campus. Many goods and services were available for any monetary donation. Children and teens especially enjoyed a bounce house, chicken toss, jousting, miniputt, etc. Winners received tickets to redeem for prizes at the prize booth.

For a donation of any amount, people received a Chick-fil-A-styled lunch of chicken sandwiches, tenders, and waffle fries. Funnel cakes and nachos and cheese were also available. Several student groups raised support for their divisions by selling tacos, iced coffee, donuts, and pies.

Benefit Auction. At 1:00 pm, GBS hosted its second Homecoming Benefit Auction. Director of Devel-

opment Mike Yancey, who was responsible for the auction, reports that with several members of the Board of Trustees underwriting the cost of the merchandise being auctioned, all the auction proceeds were profit. We also saw a significantly larger turnout this year compared to our first auction last year. With the assistance of professional auctioneers and increased participation, we realized about \$30,000 from this year's auction compared to \$11,000 last year. We are exploring new strategies to boost these numbers further and create an even greater impact.

The potential benefits of the auction go beyond just the funds raised. We had the privilege of seeing several new businessmen and community leaders in attendance this year. This network is growing, and the opportunities for collaboration and support are expanding. One friend told Mike Yancey that next year he would help GBS by advertising the auction on his radio stations and bring a few friends to spend money! So, please plan on joining us next year for an even bigger and better auction at Homecoming 2024! 🍷



The Saturday Homecoming Benefit Auction

CAMPUS IMPROVE



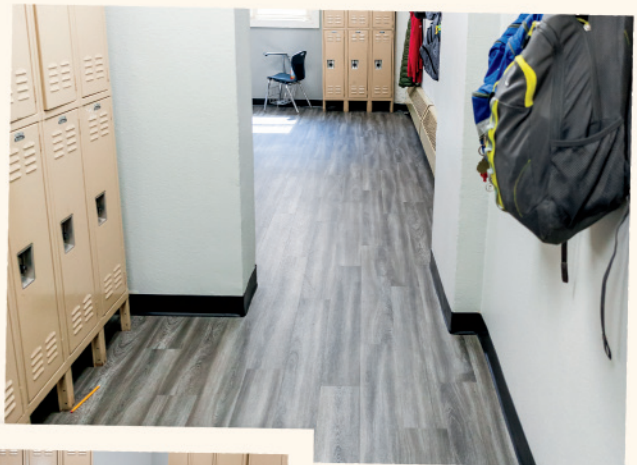
We have been blessed with a beautiful, historic campus. Often visitors are amazed at the stately buildings and the well-manicured landscaping. As you know, these things do not happen by chance. We are committed to maintaining with the highest possible standards the facilities that God has entrusted to us. Because of the generosity of folks across the United States, we have been able to complete many projects over the past year.

Repairs and Improvements

A lot of our work is not glamorous, and often it goes unnoticed. When one of the major stone walls on campus was damaged by a tractor trailer, we were able to restore the wall to its original condition. We also repaired concrete around campus that needed attention. The roof of the Facilities Building was reshingled. (You can see President Loper working with the maintenance crew on this project in the accompanying photo.)

The old, red chapel platform chairs, which had lost all cushion integrity, were replaced by new, sturdy, gray chairs.

The second-floor academy entrance had old tile replaced by vinyl plank flooring. This also extended down the hallway and into the large science room.



CONSTRUCT

GOD'S REVIVALIST and BIBLE AD

RUCTION



New Outdoor Spaces for Students

Fortunately, sometimes our work proves to have a big impact on the students. Such was the case this year as we created a new outside hangout area next to The Commons (which was renovated last year). Also, "The Porch" just outside the back doors of The Commons was given a new table and chairs. Both of these spaces provide students with comfortable areas in which to sit, visit, and relax. In addition, the patio on the west side of the cafeteria had new umbrellas added to the tables, shielding students from the elements.



Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning

It seems like this was the year of HVAC replacement. We have replaced a number of units across our campus so far this year: college and academy classrooms; The Commons; ministerial, recruitment, and Revivalist Press offices; and many residences. Their enhanced efficiency will generate cost savings in the future.





ON! CONSTRUCTION!

Remodeling Campus Residences

We remodeled several campus residences this year. We do our best to ensure that our faculty and staff have residences that are in good shape. Because of the age of our buildings, this is a full-time job. In addition to needed repairs, these residential updates include bathroom remodels, new cabinets, and flooring. Pictured is our crew at work on one of these projects.

New Lawn Care Equipment

We were able to replace tired and worn lawn care equipment earlier this year. GBS alumnus Mike Quailes sold his lawn care business, and we were able to purchase three of his mowers: riding (pictured), walk-behind, and standard. These upgrades help us to keep the landscaping around campus looking great.

Entrance/Exit Gate System

We added security gates to the north and south ends of the 1800 block of Young Street. We have had too many instances of neighborhood cars dangerously speeding through the campus after wrongfully entering through the exits. Extensive preparatory work was needed to bury the necessary power to the gates. These gates have proven to be a great deterrent.



CONSTRUCTION!

ON! CONSTRUCTION!





The Facilities Team

All of these things are important, but they are not our greatest assets. That distinction belongs to the Facilities team of dedicated employees who understand that maintaining this campus is God's work. Because of their skills and dedication, we are able to complete many projects for significantly less than what outside contractors charge.



Upcoming Projects

- **Replacing the carpet in the cafeteria.** This fall, many of you joined with a matching donor to provide the funds for this project. Estimated cost is \$30,000.
- **Replacing windows in the cafeteria.** Many of these windows are cracked and/or discolored, as the Miller-Deets Student Center will soon be 50 years old. Estimated cost is \$40,000.
- **Replacing carpet in the dorms.** Several floors of our dorms need new carpeting. Estimated cost per floor is \$25,000.
- **A van for Public Relations.** We service and maintain our vehicles to the highest standard. With a rigorous maintenance schedule, we feel confident in keeping our vans on the road full-time up to 250,000 miles. We have three vans nearing that mark and would like to replace one. Estimated cost is \$30,000.

Budgets for maintaining buildings and grounds are the natural outworkings of our endeavors to accomplish our mission. Would you consider helping us meet these goals for the coming year? With a generous gift of any amount, you will help us as we train the next generation to go out and do the work of ministry.

To make a donation by check, send it to 1810 Young Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202. To donate by credit card or give online, visit www.gbs.edu/givenow; or you may call the school at 1-513-721-7944 and ask for the Development Office.

Thank you for standing with us!

Dr. Rodney Loper

GOD'S BIBLE SCHOOL
& COLLEGE

DECEMBER 2023

Dear Phil

DISTINCTIVES OF WESLEYAN BIBLE STUDY

I'm a Baptist. What are the distinctives of Wesleyan/Methodist Bible Study? —Mark

Dear Mark,

A longer version of my answer is forthcoming on the blog "Word by Word" at logos.com/grow/. Here's a short version using your three key terms.

Wesleyan/Methodist. Christians who identify as Wesleyan or Methodist trace their branch of Christianity to the influence of John Wesley. Wesley was an English evangelist and pastoral theologian in the 1700s. He was a lifelong Anglican. He was also a conservative Arminian, affirming that all men need to be saved, all men can be saved, all men can know that they are saved, and all men can be saved "to the uttermost" (cf. Heb. 7:25 KJV). Everywhere Wesley evangelized, he gathered believers in small groups known as class meetings to help them pursue holiness of heart and life methodically. They came to be known as methodists. Under Wesley's direction, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was founded in 1784. After Wesley's death, British methodists formed the Wesleyan Methodist Church and separated from the Church of England.

Bible. Wesley encouraged his converts to read the Bible daily. Wesley and other early Methodists affirmed their belief in the inspiration,

authority, and infallibility of the Scriptures. John Wesley was adamant that Scripture contains no mistakes or falsehoods: "Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible there may as well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth." Unfortunately, not all Methodists and Wesleyans today share the classic methodist (indeed, classic Christian) view of Scripture.

Study. Those who do share Wesley's confidence in Scripture's complete truthfulness approach Bible study with a set of theological lenses. The first lens is an *OPTIMISM OF GRACE*. We study Scripture confident that God's grace is sufficient and freely available to enable every believer to obey God's commands, including the command to be holy as He is holy. Thus, we read texts such as "he that is born of God does not practice sin" as the present privilege of God's children. What the Spirit inspires the apostles to pray (e.g., Eph. 3:16-20; Phil. 1:9-11), we expect God to do, including sanctify us entirely and preserve us blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

The second lens is *SPIRIT-DEPENDENCE*. As we study Scripture, we ask the Spirit to guide us into understanding its truth. We look to the Spirit to speak to us through compar-

ing Scripture with Scripture (the rule of faith), and through listening to the wisdom of other Spirit-filled members of the Church through the centuries. We also engage in earnest obedience, depending upon the Spirit's empowerment to live out the truths He helps us learn.

The third lens is a *GENEROUS ORTHODOXY*. At our best, we distinguish between the doctrines that are the root of Christianity and those that are not. For example, on the one hand, we acknowledge that Scripture teaches that believers do not deny Jesus' full deity, full humanity, bodily resurrection, and future return in glory. Believers must be born again by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. On the other hand, we approach Scripture's teaching regarding forms of church government, the millennium, modes of baptism, frequency of the eucharist, and other such issues that do not strike at the root of Christianity, with "think and let think."

The fourth lens is a *TRANSFORMATIONAL FOCUS*. The primary purpose of Scripture is to redeem and transform believers into Christ's likeness so they may live eternally in fellowship with the thrice holy, triune God. We study the Bible inviting, expecting, and engaging with the Spirit in the transformation of our minds and lives.

The fifth lens is *EXPERIENTIAL CONFIRMATION*. We expect mature Christian experience to confirm proper interpretation. The Spirit not only uses the rule of faith, right reason, and church tradition to help us understand Scripture; He also uses our consciences and experiences as witnesses to the truth properly interpreted.

Blessings,
Phil ■

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



student focus

UPDATE ON CATHOLIC SYNOD

The only thing that came out of the meeting recently convened by Pope Francis to determine the future of the Roman Catholic Church was that women have a larger role. Progressive participants had hopes that the meeting would create momentum for change but were disappointed because such sensitive topics as blessing same-sex unions, reaching out to LGBT Catholics, and the possibility of allowing married men to become priests were not addressed. The assembly will reconvene in October of next year.

IN-PERSON CHURCH SERVICES AND ATTENDANCE IS RISING

During the Covid pandemic, many churches were closed and only offered services online, often due to government restrictions. Three years later, in-person church attendance has been on the rise. In 2021, even after most restrictions had been lifted, only 38% of those participating in the State of the Bible study said they primarily attended church in-person. That number has risen to 56% in 2022 and to 67% in 2023.

\$38.1 MILLION HEBREW BIBLE

The oldest known near-complete Hebrew Bible sold for \$38.1 million, which, according to Sotheby's, set a record for the most expensive manuscript ever to be

sold at auction. The Codex Sassoon was created in the early to late ninth century requiring the skins of more than 100 animals to create its leaves. It was named for its previous owner, David Solomon Sassoon, a well-known academic and book lover, who purchased it in 1929.

On behalf of the American Friends of ANU, former U.S. Ambassador to Romania Alfred H. Moses and the Moses family made the purchase and then donated it to the ANU Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv, Israel.

ABSENT FATHERS AND THE COLLAPSE OF MARRIAGE

A study by the Nationwide Study on Faith and Relationship concluded that "family decline appears to fuel faith decline" and suggested that the two best explanations for why Christianity is declining in the U.S. are "absent fathers" and "collapsed marriages," and said, "The reason for the decline in faith is...that the absence of a married home where dad is warmly engaged in the life of his child is the cause of the fire that is the source of the reason fewer and fewer people believe."

The survey data came from 19,000 Sunday church attendees from a sampling of various Evangelical, Protestant, and Catholic churches across the nation. The reality is that marriage rates have dropped 31% since 2000 and 61% since 1970. ■

ROSE JAMES insists that she didn't "decide" to attend GBS. "It was more of an obedience to the next step to which I felt God was leading me." Rose is a missionary kid who grew up knowing and learning about God, but she did not make the personal decision to "choose God" until she was 19. She has never turned back since, no matter how many times or how hard she has gotten knocked down; God has always been with her through the rough times. "The Holy Spirit dragged me out of the muddy nastiness of life countless times. I have seen God show up in so many incredible ways. He is my Heavenly Father and my Best Friend!"

Rose is working on a secondary teacher education program—integrated English language and arts for secondary schools. After graduation (2025 or 2026), she plans to use a teaching career "as a bridge" to minister in a non-Christian country, "but more importantly, I'm keen for where God will lead me next." ■

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:

Student Fund
God's Bible School and College
1810 Young Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

or give online anytime at
www.gbs.edu/givenow



Amazing Grace

the Story of a Song

A Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the Beloved Hymn PART 3

by Joy Barnett

During his life, John Newton's relationships would mark and influence him. He was a loyal and caring friend. He loved deeply and displayed the self-sacrifice of a good servant-leader. Most of all, his relentless pursuit of Christ was the driving force of his life. Evidence of these characteristics is found in the letters that he left behind.

He wrote friends, family, other preachers, parishioners, and politicians. As his reputation grew, so did his correspondence. He was so well known for his letters that a pastor friend noted it was a pity he did anything but write them! He was trustworthy, affectionate, wise, down-to-earth, and funny. His letters began to be circulated widely, and eventually collections of his correspondence were published. *Cardiphonia: Utterances from the Heart* is a publication of letters filled with loving admonitions, counsel for the doubting, honesty about his own failings, and encouragement to follow Jesus. Most of all, Newton was full of warmth and not afraid to express his care. He wrote to one friend, "I brought home with me a thankful sense of the kindness and friendship I am favored with from you and all yours. I account this connection one of the great comforts of my life."

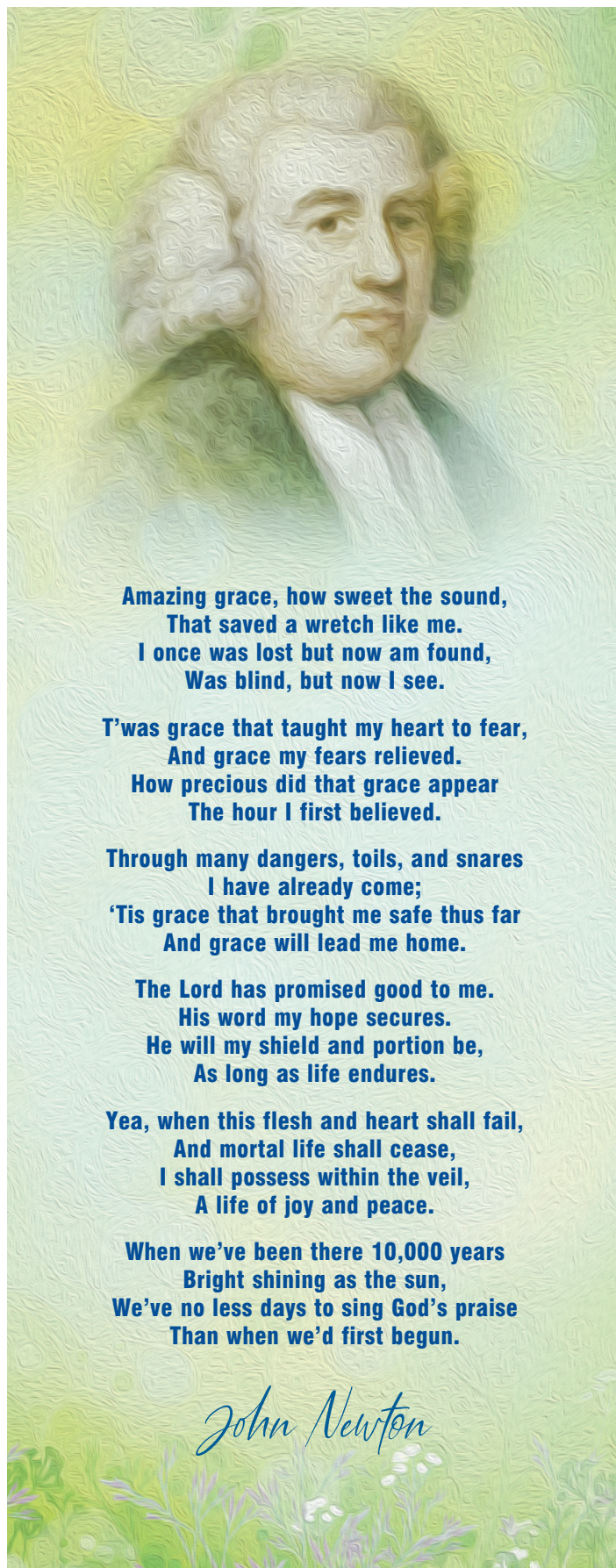
When Newton's wife died, a collection of their letters was published called *Letters to a Wife*, a witness of their deep love for God and for each other. In one letter to her, he wrote, "You will not be displeased with me for saying that though you are dearer to me than the aggregate of all earthly comforts, I wish to limit my passion within those bounds which God has appointed. Our love to each other ought to lead us to love Him supremely, Who is the author and source of all the good we possess or hope for. It is to Him we owe that happiness in a marriage state which so many seek in vain...."

It was this willingness to love people and to be involved in their everyday life that made John Newton a great pastor. Instead of the clerical garb that was expected of an Anglican minister, he wore his old sea captain's coat. An entry in his diary notes that "in the afternoon [I] walk about an hour or two among the people and sometime drink tea with them." He had time for children, taking them on his knee, singing them sea chanties and telling them hair-raising tales from his seafaring days. His desire to minister well to his people is one of the reasons he began to compose hymns in the first place. Since most of the people in his first pastorate were not literate, he felt that hymns would help them remember the truths he taught in his sermons. Lacemaking was the industry in the town, and as the ladies made intricate knots, they would recite little rhymes to help them keep up a rhythm in their work. Newton felt that instead of silly poems, he could write something that would help them meditate on the gospel he preached. To that end, he began to write hymns to accompany his sermons.

Every new year was an important time of reflection for John Newton, a practice that was part of his personal spiritual disciplines. He used that time to contemplate the grace of God in delivering him in the past, how that grace was working to keep him in the present, and what that grace would mean in the future. In a letter to a friend, he mentions this past-present-future view of grace, "I hope this New Year will bring many new blessings to you. The Lord is good. He has delivered—He does deliver—He will deliver.... What a Savior and what a Shepherd have we!"

On January 1, 1773, Newton preached a sermon for the new year from 1 Chronicles 17. To go with the sermon, he wrote a hymn called "Faith's Review and Expectation." In this Scripture text, God reminds David of His faithful covenant with him. Newton used this text for a study on God's grace.

First, God tells David to remember his lowly beginnings. "Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep..." (v.7). John Newton always remembered that he was a "wretch," when grace found him. One friend, upon visiting Mr. Newton, observed a sign in very large letters over the desk at which he composed his sermons: "Remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt and the Lord thy God re-



**Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.**

**T'was grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.**

**Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.**

**The Lord has promised good to me.
His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.**

**Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.**

**When we've been there 10,000 years
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.**

John Newton

deemed thee." He was filled with humble gratitude for all that the grace of God had done to rescue him from sin.

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.*

*T'was grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.*

Next, God reminds David, "I have been with thee withersoever thou has walked and cut off all thine



enemies from before thee..." (v.8). David understood that it was God Who protected and provided for him. Newton continued his sermon with an admonition to look at how the grace of God has preserved us in this present hour. Newton faced difficulties, as we all do. He was convinced that he could rest in God's Sovereignty in suffering and allow difficulties to redirect his attention to Jesus. "Seriously, the times look dark and stormy, and call for much circumspection and prayer; but let us not forget that we have an infallible Pilot, and that the power, and wisdom, and honor of God are embarked with us.... Is He not gracious and faithful to support us under the stroke? Is He not rich enough to give us something better than ever He will take away? Is not the light of His countenance better than life and all its most valued enjoyments?" God's grace can sustain us through the trials of life.

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.*

Finally, God confirms His promise to David for the future: "I will build thee a house...I will raise up thy seed...I will establish his throne forever" (v.10-12). David's response is to worship in awe. "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house? ...According to your own heart, you have done all this greatness, in making known all these great things. There is none like you, O Lord, and there is no God besides you..." (v.16-20). Newton preached that we have confidence in the future, for God's grace will be there. "When we awake into that glorious world, we shall in an instant be satisfied with His likeness. One sight of Jesus as He is, will fill our hearts, and dry up all our tears." Grace in the future looks like heaven and home!

*The Lord has promised good to me.
His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.*

*Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.*

Newton's New Year's Day sermon has been forgotten for the most part. The song he wrote to reinforce its truth was not immediately popular. We have no record of how it was received, the original tune used, or any other particulars. It was published in the *Olney Hymns* collection in 1779 and then virtually disappeared in England until 1900. However, it was published in America in 1790, and that is where the song received a new life.

In 1852, the song was included in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, where a new final verse was added that Stowe noted had been sung by slaves in America for more than 50 years. What a beautiful irony that American slaves would find hope in a song written by a former slave ship captain! Truly, a story of grace.

*When we've been there 10,000 years
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.*

Not only did Newton's hymn get a new verse, but it was married to the NEW BRITAIN tune by which we have come to know it in 1835 when William Walker published it in *The Southern Harmony*. So, the song was re-born in the shape-note and African American singing traditions of the South. Since then, "Amazing Grace" has become part of the musical score of America. It has given comfort during loss, hope during war, a call to arms for civil rights, and a voice to the deep worship of believers. In 2006, Chris Tomlin added a chorus to the original stanzas that is now widely used. "My chains are gone, I've been set free," adds a fresh expression to the joy and freedom from the past that the hymn embodies.

John Newton's hymn not only echoed the truth of his sermon for that New Year's Day, but it is a recounting of his own testimony. Indeed, it is the testimony of all who find forgiveness in Jesus. We experience for ourselves the overwhelming joy of redemption and the satisfaction in trusting God's Providential care; and we rest in the steadfast hope of heaven. We are in the middle of the plot, but we can find grace everywhere in our own stories. Grace in the past. Grace in the present. Grace in the future. And so, even 250 years later, we are still singing "Amazing Grace." ■

Joy Barnett (BA '00) teaches voice and piano and writes articles for various publications. She and her husband Matt sing for revivals and camp meetings. They live in Hamersville, OH.

Resources:

www.andybannister.net. "Lost and Found: The Story of John Newton." *Heroes: Five Heroes from Whose Lives We Can Learn*. Andy Bannister.

www.christianitytoday.com. "We've sung 'Amazing Grace' for 250 Years. We've Only Just Begun." Daniel Johnson.

www.desiringgod.org. "God has Brought Me Safe Thus Far: Amazing Grace for the New Year." Tony Reinke.

www.youtube.com. John Newton. Jonathan Aitken, Brian H. Edwards, Tony Baker.



by Sonja Vernon

GOOD NEWS IN A NUTSHELL

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." —John 10:10 ESV

I love concise statements. When a broad concept is explained thoroughly in a few words, it's like a little linguistic present. Over the last several years, I have come to view John 10:10 as one of those gifts. In twenty-one words, John gives us the *modus operandi* of our Creator and that of our enemy. The evil one's goal is to steal, kill, and destroy. His focus is our ultimate destruction. Everything he does, every promise he makes, every gift he bestows has, as its end, death. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Creator's ultimate goal for His created ones is eternal, abundant life. Everything He does, every promise He makes, every gift He bestows has, at its end, life. What a stark contrast! The disparity is shocking. One comes to harm, the other to heal. One comes to enslave, the other to free. One comes to ruin, the other to redeem.

During the Christmas season, we celebrate the God who emptied Himself and took on human form—the perfect Son Who, "though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6-7). The most perfectly concise statement of who God is was delivered in the form of a baby over two thousand years ago. This tiny embodiment of the Gospel was the perfect Word Who spoke life to a dying world and changed our destiny forever. That, my friends, is good news indeed! ■

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

God's Bible School & College
wishes you a

*Merry
Christmas*

*and a
Happy New Year!*

