



GRACE INSIDER

NOVEMBER 2023

**MARK SERMON
SERIES, PART 2
PREVIEW**

GSM Update

What do we do when we gather?

Approaching the Throne



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GSM

fall update

It's time again for a student ministry update! After a great summer with an adjusted student ministry schedule, the staff, volunteers, and students returned with unrivaled energy and enthusiasm as we got back to our regular weekly rhythm in August. But let's back up and highlight a couple of things from the summer before we get to what has been happening this semester!

We kicked off the summer with our annual Adventureland trip where we were joined by over fifty students and leaders. We also gathered weekly in junior high and high school groups to discuss various topics and belief systems that our culture holds, and explored how we should view and respond to them in light of the Scriptures. We also enjoyed spending time together at the local park where we played games, ate ice cream, and spent some time laughing and getting to know some new friends. We then brought summer to a close and kicked off the new school year with Rec Night, our outreach event at the North Liberty Rec Center.

As school began and we all started to settle

into our new norms, we formed new **Life Groups** and began studying **Mark** along with the rest of the church. We are so grateful for how the Lord is using each Life Group to help students get connected to others, caring leaders, and ultimately, into his word to experience the hope that comes from seeing Christ and his character, promises, and actions in the Scriptures. It is truly amazing to hear the students engaging in conversation each week, asking questions, and seeking to understand what God calls them to.

One of our goals each year is to have students serve alongside one another and their leaders. **This is our second year of serving with Houses Into Homes**, and it has become a highlight for us. Each Life Group takes turns serving at their warehouse, helping to sort donations, loading trucks, packaging items, and doing whatever else is needed to serve their mission of bringing furniture and household items to those in our community who need assistance.

As we near the end of 2023, we will focus on our student ministry **Winter Retreat** that we hold every January. Each year, we host a weekend



for our students to participate in breakouts on various topics (many of which come directly from their suggestions), play games, and worship together as we set our course for 2024. We look forward to it every year, and we would truly appreciate your prayers for our students, volunteers, and staff as we get ready for our Winter Retreat 2024!

I cannot thank our volunteers enough for their hard work and dedication every single week. The Lord has brought together an amazing group of men and women from various points in life who desire to follow Christ while seeking to love, support, and encourage the students of our church and community during one of life's most challenging and crucial times. While not everyone will serve at an event or in a Life Group, you can be a part of the mission of Grace Student Ministry through your prayers. Please pray for our students, leaders, and their families, and pray that every student who participates with us will be loved, known, accepted, taught about Jesus, and challenged to grow! 🌿



By Lead Pastor Brooks Simpson

MARK SERMON SERIES, PART 2

PREVIEW



The Gospel according to Mark is loosely divided into three sections. Each section answers a specific question about Jesus.

Part 1 – **Who is Jesus?** *Mark 1 – 8a*

Part 2 – **What kind of Messiah?** *Mark 8b -13*

Part 3 – **How does Jesus secure his kingship?**
Mark 14-16

Mark's writing style is punctuated and brief. He tells us what Jesus did and what happened when he did it. He comes on the scene, and everything he does begs the question, "Who in the world is this guy?" Some highlights from Part 1:

- He comes announcing the kingdom of God is at hand. *Mark 1:14-15*
- He teaches with authority. *Mark 1:22*
- He demonstrates authority over demons.
Mark 1:27
- He demonstrates authority over sickness.
Mark 1:34
- He demonstrates he has authority to forgive.
Mark 2:10
- He demonstrates he has authority over the Sabbath. *Mark 2:28*
- He demonstrates authority over weather.
Mark 4:41
- He demonstrates he is able to provide food.
Mark 6:42

Every time you turn around, Jesus is saying or doing something people just should not be able to do or say. Everyone is asking, “Who is this guy?” Some love him, and others hate him, but no one is neutral about Jesus. Everyone has an opinion, but up until chapter 8 only the demons seem to understand who this Jesus character is. Part 1 reaches its climax with Peter’s famous confession in Mark 8:27-29:

*Jesus asks, “Who do the people say that I am?”
The disciples reply, “Some say John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets.”
Jesus asks, “Who do you say that I am?”
Peter replies, “You are the Christ.”*

Boom! There it is. He gets it. Finally, someone other than the demons knows who Jesus is. Time to start spreading the word, right? Wrong. The first thing Jesus does is tell Peter and the disciples to keep the whole Christ thing on the down low.

"And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him." Mark 8:30

Why does Jesus tell them not to tell anyone? One would assume that if Jesus came to be the Messiah for the whole world, it might be a good idea to let people know that he is said Messiah. That would be true if everyone’s perception of what a messiah should be were in line with the kind of messiah Jesus intends to be. The trouble is while Peter’s confession is good and true, he and the rest of the disciples are utterly clueless as to how the Messiah plans to deliver his people.

*'And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”’
Mark 8:31-33*

Wow! Peter goes from being the first in his class to being labeled “Satan” by Jesus. That is quite a rebuke. Peter is just like any of us; the difference is that he always says what he thinks. In Part 1 of *Receiving The King*, Mark took eight chapters to help us understand who Jesus is. He is the Christ, Messiah. Now, in Part 2, he will take six chapters (8-13) to show us what kind of Messiah Jesus is. The disciples are like everyone else. They assume their biggest problems are out there: the Romans, the corrupt Jews, bad systems and structures, and the wrong leaders. They believe deliverance means cleaning the house from top to bottom, and Jesus is the guy to do the cleaning. Peter’s statement reveals he has no idea what he or the rest of the world needs to be delivered from, nor how the Messiah plans to save his people from their sins.

Mark will show us in chapters 8a through 13 how Jesus repeatedly reveals what kind of Messiah he would become to the disciples. Two thousand years later, the church seems to frequently parrot Peter’s confession — Jesus is the Christ — but without understanding the implications of what we are being delivered from and delivered for. Part 2 of our Mark series will help us understand what we are saved from and what we are saved for. If you missed the first part of our series, Part 2 is a great place to jump in and follow along in the Mark study guide. 🌿



Christmas Eve Service

9AM • 11AM • 1PM

Children's classes will be available for the nursery and 2 year old rooms. Older children will join their parents in service.

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What do we do when we gather?

Corporate Worship Part 3

By Worship Director Zack Stanton

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY WE DO THE PARTICULAR THINGS WE DO AS A CHURCH ON SUNDAY MORNING? And I don't just mean Grace Community Church. How do churches decide what happens each week? Broadly speaking, most church services consist of similar activities and content, regardless of where they take place in the world or what denomination they are. There are some obvious differences between churches that use a more formal liturgy and those that are less formal (though ALL churches have a liturgy, whether or not they realize it), but when it comes down to it, our services are made up of the same things: singing, preaching, praying, giving, communion, baptism, etc.

Worship involves us and is crucial for our lives, but worship isn't about us.

There's a good reason for this. The Bible has specific things to say about what we do in corporate

gatherings. This is important for many reasons, but especially because, as we detailed in one of the first articles in this series, when we approach God in worship, it must be on HIS terms. We need to make sure what we do each week is biblical. When we're bored or get tired of certain things, it's important to remember that church is not about being creative or relevant. It is *not* about "keeping things fresh" (though our worship shouldn't be stale), and it is *not* about keeping people interested. If any of those things become our primary motive, we've missed the mark on worship. Worship involves us and is crucial for our lives, but worship isn't *about* us. Church shouldn't be boring, but when our worship is Christ-centered, God-exalting, and mutually edifying for the building up of the church, biblical routines will be anything but boring. They are anchoring. They are formative.

Worship is like a pot-luck gathering.

A helpful analogy I have heard regarding the corporate gathering is the "Concert Hall" vs. "Banquet Hall" mentality. If we view church from a **concert hall** mentality, we show up as passive observers and critics, eager to have the itches of our preferences and felt needs scratched. If we have a **banquet hall** mentality, we come to a communal gathering, ready to participate and share the experience with one another. Worship is like a pot-luck gathering: we're all involved, using our gifts to serve the church, contributing to the mutual edification of the body and offering praise to the Lord.

What does that look like? Let's take a moment to look at the biblical basis for how this plays out practically.

- Prayer with and for the community
(*Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 2:1*)
- Reading the Scriptures
(*Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 1 Timothy 4:13*)
- Preaching the Scriptures
(*1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Timothy 4:1-2*)
- Communion (*Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:26*)
- Giving offerings for the poor and the mission of the church
(*2 Corinthians 9; Philippians 4:14-18; Hebrews 13:16*)
- Singing (*1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16*)

This is by no means an exhaustive list of things the Bible talks about regarding our corporate worship, but these are some of the core elements that should shape what we do together each week. Some of these things can (and should!) be done in contexts other than Sunday morning, but the Sunday morning gathering is unique in its function. We can gather with other Christians and do a lot of different things, and that's good. Each summer I enjoy playing on one of the Grace softball teams. It's a great opportunity to do something fun with other believers and get to know them better. But that doesn't carry the same weight or have the same purpose as our corporate time of worship. God has called us to actively participate as a member of Christ's body, engaging with him through these practices. When we do so with expectation and intentionality, they form us, teach us, encourage us, and prepare us for the work and worship God calls us to the rest of the week. 🌿



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Approaching the Throne part 1

By Executive Pastor Josh Haveman

Editor's Note: This is part one of a series of articles discussing prayer. The next article will appear in the January Insider.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

In the Old Testament, the word that we commonly translate as “prayer” comes from a Hebrew word that means to intervene or interpose. Those are both ways of saying, “get in between.” The New Testament adds more dimension to this idea, translating “prayer” literally as “to exchange wishes,” or trade ideas. Taken together, the Old and New Testament concepts help us understand what the word of God teaches us about prayer. **Prayer is the act of inserting ourselves into communion with God, and exchanging our ideas for his ideas.**

This is why Hebrews 4 describes prayer as “*approaching the throne of God.*” In God’s throne room, Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. They have communion with each other - within himself. Our talking to him means inserting ourselves into that communion. In a sense, it means coming in between God and God so that we can be heard.

God wants to hear what we have to say so much that he will make sure it gets said.

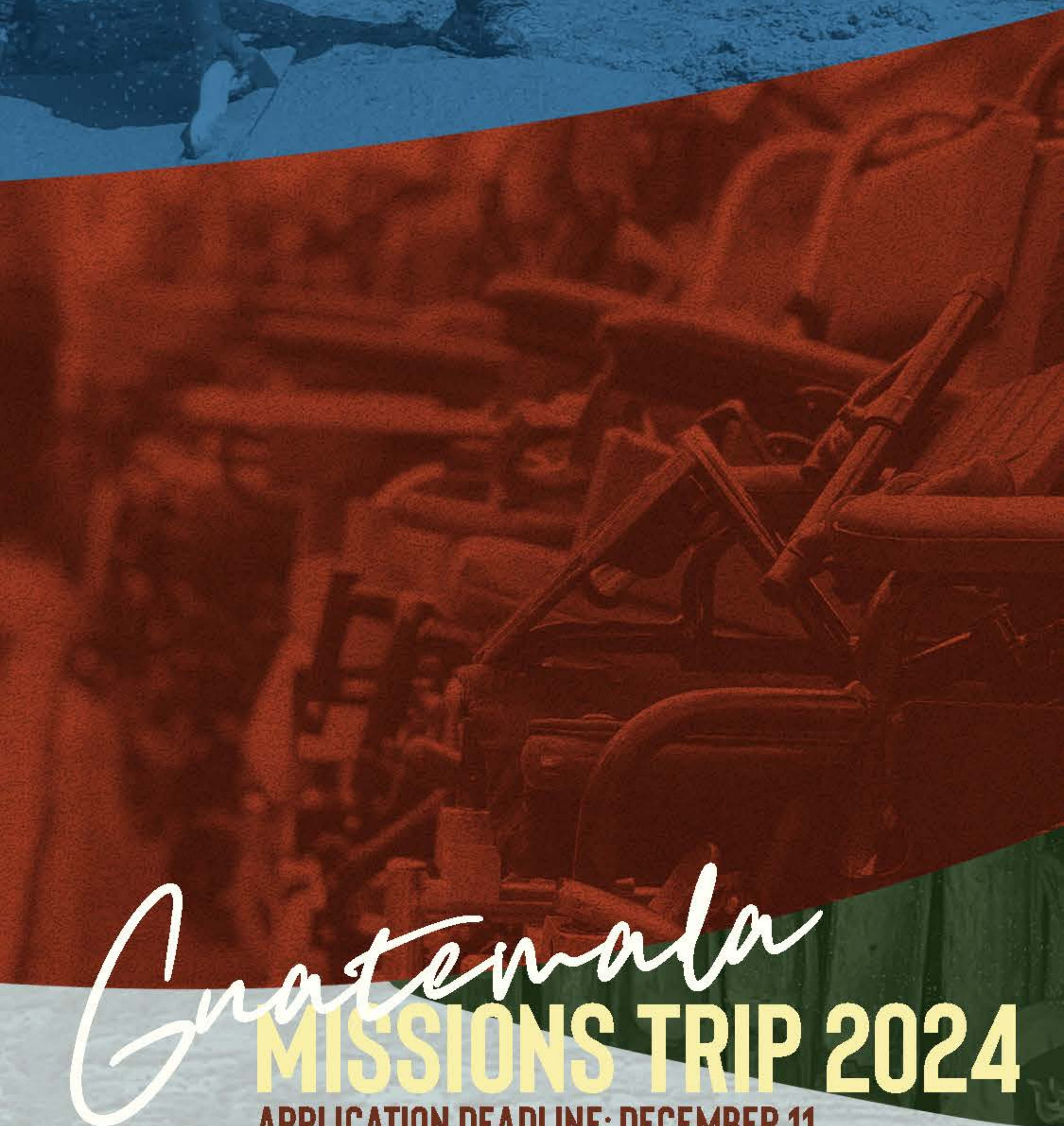
If that sounds scary to you, or impossible even, there is a good reason for that. God is the creator of the universe and the Lord over all of creation. We have no business inserting ourselves into his communion if he doesn't invite us. But he does invite us! More than that, he speaks for us. Romans 8:26 tells us that God the Spirit intercedes on our behalf. **He breaks into the communion of God, and disrupts his own thoughts, so that our words can be heard.**

This is an awesome gift. God wants to hear what we have to say so much that he will make sure it gets said. But it should be no surprise, then, that Jesus also tells us not to approach God with babbling. Matthew 6:7 says, *“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.”* Instead, Jesus teaches us to pray like this:

*‘Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.’
Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)*

That is the prayer that we commonly call, the Lord's Prayer. Jesus, our Lord, made that prayer himself so that we could see what it looks like to go before God in the right way. And the right way is clear; whatever ideas we have need to be exchanged for these ideas: that God would be praised, that his kingdom would come, that his will be done, and that we would depend on him for everything.

Join me for the next article in January. We'll begin to take a closer look at the Lord's Prayer — examining it as a model of how we should approach the throne of God. 🌿



Guatemala

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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.

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RYAN.MILLER7999@GMAIL.COM OR AT 319-330-6483

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