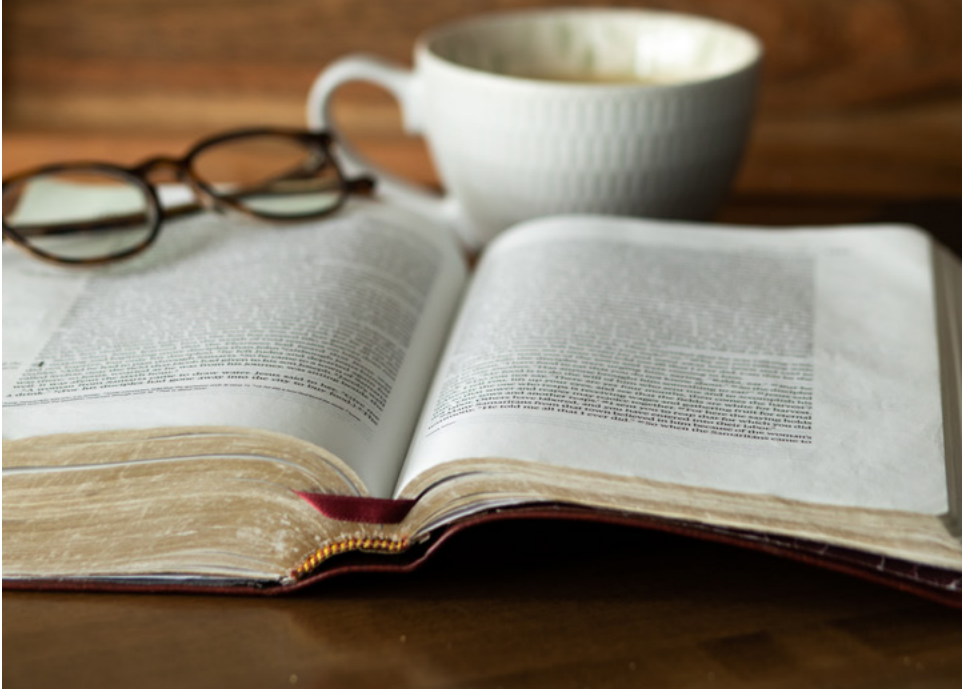


SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS



'But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).'
Matthew 1:20–23 ESV

GREATER WORKS

By Pastor Brooks Simpson

Does your Christian experience include the presence and power of God?

Or is your faith one that sees Christ only for what He has done for you in the past? When we celebrate Christmas we celebrate God taking on flesh (John 1:14). When we celebrate Easter we rejoice in Jesus conquering sin and death. It is good and right to celebrate what Jesus has done for us in the past, but that is not what Christianity is. Christianity is the life of Christ lived out today through the Body of Christ.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."

John 14:15-17

Jesus promised His disciples that He would send another like Himself that would be WITH them and IN them. That same promise is for us right now. Christ wants us to experience His presence and power through the Holy Spirit.

Our last sermon series focused on

"Encountering Jesus." More precisely, we focused on how encountering Jesus answers life's most important questions. This Advent season we will spend four weeks "Encountering the Holy Spirit". Jesus promised His disciples that they would do greater works than He did (John 14:12). That promise is only realized when we are indwelt and empowered by the Spirit Jesus promised to send.

How would you characterize your walk with Christ? Would you use words like vibrant, powerful, intimate, joy-filled, fruitful, meaningful, and rich to describe your walk? If not, why? Jesus said His disciples would do greater works. Greater works are only possible through the indwelling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Each week we will seek to understand the third member of the Trinity.

11/28 | Who is the Holy Spirit

12/5 | Why We Need the Holy Spirit

12/12 | How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit

12/19 | How to Walk in the Spirit

Jesus wants to do greater things through us. Join us this Advent as we seek to encounter the Holy Spirit to the end that we may experience Immanuel, God with us! 🌿

UPCOMING EVENTS

Learn more and/or sign up for events on graceb3.org/events

SUNDAYS

Winter Thrive Classes • Adult education classes designed to equip you for all aspects of your walk with Jesus.

Sunday Morning Prayer • 7AM • Lift up in prayer the needs of our church, community, and world.

MONDAYS

Men's Bible Study • 6:55PM • Study God's word with other men in the community.

WEDNESDAYS

Refill, hosted by Grace Student Ministry • 6:30PM • Equipping 7th-12th graders to love God, serve others, and make disciples of Jesus.

11/7 • 2PM • Zoom

Campus Ministry Prayer Meeting • Join us the first Sunday of the month to pray for our local campus ministries.

11/13 • 7PM

International Student Thanksgiving • Reach the nations from your home this Thanksgiving by sharing a meal with an international student. Gather for dessert & discussion at Grace at 7PM.

SELECTED DEVOTIONALS FROM THE SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS SERMON SERIES.

More Questions and The Consequence of Denying Evil

By Pastor Brooks Simpson

*This devotional refers to the
October 3 sermon "What is Evil?"
Watch it at graceb3.org/sfa-sermons*

*"Then Jesus was led up by the
Spirit into the wilderness to be
tempted by the devil."
Matthew 4:1*

The Bible insists that evil is real. The Devil (slanderer) tempted Jesus in the wilderness, and he tempts us today. This historical reality, recorded in the Bible, isn't believed by the world. Modernity has moved on from the belief in

ghosts, goblins, devils, and spirits. Supernatural evil is not an idea which modern people want to engage in. Bring up 'The Devil' and you are likely to earn the badge of a religious nut at work or your Parent-Teacher Org meeting. How do you talk about evil in a culture that doesn't believe there is such a thing? Begin with prayer, then ask questions and listen.

Sure it's awkward being the only one in the room who believes Jesus rose from the dead and the Devil is real. You cannot convince anyone to believe anything, but you can ask questions that

may help someone to come to the conclusion that what they currently believe does not adequately answer life's questions.

- *What behaviors or beliefs would you consider evil?*
- *If you don't believe a deed or thought can be evil, are things like child molestation morally neutral? Why or why not?*
- *If there is evil, what makes some actions evil and other actions not evil?*
- *Are there degrees of evil? Are some behaviors or beliefs more evil than others? If so, why?*
- *Can good people do evil things? If so, why would a good person do evil, and if they do evil are they still a good person?*
- *What should society do about evil people and evil deeds?*

The goal in asking questions like these is to help your friends discover what they believe and why they believe it. Os Guinness, in his book *The Call*, describes true seekers as people for whom life, or a part of life, has suddenly become a point of wonder, a question, a problem, or a crisis. Guinness says that seekers disbelieve in what they believed in before because of new questions their previous beliefs could not answer. Our witness does

not cause belief. Our witness stirs questions that only Jesus provided solutions for.

We don't have to get people to convert. That's the role of the Spirit. We do have to give a reason for the hope that we have in Jesus. Sometimes sharing our hope includes helping people see that what they believe currently is hopeless. A culture that insists man is by nature good has no category for the evil they see everyday. If nothing or no one is evil, then words like right, wrong, good, and evil are meaningless.

Begin with prayer and ask good questions.

The Evil Inside Us

By Pastor Brooks Simpson

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" Matthew 7:7-11

This devotional refers to the October 3 sermon "What is Evil?" Watch it at graceb3.org/sfa-sermons

Did you ever wonder how the disciples received Jesus' teaching on prayer? The premise is great. Ask and it will be given to you. I can just see the disciples tracking. Nodding during the message, saying, "Amen!" Great so far but how do you think they felt when He gave them the clincher - "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more..." I can imagine at least one disciple thought, "Wait, what? He just said we were evil." Perhaps they figured He was speaking to those awful Pharisees. Jesus doesn't stop to qualify who He meant by "you who are evil." This is the Sermon on the Mount and He is speaking to whoever has ears to hear.

When people consider the problem of evil, they generally approach it as something external to themselves. Sure there are evil people in the world. Some might even go so far as to agree with Jesus that there is a supernatural evil, but few people locate the problem of evil as a personal one. Jesus does.

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray He told them to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." (Matthew 6:13) He prayed for our deliverance and bids us to do the same because our hearts are prone to evil. Yes, there is an external evil who tempts us to choose to walk independently of God; but the reason his temptation sticks is that our heart already desires evil.

This does not mean that we are as bad as we could be. It does mean that we are not as good as we should be. Some will carry out the evil inclinations of their hearts to a level that shocks society. Most will not. We are not all Hitlers, Stalins, or Judas Iscariots. Most of us, when we succumb to temptation, believe that "our evil" is benign and thus not all that bad. We convince ourselves that the small temptation we give into will not surely lead to

death. We justify our sin, "It is just a little sin."

Remember, the object of the first sin was a piece of fruit. And look what it produced.

Recognizing the evil in us is not self-loathing. Paul says that nothing good dwells within him, that is his flesh (Romans 7:18). But this is not self-loathing. While recognizing the sin in his flesh, he remembers Christ has delivered him from the evil of sin through the merits of Christ (Romans 7:21-8:4). To be delivered from evil, we must know we are vulnerable to it because we are prone to desire it. We are never closer to being overcome by evil than when we assume it is something purely outside of us.

The Price of Wholeness

By Pastor Brooks Simpson

"And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, 'If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.' And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my garments?'" Mark 5:25-30

This devotional refers to the October 10 sermon "How do I Face Suffering?" Watch it at graceb3.org/sfa-sermons

Jesus came to deal with suffering. Sin, sickness, death, and suffering have been the common lot of a broken and fallen world since our ancestral parents were cast from Eden. No one escapes suffering. No one; not the good, not the bad, not the religious, and not the irreligious. But, in Christ, we meet God, who became flesh to do something with our suffering. Here, Jesus heals a woman who had hemorrhaged for twelve years. Moments later, He will raise Jairus' daughter from the grave. We read account after account of Jesus healing and assume,

"well, Jesus is the Son of God, of course, He healed them. I mean, if you are omnipotent and can do all things, why wouldn't you heal and relieve suffering?" While the line of reasoning is sound, it is incomplete. It ignores the cost which Jesus pays for the restoration of wholeness.

The woman receives her healing, and Jesus perceives that power has gone out from Him. "Who touched me?" He asks. Her healing cost Jesus something. This broken woman had suffered in ways we can only imagine. In an instant, she is whole. Jesus doesn't need to imagine her suffering. He feels it. Her strength comes at a cost to His wholeness. This broken woman becomes whole because Jesus becomes broken. The power that leaves Him here is a foretaste of the agony He will bear on the cross.

"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

There is no wholeness without the brokenness of Jesus. Sin brings with it physical and spiritual brokenness: shame, guilt, loneliness, physical disease, and death. Jesus came to restore creation. He came to take what

has been broken and make it whole. What wounds do you carry? This woman carries more than a disease. She carried shame, loneliness, and isolation. In an instant, Jesus took all that from her and made it His own. On the cross Jesus took the disease, sin, shame, and guilt of the world. He did not merely experience power leaving His body. He experienced hell. Bring your suffering to Jesus and ask Him to make you whole in mind, body, and spirit for your good and His glory.

God Grieves

By Pastor Brooks Simpson

"When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept." John 11:33–35

This devotional refers to the October 17 sermon "How Do I Face Death?" Watch it at graceb3.org/sfa-sermons

If Jesus knows the end from the beginning, why does He weep? Why is He deeply troubled? The word translated troubled means

indignant or angry. Jesus is a white hot mess. Jesus is losing it at the funeral He is going to turn into a celebration within minutes. Within moments, the grieving sisters and their dead brother will be embracing, jumping up and down, and crying tears of joy. So, why does Jesus grieve when He knows the pain of loss won't last? He grieves because to not do so would make Him less than human, and less than God.

Grief is the sadness and sorrow we feel due to loss. The death of a spouse, child, parent, friend, or relationship brings pain. God created you in His image to reflect His nature. God is relational, and so are you. You were designed to find joy in giving and receiving love from others. Death puts the giving and receiving of love to an abrupt halt. No more warm embraces. No more laughter. No more birthday parties. No more conversations over a meal. When you lose something or someone you love, you should grieve. Jesus can't not grieve, even if His grief is temporary.

We know the rest of the story. Jesus calls Lazarus from the tomb and the party starts. But, it's not the raising of Lazarus that intrigues me the most. Jesus'

tears and grief are what hold my attention. His tears remind us that He is not indifferent to our pain and suffering. Jesus knows how He is using your suffering for your good and His glory (Romans 8:28). But His foreknowledge doesn't mean He is indifferent to your pain from moment to moment. The author of Hebrews says Jesus sympathizes with us in our pain. He is able to help us in our weakness because He has put on human flesh. He has walked the same path we walk.

Have you lost a loved one, your health, your reputation, or your dreams? Don't treat Jesus like some emotionless master planner in the sky. Your grief grieves Him even if He does know how He will use it for your good and His glory. Are you hurting? Go to Him and tell Him your pain. He cares.

Miracles and the Nature of Faith

By Pastor Josh Haveman

"Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.' John 11:21

This devotional refers to the October 17 sermon "How do I Face Death?" Watch it at graceb3.org/sfa-sermons

In this passage, Martha is talking to Jesus about her brother, Lazarus. Her faith, she says, is such that she believes Jesus could have prevented Lazarus from dying. Martha also says that she believes Jesus could yet bring Lazarus back to life. Martha believes a miracle is possible.

At this point in Jesus' ministry, Martha has probably seen Jesus heal dozens of people. His power is clear in her mind, and she trusts her Lord completely. Her statement to Jesus is not surprising, therefore, and it isn't lacking. Martha says the exact right thing: "I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

This is the right response from Martha, to despair over the loss of her brother and still trust God. Because it acknowledges both God's power and His will. It is God's will that humans live without death. We know that from how He created us. Despairing at death is good grief because we were never meant to die. But in this instance, God is using the death of Lazarus to glorify Himself and exalt Jesus. Therefore it is also important for Martha to trust God to determine whether healing is the right choice at this time.

But our faith is often fleeting. One minute we say, "I know you can do this, Lord." In the next minute, we think, "but you probably won't." We read about the parting of oceans and the resurrection of Jesus and we proclaim, "that's my savior!" Then we encounter suffering and ask, "Where, God, did you go?"

God performs miracles for His glory, not for ours. He inserts His supernatural presence and power to advance His will, not ours. Jesus tells His disciples earlier in John 11: 15 that He is glad that Lazarus died so that the disciples will see the miracle of Lazarus resurrecting.

This miracle advances God's kingdom and glory according to the will of the Father. It brings Jesus praise and strengthens the disciples' faith. It grieved Mary and Martha. Seeing their pain, even Jesus wept. Yet this was God's plan to glorify Himself.

When you find yourself suffering, don't look for a miracle to relieve your pain. God certainly has the power to perform one. That isn't the issue. He doesn't want your eyes or hope to be pinned to an act of healing or rescue. Jesus wants you for Himself. Do ask Him for healing! Do pray that He miraculously saves you! But, like Martha, believe that your hope is in Christ Himself — not the miracle. Whatever He asks of His Father, His Father will give Him. Therefore Jesus is our hope. The Son, through the Father, gives us every good and perfect gift. Trust in that. Have faith in Him. 🌿

GLOBAL TASK FORCE

By Pastor Paul Hansen

Can you help us reach forward?

*"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus."
Philippians 3:13b-14*

Are you willing to help us reach forward at Grace Community Church as we seek to branch out to God's glory?

In recent months at Grace Community, we have focused on returning to the foundation of our mission by branching out. Our series this past fall has reflected our desire to do that well.

Over this past year, we clarified what we mean by this action in sharing the gospel. We have sought to emphasize where and how we endeavor to do that: we cross the street (and reach people who are like us), we cross cultures (both locally and abroad reaching people who are not like us), and we cross boundaries (by reaching people who are not yet reached).

To move this vision from aspirational to actual, we need to foster a culture that celebrates and embraces these efforts. During our most recent corporate gatherings,

we encouraged all of us to begin with prayer. Therefore one of the values we are seeking to foster is a church-wide prayer saturation. Are you willing to help us with that? If so, I would love to hear from you. Please feel free to reach out to me at paul@graceb3.org. Thanks for considering!

Throughout this fall, in addition to improving our prayer in outreach and other fundamental values, we will seek to identify a sundry of roles, including future mission leaders and workers, advisors, and champions in the calling that God has entrusted to us in our mission work at Grace. Please be in prayer that God would be leading us in what key members of the body need to be involved. We will be starting a brand new approach to our mission-related activities. These include a lead Global Task Force, supporting teams in all our crucial mission areas, and YOU! Please be on the lookout for ways you can be involved. As we begin this restructure throughout the fall, we look forward to rolling out many of these ways in 2022. We hope this better positions us as a church for greater kingdom effectiveness!

While the implementation is new, much of the work for this effort began with several elders at Grace back in 2019 asking what missions could look like in the future. After an extensive time consulting with a missions organization called 1615, and pausing amid the pandemic, we look forward to sharing the fruition of some of those efforts over this next year. You can hear more about 1615 as an organization by going here: <https://cutt.ly/graceb3missions>. Thanks, church, for your heart for branching out with the gospel, and may God bless our efforts!

Until the Whole World Hears,
Pastor Paul and Amy 🌿



National Collection Week
NOV. 15-22, 2021



**SEND SHOEBOX GIFTS AND THE GOSPEL
TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH**

Pick up your shoebox in the foyer starting 10/31.
For more information, visit graceb3.org/events

WHY DID GOD SAVE YOU?

By Brooks Simpson

That was the question my pastor asked me over pancakes at Perkins. I blurted out, "So I could go to heaven." My pastor replied, "Yes, that is the end result but to what end? What is His purpose in saving you with your whole life ahead of you? What is His purpose for your life now that Jesus saved you?" I was a baby Christian with my whole life ahead of me. I was getting married soon, had one more year of college, and was planning my future career as a science teacher and wrestling coach. Jesus had saved me from my sins, but beyond forgiveness I had not given much thought to the purpose for which God saved me. Have you? Why are you here? Who did God save you to become? What did God save you to do? What is your purpose?

Throughout the Searching for Answers: Encountering Jesus series we have looked at some of life's most important questions about truth, justice, satisfaction, evil, suffering, and even death. Heavy stuff but each one of those topics can be held at a distance. It's possible to deal with them in the abstract, the way a philosophy class might approach

questions around the meaning of life. November's questions focus on you and me. Questions that cannot be answered in the abstract. Where is your hope placed? Where do you belong? What is your purpose? Each of those questions are personal.

The world will tell you that you alone can determine questions of hope, belonging, and purpose. Search your heart. You do you. Be true to yourself. But Jesus has a different approach. Jesus designed you and He knows your sweet spot. He crafted you in your mother's womb for a purpose – His glory and your joy. We discover that purpose when we encounter Jesus.

Join us in November as Jesus helps us discover the answers to four questions designed to bring us joy. 🌿

October 31 | Where Do I Find Hope? *John 20:1-18*

November 7 | Where Do I Belong? *Matthew 12 and Luke 8*

November 14 | What Is My Purpose? *Matthew 28:16-20*

November 21 | What is My Next Step? *Matthew 28:16-20*

Bless The Schools

Get more info & sign-up at graceb3.org/school

Opportunities:

1. Bless your Teacher
2. Bless a School Near You
3. Contribute to the focused giving fund

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28–30

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