



AN INVITATION TO  
ENTER INTO GOD'S  
REST AS YOU DISCIPLE p.8

HOW TO ENGAGE WITH GOD p.14

MISSIONS EMPHASIS WEEK p.4

# UPCOMING EVENTS

*Learn more and/or sign up for events at [graceb3.org/events](http://graceb3.org/events)*

**FALL SERIES  
COMPANION  
BIBLE STUDY** Gear up! Our church-wide 16-week study takes you verse-by-verse through the fall's sermon series on 1 Peter. Grab a notebook, roll up your sleeves, and let's get into the word.  
*Study begins August 22.*

**SOUL CARE  
WEEKENDS** Get trained on how to use Scripture to minister to the hurting... and your own heart as well.  
*Sessions will be held on September 10, October 8, and November 12.*

**MOPS**  
(MOTHERS OF  
PRESCHOOLERS) MOPS provides a Christ-centered, caring environment where friendships, creativity, and personal relationships with other moms and Jesus Christ can develop. Meetings are every 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 9:15am-11:15am, beginning on September 13 and continuing through April. Registration required.

**THRIVE CLASSES** Twice a year, we offer classes that equip you to become a person of God's word, caring for one another, and living missionally. Browse class details on page 7.  
*Fall session begins September 18.*

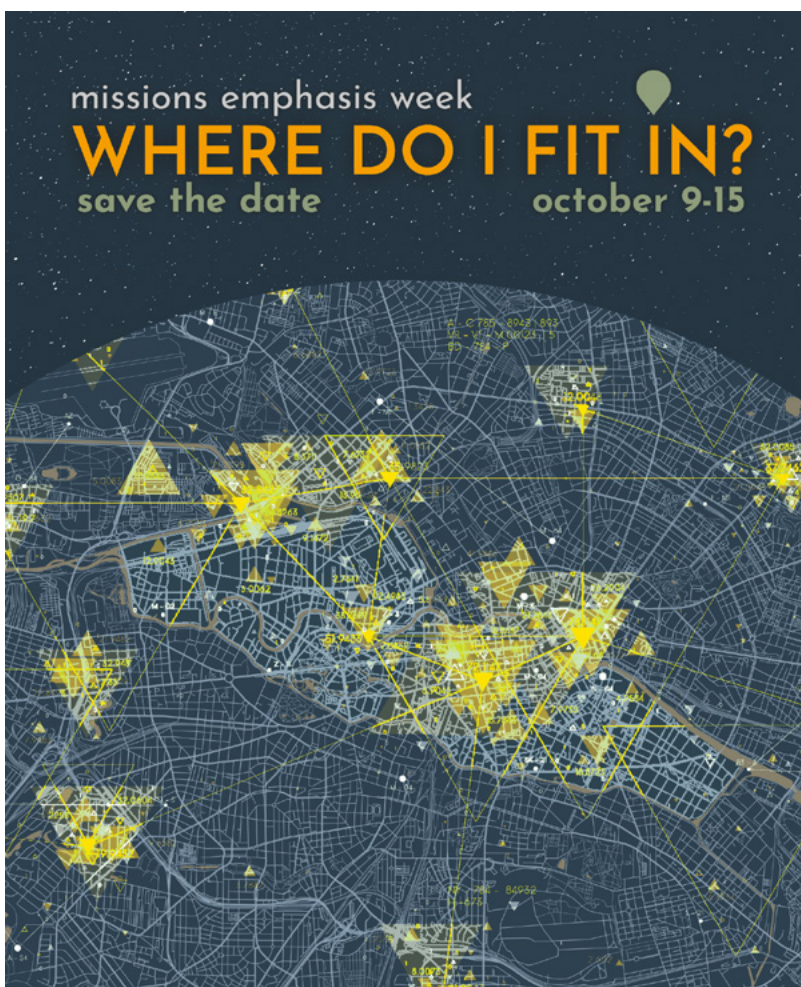
# COMING IN OCTOBER



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By Pastor Paul Hansen

**T**he adage is there are only two things in life that are certain – death and taxes. While both are unpleasant to consider, one thing is for sure: certainty causes us to take action. Yes, some may ignore taxes until April 14, but even the most stubborn procrastinator does *something*. What's even more certain and finite than taxes, however, according to Revelation 1:7, is that Jesus is coming back:

*"Look! He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, including those who pierced Him. And all the families of the earth will mourn over Him."*

### WHAT ACTION SHOULD THIS CAUSE US TO TAKE?

Specifically, what should this cause Grace Community Church to do in light of Christ's imminent return and our second annual Missions Emphasis Week beginning Oct 9? How does it affect this game of life?

The broader church of Jesus Christ knows how to play defense. There are other fundamentals of the game where we could use some work. Many believers are constantly licking wounds, and while Jesus is indeed the Great Physician, we have been given so much more in life to share and not just recover. The problem is we are often unsure of what to do or where we fit in.

This year's theme for our Missions Emphasis Week is intended to manage that difficulty. "Missions: Where Do I Fit In?" is our theme for 2022. Throughout the week, we want to help address this fundamental concern.

**Beginning Sunday, Oct 9, we will hear from our South African Field Staff, have our children help raise the global awareness of our mission, and host a large missions fair to help educate and mobilize the church.** Throughout the week, there will be an opportunity to dig deeper and know how this offense strategy applies to the entire family. **On October 15, we will conclude with a challenge for the remainder of 2022 for each of us.** Don't procrastinate – take action: Mark your calendar and plan to participate in this vital week at Grace Community Church! 🌿





recap

# ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

*By Business Director Caleb Stamp*

On Sunday, June 26, at our downtown congregation and Monday, June 27, at our North Liberty Congregation, Grace held its annual business meeting. Those present at the meeting heard about the church budget, some staffing changes, and an update on our building and property use plans. A summary of that discussion is presented below.

**Budget** The general fund giving for 2021-2022 was lower than anticipated.

Had we not adjusted our spending, this would have meant a revenue shortfall at the end of the year. As it was, we spent significantly less than we planned to initially, and wound up with a small surplus for last year. Praise be to God for his provision amidst those circumstances!

The budget for 2022-2023 includes changes made as a response to last year's financial situation. Part of the reason we believe general fund giving was down last

year is the fact that we don't talk about financial stewardship very often. By generating greater awareness of our needs, we anticipate some rise in revenue. We also cut spending plans to be more in line with actual needs. Last year's budget did not include outrageous spending projections, but our actual spending from this last year indicated that we are able to be effective with less than we thought we needed. This year's spending projection is, therefore, a better representation of what we need to spend to serve the church well.



Generally speaking, the church is financially stable. It would be good if a greater percentage of regular attenders participated through giving. However, God has blessed us in that we own our building, we own property on which we might build in the future, and we have sufficient annual funds to serve our community.

**Staff Updates** Several staff changes have been made over the past year. Pastor Steve Scheperle and his family answered a call to new ministry opportunities in Missouri. That led to **adjustments in staff reporting and role changes** as no one was hired to directly replace Steve. Notably, Jacob Varvel, Communications & Connections Director, joined our Senior Leadership Team.

Our part-time Women's Ministry Director position has been vacant since the end of 2021. The 2022-23 budget **plans for the hire of a full-time Women's Ministry Coordinator**. This new position will not require as much high-level leadership, but it will provide more time to get the work done. The Women's Ministry Coordinator will report to Cindy Sulwer. Cindy's job title

and description are under review as a result.

### **Building and Property Plans**

Most of you know that Grace purchased property last summer. The lot in question is about 14.5 acres of land, and is located on the west side (south end) of Kansas Ave, in North Liberty. The Elder Board and Senior Leadership Team have decided **not to develop that property at the present time**. We have determined that we do not need to build a new building immediately in order to effectively minister to our congregation and the community. In the meantime, we will continue to hold that property and collect rent from the local farmer that uses it.

Simultaneously, there is a need to make sure our current facility remains in good condition for our ongoing work. For that reason, you will begin to see some maintenance and improvement projects. The largest project we have planned for this coming fiscal year is an upgrade to our East Wing heating, ventilation, and cooling (HVAC) systems.

Questions? Feel free to reach out at [calebs@graceb3.org](mailto:calebs@graceb3.org). 🌿

*By Pastor Brooks Simpson*

# RESTFUL DISCIPLESHIP



*'And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'*  
*Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)*



**D**o you consider yourself a disciple of Jesus? If so, what evidence would you offer in support of that claim? Being and making disciples is our calling if we are Christians. How well are we doing? I mean, are we *really* disciples, and if we are, are we actually making other disciples?

Go back and read the verses and process the questions carefully.

How do the questions make you feel? As you ponder discipleship, do you feel a lightness in your soul? Do you feel excited to take your next step? Are you overcome with thankfulness in anticipation of what you expect God to do in and through you? You might feel that way. Praise God if you do, but you probably don't.

Early during my sabbatical, I felt heavy, insecure, and lacking when I pondered these questions. I had a "vision" of what a successful disciple looked like, and I clearly wasn't successful. I love Jesus and know he loves me. I know the truth and I teach others the gospel, but **my vision of what I believed a successful disciple was and did made me feel more remorse and regret than anything else.**

On August 21 and 28, we will have two sermons focused on discipleship. Does that excite you or does it exhaust you? Are you thinking, *"Perfect time to get a few more weeks of vacation before summer is over."*?

On one hand, we love Jesus and we embrace his call to be and make disciples. Yet, the thought of attempting to obey everything he commanded exhausts us. When you consider the command to be and make disciples and to obey everything Jesus commands, do you sense a feeling of guilt and shame start to creep in? Do you tend to immediately think about everything you know you will be told you should do but are not?

- *I don't read my Bible enough.*
- *I don't pray enough.*
- *I don't share enough.*
- *I don't serve enough.*
- *I don't give enough.*
- *I don't care enough.*
- *I don't love enough.*

If you think those things, you are not alone. Those thoughts find their way into our mental space when we begin to consider what it means to obey all that Jesus commanded. But I am pretty sure **Jesus' goal in giving the Great Commission was not to exhaust his followers.** The reason we can't see discipleship as an invitation to rest and have joy is because we take what Jesus said and we give it our own meaning based upon our twisted view of God and our failure to appropriate the gospel.

The first week of my sabbatical, Stacy and I visited my mother-in-law's church in Missouri. I hated every second of it. It was awful. No, it's not that her church did anything wrong, it's that I compared myself and our church to that church and found myself lacking in every way. Here is what I wrote and prayed in my journal entry:

*January 23, 2022*

*Worship service was strange this morning. My mind went into evaluation mode. Comparing how Ridgecrest did worship, guest services, and preaching with how we do those things. I looked at a couple books they promote and make available to their church. Immediately thought about everything I haven't written. I began to think about all Grace hasn't done, and, well, what I/we lack. It wasn't healthy. Lord, I am sorry. Father, I came here to rest.*

Week one into my sabbatical and I was wearing myself out mentally by comparing myself and my ministry to a church and a pastor who appeared to be more successful at being and making disciples. Thinking about discipleship made me tired even when I was supposed to be resting.

When we read or hear Matthew 28:18-20, we often process it in ways that Jesus does not intend. We translate it internally and it sounds more like this:

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and try to become someone you are never actually going to become and make others disciples who, like you, will never become the people I want them to become. Tell them to obey everything I command, and when they fail, just tell them again, only louder, and tell them to just try harder next time. Behold, I have told you what to do, now go do it. And for the love of me, at least try to stop sucking all the time."*

*Matthew 28:18-20 (BIDV, Brooks' Internal Dialog Version)*

While on sabbatical, God showed me I had ears to hear, but I wasn't hearing him correctly. God's Spirit used time, solitude, the word, and prayer to show me that **being a successful disciple is NOT identifying all the areas I suck at and then resolving to be better**. An invitation to be and make disciples is **an invitation to enter into God's rest**. The Great Commission is not an invitation to frustration, exhaustion, and impossible expectations. It's an invitation to find rest and an opportunity to help other exhausted people to do the same.

*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 (ESV)*

On Sundays August 21 and 28, we want to reset our vision for discipleship. Before you get your calendars out to book a trip to the lake so you can avoid the guilt trip, notice Jesus' paradoxical words in Matthew 11:28-30:

**v. 29 Take my yoke upon you...** A yoke implies a burden. Something to carry. Something to pull. Work to be done. I think this is the part we instinctively understand about discipleship, and we get tired just thinking about it.

*v. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Wait.*

What?! Jesus says that taking his yoke is the only way we actually find rest.

Being a disciple who makes disciples means there is a yoke to take on. **Discipleship means obedience, but that obedience is not heavy.** Instead, it becomes the means by which we discover rest. That is counterintuitive and not at all well understood. Throughout my sabbatical studies, I read a great working definition of a disciple from Dallas Willard:

**A disciple is an apprentice of Jesus who learns to live their lives in such a way that obedience to Jesus characterizes all they do.**

We (myself included) have confused telling people to obey what Jesus commanded with teaching them how to become the kind of people who do by nature what Jesus commanded. We often see discipleship as getting people to do what they don't naturally want to do.

**Jesus sees discipleship as teaching people to take his yoke so that, as a matter of course, they begin to desire his will and naturally carry it out.**

Oh, make no mistake, there is work to do. Grace is not opposed to effort. It's opposed to earning. We want to begin to help the church see discipleship as the process by which we become the kind of people that obey God. We will learn to stop telling each other to obey and start training together to become the kind of people who obey. As a disciple we will devote ourselves to these practices: devotion to the word, prayer, caring community, serving others, missional living, and corporate worship.

These are things disciples do. Do you feel yourself getting tired yet? Stop. Those are not benchmarks to check off to show our progression as disciples. They are the means by which we learn to experience the presence and power of the triune God.

## SIX DEVOTIONS OF A DISCIPLE:



*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*  
*Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV), emphasis mine*

What does it mean to baptize someone into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? It means more than getting people wet as we repeat the name of Jesus. It means immersing people into the reality of the Trinity. It means **guiding people into a life that experiences the presence and power of a triune God moment by moment.** This is the key to joy. It's the key to rest. It's the key to becoming the kind of people who, as a matter of course, do God's will. There is no obeying all Jesus' commands until we are immersed into the triune God. All those things we used to think of as acts that we did or failed to do that made God happy or irritated with us have been given to us as a means by which we learn to be yoked to the triune God: his name – Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

Join us on August 21 and 28 as we seek the Spirit's help in entering the rest Jesus secured for us. 🌿



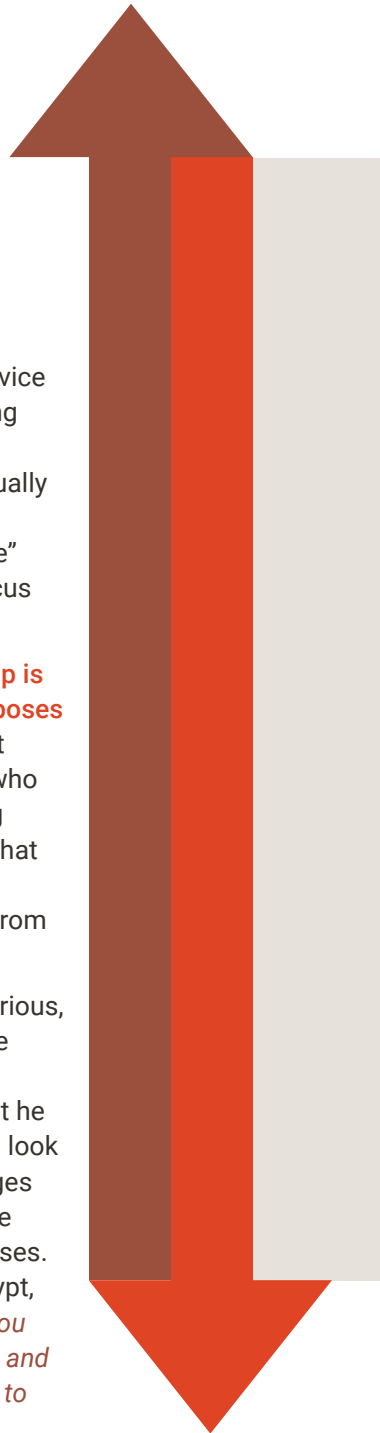
# Engaging with God

By Worship Director Zack Stanton

**C**an you imagine being at a worship service and the worship leader does something so awful that God strikes him dead? “Whoa, weird intro, Zack!” But this actually happened in the Bible. Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu — ordained priests! — offered “strange fire” before the Lord and he consumed them. (Leviticus 10:1-3)

Leviticus highlights an important lesson: **worship is engagement with God on the terms that he proposes and in a way that he alone makes possible**. Last month we described worship as a response to who God is and what he has done — our souls having been motivated by awe, gratitude, and delight. That definition may feel a little more intuitive, but the above definition will help us approach worship from an important angle.

The God we worship is holy, morally perfect, glorious, and powerful. When we approach him, it can’t be flippant. Joyful, yes! But not without care. Our engagement with God must be on the terms that he proposes. We don’t decide what worship should look or feel like. Several times in the Bible God engages people in a covenantal relationship. Consider the covenant that God made with Israel through Moses. God called Moses to deliver his people from Egypt, and after Moses brought them out, God says, *“You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to*



*myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."* Israel responded and said, *"All that the LORD has spoken we will do."* (Exodus 19)

This holy God came to a sinful group of enslaved people, rescued them, and initiated a relationship with them. But because he is holy and they were sinful, there were terms. The rest of the book of Exodus and the book of Leviticus spells out these terms in detail, including God's law, instructions for the tabernacle, feasts and festivals, the priesthood, and the sacrificial system. God gives commands about relationships, business, furniture, curtains, animal blood, tassels... it gets really specific!

We can't get into all the meaning wrapped up in these things (nor am I saying that Christians have to follow the Old Testament rituals). But we *can* note that when God's people worshiped him, it was on his terms. If those terms weren't followed, there were consequences. Look at Nadab and Abihu. Or King Saul, when he offered an unauthorized sacrifice and God took the kingdom from him. (1 Samuel 15) We don't approach God based on what we think is a good idea, or will make us happy, or will seem cool to unbelievers. Our worship must be according to his plan. While worship is a wonderful gift that involves us, it's not about us!

This may all seem a little heavy. Why did God prescribe all these things? Why was Old Testament worship so complicated? But consider this angle: the terms of God's covenant are gifts to his people *so that they can engage with a holy God in a way that he alone makes possible!* God made a way! We couldn't have done that. While Old Testament practices seem strange to us, they point powerfully to God's most personal and enthralling engagement with us: the Lord Jesus Christ. Next time we'll look at how worship must be



# THRIVE

CLASSES BEGIN SEPTEMBER 18  
STAY TUNED

# Hearing God

## AND HIS VISION FOR HIS CHURCH

### SABBATICAL LESSON *part 4*

*By Pastor Brooks Simpson*

**V**ision. Read any book on leadership, secular or sacred, and the authors will tell you that you have got to have vision. Without vision, an organization will wander aimlessly. Without it, each individual in a church, a business, a sports team, or a family will be left to themselves to determine which way they ought to go and what they ought to do. But with a compelling vision, the organization reaches its full potential. Here are some visions from the corporate world:

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Amazon    | <i>To be the world's most customer-centric company.</i>   |
| Walmart   | <i>To become the worldwide leader of all retailing.</i>   |
| Costco    | <i>A place where efficient buying and operating practices give members access to unmatched savings.</i> |
| Disney    | <i>To make people happy.</i>  |
| Netflix   | <i>Helping content creators around the world to find a global audience.</i>                             |
| Google    | <i>To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.</i>               |
| Wikipedia | <i>A world in which every single person is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge.</i>     |
| Starbucks | <i>To establish Starbucks as the most recognized and respected brand in the world.</i>                  |

So what is the vision at Grace?

*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

*John 15:13–15 (ESV)*

While on sabbatical, the Father made it clear to me that way too much of my identity was wrapped up in what I thought I could do for him as his servant. The Spirit reminded me through John 15 that Jesus doesn't need me as a pastor, but he does desire me as a friend. That lesson\* has a profound impact on how I see myself and my relationship to God.

*\*read the story, Sabbatical Lesson #3, in full in the July Insider.*

Jesus had big plans for his disciples whom he now calls friends and he wants the big plans – the vision – to be made known.

Ah vision. I love that word. And I hate it too.

One of my goals during sabbatical was to hear from God: Where does Grace need to go? What do we need to focus on? If you are a regular at Grace and think the answer is that we need to focus on making disciples who make disciples, you are 100% correct. But what does that even mean? What is a disciple? If a disciple is merely a church attendee, then our focus will be on getting people in the seats on Sunday. If a disciple is merely someone who has received forgiveness, then our focus will be on getting the gospel in front of people so they can become forgiven. Of course disciples are forgiven, and they should attend church services with other disciples, but *what* do they do?

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*



*Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)*

A disciple is someone who is learning to obey all of Jesus' commands. Throughout my sabbatical studies, I read a great working definition of a disciple from Dallas Willard.

Defining a disciple – an apprentice of Jesus who learns to live their lives in such a way that obedience to Jesus characterizes all they do.

If a disciple is someone who observes everything Jesus commanded, how do we become those people and then teach others to do them the same? One thing is certain, telling them what Jesus taught is not sufficient. We have greater access to content and information than any generation before us, yet study after study shows that professing Christians are not much different than their unbelieving neighbors. Professing Christians differ in what they profess to believe but little in their character. Clearly something is missing.

Dallas Willard posed this question: what would you think of a church who posted the following on their marquee, "We equip people to do everything that Jesus taught."?

Does it sound presumptuous, or maybe even arrogant? I mean, who expects a Christian to obey everything Jesus commands? And what kind of church would actually come out and say that they equip people to do everything Jesus commanded? Maybe that's the problem. Jesus seems to think that his disciples should be the very people who do what he says while his followers tend to think discipleship is merely getting people to believe what Jesus said.

I get it. There are perilous dangers in screwing this up. Churches that focus on obedience have veered into legalism void of grace. And churches that focus on grace have veered into licentiousness where obedience is not even a goal. Let's face it. Even when churches remain balanced and preach grace and obedience, it seems those who actually attempt

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obedience become frustrated they just can't seem to do what Jesus commands.

Do you read that and think no one would expect to obey all Jesus commanded? You read that and think, who could obey ALL Jesus commanded? It's not possible.

He assumes his disciples know what they are and tells them to make others disciples.

If a disciple is merely a sinner who has been justified by faith in Jesus, then our focus as a church will be to get the gospel in front of other sinners so they too can become justified by faith in Christ.

A year prior to my sabbatical, God began to show me I lacked love. I have perhaps taught well, but I cannot say that I have loved well these past 25 years. Just prior to my sabbatical, I shared with a friend of 20 years that God was showing me I needed to learn how to love well. We talked for over an hour and I ended the conversation with a question, "How can I encourage you?" My friend paused and replied, "That's the first time in 20 years you have ever asked me that question." His observation validated my point. Today is a new day; it is time to forget what is behind and press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)

It is not enough to know that I and perhaps the rest of the church lacks love. The question is how does a person like me or a church like ours become the kind of people who simply love well. When Jesus instructed his disciples to make disciples and teach them to observe all that he commanded, he was telling them to instruct people how to become the kind of people that can actually love the way he loved.

This is my task as a friend of Jesus – to become the kind of person who loves well and helps others do the same. This is the work I believe the Lord has called me to give my life to. 🌿

missions emphasis week oct 9-15

# WHERE DO I FIT IN?

**Sunday, Oct 9 | 9am & 10:45am; 5pm**

**North Liberty:** Our morning worship services will highlight a **missionary speaker** and a **flag presentation** to represent the many nations who need the gospel. There will be a display of several **mission organizations** in the gym.

**Downtown:** Our evening worship service will highlight a **missionary speaker** and include the opportunity to interact with an individual who has served on a mission field.

**Wednesday, Oct 12 | 6:30 - 8pm**

**North Liberty:** Everyone is welcome to come out for Grace Student Ministry's Refill gathering - not only students but their parents and anyone in the church. Hear how **every individual can have a place in God's "Great Commission"** of sharing the gospel to the world.

**Saturday, Oct 15 | 6pm**

**North Liberty:** Come out for an evening of focusing on the challenges presented during the week, discussing and discovering "Missions - Where Do I Fit In?"



SERMON NOTES

DATE:

MAIN IDEA:

NOTES:



MARRIAGE  
DEMOCRACY  
RELATIONSHIP  
CAREER  
SCHOOL  
RETIREMENT  
PLEASURE  
COMFORT  
FAMILY

**WHERE<sup>IS</sup> YOUR  
HOPE**

POWER  
SOCIAL  
JUSTICE  
RELIGION  
CONSERVATISM  
LIBERALISM  
STATUS SOCIAL  
ACCEPTANCE  
POWER SOCIAL  
JUSTICE



COMPANION BIBLE STUDY ON 1 PETER  
*BEGINS AUGUST 22*