

# Fall Preview: Upcoming Series and Bible Study

## GUATEMALA SUMMER TRIP

## CORPORATE WORSHIP: OUR DAILY WITNESS

new foreign woman <sup>3</sup> Hebrew to the Babylon <sup>4</sup> Or repute <sup>5</sup> Hebrew novel <sup>6</sup> Or medicine

# UPCOMING EVENTS

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

## **PARK PARTY** July 14 7-9PM

7th-12th graders, come hang out with friends, old and new! We will play field games and enjoy snacks. No sign up needed. Bring a friend!

## **CLASSIC CAR SHOW** July 21 5:30-8:30PM

Hosted by Classic Car Cruisers and our Men's Ministry, come appreciate classic cars, music, food, and raffle. Free admission.

## **GUATEMALA MISSIONS TRIP** July 26-Aug 2

Pray for our team as they become Jesus's hands and feet in Guatemala. For specific prayer requests, go to [page 20](#).

## **ALL-CHURCH POOL PARTY** Aug 6 6-7:30PM

Come for family water fun at our free all-church pool party at the North Liberty Community Center! Invite your friends and neighbors!

*By Lead Pastor Brooks Simpson*

# How Would You Rate Your Church?



**H**ow do you evaluate your church? Is it great preaching, music programs, missions, small groups, or something else? Recently, I was curious about how many churches are in North Liberty. I wanted to compare the population of North Liberty with the number of churches available. A Google search lists all the churches along with their reviews. Ah, Google reviews. That is one way to determine if a church is great. Just ask the people. Grace Community Church has a Google rating of 4.8 out of 5 stars. Not bad. There are two churches that have 5 out of 5 stars. While Google reviews can make a church more findable, they are not an effective way to measure the health or effectiveness of a church. A Google review is typically a consumer's satisfaction rating - but satisfied with what?

Google has no boxes to rate the church on equipping its members to understand the word, pray, care for one another, share their faith, or excel in generosity and well-doing. The only criteria worth considering is if a church is doing what God designed and established his church to do: **Is the church making disciples who follow the calling themselves? Is that church contributing to the advancement of God's kingdom?**

Grace Middle - July

# PARK PARTY

GRACE STUDENT MINISTRY

7th- 12th graders are invited  
to come party in the park!

Come hang out with friends  
and meet some new ones.  
We'll play field games and  
enjoy some snacks.

No sign up is needed - just  
invite a friend and come!

**JULY 14 7-9PM**  
**PENN MEADOWS PARK**

Our nation has seen a dramatic decline in the number of churches. In 2019, 3,500 new churches opened their doors. That sounds encouraging, but that same year 4,000 churches closed their doors. This is not a new trend as churches have declined for decades. The lack of salt and light the body of Christ brings to culture is evident. In 1820, there was one church for every 820 people in the United States. By 1900, there was one church for every 430 people. Our nation began in 1776 with a paltry 17% of the population being religious adherents and that number grew to 53% in 1916. Disciples made disciples and planted new churches. As the nation settled in and the western expansion ended, so did the church plants. Established churches began to focus on keeping their base happy, not advancing the kingdom. Existing churches viewed new churches in their cities as competitors and not partners in the gospel.

What about right here where we live? Just read the news. In 2017, The American Bible Society and the Barna Group ranked 100 cities from most to least biblically minded. Cedar Rapids (which included corridor cities from Waterloo to Iowa City) rated among the five least biblically literate cities in the United States! 47.2% of corridor residents rate themselves as having no religious affiliation whatsoever, and only 13.8% identify as evangelical protestant. <sup>[1]</sup>

If a church is going to embrace its mission to make disciples

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1 <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/no-bibles-in-iowa-curious-the-case-of-cedar-rapids/>

who make disciples who advance the kingdom of God, there is work to do right here in the corridor. So, what needs to happen? Two things:

**First, we need more disciples who are actually trained and equipped to make disciples.** This emphasis on equipping may actually lower our Google rating. The success of a church cannot be measured by the number of people who are pleased with what they consume each week. **The only metric worth considering is whether or not the people in the pews are doing what Jesus commanded: loving God, loving one another, and making disciples.** This will require a complete life commitment to Christ and his mission. A call to discipleship is a break from the path of least resistance, and we will have to make choices. Our focus must be on training each of you to become the kind of person who, as a matter of your new nature, is able to and desires to love God and your neighbor. It means Grace Community Church must train our congregation how to read the Bible daily, pray without ceasing, live life together with like-minded disciples, live generously, share your faith with those God brings across your path, and everything else daily Spirit-led obedience looks like.

**Second, we need more churches that embrace the Great Commission.** Grace Community Church on Dubuque Street cannot grow physically because we are landlocked, but even if we could, it would hardly make a dent in reaching the unreached population in the Corridor. Currently, there are only 11 churches in North Liberty for the 20,875 people who live here. That is one church for every 1,897 people. Part of the reason 50% of the

population was churchied in 1916 is that there were just more churches for folks to attend — one church for every 450 people.<sup>[2]</sup> If disciples are equipped and begin to share the love of Jesus with others, then new disciples are made and the church grows. Church growth is good, and church multiplication is even better. We need more churches in the Corridor.

Ten years ago, we planted a church in Downtown Iowa City. Since then, we have helped start Jordan Creek in Solon and River City Church in Riverside. These church plants were not strategies to alleviate space problems for an overcrowded service in North Liberty. These church plants are part of the God-ordained strategy to reach the world for Jesus, starting right here in the Corridor. Missiologist Peter Wagner says, “*Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven.*”<sup>[3]</sup> Those three churches are a start, but we need more. The ratio of one church for every 1,897 people is not acceptable.

**Please make it a priority to join us on 8/13, 8/20, and 8/27 for three sermons highlighting Grace’s strategies to be faithful to the calling to make disciples, plant churches, and be part of reaching the Corridor with the gospel.** If you know you will be on vacation, make it a priority to download the sermons and listen when you can. Pray we become the kind of church that God will use to advance his kingdom. 🌿

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2 Redeemer Church Planting Manual page 28. Copyright 2002

3 C. Peter Wagner, *Strategic Growth* (Glendale: Regal, 1987), p. 168

COMING THIS FALL

a 3-part Bible study  
on the book of Mark







By Worship Director Zack Stanton

**L**ast month we discussed the central importance and command of coming together and worshipping Christ and how that forms us. This month's article will extend the discussion into what worship looks like in our daily lives and the natural outcomes of our day-to-day worship.

If we engage in body life with a deep understanding of what God is up to, we will be energized by the gospel in fellowship with God's people to live out lives of daily worship. **We gather to be nourished. We gather to nourish others.** Paul says multiple times that we should build one another up (1 Corinthians 14:5, 12, and 26; Ephesians 4:12). When we sing truth together, we are "teaching and admonishing one another" (Colossians 3:16). When we read Scripture together, we are speaking truth to and with each other. When we take communion together, we are remembering and proclaiming Jesus' death until he comes. When we teach a children's class, we share the gospel with the next generation. As the above

# THRIVE

CLASSES START SEPT 17

*details coming soon*



statement says, this forms us. As we are formed, we grow into maturity, we bear the fruit of the Spirit, and we live out our calling to be salt and light during the week. **Corporate worship is a form of discipleship.** Do we treat it as such?

## EVANGELISM

Toward the end of the twentieth century, there was an increasing (though not entirely new) trend in churches to be “seeker-sensitive” — that is, they wanted to make sure people who were not Christians, but were interested in spiritual things, felt welcomed and at home in church. This is certainly a worthy desire. Who wants to be the kind of church that runs people off? But an unfortunate side-effect is that rather than reaching the unchurched they “unchurched the church.” There was an emphasis on production, performance, and programs. A move from weighty to casual. Not everything that seeker-sensitive churches espoused was bad. But if we look at all the passages in the New Testament about the corporate gathering — church — we see that its primary purpose is for believers to worship God through Christ and to edify one another. The primary purpose isn’t to get lost people saved. However, that **SHOULD** be a byproduct! In 1 Corinthians 14:25, Paul alludes to this, saying that as unbelievers come to their gathering and experience God’s power, they will say, *“God is really among you.”* Our worship should be a **POWERFUL** witness to anyone who walks into our gatherings. We can’t manufacture that by putting on a great show. **Our witness is our joy in Christ, our hope in the gospel, and our love for people.** There can be no more powerful witness than that.

We don’t “have to go to church” to be saved. But it’s what we’re called to do (Hebrews 10:24-25). And rightly understood, it can be one of the greatest joys of our life. Do we love Jesus? Is he our Lord? Then let’s come together each week and build up his body. We won’t always feel like doing it, but it will form us, nourish us, and build us up as we fall into the biblical rhythm of gathering and scattering. 🌿



free all-church

# POOL PARTY

at north liberty community center

aug 6 • 6-7:30pm

invite your friends  
& neighbors!



# Fall Sermon Series

## and Bible Study

By Lead Pastor Brooks Simpson

***"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ,  
the Son of God." Mark 1:1***

What is the gospel? The Greek word (*euangelion*) translates into English as gospel, which means 'good news.' I first heard the good news in 1988. I understood myself to be a sinner and Christ to be a savior. As a new believer, I understood the gospel to mean that God pardoned my sins because of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. This meant when I died, I would be with Jesus in heaven for all eternity. This is true enough, but is that all the gospel entails? Not even close. The gospel is not less than a full pardon from sins, but much more.



*'Now after John was arrested,  
Jesus came into Galilee,  
proclaiming the gospel of God,  
and saying, "The time is fulfilled,  
and the kingdom of God is at hand;  
repent and believe in the gospel."*

*Mark 1:14–15*

When Jesus proclaimed the good news for the first time, he linked it to the coming of the kingdom of God, which is the restoration of his world and his people back into a perfect relationship with God's eternal reign and rule. This eternal reign includes a future life in heaven, but with Jesus, it begins now. He proclaims that this kingdom is at hand — meaning it is beginning right here, right now, in front of his listeners. Jesus intends to rule and reign by redeeming and reclaiming a fallen humanity.

This fall, we embark on a study of Mark's gospel. Mark took the eye witness accounts of Peter and organized them in such a way that his readers would understand how Jesus came to make his people a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession who proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). We will study Mark in depth so that we can discover how Jesus makes Peter's declaration possible.

Mark answers the questions – how does Jesus's life, death, and resurrection bring the kingdom of God, and how do we enter and take part in that kingdom? Mark addresses three questions.

### **WHO IS JESUS?**

In Mark 1-8, we see that he is the Messiah, or Christ. He is a king.

### **WHAT KIND OF MESSIAH IS HE?**

In Mark 8-10, we learn what kind of king he intends to be and the nature of his kingdom.

### **HOW DOES HE ACCOMPLISH HIS MISSION?**

In Mark 11-16, we witness his plan of redemption unfold as he lays down his life for his people.

This series will begin the first Sunday in September and finish the Sunday after Easter. Our desire is to see the Holy Spirit transform his people and his church in a way that causes us to expect and experience the power of God's kingdom in our day-to-day lives. Our desire is to move beyond the kind of Christianity where we wait for heaven while living for the world. We invite you to pray Jesus' prayer after him – *"May your kingdom come and may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* We invite you to order your day-to-day lives in such a way that you allow the Spirit to drive his word into you and transform the way you see Jesus, God's people, and the world you live in.

The best way to experience Mark is to read it yourself, study it together in a small group, and celebrate it with the whole church family on Sunday morning. To help you to that end, we have created a Bible study to help you get the most from Mark. Weeks before you hear each sermon, you will have read, studied, discussed, and prayed about



# CLASSIC CAR SHOW

*music // food // raffle* **7.21**

**5:30-8:30PM**

**free admission**

**Grace Community Church**

**2707 Dubuque St NE**

**North Liberty**

*Event hosted by Grace Community Church and Classy Chassis Cruisers.*



**Grace Community Church**  
BRING IN • BUILD UP • BRANCH OUT





the applications the text and the Holy Spirit address. Since the series is 30 weeks, the Bible studies will be released in three separate smaller sections that loosely follow Mark's structural emphasis discussed earlier in this article. Our hope is that by dividing the study into three smaller parts, you will have more flexibility in deciding to study one, two, or three sections.

**PART 1:**

Chapters 1-8, begins in late August (~12 weeks)

**PART 2:**

Chapters 9-13, begins in late November (~10 weeks)

**PART 3:**

Chapters 14-16, begins in mid-February (~8 weeks)

This series and study should be as profitable for those reading Mark for the first time as well as those who have been following Jesus for decades. The kingdom of God is at hand. The only question is whether we will live in its reality or live for the world while we wait for heaven. 🌿

By Executive Pastor Josh Haveman



If you have attended Grace for a year or more, you are used to hearing us talk about sending teams of short-term missionaries to Guatemala. Grace Community Church partners with Bethel Ministries, International in Guatemala to serve the Lord in a variety of ways.

A typical trip involves 10-15 people from Grace spending a week in the country building houses, visiting people in their homes, and distributing wheelchairs. This July, a team will be doing just that. We plan to build two homes: pouring concrete slabs for foundations, building a metal frame, assembling beds, and more. We also anticipate distributing wheelchairs, visiting families to encourage and evangelize, and actively spreading the love and truth of Jesus.

Attendees can partner with our short-term teams and the mission work we support in Guatemala in many ways. First, please **pray for this year's trip**. Our team will be gone July 26-August 2. Pray for safe travels,

effective service, and that the Lord would use the people and work to bring his name praise. Pray that the church in Guatemala is grown and served well. Pray for the permanent team at Bethel Ministries in Guatemala. Pray that God strengthens them for every task and that he sustains them in all of their work.

You can also **partner with our teams by offering financial support.**

Donations of any amount can be made to the church with “Guatemala” noted as the donation purpose. That money will be used to buy food, build houses, enable the transportation of teams and equipment, purchase wheelchairs, supply Bibles, and more. Or, you can consider donating by purchasing coffee from Grace attendees Mark and Julie Farmer and their ministry: Guat’s Up Coffee Roasters. One hundred percent of the profits they receive from their coffee sales goes directly to Guatemala missions.

Finally, you can **support missions in Guatemala by attending this year’s Missions Emphasis Week in October.** This October we will have a couple of opportunities for the congregation to meet and interact with our Bethel Ministries partners, Ben and Emily Mooney. The Mooneys will be at Grace Wednesday, October 25, through Sunday, October 29. During that time, they will speak at several events and be available for questions about their work in Guatemala. Please plan now to attend those events this fall so that you can learn more and be more engaged in supporting the spread of the gospel in Guatemala.

**DONATE TO GUATEMALA TRIPS:** [graceb3.churchcenter.com/giving/to/guatemala-missions](http://graceb3.churchcenter.com/giving/to/guatemala-missions)

**CONTACT GUAT’S UP COFFEE ROASTERS:** [mfarmer69@mediacombb.net](mailto:mfarmer69@mediacombb.net)

**FOR GENERAL QUESTIONS** about short-term missions at Grace, contact Austin Ward at [mr.austin.ward@gmail.com](mailto:mr.austin.ward@gmail.com) ☛





**Backyard Bible Club**

# CHILL

keeping our cool through faith in God

**Sign Up Now at [graceb3.org/events](https://graceb3.org/events)**

## **SITE LOCATIONS**

### **North Liberty**

**June 25-28 (Sun - Wed) • 6:15 - 8pm**  
Deerfield Park, 1400 Browning Dr

**June 25-28 (Sun - Wed) • 6:30 - 8pm**  
172 Lockmoor Circle

**July 10-13 (Mon - Thurs) • 6:30 - 8pm**  
Quail Ridge Park, 921 W Zeller St

### **Coralville**

**July 24-27 (Mon - Thurs) • 6:30 - 8pm**  
1932 Liberty Lane

### **Amaha**

**July 17-20 (Mon - Thurs) • 6:30 - 8pm**  
2990 128th Dr.