

WHAT IT MEANS  
TO BE A LIVING  
STONE

SERMON SERIES PREVIEW  
WINTER THRIVE CLASSES  
CHRISTMAS WORSHIP



Merry Christmas

HAPPY NEW YEAR

# UPCOMING EVENTS

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

## **FALL SERIES COMPANION BIBLE STUDY**

It's not too late! Pick up a study guide, grab a notebook, roll up your sleeves, and let's get into the word. Our church-wide 16-week study takes you verse-by-verse through the fall sermon series on 1 Peter.  
*Series began September 4 and will continue until January 8.*

## **GUATEMALA MISSIONS TRIP**

This February, bring the gospel, wheelchairs, clothes, and toys to Guatemalan people all the while building houses as a team! Apply by December 8. More on page 13.

## **PARENT ROUND TABLE SERIES December 11 10:15AM**

Parents, Next Gen is hosting new quarterly meetings to help you and encourage you as you disciple your children. No registration needed.

## **CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES December 24 11AM • 1PM • 3PM**

Celebrate the coming of Jesus! Everyone is welcome! Singing, a message, and fellowship afterwards in the gym. The 11AM and 1PM services will have nursery and 2-year-old classes. The 3PM service will be family-sit-together (no nursery).

## CONNECT WITH US

**DOWNLOAD** the "Graceb3" app and enable push notifications.

**GET THE NEXT INSIDER** sent to your inbox at [graceb3.org/insider](https://graceb3.org/insider)

support & encouragement  
in discipling your kids

# PARENTS ROUND TABLE\*

DEC 11

SERIES

10:15 AM



Parents, you've heard us say that "*Grace partners with you to disciple your kids.*" What does it mean for you to disciple your kids? What might it look like?

Come get encouraged and equipped to make disciples of the next generation in your own household! We are in this together!

Questions? Contact Cindy at [cindys@graceb3.org](mailto:cindys@graceb3.org)

*\*no registration required*



*"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."*  
*Ephesians 4:11-13*

I often return to this particular passage of Scripture because it spells out not only our role as a pastoral team but also what we as the body of Christ get to practice. We are called to teach and equip our church to walk out the Great Commission of making disciples, which leads to unity in the gospel and spiritual maturity. It is a joy to watch people be equipped to be ambassadors of Christ using their gifts and talents to love those around them well. It is also a great joy to see people grow in their faith and identity in Christ. One of the ways we teach and train is through our Thrive classes each fall and winter.

A Thrive class is simply an equipping class designed to help you 1) grow in your knowledge and application of the word of God, and 2) connect relationally with others as you walk

through the class together. Thrive classes are like a tool shed – in each class you can pick up a skill or tool to grow in your walk with Christ and as a disciplemaker. Thrive classes are designed to be short, focused learning opportunities rather than a never-ending class. Classes are typically 10 weeks or shorter and occur twice a year in the fall and winter.

I am excited about the Thrive classes we are offering this winter. Classes start on Sunday, January 22 and finish on Sunday, March 26. The main focus will be on growing to be people of God's word, being intentional about how we care for one another, and living missionally. I encourage everyone to sign up for a Thrive class this semester, as there is something for everyone no matter your age, experience, or spiritual journey. I look forward to seeing how the Lord grows us this winter as a church and as individuals. 🌱

### **WINTER THRIVE CLASSES (January 22 – March 26)**

#### **8:30AM CLASSES:**

##### ***The Anatomy of the Bible Teacher: Andrew Meredith***

This is our Bible 101 class, designed to teach you how the Bible came together and how to use it in their everyday life.

##### ***Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands Teacher: Dave Kirk***

You will learn how to care for others using the Bible by learning principles for applying and practicing the CARE model in your daily relationships. *This class is the follow-up to the Soul Care class; you must have taken the Soul Care class to take this one.*

**The Evidence and Reason for God**

*Teachers: Bart Floyd and Andy Schaekenbach*

This class explores the reality of God by looking at evidence and reason for his existence. We will cover common objections that people have to the truth of the existence of God and how to stand firm on a biblical foundation of truth. This class is excellent for those seeking answers or those interested in apologetics.

**10:15AM CLASSES:****The Redemption Story of God: From Genesis to**

**Revelation** *Teachers: Jacob Varvel and Peter Chidister*

This is our Bible 201 class. You will learn God's redemption story from Genesis to Revelation in order to understand the Bible better and to see Jesus in each book of the Bible.

**Marks of a Disciple (Part 2)**

*Teachers: Student Ministry Team*

*This class is for junior and senior high students.* In this class we will explore what it looks like to be disciples of Jesus and what we are called to be and do in order to grow in our faith and maturity.

**11:30AM CLASS:****Tying the Knot: Premarital Counseling Class**

*Teacher: Dave Kirk*

This is for people who are engaged, thinking about getting married, or are already married but have never had marriage counseling.



# Real Relationships Conference

**Loving Others with Christ's Love**  
Register now at [graceb3.org/events](http://graceb3.org/events)

Come learn how to be intentional in loving those around you with Christ's love as we seek to B.L.E.S.S. those we are in relationship with.

We live in a broken world and we often see the brokenness in relationships. This conference will address why God made us for relationship, how God designed those relationships, and how he can redeem those relationships that are broken.

**FEB 3-4**

Fri 6:30 - 8:15pm

Sat 9am - 4:30pm

**NORTH LIBERTY  
CAMPUS**

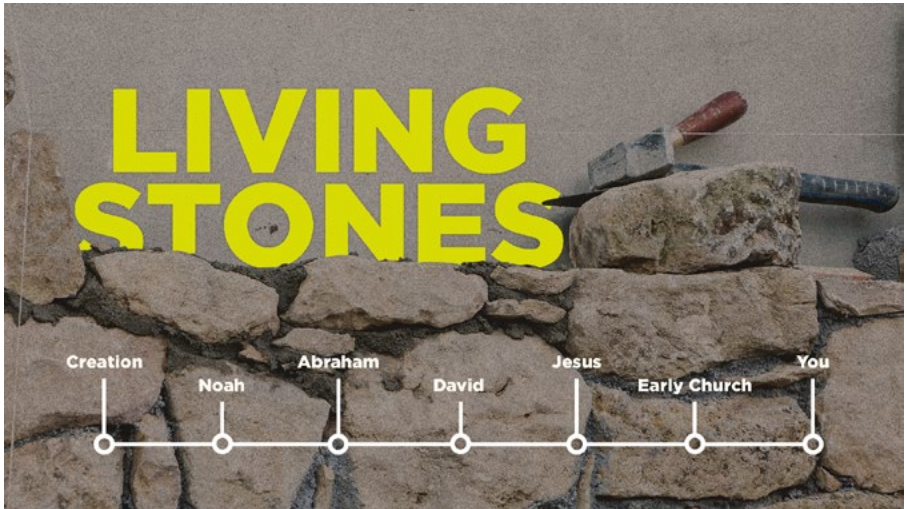
*childcare  
available for  
2 & under*

**COST:**

Individuals 15

Couples 25





*By Lead Pastor Brooks Simpson*

*"So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation – if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like **living stones are being built up as a spiritual house**, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:1–5 (emphasis mine)*

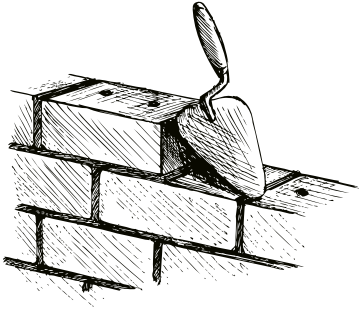
If you are like most Christians, you view your faith journey primarily as *your* journey. There was a time you heard the gospel, and then over a process that could have lasted hours or decades, you eventually placed your faith in Jesus. That moment when you trusted Jesus for your salvation, you were born again into a living hope.



*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter 1:3*

In the beginning, if you are like most baby Christians, you tended to see your new relationship with Christ as primarily your response to what Jesus did for you in the past. Jesus atoned for sin, and for that you are grateful. Jesus imputed to you his righteousness, and for that you are grateful. Jesus gifted you the Holy Spirit, and for that you are grateful. Jesus gave you his word, and for that you are grateful. But now it seems, at least from our perspective, that the rest seems to be up to us. Now that he has given you all these things: a pardon, righteous standing, the Holy Spirit, and his word, now the impetus is on you. It seems like the work of God was done in the past and now that he has given us all we need, it seems up to us to move forward in our faith.

If that is your perspective, then you need to understand things are not as they seem. The God who did all to secure your salvation is the same God who works in your sanctification. As Peter stated in 1 Peter 2:5, you yourselves are like living stones being built up as a spiritual house. The metaphor in and of itself implies someone else is doing the work. Take stones for example. They don't stack themselves. **If a house is to be built out of stones, living or otherwise, these stones must be stacked and joined together by a master builder.** God caused us to be born again (1 Peter 1:5) and he is building us up as a spiritual house. He was working before you became a Christian to move you to a knowledge of salvation. He was moving in you when you came to faith. He is moving in you now as you struggle to grow in your faith. Paul puts it this way:



*"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."*  
*Philippians 1:6*

God started the work. God will finish the work. And God never leaves his work half done. It is one thing

to acknowledge the truth that God is as much at work presently as he was when Jesus died and rose again, but it is quite another to perceive his working in the here and now. God's hand of providence is unseen. He does not announce his intention for every trial, tribulation, blessing, or mundane interaction we have as we live out our faith in real time. Because his hand is unseen, we may slip into the false belief that our growth in Christ is simply a matter of having a Bible and doing what it says. As if we are the builders who put together this spiritual house. Nothing could be further from the truth. God saves, God sanctifies, and ultimately it will be God who glorifies us. Our part is to walk by faith. Forgive the mixing of metaphors but Peter did call us "living" stones. Dead stones pretty much sit there. Dead stones have no volitional choice. They don't decide one day to get up, pour a cup of coffee, and read the Bible. Dead stones don't pray. Dead stones don't love. Dead stones are, well, dead. They have no potential for life. We are *living* stones. God shapes and forms us together, but as living stones, we respond in faith or unbelief to him.

Beginning January 2023, we will start **a new series called Living Stones**. Peter introduced the term in 1 Peter 2:5, but

A stylized silhouette of a family consisting of two adults and two children, with a small dog on the left. They are positioned behind a light green rectangular sign.

# family sit-together

**nov 27 • dec 24 • jan 1**

**nursery and two-year-old classes only**  
*no classes for the 3pm Christmas Eve service*

Children attending classes for Pre-K and older will join the congregation in the worship services. Classes and care will be offered for nursery and 2-year-olds.

**Questions?**

Contact Cindy at [cindys@graceb3.org](mailto:cindys@graceb3.org)

God laid the first stones of this spiritual house in Genesis. It is God's expressed purpose to create a people for himself. A people for his possession. A royal priesthood.

(1 Peter 2:4-10) **The goal of this sermon series is to familiarize our minds and hearts with the master builder.**

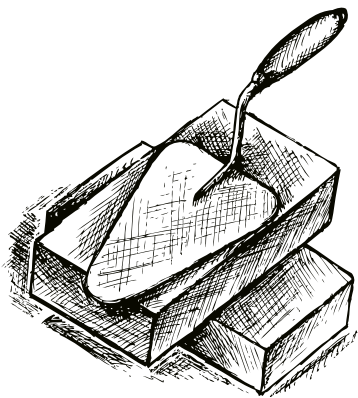
Sometimes when we read an epistle like 1 Peter we rightly tend to focus on the commands given to us: what to believe, what not to believe, what to do, what to stop doing. This is good and right, but sometimes we need to pull back and take a look at how God worked in and through other living stones.

We will begin with Adam and, week by week, watch as God initiates a relationship with his creation for his glory and their good. We will watch these living stones sometimes believe his promises and at other times reject his promises. We will see them at their best and at their worst. We will see examples of heroic faith and of shameful faithlessness. But our purpose in studying these living stones is not to copy their good behavior or avoid their bad behavior. **Our purpose in studying these living stones is to come to know the master builder more intimately than we do right now.** As we dig into Genesis and Exodus we will be stunned by the unrelenting love of a master builder who just won't leave these living stones to themselves.

This master builder that formed Adam and Eve, delivered Noah and his family, and called forth an old man and his barren wife to be the father of many nations is the same yesterday, as today, as he will be tomorrow. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the great I AM who became a baby in a manger who grew into the man Jesus who bore your sins. Each week we will see the master

builder take raw uncut ugly stones and fashion them into a beautiful spiritual household. These accounts were written for us that we might learn from them (1 Corinthians 10:6-13 and Hebrews 11).

I know it's hard to believe God could do anything beautiful in and through us, especially when it is our sin and faithlessness that seems most visible to us. It isn't that God doesn't see our ugliness and sin. He does. But he sees exactly how he plans to shape us, mold us, and even use that sin in the process. Does this sound too good to be true? Perhaps it is because you have tried to build yourself up and found the task impossible. It is possible, maybe even probable that you have perceived your faith journey as what you do for Jesus in response to what he has already done for you.



Join us this January through May as we watch God call and shape the first living stones to be laid in this spiritual house that you and I are being built into. We will begin with Adam and end with Joshua. The great men and women of faith we will encounter on the way are not the heroes of the story. God is the hero and he is the builder.

As a living stone, you are being built into God's spiritual household alongside other Christians. That building up occurs as we feed on the pure spiritual milk of the word of God, his promises to sinners redeemed into saints through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Each week you

will hear a new sermon which focuses on God's formation of a particular stone. **In addition to the weekly sermon, you will be provided with a daily study guide designed to help you develop the daily practice of reading and applying God's word as a means to experience the person and presence of Jesus in your life.** God will use the Spirit-inspired Scriptures to inform our hearts and minds regarding his nature, character, and promises. The Spirit will produce fruit in and through you (John 15) as you learn to abide in his word. **Pay particular attention to what each text tells you about the nature of God, man, and the promises God offers to those he seeks to redeem.**

**Schedule a time and location** that will work for you each day to spend time in God's word. It may be helpful to have a **spiral notebook** or journal you can use to take notes, jot down questions, or even write your own prayers to God in response to what he shows you in his word.

Each section is devoted to particular Old Testament saints. Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, etc. These saints are not the heroes of the story. God is the hero in these narratives and each story is to help us know and love God more. Sometimes we see these living stones acting in heroic faith. Sometimes they act out of selfishness, fear, and faithlessness. In every instance, we see the God who pursues them with unrelenting love. It is our prayer and hope that you will come to trust this unrelenting pursuer of souls and be built up as a living stone. 🌿





# Guatemala

## MISSIONS TRIP 2023

APPLICATION DEADLINE: DECEMBER 8

TWICE A YEAR GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH TAKES SHORT-TERM TRIPS TO GUATEMALA, WHERE WE WORK ALONGSIDE BETHEL MINISTRIES TO DISTRIBUTE WHEELCHAIRS AND WALKERS THEY'VE BEEN COLLECTING ALL YEAR LONG. WE ALSO POUR CONCRETE FLOOR AND BUILD METAL HOMES FOR FAMILIES. THESE HOMES TYPICALLY INCLUDE A FUEL-EFFICIENT WOOD STOVE, AND TRIPLE BUNK BEDS. IN ADDITION, WE DISTRIBUTE FOOD, CLOTHES, AND BLANKETS THROUGHOUT THE WEEK.

QUESTIONS? CONTACT RYAN MILLER AT [RYAN.MILLER7999@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RYAN.MILLER7999@GMAIL.COM) OR AT 319-330-6483



# THE WONDER & WORSHIP OF CHRISTMAS

*By Worship Director Zack Stanton*

*Editor's Note: This is part 6 of our series discussing the worship of God. If you haven't read the previous articles yet, I suggest you give them a look. They can be found online at [graceb3.org/insider](https://graceb3.org/insider).*

**T**here's a profound mystery within Christmas. God is born, becoming human and putting himself into the midst of our fallen condition so that he can save us. This revelation, prophesied in the Old Testament and recorded in the New, has been a source of wonder since Christ's birth. Consider some of the amazing expressions of worship at Christmas recorded in Scripture.

The first is Mary's Magnificat from Luke 1:46-55. After the angel appears to her and tells her that she will carry "the Son of the Most High," she goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth and they worship the Lord together, full of hope for his fulfilled promises. Then Mary offers this beautiful, rich song of praise for God's mercy and faithfulness to his people, and for the upside-down nature of his kingdom. Take a moment to read Mary's song of praise.

Luke Chapter 2 records the most glorious and well-known expression of worship at the first Christmas: the angels appearing to the shepherds. This event is among the most awe-inspiring moments recorded in Scripture and speaks to the grandeur of what Christmas is. This event — the incarnation — is so important that God sends an angel to declare the coming of the Messiah and then a multitude of angels praise God in response right there in front of those shepherds! *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will toward men!"* (Luke 2:14) Nowhere else in Scripture does a large group of angels appear to people and worship God!

Another expression of worship at Christmas is when the Magi come from the East. Matthew 2:10-11 says, *"When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh."*

Even today, the Christmas season is an awe-inspiring time. Granted, it is increasingly commercialized, and people worship many things other than Jesus as the idol of consumerism is put on full display. But even in the midst of that, our culture cannot escape the profound nature of God's gift to us, the implications of which continue to send ripples through our secular society. God's generosity, care for the poor, love for the marginalized, forgiveness toward those who have rebelled against him, and provision for healing broken relationships — all lead to a perpetual wonder at Christmas as we consider Jesus' supernatural humility and self-giving love.

It's no wonder the Christmas season can be so powerful! As we are reminded year after year that God became man, was born in the humblest of circumstances, and came to die for sinners, we build a long-term relationship with these truths, which become a part of who we are. And yes, there is a sense of nostalgia that is tied to our experiences at Christmas. Our traditions have the potential to shape us in positive and wonderful ways if they help us find our joy in Jesus rather than in the traditions themselves.

It will probably come as no surprise that I love Christmas music. This is a tradition I lean into! Through the centuries (even up to our current one) Christmas has inspired some incredible music. Some of it is staggering in scale, like Handel's Messiah, and some is deeply moving because of its simplicity, like many of the carols we sing.

This year for our Christmas Eve services, we will lean into the beauty of tradition and have a choir lead us in worship. We'll sing carols written centuries ago and some written during our lifetime. Our hope is that hearing the beauty of voices joined together in worship reminds us again of the beauty of God's plan to enter our suffering and save us; of the long-standing history of worship inspired by the incarnation; and of the beauty of a community of believers worshipping together. Few things encourage me as much as hearing voices joined in worship, and I look forward to worshipping with you, as a family of believers this Christmas Eve. 🌿

# recruiting volunteers *for* special needs ministry

become a buddy to a child who  
needs extra help in the

- classroom
- sensory room
- auditorium

interested? contact Cindy  
at [cindys@graceb3.org](mailto:cindys@graceb3.org)

