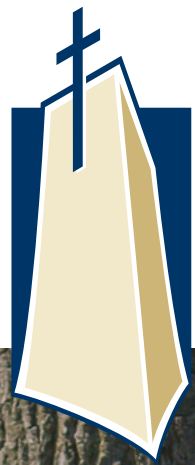


THE JOURNEY

2018 GRACE BIBLE COLLEGE



Stories



Stories of grace, growth, and hope. These are the stories that have shaped us.
And they are the stories that will shape our future.



From the President

Stories.

This has been our chapel theme this year, and we are sharing the theme with you through this issue of *The Journey* magazine. Everyone loves a good story with a hero, a villain or obstacle, with twists and turns and a magical ending which they can only imagine. It can be so enjoyable to experience a good story! Some people really know how to tell a story, don't they? We are able to read these great stories in books, listen to them described in the lyrics of music, or see them put on the movie or television screen for others to enjoy. *Our everyday lives are actually a story, but they are really only the story within the greater story.*

God's story is the greater story, and He has revealed it in His Word. He created the world, man fell into sin and was separated from God. Yet, in His love, God orchestrated an unimaginable way of rescue and reconciliation for the "enemies" (Isaiah 59:2; Ephesians 2:1-3) of God to be His beloved children (John 1:12; 3:16). The Bible tells this amazing action and dramatic love story: *Even when we were dead in our transgressions, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8). *He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him* (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is the most amazing story! It could not have been conceived by human intellect.

In this issue of *The Journey*, we attempt to show how Grace Bible College is an exciting and meaningful part of God's story today, as it was in the past, and will be into the future. For almost eighty years, we have been seeking to align our educational efforts with God's bigger story and mission in this world. God's grace is the context and the content of our story played out in the lives of students, staff, faculty, and alumni. Remember that our 70-90 years on this earth is very short in the overall scheme of things, and yet those years can be very significant if the actions we take and decisions we make live on in the eternal story of God! Enjoy the story!



Ken Bruce Kemper, President



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THE STORY OF GRACE CONTINUES

HELLO
my name is

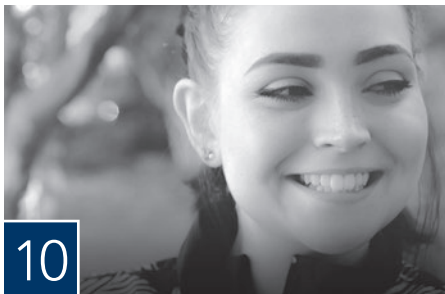
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THE STORY OF GRACE CONTINUES

by Ken Bruce Kemper, President

The story of Grace Bible College is a rich, blessed story. The founding fathers began the institution as an evening school for lay leadership in 1939 with Dr. Charles F. Baker teaching classes. A group of Grace Gospel Fellowship pastors requested Dr. Baker's courses form the foundation for a Bible institute to train leaders to expand the ministry across the country and worldwide, and in 1945 the day school began. In these early years, young men and women came to study at the Fundamental Bible Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Early classes met in the church's basement on 26th and Hadley, and later at the State Street campus. As the Institute grew, it became a College; still holding a clear focus to fulfill their purpose of training ministers to understand the Gospel of the Grace of God (Acts 20:24), and to be ambassadors of this grace for reconciliation to a lost world (2 Corinthians 5:20).

As the story of our College continued, the staff, faculty, and administration kept a keen eye on the core values as well as the purpose for which the institution came into existence. The core values are today expressed in these four key foundational pillars, or cornerstones:

Grace Theology

Our clear commitment to God's plan for the Church, the Body of Christ today as distinct from that of other dispensations, and His work through the Church to reconcile the world to God (Ephesians 3:1-10 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

Bible-Centered

Our educational programs will be thoroughly infused and permeated with biblical learning as relevant for the learning and understanding of all disciplines, and for ministry and practice (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Ministry Focused

Each of our students is gifted by God; and our educational program is designed to equip each one for meaningful purpose according to that gifting, within the church and beyond it in various contexts, according to their diverse vocational callings (Romans 12:1-8).

Transformational Relationships

God works through people. Spiritual maturity as well as ministry passion has always been multiplied through people who are used by God to lead, redeem, and transform others who, in turn, touch others (2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:11-16).

In the story of our institution, we have seen these core values lived out in class after class of our graduates, as well as in the lives of our alumni as they remember those values instilled while at the College that continue to impact their lives. The community of personal relationships between students and instructors, administrators, or staff, as well as between our students, is extremely powerful, living on in the memories of our students for years. Often these stories involve students on athletic, music, or ministry teams traveling to serve at churches or overseas. They experience all kinds of things together over the miles and the time they spend together. Last November, my wife Kathy and I, along with Nathan Johnson, had the privilege of serving alongside thirteen students in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. Our team grew in observable ways by serving and working hard together. We learned so much due to that experience. Grace Bible College celebrates these stories, and will continue to create more of these kinds of experiences for our students just as we have always done in the past. This is our culture! It is our goal to create graduates who learn how to serve others and respect one another.

The purpose of our institution has always been one of focus upon the students' progress toward effective ministry. Prior to assuming my role at Grace Bible College, the previous leadership worked hard to articulate a mission statement which described our educational purpose. It states: *Graduating Godly Individuals Prepared To Serve Christ In Church And Society*. This statement inspires – as well as guards – our mission as an institution. It is not overly specific, nor does it state our core values (such as our doctrinal position or all of our learning outcomes), but it is clear and concise. It is more important than our function, and in fact, it gives clarity to what our daily tasks are about. We communicate this to new employees as well as to students, and we annually evaluate how effectively we are fulfilling our mission. Our core values and our mission statement are an assessment – or a “litmus test” of sorts – for our yearly budget and operations, as well as for our personnel. They make sure we stay in line with what we are here to do today, much as we did in the distant past.

This is a story about fulfilling our mission statement, which is built upon our core values. The story began in 1939, and has endured three location changes from Hadley Street and State Street in Milwaukee, to our present Aldon Street campus here in Wyoming, Michigan. This mission has endured three official name changes as well as four presidential changes. We have nearly outgrown our current campus and as we have explored the possibility of acquiring additional land or relocating the campus, we have closely guarded our mission and core values, knowing this is who Grace Bible College is and will continue to be in the days and years ahead. Our forefathers as well as our present leadership have worked to effectively fulfill this mission statement in the context of the current culture and time. The move to Grand Rapids in 1961, and subsequent changing of our name to Grace Bible College was dramatic, yet it aided the leadership to fulfill the mission of the College into the future.

Seventy-nine years after those evening classes began in Milwaukee, we presently stand (in 2018) with a student body of 1,000 students on campus and online with degrees offered at the Associates, Bachelors, and Masters Degree levels. We continue to be guided by our core values and our mission statement. As the Board of Directors and Administration continue to pray and work hard to lead the College forward into the future, our vision will give heart and legs to the mission in the days to come. We will need to be effective and grow student experiences through technology advancements, facilities upgrades, and educational methodologies. We will need to complete our name study. We need to identify the most appropriate name to allow us to fulfill our mission into the future. We will need to grow our resources, including our student body and ministry partners in local churches, to

provide quality education in a very competitive – and sometimes hostile – environment. We will need to develop scholarships for ministry students to become pastors of Grace Churches or church planters. We will prayerfully discuss how to build a viable biblical university on the core foundation entrusted to us by Dr. Baker, Pastor Stam, Pastor Reich, Dr. Dean, Dr. Olson, Dr. DeWitt, Dr. Vinton, and my father, E. Bruce Kemper. Our stewardship is clear as God has entrusted us to fulfill the mission passed on to us by those who have written the story prior to our time.

Fifteen years have gone by since I was called to come back with my wife and three children to the United States from Tanzania, East Africa to lead this institution as president. At times it seems like yesterday, and other times I think I've aged twenty five years during this time, and have turned gray and old. God has proved Himself faithful! He has not only preserved His College, but has graciously enlarged its influence and impact. He is leading us into an exciting future for our story even though it will be very hard work. God has blessed us with extremely talented and hardworking faculty, staff, administrators, and board members. These leaders understand our mission and work joyfully and strategically. In 2017 we lost my father, E. Bruce Kemper, who was my hero. We also lost our long standing Board Chairman Rick Velting, who deeply impacted my life and my leadership of the College. This is how the story is written, and continues – year after year, page after page, and person after person whom God uses. It is the same in our lives. As stewards of this story, we cannot selfishly hoard it or align it only with one person, as we all lead and serve for only a short period of time. Grace is God's institution, and the names and faces will change as God's mission and plan is fulfilled. Our task is simply to remain sensitive and humble to His leading.



Our vision is to be influential in an increasingly difficult society where the Bible is not valued. We believe God would have us grow our student body, expand our degree offerings, and seriously upgrade our facilities as we write the next chapter of our story for His glory. I imagine that each person reading this page has had some part in the story of GBC. We can write the next chapter together, making it significant through prayer, financial partnership, and other types of involvement. There is much to be done, and we will need greater participation than ever before! What a blessing to be part of this incredible story of blessing called *Grace Bible College*.

HELLO
my name is

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

THE NAME CHANGE STUDY PROCESS

by Dr. Gretchen Records Johnson,
Chair of the Name Change Study Committee

In 1939, a small school to train laymen and Sunday School teachers was opened in Wisconsin as Milwaukee Bible Institute. With changes in curriculum, the School became Milwaukee Bible College. In 1961, the move to Grand Rapids, Michigan precipitated the name change to Grace Bible College. With a growing student body, online classes, a growing number of baccalaureate degrees, as well as master's degree programs, the Board of Directors decided it was time to explore the need for another name change.

Multiple factors point to this being the appropriate time to consider a name change. First, and most exciting is that GBC now meets state requirements to be recognized as a university! Second, statistics from recent research conducted by the Barna Group show that the number of students who desire to attend a Bible College is decreasing each year due to their perceptions. Our own experiences in recruitment validate this research, and the recruitment teams have also found that many individuals assume GBC only offers pastoral or missions programs. Additionally, a name change could also aid in the accreditation process with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) when new programs are offered, and job placement will be made easier for our graduates with potential employers.

As an alumni and board member of GBC, I am excited to see new programs, graduate studies, and a growing student body (both in traditional and adult studies). When I am on campus, I see authenticity, spiritual growth, and students being prepared to serve Christ in church and society. The change over the past few years means more individuals are being prepared to serve.

And yet...we know we could not be where we are today without those first leaders who opened that small school in Milwaukee. Therefore, it is important to pause a moment to reiterate those things that will NOT change – regardless of the fact that the College's name may change. These include:

- *OUR COMMITMENT TO THE GRACE DOCTRINE*
- *OUR MISSION STATEMENT: GRADUATING GODLY INDIVIDUALS PREPARED TO SERVE CHRIST IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY*
- *OUR FOCUS ON ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE*
- *OUR FOCUS ON BIBLICAL STUDIES THROUGH MAINTAINING OUR ASSOCIATION FOR BIBLICAL HIGHER EDUCATION (ABHE) ACCREDITATION*
- *OUR THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY PROGRAMS (AS WELL AS BUSINESS, HUMAN SERVICES, WORSHIP ARTS, ETC.)*

The process of searching for the best name for the College has been a prayerful process and was conducted with thoughtful discernment. Initially, a group of current students, alumni, faculty, staff and donors met regularly. They reviewed the Barna research, studied data from other colleges and universities that engaged in a similar process. Additionally, we conducted a survey (via mail and online), met with students, faculty, and staff, and led two town hall sessions. To support the process further, we met with multiple marketing firms and found a great team to work with us to find the best name. This group reviewed all of the data collected from the surveys and town halls, reviewed the research, met with the administration and board members, and then guided several focus groups.

In October, several names were presented to the Board. Nearly a year after the Board initially commissioned the name study process, and after much prayer and thoughtful consideration, they unanimously voted to continue to move forward with a potential new name for the College, pending state, federal trademark, and legal approval. We pray we will be able to complete this process, and announce this news in the near future.

We are so grateful for the support of alumni, faculty, staff, students, donors, and other friends of the College who completed surveys, participated in town halls and focus groups, and who prayed for the committee and the Board through this process. We ask that you continue to pray for the roll-out of the new name to our constituents sometime in 2018.





Homecoming

Friends and family of GBC gathered last October for our Annual Homecoming celebration. Traditions like our Fourth Annual 5K Tiger Dash and Bake-off were a big hit! Other activities included a special welcome back chapel on Friday morning with guest speaker, Dr. Mat Loverin. Beautiful weather that evening allowed alumni and friends to enjoy a family style barbeque and delicious s'mores outdoors by the fire pit in the ravine. Later that night, Baker Chapel was the venue for the "GBC's Got Talent" Show. Alumni, faculty, staff, and students shared their "talents" - ranging from songs, magic tricks, to hilarious storytelling. Congratulations to alumnus Linda Holton who took first place with her rendering of "Rindercella."

Two outstanding men of God are being honored as Alumni of the Year for 2017-2018.



Harold Petersen (1954) served as a pastor of numerous churches within the Grace Gospel Fellowship following his graduation from Milwaukee Bible College. He met his wife, Corrine while at college, and they served the Lord together faithfully for many, many years prior to her homegoing in 2006. Dr. Sam Vinton recounts, "Even though Harold pastored a number of healthy churches, God gave him the ability to pastor struggling churches. By working with the leadership and congregation, he was able to see at least three churches restored to full health before he moved on." Harold served on the boards of Grace Bible College and Grace Ministries International. Harold currently lives in Ocean Shores, Washington, and lost his wife, Barbara in November of 2017. We are thankful for his long legacy of service to the Lord!

Tom Thelen (2005) is an author and a motivational speaker to young people. After graduating from GBC, he served as a youth minister for several years. Following a stint in marketing for an engineering firm, he felt the call to go back into a ministry for teens. In 2013, he published the book "Victimproof: The Student's Guide To End Bullying," and developed curriculum combining video lessons for students with a teacher's guide to aid schools in addressing this serious issue. Tom and his wife, Casie live in Lowell, Michigan with their four children. Tom currently speaks at over one hundred school assemblies each year.





The Story of EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING at Grace Bible College

by Dr. Timothy Rumley

The story of experiential learning at Grace Bible College began long before the College existed. If experiential learning is defined as learning by doing, it is not hard to see that it was a core part of the Apostle Paul’s educational strategy. His ministry partners knew his teaching, observed his life (2 Timothy 3:10-11), and even assisted in his writing (1 Corinthians 1:1, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, etc.). Their education also included “assignments” that made them learn by doing. Paul extended his ministry by sending or leaving his protégés with churches (1 Timothy 1:3, Titus 1:5, 1 Corinthians 4:17, etc.). Timothy, Titus, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, and Trophimus (Acts 20:4) learned how to minister through hands-on ministry.

THE PAST

When GBC was founded as Milwaukee Bible Institute in 1939, it was part of the Bible college movement which began in the nineteenth century. Leaders insisted that Bible education must be “practical” – the word they used for hands-on learning. This idea of experiential learning was present in the DNA of the movement when GBC was founded as well as when it became a day school in 1945. Board minutes from 1948 recount that “Mr. Stam brought up the question of practical work and . . . it was agreed that now would be a good time to get all the information necessary for our practical work department and to begin making up charts for information as to what students are engaged in what practical work.” Experiential education was a regular department of the College and part of the students’ experience. In subsequent years, publications such as yearbooks and catalogs confirmed that Christian ministry remained important, providing “excellent training for the students’ future ministry and an outlet for the acquired knowledge which they receive in school,” and affirming that MBI/GBC wholeheartedly believed in “learning by experience and by practice: classroom teaching must be supplemented with on-the-job training.”

THE PRESENT

Christian Ministry

Christian ministry, of course, is not just a part of GBC’s history; it remains experiential learning for today’s students as well. Students at GBC take six semesters of courses that require involvement in out-of-classroom Christian ministry experience. In recent statistics, 33% of the students served in church ministries, 50% served in a community ministry of some type, and 17% served fellow students on campus in some capacity. Ninety-seven different sites around West Michigan were impacted by these students, totaling over 4,000 hours of experiential learning!

Mentoring

Mentoring in local public schools is one excellent example of ministry involvement in the community. Senior student Megan participated in this program for three years. She learned to think of others above herself as she developed a mentoring relationship with a girl coming from a disadvantaged background. Christian ministry has taught Alese to manage her time wisely, and Reanna now knows that many people need the Lord and she is learning how to best communicate the gospel to them. Zachary serves on the same team as Reanna and says ministry is teaching him that he has to help people much more than he ever thought he had to. “Otherwise, nothing happens,” he said. Bethany added that she is experiencing God working through her as she mentors a student.





Internships

Another example of experiential learning at GBC is internships. Seniors in every degree program are required to obtain at least 120 hours of experience in a professional or ministry setting related to their area of study. The students are supervised by a faculty member as well as someone at the place of their internship. Students must reflect on their semester in order to consolidate their learning, and extend it to other settings. This “outside of the classroom” learning does not wait for the student’s senior year. “Learning by doing” is incorporated into many classrooms as well.

Human Services

Students must visit at least six agencies during their first semester, collecting business cards from these contacts. Based on these visits, they prepare a presentation as well as a paper (after all, it is still college!). This becomes very important later when they must find a place to do their internships! This experience teaches the students persistence because employees at agencies are not always readily available for a student project. They also learn empathy, as their feelings of being ignored or given the run around may be similar to the feelings of clients whom they will serve in the future. Additionally the human services program includes at least nine courses with hands-on components, ranging from weekly visits with older adults for a psychology course to visiting (just visiting!) the jail for criminal justice.

Worship Arts

These students are also given a multitude of hands-on experiences, including leading worship at churches, camps, youth groups, retreats, and other venues. Annual department events allow students to share musical pieces, testimonies, and dramatic interpretations of Scripture. In addition, students lead worship in chapels, learn video and audio technologies, and provide videos and recordings for the GBC website and other departments on campus. Students and faculty members have also traveled to Tanzania teaching music and worship seminars.

Biblical Studies

Youth ministry students visit David’s House for an afternoon of ministry to the ten residents who live there. Students spend time with the residents, pray with them, and serve them supper. Even though these residents are not “youth,” students learn important aspects of a biblical philosophy of youth ministry by serving.

Business

Students in the business program are utilizing a new process for class projects using a survey to find out how local businesses accomplish key course concepts. Survey results become raw material to use for their paper (yes, it is still college) and presentation. This allows students to gain first-hand knowledge about a local company, and the experience of teaching their peers what they learned (an experiential learning activity in itself!).

Studying Abroad

Experiential learning through travel is also available to our students. Trips abroad allow our students to study, as well as have first-hand experience with great art (Italy), biblical sites (Israel), and ministry (Ireland). Students touring Israel learn about biblical sites, history, cultural values, and political oppression. “I am excited to read the Old Testament because I can now picture some of the places,” related one student. Dr. Long, who leads this tour, relates their visit to the Holocaust Museum, Yad VaShem: “I stood with two or three students in front of a display of Christian anti-Semitic propaganda. One of them said she had no idea that the church was responsible for anti-Jewish hatred. It challenged her to speak out as a Christian against social injustice.”

The Ireland trip brings faith, culture, and a personal human element to course learning. The course includes reading and classroom learning about Irish history and the differences and similarities between US culture and Irish culture. The students tour significant cultural and historical sites, worship with Irish Christians, and minister at Dublin Christian Mission. Students were often pushed far beyond their comfort zone and gained cultural perspective by serving food and providing clothing to the homeless, many of whom were struggling with heroin addiction.

THE FUTURE

Grace Bible College is planning future growth for hands-on education. A semester abroad program is being developed with potential locations such as Belize, Ireland, Nicaragua, Zambia, and possibly Turkey. Students will have the opportunity to earn credit for cross-cultural experiences, studying the local culture and history, while obtaining biblical and theological learning in the context of other cultures. As the College continues to expand its programs, all students will go beyond an education that is merely intellectual, scholastic, and traditional. They will integrate the theories and research of their book and classroom learning with hands-on experience across cultures and locales.

Just as Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus, Corinth, and Philippi to care for the church and spread the gospel, may it be true of Grace Bible College that we sent future graduates to cities near and far, prepared to serve Christ in church and society. Those graduates will be well prepared to start businesses, care for orphans, plant churches, or lead worship because they have already done so as students. They will learn from the best who preceded them; they will try out new ideas with coaches and mentors to guide them; and they will find out what it is like to cross cultures for Christ. All of that will occur while they learn, so when they graduate they will be prepared to serve Christ, just like Titus, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, and Trophimus.



Cheyenne's Story

Once in a great while, a story comes along that not only touches your heart when you read it, but impacts your life for years to come. Cheyenne's story is one of those stories. Cheyenne DeVelasco and her family visited GBC several times in the months leading up to her acceptance. She was so excited to attend GBC and planned to be at Check-in Day on August 24 and join her classmates for orientation the following day. However, God's plans for Cheyenne meant that her next residence would not be at GBC but in heaven. On August 20, 2017, Cheyenne went "home" to be with her Lord and Savior following her three year battle with osteosarcoma. Here is her story, in her own words:

Hello, my name is Cheyenne DeVelasco. On June 14, 2014, I was diagnosed with a bone cancer called osteosarcoma in my left leg on my fibula bone. I started chemotherapy immediately and just a short four months later, I had successful surgery on my left leg to remove the large mass that had grown to almost the size of a golf ball. As March 2015 rolled around, I thought that I had finished chemo and was rid of this disease; however, that would not be the case. Once again, a small tumor appeared in my left leg. This time, it had also spread to my lungs, where I developed multiple small nodules on both sides. What I thought was finally coming to an end, was starting all over again. Since my first relapse, I have relapsed two more times, had two more surgeries to my leg, and surgery on both of my lungs. My latest surgery was an amputation of my left leg just above the knee.

Since I began this journey, I've been on eight different types of chemotherapy drugs which have not been able to fully knock out this disease. This is why I opted to amputate my leg; the idea being that we cut off the source. Currently, I am on a new oral chemo called Pazopanib that I take every night. For now, it is unclear how long I will need to be on this medication, but we are anticipating at least a year. Each month I have a scheduled clinic visit with my oncologist, along with CT scans every three months to check to see if the lung nodules are staying stable or if there are any new nodules. I am happy to say that the disease is currently stable and not spreading or growing anywhere in my body.

I never really thought about what my life would be like once I discovered I had this type of cancer. I lived what I believed was one of the most normal lives a young teen could live. I was on the Volleyball team and Track and Field team. I hung out with my friends, liked to go shopping, enjoyed listening to music, and loved going to the movies with friends. Never did I think I would be including CANCER in my life.

Cancer is (in all truthfulness) a beast. You can be in perfect health one minute, in gut-wrenching sickness the next and while you're stuck in the hospital, life moves forward without you. As life moves on without you, the treatments feel like they will last until the end of time and can really start to bring you down. Instead, all you can do is focus on those still fighting and believe with all your heart that you will be another survivor. Unfortunately, you won't be able to live life as normal as previously, because your body is taking a huge beating with chemo/radiation, but you can't let that get you down. There will be blessings that you receive, that you may never have experienced if it weren't for the path you are on now.

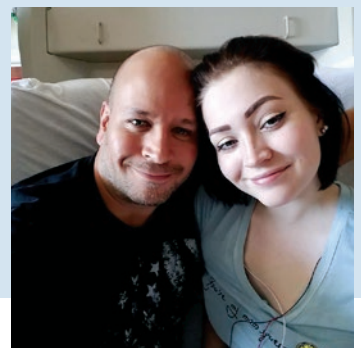
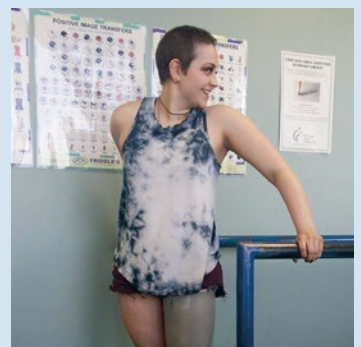
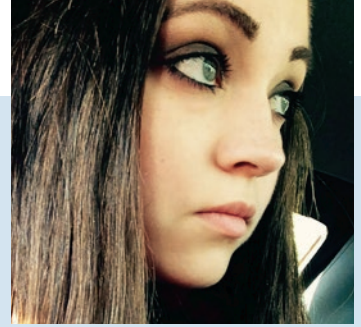
My biggest personal blessing has been my newly chosen career path in Exercise Science. I will be attending Grace Bible College in Wyoming, Michigan and majoring in Exercise Science there. My goal is to someday work as a personal trainer for amputees. I originally desired a career in music. While I still love music and plan to continue to write as a hobby, my career path changed when I started a class in Sports Medicine this past year. It created in me an even stronger desire, the desire to study science and pursue involvement in research or therapy.

Having had my leg amputated has made getting around a bit more challenging, but nothing that I can't overcome. Since I began working with my physical therapist, Natalie, at Marianjoy, I have been able to increase my core strength, my ability to walk, jump and most importantly run. Another one of my goals is to join the volleyball team at Grace Bible College.

One of the main things I have learned is.....this life "experience" can take away your hair, health, physical strength, limbs, and so much more physically. What you cannot do is let it take away the warrior inside. You can pull through the punches thrown at us because you are stronger than the cancer living inside. I will not stay down. "I will fight and I will win!"

Warmest Regards, Cheyenne DeVelasco

On August 20th Cheyenne was rescued and is home with our Lord and Savior. She truly is victorious over this cancer!



CONTINUED ►

Cheyenne's grandfather, Joe DeVelasco (1933-1999), attended Milwaukee Bible Institute, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the American Academy of Art. He was a free-lance artist and award-winning illustrator and a fine arts painter. He illustrated Calvin Miller's "The Singer Trilogy" published by IVP and Cook Publishing's "The Gospels Illustrated." Additionally, his artwork graced American Artist Magazine, Moody Monthly Magazine and Campus Life Magazine. Cheyenne wrote an essay in high school about one of Joe's more intricate works entitled "O Wretched Man." We thought you would like to read it, too, as it gives even more insight into the heart and mind of this precious young lady.



O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.
Romans 7:24-25

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 Corinthians 15:53-57

These Bible verses are used to describe a chilling painting done by my grandfather, Joseph E. DeVelasco. "O Wretched Man" gives an overwhelming feeling of the death and decay of man. Dark colors are used to give emphasis to the painting and hit home the message that he wanted to unfold. Using black as the background, an endless time of darkness is presented; gray as the color of the old man sitting, while holding in his hand a skull, gives the fact that the body of this man is without life. The old man is wearing very old fashioned clothing, with ruffled sleeves and collar that is reminiscent of how men were once dressed for display in their coffin before being buried in the ground. That however, is not the main focus because when looked at closely, the painter purposely highlights the face of the skull and man that are facing each other, telling us that this old man faces an imminent death. But, his left hand is highlighted with a different color along with the words of the Book his hand is resting on. The words are Holy Bible and both his hand and these words are given a more fleshy color as though life has been given to this dead man through this Book. The painted framing around the old man does not lighten the mood of the painting, instead, it reassures the overall eeriness that is portrayed. Joseph DeVelasco created this painting as though it were a photograph of an old man staring at death in a finished framework, ready to be placed or hung in a household without the typical wood framework. The painted on frame has entangled ribbons that have been painted with a rusty brown color. They vary in depth with no start or finish, portraying the infinite chains sin has us caught up in. Camouflaging within the ribbons, there are men intertwined, desperately trying to break free but they cannot. Throughout the entwining ribbon-like structures, at the top are the words, "O Wretched Man that I am" continuing at the bottom with, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" A frontal view of a skull in-

terrupts these words, placed right in the bottom center of the frame. There is a second skull in the bottom right corner, but unlike the center skull, the right skull appears to have an "airier" feeling to it. I believe this is a representation of how man is unable to escape the sting of death with their own righteousness. We are dead without believing in the Lord, who died an unjust death, being without sin. We stare death in the eyes and are entangled with our sins. They are endless - without an escape. We may try to live a righteous life through our own good deeds, but even then they are overshadowed by the immense transgressions we have tainted our lives with. This brings in the description that is given with the verse, that seems to flawlessly tell the story behind this painting: the old man is dead, but through the Word of God, a new man is born and faces an eternal life with Christ. "For the corruptible must put on incorruption..." This Scripture is saying how we sinners must believe in the One who gave us the ability to be perfect, and only then will we have victory over death.

In this depiction, we are the old dead man - unwittingly living our everyday lives apart from God. Joseph DeVelasco painted a spiritually dead man. A man that lives and breathes every day like normal. But he doesn't get the connection of being with our Father, God, in Heaven. The hand that is placed on the Bible is showing the connection that he finds, and shows him then being spiritually alive. Every day we go about living without knowing our personal Savior, Jesus Christ, is another day we live in the hands of death. "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Never knowing what a life with Christ is like is the same as being dead for eternity. We can try to substitute eternal life in Christ with anything and everything in this world, but the part that most spiritually dead people feel is larger than worldly things that we try to fulfill our lives with.



GRADUATION 2017

The Grace Bible College class of 2017 hailed 158 graduates *prepared to serve Christ in church and society*. We are thankful for the blessing of being able to walk alongside these men and women who desire to serve Christ in all walks of life, hearing their stories, and becoming part of their ongoing story.

Festivities for the graduates began the evening of April 28 with a wonderful banquet held at Watermark Country Club. Music, testimonies, a delicious meal, and sweet fellowship were part of this event. The following morning we gathered at Rush Creek Bible Church for the Grace Bible College commencement ceremony. This time of reflection and sending forth of our graduates is always a special ending to the academic year. Students who graduated with honor and high honor were recognized by Chief Academic Officer and Provost, Dr. Kim Pilioci. Additionally, some special awards were given in recognition of four outstanding students who exemplify excellence in biblical studies, ministry, and in service. The *H.B. Prince Homiletics Award* was awarded to Leah Befus. The *T.R. Huston Christian Service Award* was given to Deanna Bazan. Miranda Stout was presented with the *Vernon H. Stromberg Worship Arts Award*, and the *William L. Rigg Youth Ministry Award* was given to Ben Stout.

Gerald Asong, Leah Befus, and Jason Pugh were privileged to address their fellow graduates as well as those gathered for the ceremony. We are including portions of their speeches here for your encouragement and enjoyment.



Gerald Asong

missionaries working with Prison Mission Association. I am from Cameroon in Central Africa where almost half of the population lives below the poverty line. I grew up in a Christian home: I saw and felt the love of God. Life was easy. I was blessed and privileged to be born into a family of hard-working parents who were blessed to serve God as missionaries and as small business owners - so they could give us a better life. My parents invested in me. Our home was open to everybody: they invested in the lives of friends, relatives, and even people they did not know. My parents taught us the way of the Lord, and they disciplined us when we went wrong.

However, these exceptionally happy years did not last long. When I was eleven, God called my mom home, and He called my father home when I was seventeen. These were very sad years in my life. People told us to curse God for hurting us, and our faith in God was seriously tested. I could not understand why God would allow something like this to happen to a family so dedicated to Him. Everything changed for us as a family – life became hard without my parents. Still, the investment of my parents in our lives kept us pushing forward. We had to grow up very fast to meet with the challenges of life. Although life has been hard, I am thankful that God has been faithful to us as a family. Because of my parents, I continue to be the example they desired me to be, and I am able to invest in the lives of others.

In 2007, I moved to China to study, but ended up teaching English as a second language. It was so much fun to work with children from the age of two through high school. After six years, the opportunity to study at Grace Bible College came knocking and I couldn't let it slip away. When the time came for me to depart from China, it dawned on me how much I had invested in the lives of others. The pressure to not leave China was enormous. Some people even promised finding a beautiful Chinese wife for me so I could stay. But I had to leave: going to Grace was a great opportunity I did not want to miss. In December 2013 I moved to the United States, and today, I stand here as a commencement speaker.

Fellow graduates, I do not know your stories, but I do know there is a

Growing up, I remember hearing the Bible verse, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." I didn't understand this until I became an old man (oh sorry, I'm not an old man!). I am standing here today in front of beautiful people like you because of God's goodness through the people who invested in me. I want to dedicate this honor to my parents. I was born into one of the most amazing families in the world. My parents were

reason why God wanted us to study at Grace. We are special. As students we didn't give up. We were not ashamed to tell our families and friends that we went to a Bible college. Nothing happens by chance. We have been chosen to be agents of investment in the lives of others. We need to work hard and not be afraid to maximize our gifts and abilities from God.

We have been chosen to be the hands and feet of Christ. We have been chosen to give hope to the hopeless, to put smiles on the faces of others.

We live in a world that needs people like us. The question is: are we ready to serve church and society? Yes, I believe we have what it takes to make an impact in the lives of others. Grace Bible College has invested in us and the time has now come for the world to see the return on that investment. Are we willing to be the change our communities need? Are we willing to go out of our way for others? Are we willing to invest in others? As Dr. Sam Vinton usually says in his classes, God has given us a lot and He is going to judge us according to what He gave us. We must consider ourselves as soldiers being deployed by God to represent the gospel. We must see ourselves as God's workmen being sent out to represent Christ in an ungodly world. We need to join forces with other Christians and help shine the light of God in our communities. Let us invest in others - not only because we have been called by God calls to do so; but because there is joy in investing in the lives of others. ■



What a day to celebrate! What an honor to have reached this point in the history of our lives. We have put in countless hours dedicated to reaching this final reality of graduation. For some of us, this day marks the journey toward more extensive formal education. For others, this marks the completion of a good fifteen or more years of having formulated life around education. It is no small feat that we have made it thus far. We have been endowed with knowledge, and are responsible for what has been entrusted to us.

And as we go on from here, I want to encourage you to not be afraid of hard work.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul says in Ephesians 4:1, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” In Colossians 3:23 he says, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.” Paul was a man of dedication, motivated by the Spirit to accomplish what was before him. My challenge for you is to *live a life worthy of the calling* you have received from the Lord. The hard work that life requires is ultimately for Jesus, and then for others. Maybe you have the next ten to fifteen years mapped out, or maybe you do not. Let me encourage you to work hard at what lies before you, doing it for the Lord. God is our Creator and Sustainer, and if we so desire, He is our Redeemer, our Guide, our Defense, our Confidant, our Healer, and so much more.

Give your life the effort that God deserves. Let me say that again: Give your life the effort God deserves.

The working out of your calling and the transformation of your life is not a “one and done” kind of deal: it is a continual process - a lifetime journey. As one of my professors would often say, “We are clicking the dial forward.” What does this mean? It is forward progress, steps in the right direction; it is fighting the battle, it is making daily decisions, and it is the substance of maturity. Philippians 3:13-14 says, “Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have laid hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize of God’s heavenly calling in Christ Jesus.” We will continue to grow, learn, develop, and progress if we make the daily decision to be diligent in “clicking the dial forward.” I am not merely referring to your workplace, but even more so to your home life. Relationships, standards, family values, and love require sacrifice, loyalty, and positive intent. Are you going to work harder at investing and strengthening the health of your family or are you going to forego your family in pursuit of the “American dream?” Let’s not be lazy when it comes to our families! Take ample time to pause and assess the health of your home and the priorities you have set in life, then do something about them! Romans 6:13-14 says, “Do not present the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death

to life; and present the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.” Position yourself at the feet of Jesus every day, being nourished and directed by His Word. In so doing, you can adequately give out of the wealth you have been given. Theologian Karl Barth admonishes that the Word of God, to which we are witnesses to the world, must be heard afresh continuously by the believer. The

inner witness of the Word of God must precede the outer witness, of which he says, “If it were to fail here, its outer witness might be compared to the empty bed of a stream which has been sealed at its source, or to the sowing of a bad or shriveled seed. Christians can obviously be serviceable in the ministry of the Word to those without only if they find themselves constantly placed under the same Word” (Barth, 196).

The Reality of the Gospel

Let me share with you the reality of our lives: *all the striving is meaningless, unless you have known Jesus*. You cannot be a mighty servant of God in your own strength. Philippians 2:12 says, “For it is God who works in you to will and to act on behalf of His good pleasure.” The bottom line is that God is the one who gives us the strength to do the things He has set before us. Above and beyond that truth is the reality of eternal life offered to us through the ultimate work Jesus accomplished on our behalf. Powerless to free ourselves from the bondage of sin, God came to earth as a man to pay the only acceptable price for us and to rise from the dead, defeating the hold of sin and death. Not because we deserved it, but because He loves us. Romans 3:23-25a says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith.” If you have never heard this before, I invite you to accept God’s grace and to entrust yourself to your faithful Creator. To you then He imparts new life and gives the Holy Spirit. As followers of Jesus Christ our Savior, we have the great privilege of walking with Him each day. It is under the umbrella of Christ’s work in which we live and strive. It is in His grace that we rise each day. His grace meets you where you’re at and beckons you to excel out of the riches of God’s mercy and power.

Graduates, may your lives be a witness to this grace, elevating and illuminating the gospel. May you daily press on. Jesus said in Matthew 5:15-16, “Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a lampstand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” You are a light in this world. Live worthy of the gospel and the calling you have received! ■



Leah Befus



Jason Pugh

For me, this graduation ceremony is a step of obedience. In 1995, I enrolled to be a student at Grace Bible College, pursuing a degree in ministry, as that is what I felt called to. However, after my first year, I was no longer certain about this college deal, as it was a lot of hard work! Well, truth be told, I was quite lazy and irresponsible.

I quit after my first year. I had a wonderful girlfriend to marry, a career to start, and a life to live. It took seventeen years for me to start pursuing God's will for my life again. I tried to fulfill God's call on my life my own way, and by my own means only to be constantly shut down and frustrated by my inability to find my place in God's great plan. I still felt I was called to serve Him fully, but I could not seem to do it, no matter how hard I tried.

Finally I gave up. I quit trying. I told God I was done trying to figure it out, and if He had something He needed me to do, He was going to have to make it extremely clear to me, and then know that I was going to test Him on it. The unique combination of events over the next three weeks culminated with me walking through the doors of GBC and enrolling as an adult student.

After all those years, God never released me from His original call to attend Grace and seek a ministry degree. Only through the surrendering of my own will was I able to fulfill the will of my heavenly Father.

This is just part of my testimony. This is my story: a personal example of the redemption God worked out within my life. One of the things I enjoyed most about my college experience is hearing stories of God's work in the lives of each of my classmates. Patricia: God took a terrible and senseless accident and used that to help shape you into the woman you are today. My friend, Jason overcame significant hindrances and hard circumstances in his life to become a loving, caring, husband and father, with a heart for helping others. I would love to mention everyone by name, and to tell more stories from my fellow graduates that have both blessed and inspired me, but instead, I want you to know it is more important that you, as children of a Holy and Loving Father, *understand the power and hope* that is contained within your own story. The redemption and restoration that has happened within your life is a powerful encouragement to others.

Now that I have completed my degree, there is one question that I have been asked too many times. Over the three years I spent completing my degree, many of my family, friends, acquaintances, and business con-

tacts knew that I was attending Bible college. At first, I was embarrassed to say that I was studying for ministry, as opposed to a more "socially acceptable" business degree. I was soon convicted that I needed to embrace the call that God placed on my life, regardless of what anyone else might think. The question goes something like this: "So...now that you have graduated, are you going to quit your job and become a pastor? What church are you going to work at? Or, because this seems to be the entry level for pastors - Are you going to become a youth pastor?" One person even went as far to imply that I was too old to be effective as a pastor to youth!

The truth is, I don't know the master plan God has for my life. I don't feel called to be a traditional pastor, and I certainly don't think I would survive as youth pastor. However, there is one thing about my calling that I do know for certain: no matter where I am, or what my current occupation is, *I am* called to full time ministry. You see, God has given me a heart for people, especially generational relationships, specifically, helping men develop into the man God calls him to be, and to be an effective leader in whatever position God places him. I believe that no matter what I am doing, whether pounding nails on a jobsite, having a cup of coffee with a friend, or leading a small group at church, I am engaged in ministry. God has placed me where I am to minister to others. Every aspect of my life needs to be purposeful toward God's will. I believe I am in full time ministry even if I am not a pastor.

Every Christian is called to be in full time ministry, regardless of profession or life situation. God has placed us right where we need to be. Right where He wants us. We are here for a reason and need to serve God where we are.

Remember, there is power in your story, your testimony. God has given you a personal experience that is yours alone, and He has prepared you to minister to others. Don't be afraid to share your story of redemption, transformation, and preparation.

As a child of God, you are in full time ministry. God has placed you where you are because someone needs what you have to offer. You are part of God's plan of redemption and restoration for those around you. Don't be concerned with the ultimate plan God has for you. If you fully knew it, you would probably be sufficiently scared into not following it. Instead, look around you for unique ways you can bless, encourage, support, and serve the people God has placed around you. You are uniquely created to be an ambassador of His love to the people you see each day.

Thank you, and I am humbled and blessed to be a part of the 2017 graduating class of Grace Bible College. ■

SPRING 2017 ACADEMIC HONORS

DEAN'S LIST

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

Atemlefac G. Asong, *Kumba, Cameroon*
Caryn A. Baker, *Byron Center, MI*
Deanna N. Bazan, *Holland, MI*
Ashley E. Bearden, *Fenton, MI*
Autumn G. Befus, *San Antonio de Belen, Costa Rica*
Jacob L. Betts, *Houghton, MI*
Abigail L. Bickler, *Waukesha, WI*
Jared S. Bradford, *Sparta, MI*
Madilyn E. Brown, *Mount Pleasant, MI*
Adrianna S. Bunce, *Byron Center, MI*
Daniel I. Burkey, *Hudsonville, MI*
Abigail E. Cairns, *Gwinn, MI*
Sarah M. Carlson, *Spring Lake, MI*
Marcus J. Chandler, *Grand Rapids, MI*
Lucia Chaves Pacheco, *Alajuela, Costa Rica*
F. Joseph Craesmeier, *Tijucas, Brazil*
Emily D. Cross, *Muskegon, MI*
Chloe R. DeVries, *Dorr, MI*
Baylee A. Draper, *Mears, MI*
Allison A. Eding, *Hamilton, MI*
Brock C. Emery, *Buckley, MI*
John P. Ermatinger, *Wyoming, MI*
Kiley A. Fawley, *Grandville, MI*
Katlynn R. France, *Whitehall, MI*
Ashley M. Gardner, *Dorr, MI*
Elizabeth H. Goff Sterbroock, *Tegucigalpa, Honduras*
Jonathan W. Hansen, *Lakeview, MI*
Adam R. Hartwig, *Augusta, MI*
Taitum J. Henderson, *Lansing, MI*
Breanna R. Heneveld, *Hamilton, MI*
Cody S. Hennings, *Whitmore Lake, MI*
Benjamin N. Hoffmeister, *Grandville, MI*
Parker J. Hossler, *Almont, MI*
Mark G. Hucklebury, *Coral, MI*
Sydney J. Jacobson, *Wyoming, MI*
Robert P. Kilgo, *Penang, Malaysia*
Benjamin W. Lange, *Mobile, AL*
Lauren B. Lomasney, *Howell, MI*
Alexandra G. Lorenz, *Byron Center, MI*
Alida M. Luck, *Coeur d'Alene, ID*
Sarah J. Maas, *Trenton, MI*
Brennan C. Malley, *Hamilton, MI*
Kaelee L. Mauer, *Dorr, MI*
McKenzie R. Mc Cord, *Cadillac, MI*
Megan N. McFarland, *Muskegon, MI*
Bailey M. Mines, *Muskegon, MI*
Rebecca S. Moore, *Jenison, MI*
Allison M. Parker, *Wyoming, MI*
Natalie A. Parker, *Wyoming, MI*
Mary M. Patterson, *Montague, MI*
Deborah A. Pekel, *Muskegon, MI*
Alexandra R. Pelley, *Livonia, MI*
Diana L. Peters, *Wyoming, MI*
Lydia M. Peters, *Wyoming, MI*
Evan A. Przybysz, *Wyoming, MI*
Adam C. Rayner, *Muskegon, MI*
Tasha R. Reed, *Santa Cruz, Bolivia*
Holly B. Renberg, *Norton Shores, MI*
Elle C. Roskamp, *Grand Rapids, MI*

Rachel N. Roth, *Jenison, MI*
Jaclynn R. Rumenapp, *Richmond, MI*
Zachary D. Rumley, *Wyoming, MI*
David G. Schrock, *Muskegon, MI*
Troy M. Sergey, *Marquette, MI*
Adam M. Shultz, *Gobles, MI*
Marlae M. Sloothaak, *Caledonia, MI*
Bernard R. Smith, *Muskegon, MI*
Skylar L. Smith, *Caledonia, MI*
Stafford A. Smith, *Petoskey, MI*
Christian P. Storms, *Jenison, MI*
David P. Stout, *Wyoming, MI*
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Carson M. Straube, *Kalamazoo, MI*
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Mitchell E. Tate, *Crawfordsville, IN*
Alexander J. Tulsie, *Omaha, NE*
William C. Van Loo, *Hudsonville, MI*
Annika W. Ward, *Alanson, MI*
Austin J. Wolf, *Rothbury, MI*
Kathryn E. Yanik, *Port Huron, MI*

ADULT EDUCATION

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Gregory D. Anderson, *Bloomington, IN*
Beba Balana, *Tampa, FL*
Kelly Jo Beeney, *Comstock Park, MI*
Jeanie M. Boatright, *Dickinson, TX*
LaCharles S. Bradley, *Beaumont, TX*
Sherisa I. Brown, *Rockledge, FL*
Blaine E. Brumley, *Marietta, GA*
Amber M. Burns, *Auburn, AL*
Matthew D. Burton, *White Pine, TN*
Frederick Carlisle, *Taylorsville, NC*
Michael S. Carter, *Lamesa, TX*
Lloyd E. Christmas, *Dayton, OH*
Valerie R. Christmas, *Dayton, OH*
Lauren A. Cranmer, *East Alton, IL*
Loren E. Crannell, *Duck Creek Village, UT*
Constance Dixon, *McKinney, TX*
Courtney A. Dumlao, *Makawao, HI*
Ana-Maria T. Eddie, *Coloma, MI*
Kaylee J. Elder, *Grand Rapids, MI*
Ronnie Evans, *Valdosta, GA*
Courtney A. Fields, *Montgomery, IN*
Cynthia L. Flowers, *St. Clair Shores, MI*
David Fryoux, *Jonesville, LA*
Jonathan Garcia, *Indianapolis, IN*
Rosalie S. Gasser, *Payne, OH*
Sandra Gilliam, *Philladelphia, PA*
Avis Grant, *St. Louis, MO*
Melanie M. Harrell, *Navarre, OH*
Casey J. Heller, *Otney, IL*
Michael Holcomb, *Alvada, OH*
Chelsea M. Hooker, *Scottville, MI*
William A. Horton, *Spring, TX*
Rose Marie Huizenga, *Allegan, MI*
Starla A. Hundstad, *Mobridge, SD*
Barbara Jenkins, *Deltona, FL*
Devon R. Johnson, *Santa Maria, CA*
Lawrence L. Johnston, *Little River, SC*
Zachary A. Kergel, *Upper Marlboro, MD*
Franz D. Kinkhorst, *Kirksville, MO*
Benjamin M. Kirsch, *Wyoming, MI*
Deanna H. Knee, *Dayton, OH*

David L. Kuikstra, *Kentwood, MI*
Anthony R. Lange, *Saint Johns, MI*
Ricardo N. Lejano, *Houston, TX*
Christopher H. Lerma, *Big Bear City, CA*
Cheryl Logan, *Flint, MI*
Kohl Long, *Beaufort, SC*
Keegan G. Macloude-Lafreniere, *Clarksville, TN*
Angela K. Marrs, *Bryan, TX*
Shara R. Massey-Bixler, *Pine Bluff, AR*
Michael Matthew, *Stryker, OH*
Michael J. Matthews, *Claysville, PA*
Corey J. McCoy, *Kissimmee, FL*
Jerri-Lynne McDonald, *Westland, MI*
Robert R. McDonnell, *Fresno, CA*
Valerie McRae, *Rockledge, FL*
Nathan Medlin, *Ladson, SC*
Charlene K. Miller, *Gibsonburg, OH*
Paula Moore, *Anniston, AL*
Julia Moreira Dutra, *Maple Shade, NJ*
Matthew R. Morrison, *Skiatook, OK*
Kimberly D. Nielsen, *Willow Street, PA*
Nola L. Norton, *Wyoming, MI*
Jacqueline E. Pearson, *Wyoming, MI*
Juanity M. Peevy, *Beaumont, CA*
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Joanna Phelps, *San Tan Valley, AZ*
Nichols M. Phelps, *San Tan Valley, AZ*
Esther M. Pomerantz, *Accord, NY*
Deborah S. Quinn, *Asheville, NC*
Keyandra Raines, *Sneads, FL*
James E. Rainey, *Aurora, MO*
Stephanie L. Reeder, *Howard City, MI*
Jennifer A. Reynolds, *Camdenton, MO*
Gentry D. Rhoades, *Williamsburg, KY*
Sierra S. Ricketts, *Union Bridge, MD*
Todd C. Riemersma, *Grand Haven, MI*
Brandi Riffel, *Brownsburg, IN*
Jon A. Ring, *Three Rivers, MI*
Joshua D. Ritchie, *Fort Wayne, IN*
Frances C. Robinson, *Darlington, SC*
Katina C. Robinson, *Pike Road, AL*
John R. Rokos, *Traverse City, MI*
Ricardo Rosas, *Oxford, OH*
Arturo B. Sabates, *Huntersville, NC*
Kathryn R. Shepard, *Oklahoma City, OK*
Beverly J. Smith, *Swanton, OH*
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Charles A. Spradley, *Florence, TX*
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Kathern I. Swain, *Martinsburg, WV*
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Abigail J. Taylor, *Grant, MI*
Shanetta De-Mel Thomas, *Grand Prairie, TX*
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Norman Weber, *Baltimore, MD*
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John S. Wicker, *Opp, AL*
Brianna M. Wieringa, *Plumtree, NC*
Arnetirious C. Wilkins, *Grand Rapids, MI*
Bill G. Winchester, *Valley Falls, KS*

Catherine A. Windle, *Arlington, WA*
Amy L. Witbeck, *Kaukauna, WI*
Lisa M. Worthley, *Oconomowoc, WI*
Richard D. Worthley, *Oconomowoc, WI*
April M. Yennior, *Beaverton, MI*

PRESIDENT'S LIST

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

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Elenrae L. Befus, *San Antonio de Belen, Costa Rica*
Adam M. Bradt, *Hudsonville, MI*
Kimberly M. Buskirk, *Mecosta, MI*
Paige E. Clark, *Manton, MI*
Amanda S. Compagner, *Hamilton, MI*
Nathan M. Conroy, *Zeeland, MI*
Victoria R. Corwin, *Kingsley, MI*
Tyler A. Endsley, *Hastings, MI*
Grant J. Garrison, *Paw Paw, MI*
Darius C. Hall, *Wyoming, MI*
Timothy A. Hoffmeister, *Grandville, MI*
Michelle H. Kamps, *Wyoming, MI*
Begench Kerimi, *Shelby, MI*
Sarah A. Kobrak, *Ludington, MI*
Adam J. Kregel, *Walker, MI*
Erik A. Kutchen, *Yale, MI*
Kylee A. Maat, *Holland, MI*
Alexandra D. North, *Byron Center, MI*
Lauren A. Olsen, *Pierson, MI*
Ethan A. Partridge, *Cambridge, Ontario, Canada*
Lauren E. Peterson, *Comstock Park, MI*
Nicholas R. Pileci, *Wyoming, MI*
Trent N. Ramos, *Holland, MI*
Jewel F. Ro, *Hudsonville, MI*
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Rachel E. Stevens, *Shoreline, WA*
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Leah C. VanderLaan, *Spring Lake, MI*

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Haley M. Vanduzen, *Marysville, OH*
Justin S. Wallace, *Mount Holly, NC*
Amy L. West, *Huntsville, TX*

GOING BEYOND



In January of 2015, Grace Bible College launched its first-ever Master's degree, the Master of Arts in Ministry. This entirely online, 36-credit graduate degree was the latest venture in the College's strategic vision of expanding its academic offerings as a Bible-centered university. With courses in Bible, theology, dispensational theology, ministry, and leadership, this degree was designed to go beyond the ministry preparation of the College's four-year bachelor degrees, and beyond that, to refine the ministry skills of our five year Bachelor of Theology (ThB) graduates who have been serving in ministry for years.

Here, we introduce you to our first five graduates of our Master of Arts in Ministry program. We hope you enjoy their testimonies to the quality of this academic program and its effectiveness in preparing them personally and academically for the ministry challenges of the twenty-first century.

Caleb Befus, *Lead Pastor at Grace Bible Fellowship, Jenison, MI*

Patricia ("Pat") Pruitt,
Preparing to lead in her own ministry

Jim Shemaria, *Senior Pastor, Celebration Bible Church, Grandville, MI*

Joyce Storms, *Executive Assistant to the President, Grace Bible College*



Why did you decide to pursue a Master's degree? What drew you to Grace Bible College?

Andrew: I decided to pursue a master's degree at Grace Bible College because it was the perfect opportunity during this season of my life. God opened the door for me to pursue my master's degree in ministry and I (quickly) walked through it.

Caleb: I desired the growth in Christ, career development, personal enrichment, and the greater credibility for a young pastor that the program offered me. The program was affordable, and I knew it was a good season of life for the intense work load.

Pat: I believe in higher education, and having a master's degree will help me in building and establishing my own ministry. Having this degree gives me a more in-depth understanding of what it means to lead others to Christ and how I can become a change agent in a world that is in need of the Savior.

Jim: I pursued this degree in an effort to continue to develop my ability to serve God by leading my congregation. I have always enjoyed engaging deeper in issues related to faith and the church, and saw this degree as a challenging way to do this.

Joyce: I simply felt a strong prompting from the Lord to pursue this degree, without knowing exactly where it might lead me in the future.

What did you learn in the program that will still make an impact five years down the road?

Pat: I learned what it means to be a transformational leader, about how God has progressively worked in the life of man through the dispensations, and how cultural differences can make an impact on one's ministry and outlook.

Jim: This program helped me to reframe my understanding of the church's role in culture as well as the way the worship and preaching of the local church functions in light of this. This degree has challenged me to think of the weekly worship gathering as a time to reorient the hearts of the congregation towards the gospel.

Joyce: My awareness of the beauty of our cultural differences was a significant area of growth for me, and my appreciation for how the arts can be incorporated into our biblical worldview will be of great benefit in the future.

Andrew: I was blessed to interact with colleagues from all different denominations and background. This demonstrates to me that wonderful things can happen within the Body of Christ if we focus less on our differences and MORE on proclaiming the Gospel throughout the world. The graduate program was an opportunity for me to break out of my small-town Ohio bubble.

What is one example of something practical you could take from the degree to your ministry? How did you grow in your capacity to minister to others?

Andrew: Culture was a significant topic of study throughout the graduate program, and I could not be happier about it because it was an area of weakness for me. Upon accepting the position as co-youth pastor, the first thing that I began to do was learn about the community's culture that I was preparing to bring the Gospel into. I went into local establishments (stores, community institutions, etc.) to learn about the people and culture that I plan to be a part of for many years to come.

Jim: Throughout this degree, I was regularly challenged to consider ways the theories we were studying in class impacted the practice of my ministry. I feel that I not only became more theologically and biblically equipped, but also learned to understand how to more effectively connect with my congregation and community in a meaningful way. The way that I approach, prepare, and deliver sermons has been totally renewed as a result of our studies.

Pat: I was able to share with friends and family the history and background of the theologies that are present in our time. For example, prosperity theology makes giving tithes and offerings to the church a problem, because it has made people extremely skeptical of church giving. As leaders, we must change the perception of how the church is handling its finances.

Caleb: The courses in leadership and cultural intelligence greatly helped me to observe where people are coming from and allowed me to adjust in order to value their perspective, leadership, gifting, background, and culture. In one sense, this helps me guard from making hasty decisions or even unnecessary, potentially hurtful words.

Joyce: Being able to fine-tune my coaching and listening skills through the coursework has enabled me to serve those I come in contact with at GBC in a more effective and constructive manner.

What was it like participating in an entirely online education?

Jim: As a full-time pastor and husband, my schedule can be unpredictable. Being able to participate in an online format allowed for a sense of flexibility that enabled me to enjoy this degree program. I also faced the additional joy and challenge of becoming a first-time father during this program! While this called for some “creativity” in my time management, the online format helped tremendously.

Caleb: For me it was very advantageous: I would be able to find time for regular class hours during the day. I could accomplish all necessary work from my home study by regularly spending a couple of hours every evening.

Andrew: Prior to enrolling in the program, I had my doubts about completing classes online. But one of the advantages to the online format is that it allows for a flexible schedule that could be set around all of life’s other obligations; I believe that this led to a better quality of work from me.

Pat: Taking classes online is a discipline, but it is flexible enough that I was able to work and take care of my household. The challenges for me were the reading assignments from three or more books, trying to formulate a response on discussion boards, and responding to others. There were many times when I could not think of anything to write, but prayer helps and the Lord gave me what I needed to say.

Joyce: As it had been over thirty-five years since my undergraduate work, I had never taken an online course before. I was concerned with the aspect of community and relationship with my fellow students: how would we connect when we were not in the same place? I have learned to love and appreciate my colleagues, and am thankful for the opportunity to learn alongside them. I also appreciated the flexibility of determining my own schedule for studies within the structure of the classes.

What about academic rigor of the classes? Was this degree challenging?

Andrew: I felt that the academic expectations of the program were very high (and you should not expect anything less) but each student is given every opportunity to succeed in the courses.

Caleb: I felt it was a good balance throughout the program. I was nice to switch back and forth from very academic to significantly practical.

Pat: I understood that going into the program would be much different than the undergraduate studies. There is more reading, writing, paying attention to details and sources when writing papers. The balance between what I studied and actual application to life, work, and family, became something I want to use in my future ministry. I believe I will be more effective knowing that I am truly doing what God has called me to do and I can see the results of my online studies.

Jim: As a masters-level program, this work was rigorous but rewarding, as I was constantly able to apply nearly everything we learned in our course work to my ministry.

Joyce: Working a full-time job, plus adding 20 plus hours per week of study/writing/reading was not an easy feat, but with the Lord’s strength and the support of my family, I have been able to be blessed through this experience and program of study.

What would you say to those who are thinking about pursuing their Master’s degree at GBC?

Andrew: If God has provided this opportunity, then I would advise them to accept it and never look back. After completing the program, I would recommend it to anyone who is truly committed to a relationship with God, called into the ministry, and is willing to open themselves up to learning something new about ministry.

Caleb: This program is a worthwhile investment of time, energy, and finances. The impact of these courses will immediately benefit your ministry in the local church.

Pat: I would say for that person to definitely come to GBC! It is Christ-centered, and the instructors, professors, and advisors are wonderful and understanding and will work with you to become the leader that God has called you to be. The professors are all knowledgeable in their field of study and it is a blessing to be part of a community whose goal is to put Christ first.

Jim: If you are looking for a way to grow in your capacity to minister to God’s people, this program is a great opportunity to do exactly that!

Joyce: If the Lord is prompting you, don’t delay!

GERRY'S STORY

Gerry Verwey has coached at Grace Bible College for three years, impacting the lives of young (and old) athletes on the cross-country and track teams. Here is his story:



I grew up in a household that never went to church except for weddings or funerals. As a high school student I had many questions about God and salvation. Fortunately, I had many good friends who were willing to introduce me to Christ without making me feel ignorant. During my final years of high school, I became involved in Young Life. A friend invited me to spend a Sunday in church with his family, and I accepted.

My search for faith continued during my college years. I would quietly slip in and out of church services, trying to learn what the Bible was all about. Eventually, I began regularly attending a local church service. I became friends with a family who invited me over on Sunday afternoons to study the Bible. What was so important for me was that these friends did not make me feel judged for my lack of knowledge. I remember asking them, “How do you pray?” They praised me for asking such fundamental questions. They were willing to encourage my growth in the Lord, and it was through the course of these Bible studies that I recognized my need for salvation and came to know Jesus.

In spite of how far I have come, I feel like I am still early in my journey with Christ. I flounder and struggle daily but work each day to grow in my faith and be an example for those around me. I recognize

that my role as an educator and coach in our community offers me a special opportunity to lead students along the proper path. It is not my goal to simply create smart students or fast runners, rather, I strive to raise young adults to be good people who are willing to be selfless servants, always looking to glorify the Lord.

As a coach, I believe very strongly in developing positive relationships with my athletes. That is my “secret” to coaching. I strive to develop growth in both athletics and citizenship and my students know I expect them to stay positive - having a mindset of growth and a strong work ethic. My role is to help mold GBC’s student athletes to serve Christ in church and society. The teams’ practices include special time set aside for Bible study, devotions, sharing testimonies, sport studies, and affirming teammates. These athletes serve within the local community in many ways. The cross country team helped with disaster response following a tornado that destroyed trees in nearby Pinery Park, and also cleaned up another local park in Grand Rapids. The track and field team served Wyoming public middle and high schools by officiating at track meets for their athletes, and have also volunteered to help at local races and triathlons. In addition to these group service projects, individuals on the teams have helped at Mel Trotter Mission and Habitat for Humanity.



Coach Verwey is one of the kindest and most humble people I have ever had the privilege of meeting, and I am beyond thankful to call him my coach every day. He has taught me that I can apply running to any part of my life, and that I can apply my life to running. I can use my pain, anxiety, and endurance from running in my daily life to help me overcome obstacles, and I can use the trials I have faced in life to push me harder while I am running.

–Kimberly Buskirk

Coach Verwey has been a positive influence from the first time I met him. He loves us as people first and athletes second, which is what makes a good coach and a good leader in my eyes. He encourages us every day and truly makes running fun and enjoyable. He is a great motivator and truly inspires me to be a runner for the rest of my life beyond college.

–Troy Sergey





STEVE'S STORY

by **Erinn Huebner**,
Online Library Services Coordinator

"I've been an entrepreneur all my life. I love business. I love creating and growing new ideas! What would excite me would be a yellow notepad, a calculator, a pen, a business idea, and somebody to bounce that idea off." Stephen C. Gowdy, Grace Bible College's recently hired Vice President of Institutional Advancement brings that excitement to GBC. Steve has had a very good start fundraising for the College and along with his team (Pete, Emily, and Juli) is spreading awareness in the local community. Naturally energetic, Steve has done everything in his life with an excitement and at a pace that would spin the heads of seasoned track athletes!

No stranger to Grace, Steve attended GBC from 1982-1985, and even met his wife, Darlene (Anderson) here. After leaving Grace, he pursued his entrepreneurial endeavors for many years in Minnesota, and he and Darlene raised a family. During this time, he never lost his connection with the College, speaking at Grace camps, participating in the President's Annual Executive Golf Outings, and supporting Grace and its ministries at all levels—even serving for a time on the Board. Steve never imagined himself coming to Grace in any kind of full-time professional capacity, but - as we've all learned from time to time - God directs us in unexpected ways down paths we would never imagine, for His fame and greater glory.

Prison. It's not a word one would associate very readily with someone serving in a leadership position or a vice-presidential role at a Bible college! However, Steve's time in prison was a transformative experience in his life. From August 1, 2007 to November 26, 2008, Steve served in federal prison for the unauthorized use of government funds. It was in the moment as he waited to enter the prison that Steve felt at his worst. "I feel like I was the woman who was crying at Jesus' feet and then cleaning His feet with my hair. I was just holding on for dear life." Just as Jesus was faithful and merciful with the woman at His feet, so God was faithful and merciful with Steve. Two guards at the prison camp were Christians, and one—the very first one Steve met—made sure he got connected with another believer—another prisoner, also named Steve—to show him the ropes, and to provide emotional and spiritual support: "It was AMAZING, so basically from that day on, at night, we would walk around the camp. We would sing, memorize verses togeth-

er, pray for our families, pray for our church, pray for all our friends, pray for the inmates, and we would encourage each other. He was my brother in Christ." When Steve first entered prison, he was on fire to win people for the Lord. Conversion was going to be his number one objective. But God showed him differently. He learned that his mission in prison was to provide the same emotional and spiritual support for fellow believers who had made mistakes, and needed to be shown the love of God in their dark places. Steve conducted more Bible studies in federal prison than he'd ever done outside those walls.

He learned a valuable lesson: "All, all, any." God showed him a passage in 2 Corinthians that formed not only his life in prison, but beyond. "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God*" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). He was able to provide that kind of comfort to none other than the one God sent him for comfort, the other Steve. On the day Steve was released from prison, his friend, Steve had something special to say: In Steve's words:

He said to me: "Steve, I'm sorry you had to come to prison." And I said, "No, I did the wrong thing; I sent the invoices through the mail." He said, "No I don't think you understand Steve. I was praying that God would bring me another Grace believer. And he brought me you. I'm sorry you had to come, but I'm so thankful that you did. Because God sent me you." I'm in tears, he's in tears. Then I said, "I'm thankful for you, to be my dear friend in the Lord during this tough time."

All. All. Any. Steve learned that he had the courage to minister anywhere, to anyone, for God's glory and purposes.

This brings us to Grace. The College, that is. God's grace and mercy runs through all of Steve's story, but His purposes brought Steve to Grace once again. After another period of entrepreneurial ups and downs, Steve was finally ready to yield his career to God's will and His gentle whispers (not to mention President Kemper's frequent texts and phone calls). He met with the GBC Board and representatives from The Timothy Group to explore what he could do for Grace in a full-time capacity. He jumped into his role at Grace with the same energy and excitement he had always shown for his own business ventures, and now he's making waves in the greater Grand Rapids community on behalf of the College. Leading the advancement team is a new experience for Steve, one that came with a little bit of uncertainty, but God has given him the courage to minister where he is, for His glory and fame. Steve says, "The Good Lord is worthy to be trusted in every, and I mean *every*, circumstance. Because I have trusted Him, I've tasted, and know how good He is." God is good; and with Steve and his advancement team, we have faith that God will do even more amazing things for and through Grace Bible College.

ALLISON'S STORY

Allison Verhine joined GBC as the assistant enrollment director for traditional education. Before she and her husband relocated to Michigan, she worked at the University of Alabama. What brought her to GBC? Here is her story:



ROLL TIDE! While those weren't my first words, I learned them early in my childhood! I was born in Mobile, Alabama, to two die-hard fans of the University of Alabama. My childhood was spent in a suburb of Atlanta, learning about Paul "Bear" Bryant and Gene Stallings. When the time came for me to start applying to colleges, I followed in the footsteps of my maternal grandfather and my mother and enrolled at the University of Alabama in 2004.

Four years later, I found myself with a communications degree and a car packed with my belongings headed away from where I left my heart in Tuscaloosa. I serve a gracious God, and His plans for me were greater than I could imagine! In August, a job offer brought me back to my beloved alma mater to recruit students. For the next eight years, I worked for the University of Alabama in various roles, including student recruitment, scholarships, and fundraising. While in Tuscaloosa, my college boyfriend and I were married in July 2010. In January 2015, we welcomed our son, Jay, into the world.

For over six years, my husband, Robby, served our community as a police officer, but he felt a pull for something else. We spent over two years in prayer, asking God to guide our next steps. We can now clearly see the path God planned for us, but it was a very long road, and many doors closed. Finally, we surrendered it all to God. We were open to remaining in Tuscaloosa or moving across the country, seeking and desiring whatever His will was for our family. We got our answer in July of 2016: Grand Rapids, Michigan.

While this was a difficult period, we know God used it to grow our faith and our dependence on Him, relying on His strength. Robby spent three months in intensive training in Washington DC. I remained in Tuscaloosa with our toddler, preparing our house to be sold, finding a new home in a city (and state!) we had never even visited, and finishing a career at an institution I never thought I would leave.

God continued to provide. Within a week of listing our house, it was sold! I scheduled a trip to Grand Rapids and had 48 hours to find a house (if you are in Grand Rapids, you know the current housing market is crazy! It is absolutely a seller's market!). We were able to secure the perfect house, and before we knew it, Christmas had come and gone. Once more, I found myself sitting in a car packed with my belongings: this time, driving north - away from my beloved Tuscaloosa.

Pulling up to our new house with powdery, white, stuff covering the ground set the scene for the next few months: SNOW! Many people in Michigan have told me that the winter of 2017 was mild, but for my little southern family, it was one we won't forget! I learned many new things, among them the importance of four wheel drive. I learned that snow blowers are, in fact, NOT the same thing as leaf blowers. I learned the importance of car washes in the winter. Finally, I learned that as much as I enjoyed spending time with my son at home, God was calling me back to higher education.

I first learned about Grace Bible College from an online job posting. When I left Alabama, I worked in fundraising, but I knew I desired to be in a role working more closely with students. I focused my job search on student recruitment positions. After some wonderful conversations with GBC's online recruitment staff, I was given an opportunity to speak with the traditional enrollment director, Alex. A few days later, I sat in his office interviewing for an opportunity to join his team. While the details were still fuzzy (there was not actually a job opening in traditional enrollment at the time), we spent over two hours discussing my experience, higher education and enrollment theories, and our shared love of the television show "The Office." Before I left GBC that day, I called my husband and told him that I had found my new home!

I knew that starting this job at GBC would not be without challenges. Alex was very open with me during the interview process that we would be expected to grow the institution. Additionally, all my experience in recruitment was at a very large public school. Would I be able to sell GBC to others without drawing from personal experience? I didn't even know very much about Michigan (it took me two months to realize "The U.P." was a place and not just the Michigan way to say "up")!

My fears quickly dissolved. GBC is one of the friendliest, most welcoming campuses in the country! I may not have taken classes here, but I have experienced first-hand GBC's incredible community and passion to seek God and to serve Him in all we do. It has been so much fun for me to implement some of what I learned at Alabama into GBC's enrollment office. I have already learned so much about how a small, private Christian college operates. While I haven't completed a full enrollment cycle at GBC, we can see positive response to some of our changes. I'm excited to see what the Lord has in store for GBC, and I am grateful to be a part of it!

The End of the Story

by Dr. Phil Long
Professor of Bible and
Biblical Languages



The Gospel of John has a double ending. If the story ended with chapter twenty, we would be perfectly satisfied. Jesus revealed Himself as the resurrected Savior, and Thomas's confession is the great theological conclusion: Jesus is both Lord and God (20:28). In fact, John 20:30-31 reads like the conclusion to the book. John tells his readers his reason for writing the Gospel in the first place, that we might believe Jesus is the Son of God and by believing, we might have life in His name.

But there are some unresolved questions for readers of the Gospel of John. What about Peter? We know he has declared himself to be the most faithful disciple at the Last Supper. He was willing to be arrested and killed with his Lord. However, when Jesus was arrested, Peter makes a lame attempt to defend Jesus (only to be rebuked for attacking with a sword). Peter then denies his Lord three times, failing to make good on his commitment to follow the Lord all the way to the cross.

The reader knows Peter did come back from his great failure and the despair he must have experienced in the days between the cross and the resurrection. Peter is well-known as a preacher of the Gospel from the book of Acts. By the time John was written (A.D. 85-90), readers must have known that Peter had been executed by Nero in Rome (A.D. 64). In the final chapter of John, Jesus restores Peter to fellowship with Himself. Peter needs to experience forgiveness and grace from his Lord, so Jesus gives him the opportunity to express his love and commitment. When Jesus calls His disciple Peter to "follow me," He also is calling all disciples to follow Him to the very end.

Restoring Peter

After Jesus tells Peter to "feed my sheep," he asks Jesus about the *beloved disciple* (21:20-21). At some point, Peter and Jesus have walked away from the group with the *beloved disciple* following along behind. Perhaps this is a subtle point, but it appears as though once again the *beloved disciple* is doing what he is supposed to do (following Jesus) while Peter is still asking questions. This is one of five separate times after the resurrection when the *beloved disciple* understands something about Jesus before Peter (for example, at the tomb in 20:4-7; on the boat in 21:7).

Why does Peter ask about John? Some believe this is a self-serving question, perhaps betraying a rivalry between Peter and the *beloved disciple*. But Peter is talking to the resurrected Jesus who has just forgiven him and restored him as the shepherd of His flock. What would motivate

Peter to jealousy at this point? The question may be about the *beloved disciple's* faithfulness. If Peter's restoration is read in the light of his recent denial of Jesus, then Peter may be asking if other disciples will also be restored, including the *beloved disciple*.

John clarifies exactly who this disciple is, pointing out that he was the one "reclining at the table close to Jesus." This sudden parenthetical comment seems strange to most readers, since at this point in the story we know the *beloved disciple* well. John's aside in the last paragraph of his book most likely is not sloppy editing, rather, he means something by it. The point of the reminder may be to point to a special relationship between Peter and the *beloved disciple*. When Peter wanted to know who the betrayer was, he told the *beloved disciple* to ask Jesus. If the *beloved disciple* was younger than the other disciples, perhaps Peter is concerned that he will have to suffer and die for his faith.

You. Follow. Me.

Jesus' response might seem rude, almost as if He is saying, "That is none of your business!" The best way to understand this line is to realize there is a great deal that Jesus cannot tell His disciples. He refuses to tell them the time of His return, for example. In fact, He basically says that it is none of their business when that will happen, so they had better be busy with the commission which they have already been given (Acts 1:6-8). Rather than being rude, Jesus is reminding Peter that his sole concern ought to be following Jesus. In Peter's case, this means shepherding the flock Jesus is leaving behind.

The word order of the Greek New Testament helps make this clear. Jesus' last words to Peter are "You. Me. Follow." Jesus emphatically places Peter first in the sentence, highlighting the fact Peter's sole concern should be following Jesus, not what other disciples are doing (or not doing). He tells Peter to keep his eyes on Jesus, not the response of the other disciples or the recollection of his failures a few days earlier. His only concern at this point is following Jesus.

This response ought to be on our mind when we observe what other Christians are doing (or not doing) in their service of God. Congregations tend to judge their pastors by sermons they hear on the radio or in podcasts. It is not fair to compare how one pastor does ministry to any other pastor, especially former pastors. Does anyone like to be compared to an older sibling? If you had an older brother, some teacher probably said to you, "Why can't you be more like your brother?" No

pastor wants to be compared to the former pastor of a church or to some extremely popular pastor. While there is room for constructive criticism, we must not set up one style of ministry as “the only way to do things” and belittle another style. We are called to “follow Jesus,” which ought to occupy our hearts and minds to the point that we do not have time to criticize others for “not being me.”

Both Peter and John Will Be Faithful to the End _____

After denying the Lord three times, Peter may have been concerned whether he would remain faithful in the future. Jesus taught His disciples that they would be persecuted on account of their testimony about Him. Some would even die because they faithfully preached Jesus. Peter knows he has already failed, and he may be worried that he will fail once again when that persecution comes.

Jesus, therefore, tells Peter he will be faithful until the end and will die on account of his testimony for Jesus (21:18-19). While John 13:36 may be a veiled reference to Peter’s death, Jesus’ words predict that Peter will give his life for Jesus. John makes this even clearer in verse 19. John’s readers know how Peter died when John’s Gospel was first read (for reference, John was written A.D. 85-90 while Acts was written after A.D. 62). We know about Peter’s death from early historical writings such as 1 Clement 5:4, a letter written to Corinth at the end of the first century by a Roman bishop.

Peter and John represent two kinds of disciples. In the first story in this chapter, Peter was in the boat casting the nets, working very hard all night. Yet, in the early light of dawn it was John who first saw Jesus standing on the shore and pointed Him out to Peter. This is similar to Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42. One disciple is busy working and another is busy pondering.

Peter will die for his faith, but John will not. Peter is not better than John for this reason. They were both faithful to their calling from God. Both Peter and John will be faithful witnesses. Peter does in fact “feed Jesus’ sheep” and would die as a faithful witness. John is called to live a long life of faithfulness, writing two major books of the New Testament (John, Revelation) and three letters (1-3 John).

According to church traditions, John left Jerusalem some time before the Jewish Revolt and settled in Ephesus. Some of the traditions refer to him as “John the Elder,” perhaps as an indication he was thought of as one of the “elders” of Jerusalem. It is likely that he was a leader in Jewish Christian churches in that city until his death, perhaps as late as the reign of Trajan.

At the end of the story, there is no rivalry between Peter and John. They are both faithful witnesses to Jesus. The contrast between Peter’s commission to “feed my sheep” and John’s commission to “write my books” are simply two different ways in which people can follow Jesus.



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Eric and Connie Sattler
Marilyn Scott
Linda K. Siler
Tom and Nancy Spaman
Thomas and Nancy Thurston
Bill and Norma Towers
Jim and Diane VanderGiessen
Gloria Velting
Phyllis Velting
Scott and Donna Velting
Shirley Walker
Jim and Joyce Webb
Treva Wheeler
Tom and Cheryl White



LET YOUR WILL BE A GIFT OF MEANING AND BELONGING

"We won't hide them from our children. We will tell them to those who live after us. We will tell them what the Lord has done that is worthy of praise. We will talk about His power and the wonderful things He has done."
Psalm 78:4 NIRV

LEAVE A LEGACY OF LOVE

There can be unbelievable pressure and emotion locked up in executing someone's end-of-life wishes — especially when financial headaches or loads of personal belongings have to be taken care of.

Go the extra mile by eliminating these concerns with some basic planning in advance to assure loved ones that you have prayerfully considered your decisions.

Communicating a heritage is a gift beyond value. Write it, say it, share it. We welcome the opportunity to meet you

and discuss effective stewardship that allows you to maximize your giving. Create a will that aligns with your heart. Carving out a plan to bless your loved ones and the ministries that have impacted your life, like Grace Bible College, is a powerful legacy to leave behind.

You may also go to www.christianwill.org/gbc/ to view a video which will walk you through designing your will.

For further information, please contact Steve Gowdy at 616-261-8565 or sgowdy@gbcol.edu.



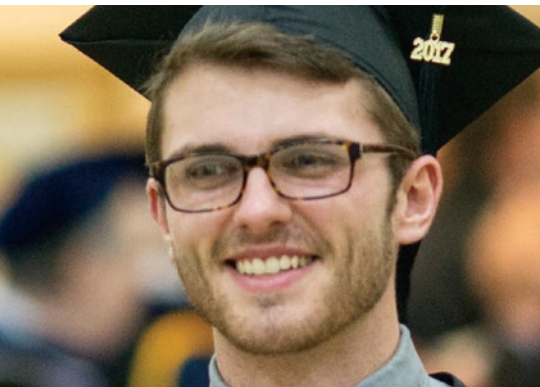
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UPCOMING EVENTS - 2018



APRIL 28

Graduation & Commencement



MAY 3

National Day of Prayer



JULY 31

Whitecaps



AUGUST 6

Golf Classic



OCTOBER 12-13

Homecoming



DECEMBER 7

Gloria 2018