HOLINESS T O D A Y

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A JOURNEY **OF GRACF**

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OF GRACE

A

JOURNEY

NAZARENE 🖄 DISCIPLESHIP

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THE VIEW FROM

The breathtaking panoramic view from the mountaintop defied words. My family and I visited Alaska a few years ago and experienced something incredible. We rode a train from a small village up a steep mountain grade all the way to the summit. From that vantage point, we could see the snow-capped mountain peaks to the east and the vast Pacific Ocean to the west. The village at the bottom of the mountain looked like a small drawing in a children's book. How vast the world looked from that mountain vista!

I sat at my office desk this morning and experienced a Revelation 8:1 moment: "...there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." Stunned silence froze me in the moment as tears rolled from my eyes and chill bumps covered my entire body. A vision passed before me, reminding me of that breathtaking Alaska view. I saw something as I had never seen it before in my life as a Christian.

I spend most of my time reading and editing content at the Global Ministry Center of the Church of the Nazarene. Editors frequently drill down to evaluate particular words, sentence structures, or paragraph flows in an article. Think of your schedule for today. Like me, I am sure you have appointments to keep, work tasks to complete, and household responsibilities to fulfill. We usually have more to do in a day than hours to do it. So we easily fall into the routine of simply checking off the items on each day's task list.

We often live our Christian lives in much the same way. We attend small group Bible studies, committee meetings, and worship services. We read our Bibles and pray on a daily basis. We fellowship with other believers and hold one another accountable in our walks with our Lord. We too easily fall into the rhythm of living our Christian lives through routine. With attention focused on today's spiritual exercises, we lose sight of the big picture.

King David wrote one of my favorite lines in the Bible. It holds deeper meaning for me every day. Psalm 37:25 reads, "I was young and now I am old." I see life from a much different perspective today than I did at the beginning of my walk with Christ. I now see a bigger picture of our spiritual pilgrimage than I used to see. This brings me to this morning's mountaintop experience. I read all of the articles for this issue of *Holiness Today* for a final time in one sitting. That's when I saw it: God's masterful plan for our journey of grace. I saw it from start to finish, from my first awakening to God's desire to live in relationship with me all the way through the hills and valleys of the sometimes-winding journey to the day He welcomes me home at earth's finish line. But that's not the end of this journey of grace, not by a long shot. It's just the beginning of an eternal walk with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Every man, woman, youth, and child in this world experiences God's grace in some measure. God offers it to everyone. He lovingly moves all those who cooperate with His grace into ever deepening levels of relationship with Him. It takes a lifetime of walking with the Lord to realize just how amazing God's grace toward us is. I know we have schedules to keep today, places to go, and things to do. However, I want to challenge you to stop whatever you are doing right now, recount the gracious work of God in your life, and see the big picture of the journey of grace you are on with Him. The view from the mountaintop will leave you breathless!

Frank Moore is editor in chief of Holiness Today.

FOREWORD

DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS

The topic of discipleship immediately brings my childhood to mind. I was fortunate to be discipled by my parents. My parents' lives modeled incarnational discipleship. The activities of the week and the family conversations around the table pointed each of us toward Christ. If there was a formal discipleship plan, we never saw it, but we knew the lessons by heart. It was who we were and what we did as Christians.

As I look back at my life, I can clearly see three patterns in the way my parents discipled us: presence, passion, perseverance.

PRESENCE

My parents modeled the love of God to us by their personal presence. Their presence reinforced the belief that God is always with us, which brought us comfort and security. Our family prayer time assured us of God's presence and involvement in every aspect of our lives – nothing is too trivial or big to bring to our Lord in prayer. Their daily involvement in our lives brought the voice of clarity and sanity into the cacophony of influences we faced outside the home. Their presence constantly assured us of God's presence.

Years later, I read about the ministry of Rev. Eugene Rivers, a pastor in the inner city of Boston. He was frustrated that he was losing so many kids to the streets. So he asked a drug dealer why he was losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the kids. The drug dealer replied, "When Johnny goes out for a loaf of bread for Mama, I'm there-you're not. When he needs a new pair of gym shoes, I'm there-you're not. When he simply needs somebody to talk to, to unload what's on his mind, I'm there and you're not. I win, you lose."

It is clear that Jesus knew the importance of personal presence to the discipleship process. He said, "if you want to be my disciple... you must follow me!" (Luke 9:23).

PASSION

The second essential element of discipleship I experienced through my parents' lives was their passion for God. God's guidance was always sought and followed, even when the personal cost was high. The material sacrifices in our lives were viewed through the lens of love for God and others. While we, as children, did not always enjoy the sacrifices made, we never doubted the value of giving God first place in all things. By including the family in the sacrifices for others, my parents engaged us in the mission and the celebration of successes.

PERSEVERANCE

My parents' presence and passion found fulfillment through their perseverance. Life was not always easy and rewarding in the short term. There were times as children when we witnessed the trials our parents faced. Nevertheless, while the path was not comfortable, my parents were determined to faithfully persevere. Repeatedly, we saw the fruit of their perseverance in the string of answered prayers and restored relationships. There is nothing like answered prayers after a long struggle to connect one to the presence and passion of Christ.

Presence, passion, perseverance: all essential qualities on the path of discipleship. Every program or framework that honors these three qualities will produce fruit that will last. I am grateful that I was blessed with parents who lived out those qualities before me. In addition, I'm indebted to the many others who encouraged them along the way.

Larry Morris is administrative director of Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International.

A JOURNEY OF GRACE

by SCOTT RAINEY

JAMES 1:17



s I began serving as the global director of Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International (SDMI) in August 2018, many people asked me, "When you speak about discipleship, what do you mean by 'discipleship'? Do you mean 'Sunday School'? Do you mean small groups? Or do you mean 'one-on-one mentoring'?" I have wondered if they asked me that in order to see what "camp" I fell into so they could decide if I was worth listening to. Their questions, however, revealed that we had a problem.

The word "discipleship" does not refer to a program, a methodology, or a denominational theme. The concept is broader than these. Discipleship includes both the spiritual journey of every disciple and the disciple-making efforts of all Christians. We might think about a computer. Discipleship is like the operating system. All of our church programs are the software that run on the computer. The software can be uploaded to meet the specific needs of the owner. The operating system, however, defines how the computer functions. Discipleship defines how the church functions and why the church exists!

After discussing discipleship in general, I would follow up these early conversations with a question of my own, "How does your local church make disciples?" I was surprised that most of the responses I received told me how their local church gathers believers into groups: Bible studies, support groups, and home groups. Basically, discipleship for most people is defined by how we make better Christians of the Christians we already have. Again, I realized we had a problem.

Discipleship is not just about committed believers. Now, maybe, you are the one surprised. Let me explain. The mission statement of SDMI is "to carry out the Great Commission to children, youth, and adults in preparation for a lifetime of being and making Christlike disciples in the nations." SDMI, the department charged with inspiring, motivating, and equipping discipleship in the Church of the Nazarene, has based its mission statement on the Great Commission.

The Great Commission is from our Lord Jesus. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). The Great Commission has been referred to as the "marching orders" of the church. Certainly, few people would argue with the evangelistic nature of these words. We, followers of Jesus, are called to make disciples of people in all nations who are not yet disciples. If SDMI is going to fulfill its mission statement, we must consider the ways that discipleship includes the lost in its focus.

With these challenges, the Board of General Superintendents set out to capture a new concept for Nazarene Discipleship that will help the global church "make Christlike disciples in the nations." On February 27, 2021, during the General Board meetings, the Board of General Superintendents launched the new initiative: Nazarene discipleship as "A Journey of Grace." This new initiative addresses the challenges mentioned above while providing a global framework for Nazarene discipleship that brings unity and clarity to our goals.

When we consider Nazarene discipleship as "A Journey of Grace," we must begin by recognizing that discipleship is indeed a *journey*. Discipleship is not a set of Bible studies: "When you finish these studies, you have graduated from discipleship." No, discipleship is a lifetime journey that begins at birth and continues through all of life! Bible studies, crisis moments, and fellow journeyers all contribute to our journey, but they are NOT the journey. Rather, the discipleship journey is better defined as humankind connecting with the story of God and being transformed by His grace. This is why discipleship is a journey *of grace.* This is all about God. It is HIS initiative. Your particular journey is defined by your response to God's gracious love in your life.

What does the journey of grace look like? We might say that this journey is a journey *from grace to grace to grace*. As Wesleyan-Holiness people, we believe that God's gracious love extends to all people, everywhere. Even before we came to believe (Romans 5:8), God was wooing us by His grace. *Prevenient grace* is the term explaining that His grace goes before. We often refer to prevenient grace as the grace that comes before conversion, awakening the pre-Christian to his or her need for reconciliation with God.

Along that journey, where God's prevenient grace is working, there can be a crisis moment when a person discovers Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the way to be reconciled with the Father. In that moment, when faith is born in the heart of an individual, God's *saving grace* is given freely! This is the moment of conversion, being born again, new life!

As the new believer continues on this journey of grace, the Spirit of God begins to transform the Christian more and more into the likeness of Christ. Again, along this journey, there comes a moment, a crisis moment, called entire sanctification. As believers fully surrender their redeemed life to God, they are set free from the chains of original sin and enter into a relationship with God that is defined as entire devotion to Christ. In that moment, God's *sanctifying grace* is given freely!

Discipleship is a journey of God's grace: His prevenient, saving, sanctifying grace! The journey of grace is a process with crises along the journey.

Even the words of Jesus point to this journey. Jesus revealed to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). *The way* sounds a lot like a journey, doesn't it? Jesus calls us to follow Him! It is the call of our seeking Savior, the call THE QUESTION FOR THE CHURCH TODAY IS: "ARE WE BEING GOOD STEWARDS OF GOD'S GRACE?" of prevenient grace. Along that journey, we realize the claim of Jesus to be *the truth*. He is the Son of God, and we must repent and put our trust in Him alone. This is the call of His saving grace. When we are living the life of a repentant believer, God's Spirit calls us to fully surrender our will to Him. When we surrender, He sanctifies and fills us with His Spirit, and we experience the full meaning of Jesus being *the life*, the abundant life, through His sanctifying grace!

For the church, it is vital we understand that Christ not only draws us along this journey but we are called to journey with others, joining and helping them along the journey from grace to grace to grace. This is what we have termed disciple-making. First Peter 4:10 says, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." The question for the Church today is this: "Are we being good stewards of God's grace?" When believers join others along the journey of grace, we carry out the Great Commission: making disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded us. May Nazarenes everywhere join others along the journey, from grace to grace to grace.

Scott Rainey is global director of Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International.

JOURNEY OF GRACE

NAZARENE SISCIPLESHIP

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

JOHN 14:6

From the beginning, the Church of the Nazarene has been committed to making Christlike disciples in the nations. Our commitment to embrace discipleship as a lifestyle is essential in the church today.

The journey of discipleship is one we do not walk alone. The grace of God through Jesus Christ draws us into an ever increasing relationship with the Father, and the fellowship of believers remains a constant encouragement along the way.

NAZARENE DISCIPLESHIP IS A JOURNEY FROM GRACE TO GRACE TO GRACE.

DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is a journey of grace with Jesus as our guide and companion.

Christian discipleship helps believers grow in the Lord Jesus Christ as they are equipped by His Holy Spirit, who resides within them, to overcome the pressures and trials of this present life and become more and more Christlike.





GRACE

Grace is the active love of God in our lives and in the world.

Our minds cannot fully comprehend the mystery of God's grace. However, at various times in our life, God's grace leads us to Him through **prevenient grace**, frees us to understand the truth through **saving grace**, and empowers us to become Christlike through **sanctifying grace**.





God PREPARES the path before us. His hand reaches out and beckons us to Him, drawing us into a deeper relationship with Him. This grace both precedes our response and enables our response.





Jesus RESCUES us from sin and leads us into the truth that sets us free. We receive the gift of saving grace by believing in God. He redeems us, makes us a new creation, and adopts us into His family.





The Holy Spirit EMPOWERS us to live a life fully consecrated to God. Sanctifying grace begins the moment we experience salvation. Initial sanctification is followed by spiritual growth in grace until, in a moment of full consecration and complete surrender on our part, God purifies and cleanses the heart. We are drawn by holy love through prevenient grace. We are captured by holy love through saving grace. We are purified and set apart by holy love through sanctifying grace. We grow in grace as we abound in holy love. This is how we experience the fullness of life in Christ. DISCIPLES AND DISCIPLE-MAKERS ARE ABLE TO SHARE THIS JOURNEY OF GRACE BY... **WITNESSING:** Every disciple of Jesus is called to share the story of God's grace in his or her own life with others. As we make disciples, we must tell and *retell the story* of God's grace in our lives and the lives of others.

WALKING: God does not make Christlike disciples in a moment. The journey of grace spans a lifetime. Christ calls His followers to a journey with others from *no faith* to *new faith* to *mature faith*. The journey with others takes patience. It takes love. It takes grace!

JEREMIAH 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

LIFE IS A JOURNEY

by DAVID GRAVES

ur spiritual life is a journey: a journey of grace. It begins when we hear God's call to come and follow Him, to put our faith in Jesus Christ. This was true in the life of Simon Peter. One day, he was cleaning his fishing nets with his brother, Andrew. Jesus looked at them and invited them to come and follow Him. Immediately, Peter and Andrew left everything and followed Jesus. That decision changed their lives.

Years later, Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:1-2: "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

Christ's righteousness became Peter's righteousness, and he was given a right standing before God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Just like Peter, when we trust Jesus as our Savior, we receive His righteousness. When we join Jesus on a journey of discipleship, we receive God's grace. God, in His mercy, does not give us what we deserve; God, in His grace, gives us what we do not deserve. Our God is "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10), and He channels that grace to us through Jesus Christ (John 1:16). As a result of putting our faith in Jesus, we also receive peace. Peace *with* God (Romans 5:1) and the peace *of* God.

18 HOLINESS

In our journey with Christ, when we put our faith in Jesus, we also experience God's power and receive everything we need to grow spiritually: "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (1 Peter 1:3-4).

God promises us that through His Word, He will enable us to develop this life and godliness. His promises will guide us to live a victorious life because they come from an Almighty God. They are precious because their value is immeasurable. As we progress on our journey, the Spirit of God uses His Word to impart God's very nature in us. His Spirit helps us to escape the corruption, defilement, and decay of this world. Godly living is the result of cultivating His nature within.

We are all on a lifelong journey. When someone graduates from high school or college, the ceremony that formally concludes his or her education is called "commencement." Most of us think of this graduation ceremony as the end of a process, but "commencement" actually marks a beginning. Now that your education is finished, you can begin real life! Many people think of their relationship with Christ as a completed process-I received Jesus as my Savior, I am a Christian: now it is completed! However, like a commencement exercise, coming to Christ is both an end and a beginning! Our relationship is to be new and growing. Discipleship is the process of becoming like Christ, and it is a lifelong calling that requires faith, devotion, and energy.

Progress and spiritual growth on this journey are not automatic. They require cooperation with God, spiritual diligence, and discipline. Literally, Peter wrote, "Make every effort to add to your faith" (1 Peter 1:5-7). We work together with God to grow spiritually, becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. When we are not growing, we will be ineffective ("barren") and unproductive (unfruitful): "For if you possess these qualities

in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:8).

The more we become like Jesus Christ, the more the Spirit can use us to witness and to serve. Some of the most effective Christians I have known are people without dramatic talents or special abilities, or even dynamic personalities; yet God has used them in marvelous ways.¹ Why? Because they were becoming increasingly more like Jesus Christ. They are fruitful because they are faithful. They are effective because they are growing in their Christian experience. The Christian life begins with faith, but that faith must lead to spiritual growth. And spiritual growth leads to fruitfulness.

Our spiritual growth will not happen by accident. If we want to become more like Jesus Christ, it will take time and practice on the disciplines needed for spiritual growth. *Study the Word*—one of the ways we get to know God is by hearing what He has to say to us. *Pray daily*—it is our conversation with God; talk to Him and He will talk to us. Examine our heart—"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

Our greatest spiritual growth will take place as we honestly examine our heart to find areas that are not in harmony with God's will. Your journey to become more like Christ will happen best in relationships with other Christians. Get involved in fellowship and accountability groups, for the Christian life is not a solo sport; it is something we do together. To know Jesus and to have a genuine relationship with Him means to change our lives forever. Keep growing in and with Him, becoming more and more like Him. Focus on being a growing disciple of Christ, seeking a dynamic relationship with the living Lord. Your life will never be the same! Enjoy the journey of God's grace.

David Graves is a general superintendent in the Church of the Nazarene.

^{1.} Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Study Series: 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Jude: Beware of the Religious Imposters (David C. Cook: Colorado Springs, 2013), 275.

ON THE BRINK OF EVERYTHING

by JOHN BOWLING

ISAIAH 43:19

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

> he phrase "On the Brink of Everything" is taken from a recently published book by Parker Palmer.¹ Dr. Palmer is a renowned educator, writer, and thinker. He turned 80 not long ago, and in his book, he looks back across the landscape of his life. In fact, the subtitle of the book is "Grace, Gravity, and Getting Old."

> However, although he looks back, his focus is forward—as if gravity is pulling him into the future rather than holding him back. Dr. Palmer closes the prelude to the book with this sentence: "Welcome to the brink of everything. It takes a lifetime to get here, but the stunning view and the bracing breeze in your face make it worth the trip."²

> It may seem somewhat counterintuitive, but this is exactly where we should find ourselves as a denomination today. No matter the circumstances, the church should maintain its forward focus. We have a storied and rich history. We embrace and foster our valued traditions and honor those with long years of service—yet our gaze is to be fixed on the horizon, on what *can be* rather than what *was*.

> Even now, at this point in our history, we should be standing on tiptoes, pressing our faces to the glass in wonder, asking . . . What now? What next? What if? Why not?

1. Parker Palmer, On the Brink of Everything – Grace, Gravity, and Getting Old (Oakland, California: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc, 2018). 2. Ibid., 10. The Cambridge Dictionary defines the term "brink" as "the edge of a cliff or other high area, or the point at which something good or bad will happen," followed by this example, "The company was on the brink of collapse."³

I am not sure why the term "brink" often carries a negative connotation-as in "on the brink of collapse," rather than suggesting that we might be on the brink of something wonderful, something exciting, challenging, and fulfilling. Certainly, as believers, we are to be men and women of faith who serve a God who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine; the God who declared, "Behold, I am doing a new thing" (Ephesians 3:20; Isaiah 43:19).

There are tough times filled with challenges in life and in the life of the church, but we are to be (and can be!) more than conquerors (Romans 8:37).

I think of the greeting that Dr. Phineas F. Bresee, a founder of the Church of the Nazarene, was so fond of using. Regardless of the time of day, Dr. Bresee would say, "Good Morning!" and then add, "It's always morning in the Church of the Nazarene."⁴ Even as he was nearing the end of his life, he firmly believed that he and the movement he founded were on the brink of something grand.

Dr. Bresee was very ill when he left his home in California to attend and preside at the 1915 General Assembly in Kansas City. Those that accompanied Bresee on the long journey included his wife, Maria; their daughter, Sue; daughter-in-law, Ada; and a distinguished group of colleagues including Seth Rees, Uncle Buddy Robinson, and a young H. Orton Wiley, who, at the time, was president of what is now Point Loma Nazarene University.

It was apparent to the family that Dr. Bresee was seriously ill. When they arrived in

Kansas City, Ada wired her husband, Dr. Paul Bresee, to come at once and attend to his father. In a letter to one of her close friends, Mrs. Bresee confided:

How anxious he was to be at that assembly and he certainly worked and planned that it might be a blessed gathering . . . Strength was given him for that meeting, though with anyone else it would have been entirely out of the question for them to have thought it possible to be there. But his love of the work, his energy, his will power to do – urged him on, when we all felt that he was not at all able to be out of his room . . . But, when he took the chair and presided, he seemed so strong, that no one realized that he was so sick, so near the heavenly home.⁵

Dr. Bresee wrote and delivered the general superintendents' report to that 1915 General Assembly. The general superintendents at that time were Dr. Bresee, Rev. Hiram F. Reynolds, and Dr. E. F. Walker.

I wish I could take you line-by-line through Dr. Bresee's report—his final report to the church he loved. That is not possible within the context of this brief article, but I will share a few lines to underscore his optimism and enthusiasm for the future.

He began by saying, "Four years have elapsed since the last General Assembly, at Nashville, Tenn. They have been eventful years. A church as young as this makes history fast . . ."6

As he continued, he repeatedly spoke of progress, growth, and opportunity. I particularly took note of the section of his report that referenced Nazarene higher education, which of course was in its infancy at that time. He gave wise counsel throughout that section saying: "Higher education is of such a nature, that the church which turns such work over to the

^{3.} Cambridge Dictionary, "Brink" (http:/

tinyurl.com/y8npy22z). 4. Timothy Smith, in the introduction to *The Certainties of Faith* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1958).

^{5.} Carl Bangs, *Phineas Bresee* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1995) 277. 6. E. A. Girvin, *Phineas F. Bresee: A Prince in Israel* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1916. Reprinted in 1981), 445.

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SPOKE OF

PROGRESS,

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OPPORTUNITY.

state, or to others, will soon find itself robbed of its best inheritance . . . Academies and colleges are to us a necessity."⁷

Then, as Dr. Bresee closed his report, he said,

God has put us in a place of great responsibility. We are the representatives and guardians of [a sacred trust] . . . A realization of the great work to which God has called us, will awe us into reverence, and impel us to seek the closest unity with God and with each other, that we may prove worthy of our high calling. More and more we must realize that (this work) is not of man, but of God. Closeness to the Almighty is our hope of victory.

We have written the adorable Name on our banner and lifted it to the gaze of men. Some are looking hopefully toward us, let us not disappoint them. Let us not waver. Let us be true. Forward – with eyes steadily fixed upon the Master.⁸

Even near the end of his life, his focus was forward. It was still morning. The sun was rising and there was a bright future just ahead.

Dr. Bresee died just a few weeks later, surrounded by his family. His passing is described in some detail in the closing pages of *Phineas F. Bresee: A Prince in Israel*, Rev. E. A. Girvin's biography of Dr. Bresee. Girvin wrote:

It was my privilege to see much of Dr. Bresee during the twenty-nine days that elapsed between his return from the General Assembly, and his passing away. His last days were crowned with complete victory. He passed away at 1 o'clock Saturday afternoon, November 13, 1915, loved and lamented by a vast multitude of those who had been helped by his ministry, and blessed by his life. At last, the busy hands were still; the clarion voice silent. At the time of his death, he was in the zenith of his intellectual and spiritual powers. He was a regal soul, a true Christian, a noble man, a loving husband, an affectionate father, a faithful friend, a real brother in the Lord. He left us with saddened hearts and tearful eyes, but with a lively hope of meeting him where the many mansions are.⁹

E. A. Girvin did not record Dr. Bresee's final words. Perhaps they are lost forever. However, maybe, just maybe, his final words were, "Good morning," for surely he died as he lived—"on the brink of everything"—always looking ahead with faith and confidence.

John Bowling is president of Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, Illinois, USA.

^{7.} Ibid., 450.

^{8.} Ibid., 451-452. 9. Ibid., 456.

MATTHEW 4:19

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

COME, Follow Me

by CELESTE CHAGUALA

he "Journey of Grace" is an invitation to experience a life of transformational power that changes a person from a life of sin to a life of grace—a life of unconditional and undeserved favor of God that is revealed to all who follow Him.

As such, a journey involves traveling from one place to another. One day many years ago, I went with my then four-year-old son to a pastor's house. When we arrived there, my son decided to join the other children as they went out to fetch water. He followed them at a distance but got lost on the way, and the children, not knowing that he had followed them, returned without him. They didn't know where he was. So I left the house worried and started to look for him in the streets, praying that God would help me find him. I walked in the neighborhood, looking for him and asking people if they had seen a boy wandering and lost; some of them said they had seen a boy crying. We continued to look for him until we found him with a lady who was trying to take him back to where my son said was his home. For thirty minutes, my companion on the journey was lost, and those were the worst minutes of my life. Despite the challenges I encountered, I believe the grace of God was with me through the journey, and my son and I were reunited.

In Mathew 4:19, Jesus calls people to follow Him: "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." Jesus was calling ordinary fishermen to follow Him. To follow Jesus meant that they had to leave what they were doing and go with Him. They were about to embark on a physical journey with Jesus. But beyond leaving one place and going to another, they were also to take a spiritual journey, leaving their old ways of life to follow in the steps of Jesus as the leader. We too, as we journey with Jesus, will encounter difficulties and challenges, but we must be courageous and firm, following His example of being strengthened by His Father. When we are tempted or feel tired on the journey, we have to talk with our journey companion-He will strengthen us.

Matthew 4:19 starts with a simple invitation: "Come." First and foremost, we should *go* to Him. When Jesus said *come*, He invited them to get up and go with Him, and He continued by saying, "follow me." Following Jesus is to live according to His will and in His footsteps. We follow Him because He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). If we don't know *the way*, He will show us; if we don't know *the truth*, He will reveal it to us; if we don't have *the life*, He will revive us. The grace of God is sufficient for us.

A group of believers in the West Africa Field started to reach out to children and youth in the streets with the purpose showing love to them. They played with the children and shared the Word of God. Many of them received Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and now one of the stores that once sold drugs for the street people has become a prayer cell. Most of the people that used to go to that store accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

When Jesus called the disciples, He invited them to follow Him so He could make them fishers of men. As believers, in our journey of grace, we are called to bring others to Christ and journey with them in the grace of Jesus. All over the world today, many people are desperate and without much hope for a better future. As the church of Christ. we are called to share Jesus-the source of our hope. Let us pray and ask God to go before us. The grace of God that found us is reaching out to them as well. Jesus wants to journey with them because He loves them, too.

Who knew that a place that once sold drugs would end up becoming a place for people to pray and worship God together? Only God could accomplish that through His Son, Jesus. How many times in your life have you thought you didn't deserve forgiveness? Let us be reminded that when we think there is no solution or that nothing else





WE ARE CALLED TO SHARE JESUS

can be done, the grace of God is sufficient to bring transformation! We need to remain steadfast on our journey and seek our strength in Christ Jesus.

Jesus wants to be a part of our life as we grow in His grace, and He knows that in our Christian journeys, we can't make it alone-we need Him. For some time, when I lost my son (my companion), I felt let down and weak. I believe that's how we feel when we journey alone. Are you feeling alone on your journey? Maybe you have not decided to walk with Jesus every step of the way. It is never too late to follow Him as He leads you on a gracefilled journey. Jesus invites His people to experience the power of transformation through Him. As we join in the journey of grace, we are transformed to be disciples of Christ and to share His grace to others desiring to follow Jesus. As a result, we embrace the journey and the mission of making Christlike disciples.

As participants in God's mission, we receive grace, and we have to continue testifying about that grace. As disciples, we are on a journey of grace as long as we are in this world. We are called to make Christlike disciples (Matthew 28:19), helping new believers to grow in their faith as we share our personal experiences of walking with Jesus. To testify about God's grace is a practical way to help both believers and non-believers take steps toward the journey of grace.

We were privileged to journey with some family friends who were not yet believers, and we saw their lives change as they started to grow in their Christian faith. One day, they decided to share with us how our lives had impacted them. They said, "Whenever we would go to your place, we didn't like the idea because we knew we would not have alcoholic drinks and would be served soft drinks the whole day. The first thing we did every time we left your place was to stop in a small market and buy alcohol. One thing that surprised us is that you have never told us the bad things we were doing or to stop drinking, but through your lifestyle, we learned that it is possible to have a changed life and live without drinking. That was a lesson for us—you showed us the way to Jesus through your way of life."

Still today, this couple is very active in the church; the husband is serving in several positions, including as secretary in a local church, and his wife is the children's ministry director. This kind of transformation can happen only when we commit our lives to following Jesus!

Jesus invites us all to walk with Him on the journey of grace, testifying about His unconditional love so that we might make Christlike disciples in the nations.

Celeste Chaguala is the Africa regional coordinator for Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International (SDMI).

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- 28 HOLINESS TODAY

PSALM 23:3

He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

+

FULLNESS IN CHRIST

by JORGE JULCA

s the son of a Nazarene pastor, I grew up hearing the church sing the hymn "Wonderful Grace of Jesus." I can still hear the words: "Higher than the heavens, deeper than the sea; Greater than my guilt, nailed to the cross; Grace that satisfies the soul with full salvation, Grace that leads to heaven; It is the wonderful grace of Jesus."¹ The worship leader would hold the hymnal open in one hand and enthusiastically wave the other, encouraging the congregation. The choir would divide into two groups, their voices intensified as they sang the words in rounds. With jubilation and hands raised in victory, the congregation ended in unison: "I will praise your sweet name for eternity." What profound lyrics! What eternal truth! What an undeserved gift!

The Christian life is a pilgrimage, a long path of obedience, a journey of continuous learning, a growing and formative experience that is enriched at every step by the work of God's wonderful grace. This grace that works through the Spirit to awaken us to our sins is made effective by our faith in the sacrifice of Christ for our salvation and sanctification, and it continues to work throughout our lives until glorification. Being like Jesus is a daily challenge, and that is the journey of grace.

1. Haldor Lillenas, "Wonderful Grace of Jesus," 1918. *Translator's note:* This is a literal translation of the Spanish words of the hymn. They do not exactly match the English words.

THE PATH TO WHOLENESS: GOD'S PURPOSE FOR EVERY BELIEVER

In this way, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." —Philippians 1:6

The church at Philippi was the first Christian community that Paul established in Eastern Europe. Despite the adversities that these believers faced in that city, they were an exemplary, faithful, and generous church. They believed in Jesus and were bearing witness to their faith in the face of hostility, but when Paul wrote his letter to them, he revealed his deep conviction that the Lord was *still* working on them.

When we think that we have already reached a certain spiritual level, God adds a new stepping stone to our path of growth. The believer's path to fullness of life is never static but is surrounded by new and dynamic experiences.

In His public ministry, Jesus clearly manifested His redemptive purpose when He said: "I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). The first chapters of Genesis show the contrast between the perfection of the creative act (evidenced in the divine design of everything as harmonious, fruitful, and full of life) and the tragedy of sin that damaged everything. Sin not only altered the spiritual arena; it altered the harmony of all the various human relationships: humans with God, with themselves, with their neighbors, and with creation.

But God was not paralyzed in the face of the ravages of sin. His divine plan continued in force to redeem all of His creation (Colossians 1:20) and transform human life in all its dimensions, so that everyone (without distinction of nationality, culture, race, gender, or social condition) could enjoy the full life that God made possible through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit.²

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP: A WAY OF LIFE

"... grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" –2 Peter 3:18, KJV

What distinguishes a Christian disciple? The

marks of a disciple are the radical confession that Jesus Christ is Lord of the whole of his or her life and the commitment to follow Him faithfully each day (Romans 10:9). In Wesleyan terms, this is the essence of Christian perfection, which refers to "purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God. It is the giving God all our heart; it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers."³

From this perspective, Christian discipleship is not only a cognitive experience of indoctrination into the rudiments of faith but a lifestyle in the Spirit who accompanies the believer, transforming him or her through sanctifying grace into the image of the Lord.

If God has provided His undeserved grace for our growth, then what is *our* role? Should we passively wait for His grace to perfect us? On the contrary, being aware of the divine purpose to transform us from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18), we must be intentional in seeking all possible resources that God can use for that transformation.

For Wesley, the means of grace were divine channels for communicating God's undeserved gift and helping us heal all of the things distorted by sin.⁴ In that sense, practicing the means of grace becomes a source of growth. On this path, the believer does not aspire to become independent from the Master. Instead, as the believer advances in the pilgrimage, he or she discovers that the greatest need is for the Master's presence and divine grace. Christian maturity is distinguished by a greater and absolute dependence on Jesus.

GRACE AND SUFFERING: COMPANIONS ON THE PILGRIMAGE

"... what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel." —Philippians 1:12

Relating grace with joy and pain seems to be a contradiction because we live in a world that resists suffering. We flee from any situation that may cause any kind of discomfort, and many times we measure the quality of our spiritual life by the absence of difficulties. We

René Padilla and Harold Segura, ed. Ser, hacer y decir: bases bíblicas de la misión integral (Buenos Aires: Editorial Kairós, 2006), 8.

^{3.} Translator's note: This is paragraph 27 of Plain Account of Christian Perfection. The author quotes the Spanish version, which translates directly as "purity of intention, dedication of all life to God. It is giving God our whole heart, allowing him to rule our life." 4. Translator's note: This is a direct translation of the Spanish, which the author cites as the Spanish Works of Wesley Volume I. Sermon: The Means of Grace. (North Carolina: Wesley Heritage Foundation Inc, nd), 313-332.

have not learned to value the contribution that the valley of pain can bring to our maturity.

The New Testament gives repeated examples of suffering as a divine instrument for the perfection of the Christian life (Romans 8:18; 1 Peter 1:7, Hebrews 11:39-40). James describes clearly how the chain reaction formed by trial, faith, and patience contributes to our perfection and fullness (James 1:2-4). It is necessary to clarify that this does not mean the believer must seek self-penance as the way to purify him or herself spiritually; rather, he or she is someone who believes in a sovereign and present God who walks with us and redeems the most painful situations as a means of forming our character. And that is also evidence of His grace.

When Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians, he was in prison, knowing that he could die. He was suffering for the sake of the gospel, yet he could recognize that everything that happened to him had a greater purpose. Suffering without acknowledging that God has a plan leads us to despair, but seeing His presence even through the haze of pain gives us rest as we are refined and perfected by His grace.

OUR HIGHEST CALL: TO BE LIKE CHRIST

The core of the Epistle to the Philippians is the Christological hymn found in chapter two, verses 5-11, which masterfully summarizes the incarnation, work, death, resurrection, and exaltation of the Lord. Paul implores the Philippian believers to imitate that same attitude (2:5) and demonstrate it in their faithfulness (1:27-30), harmony, and humility (2:2-3).

Accepting the lordship of Jesus Christ is the challenge needed in order to reach the "whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). That is the goal for every Christian, and therefore His grace continues to operate in all areas of our lives. In this regard, "the divine plan is not fulfilled only by the new covenant . . . but also by the restoration of the divine image, begun in regeneration, continued in entire sanctification, and will conclude in glorification . . . Although the final transformation still lies in the future, the Holy Spirit works effectively now within the followers of Christ to make them like Christ."⁵

5. John A. Knight, *In His Image* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1979), 166.

For Christians, Jesus is our unique model because of His holy life that He offered in sacrifice for the love of humanity and the perfect consistency between His preaching to humans and His attention to their human needs. For this reason, the call to holiness in the image of Christ is not a solitary, individualistic call, exclusively personal in scope. With their lives transformed by the grace of God and in the power of the Spirit, the disciples *"let see"*⁶ their master and announced the good news in a complete way: not only through their words but in their love towards others. When we yearn to be like our master, we can make Charles Wesley's hymn "Only Exalted Divine Love" our own by asking the Lord:

Now fulfill Your promise, give us purification; in You well secured, let us see full salvation take us from glory to glory to the heavenly mansion, and before You there, prostrate we give You devotion.⁷

No human methods or work would be sufficient to pay for our salvation, sanctification, and growth toward wholeness. Only the wonderful and free grace of God makes it possible for us to receive that gift through the perfect work of Christ.

Let us walk with faith and faithfulness toward our high calling. God is executing His eternal plan to perfect us in this pilgrimage, and His grace is working in us through His Spirit.

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^{6.} *Translator's note:* This is an idiomatic phrase that means "allow something to be seen" (it is used in the negative sense in the phrase "can't see the forest for the trees"). 7. *Translator's note:* This is the direct translation from Spanish of the hymn "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling." As you can see, the translation is not literal, but poetic. The meaning is not necessarily the same in Spanish as in Wesley's English.

LIFE WITH GOD by KLAUS ARNOLD

ne of the most powerful stories of a life-changing encounter with Jesus in the New Testament is the story of the two disciples on the road to the town of Emmaus on the day of the resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:13-35). Although this is a unique story, it has become an example of the journey of grace for many—certainly for me.

What is amazing to me about the journey of grace is that God is working *for* and *in* our lives before we are aware of it. It is this grace that "goes before" (prevenient grace) that makes it possible for us to even begin thinking about God and being able to respond to Him. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus experienced that truth in a powerful way. Jesus was with the two of them on their journey before they even knew that it was the Lord (Luke 24:15-16). That is exactly what happened in my own life.

I was born into a traditional Lutheran family in Germany. Growing up, I learned Bible stories in church, my mother prayed with us, and my grandmother admonished us to live God-fearing lives. As a child, I enjoyed that and liked the stories. When I became a teenager, it was not so cool to go to church—and so I didn't for some time until one day a friend invited me to a special church service of a newly developing Church of the Nazarene with lots of young people. The songs were sung with joy and enthusiasm. The preacher spoke in a way that touched my heart. That evening was followed by many more and other meetings of the youth group until one day I felt "my heart burning within me" (Luke 24:32) and I recognized that God was inviting me into a personal relationship with Him.



PSALM 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

I entrusted my life to Him. At that point, I thought it was the beginning of my journey of grace. In a sense that was true in that I began to follow Jesus more intentionally. However, as I looked back at my life, I became aware that God had been with me all of my life—in my family, in church, through people around me, and in countless other ways.

What helped to bring about the decisive change to follow Jesus in my life were moments when the Scripture was opened to me, just as Jesus did for the two disciples on the road. For me, that happened through preaching, Bible studies, Bible reading, devotional and theological literature, songs, testimonies, people giving me advice for life, and simple, personal conversations. The necessary information I needed to understand who God was and who I was before God had been revealed through the Bible. The Bible has become nourishment for my soul, just as God had said to Israel in Deuteronomy 8:3: "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

There are numerous examples in my life where Scripture helped me make important decisions. I had just finished my education in business management and was getting ready to enter my first "real job" when I felt the Lord calling me to pastoral ministry. Through Bible reading, sermons, and Bible studies in the youth group, I sensed God drawing me to consider studying for ministry. I was going through a battle. There had never been a minister in our family before—why should I become one?

One evening, as I was getting ready for bed, I looked at the brazen cross that had been hanging over my bed since my confirmation in the Lutheran church when I was 14. I took it from the wall and turned it around. Inscribed on the back was the verse that was given to me at the confirmation service as a life-verse. To be honest, I never thought of that verse before that evening. Yet there I read, "The Master has come and is calling for you!" (John 11:28). Wow—God was speaking loudly to me! The next day I talked to my parents about what I was going through and shared that I had the intention of preparing for ministry. Although my parents did not fully understand and they were hesitant to accept my decision, my mom said to me some time later: "When you were a little boy and your grandmother saw you playing one day with other kids she said to me, 'Mark my words, this boy will become a preacher one day!" My mother laughed at her remark but never forgot it; now it seemed to be coming true. Scripture, in the context of a personal relationship with God and a community of faith in the presence of the Holy Spirit, is the guiding principle on the journey of grace.

Another important aspect of the journey of grace is that nobody should travel alone. It is not a solo trip where a follower of Jesus is on his or her own. The disciples on the road to Emmaus were not alone—we read of two of them traveling together. The journey of grace is experienced as a community. The importance of this point must not be underestimated. God created us to be in communities, in relationships—with Him, with other people, and even with the rest of creation. Therefore, community is fundamental for the journey of grace. Think about it: we all need support, encouragement, help, exhortation, and even warning words from others who love us. And we must do the same for others in our lives, especially in the community of faith. The Bible emphasizes this point when it speaks about the "people of Israel" or "people of God," the "body of Christ," the "household of God," and instructs us to live intentionally in that community to be a light to the world and make a difference. Together, we are called to participate with God in His mission to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

When I look at my own journey of grace, it would have been impossible without the help and support of other people. Quite a few of them had become mentors to me at different stages of my life, and some even throughout most of my journey. It became clear to me that I was also called to accompany others on their journeys, some for a shorter time and others for a longer time—to help, encourage, or admonish them at times, all in order to help them on the journey to become stronger followers of Jesus. I find one more important aspect of the journey of grace in this story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. After they had realized that it was Jesus who was with them and whom they had encountered, they could not keep that good news for themselves. They returned to Jerusalem to share what they had experienced with the other disciples. The journey of grace did not start with me—I was invited to join others on this journey—but it also doesn't end with me! I must invite others to join in the journey of grace. This is not so much a demand but rather flows out of the joy experienced and the love received. I just cannot keep it to myself!

I am thankful that I have had the privilege of sharing my faith and my experience with other people in my life. One of the first people I shared my faith with was my own brother. He was skeptical in the beginning, but God was at work in his life. He met other Christians, among them a girl who would later become his wife. To be a part of that change in my brother's life was one of the most exciting experiences for me. I began to understand that the purpose and goal of the journey of grace was not "for me to get to heaven." Well, that was part of it and certainly one of the results of following Jesus, but the main goal was to be transformed into Christlikeness (sanctification) in order to share this good news with others so that they would experience the grace and love of God in the fullest measure.

God has created humanity in His image. Through sin, this image was corrupted and distorted. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, God has been on a mission to restore that image in us and to renew all of creation. And as He does that, He invites us (His people) to participate in that mission. That is the purpose of the journey of grace, and the goal is that we will experience God's presence and glory in the renewed-creation for all eternity.

The journey of grace is not a program of the church, nor is it a method to disciple others. The journey of grace is *life with God*! That is what I want my life to be—a journey of grace; I invite you to embark on that journey as well!

Klaus Arnold is global education and clergy development director for the Church of the Nazarene.

AFTERWORD

OUR FIRST ESTATE

aving listened intently to the minister, Jim began examining his life. The talk of intimacy with God touched a nerve that revealed his inner need. During the question and answer session, Jim couldn't remain silent. Rising to his feet, he explained that many years ago, he had given his life to Jesus. He said, "I have done everything I should do. I have attended church, been faithful to Bible reading and prayer, and financial giving to my church. Yet, I have rarely experienced intimacy with God. I have most often felt relational distance rather than a relational connection with God."

Stepping down from the platform, the minister walked to the back of the room and stood face-to-face with Jim to ask an unexpected question. He said, "If your parents gave you a T-shirt with a label describing how they felt about you, what would it say?"

As Jim reflected, tears welled up in his eyes and began flowing down his face. He quietly confessed, "The T-shirt would say, 'You're an illegitimate child." The minister only asked one question in response. "Jim, are you willing to let Jesus have your T-shirt?"

Jim hugged the minister in an embrace and loudly said, "Yes!" As he wept bitterly in the arms of the minister, he began his healing journey toward an identity transformation. At that very moment, he gained the awareness of being a beloved child of God rather than being imprisoned as the victim of his pain. The declaration that "it was for freedom that Christ set us free" (Galatians 5:1, NASB) became a lived experience for Jim.

Faithful discipleship requires attention to several disciplines. We must study the Bible for faith to rest on the solid foundation of God's Word. We must give attention to sound theology in order to remain faithful to orthodox Christian belief. Most importantly, we must completely surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to transform us in Christlikeness through a personal relationship with God.

Being known by God will likely involve awareness of our felt experience with God, shaped by the relational and emotional mapping of the self, which informs our world view. Allowing God into those spaces is necessary so that we can experience God as He is, revealed in and through Jesus Christ and not as viewed through our broken selves.

John Wesley said, "To recover our first estate, from which we are thus fallen, is the one thing now needful – to re-exchange the image of Satan for the image of God, bondage for freedom, sickness for health . . . The one work we have to do is to return from the gates of death to perfect soundness; to have our diseases cured, our wounds healed, and our uncleanness done away."¹

Is there any label on your T-shirt that is defining you in your brokenness? Or is the unashamed love of the risen Christ the foundation of your identity and worth?

John Comstock is leader of The Discipleship Place through Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International.

^{1. &}quot;The One Needful Thing" in Jeremy Ayers, "John Wesley's Therapeutic Understanding of Salvation," *Encounter* 63, no. 3 (2002): 273.

DISCIPLESHIP IS AN ONGOING JOURNEY OF GRACE

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AN INTERESTING, but puzzling statistic recently came to light. According to an analysis, 26% of Nazarene churches in the USA failed to make *any* payment toward their P&B allocation in 2020.

While there may be any number of reasons for this, keep in mind that when a U.S. Nazarene church pays at least a dollar to the P&B Fund, they provide their eligible pastor with a \$500 a month disability benefit. Beyond this, they also receive Survivor Benefit coverage of up to \$30,000.* When a church pays *nothing*, the pastor receives *no* benefit.

All it takes is a dollar. But we encourage churches to do much more, because giving to the P&B Fund is the lifeblood of the benefits and services we provide for more than 17,000 active and retired ministers and church-employed laypersons. Pensions and Benefits receives no operational support from the World Evangelism Fund (WEF).

Giving to the P&B Fund – It's the best investment your church will ever make in the life of your pastor.

*Survivor Benefit for active eligible ministers age 50 and under is \$30K, \$15K for age 51 to 70, and \$7.5K for age 71 to 75. For retired ministers (and active over age 75), the Survivor Benefit is based on years of service and is \$1.5K for 10 to 20 years, \$3K for 21 to 30 years, and \$6K for 31+ years. See the *P&B-Provided Benefits Guide* at **pbusa.org** for eligibility details.



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