



NEWSLETTER

Summer is Ended

(Hold it now AI, we haven't even enjoyed much of Spring yet, how can you entitle this month's article, "Summer is Ended"? - Just hang in there with me and it will hopefully become very clear.)

There are times when some of the people who attend our church will talk to me about their feelings or unusual things that are going on in their life. Inevitably they will ask the question, "Is that normal?"

For some reason we have a tendency to want to be normal. We base our lives on averages—by what we perceive as a normal Christian life. Is it okay for a Christian to grieve when they lose a loved one—is that normal? If my finances are a mess is it normal to be concerned? Is it normal for a

"We base our lives on averages"

pastor to be upset or discouraged when the people of his church get too busy with life to attend services on a regular basis? We are always comparing the averages and what we view as normal behavior.

You can buy books and visit websites that tell you what the average salary is for a pastor at a certain size church. You can get spreadsheets that tell you what an average weekly offering is for a church your size with your demographics in your area of the country. Some will even tell you what is the normal expectation of decisions for Christ and baptisms based on the demographics of your church. I guess we may as well just plug everything into the computer and have it spit out what sermons should be preached to get the average response and what kind

of lattes we should be serving before the service begins.

Is what's going on in the church today normal? Should we be reaching for the prize of average? If we're slightly above average should we consider ourselves as highly favored?

The second chapter of the Book of Acts begs to differ with what we consider normal: ***"So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls...And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved"*** (Acts 2:41, 47b).

Growing up in the churches I did, if we experienced 2 or 3 people coming to

Christ on any given Sunday it was time to declare a revival and consider the day a rousing success for the Lord. But three thousand being saved in one day? And then "day by day" people were getting saved? As one pastor has been quoted as saying in a facetious manner, "Who knew anyone could be saved on a Tuesday?"

Most churches have emergency plans if a fire breaks out or if an unruly person disrupts the service or what to do to make sure the children are safe in their classrooms, but I'm not sure they would know what to do if someone walked through the church doors on a Thursday afternoon asking how to be saved. Some

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Church Bulletin Bloopers

All of the following are from actual church bulletins.

- The 1991 Spring Council Retreat will be hell on May 10 and 11.
- Weight Watchers will meet at 7 p.m. Please use large double door at the side entrance.
- Pastor is on vacation. Messages can be given to church secretary.
- The senior choir invites any

member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir.

- Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.
- The associate minister unveiled the church's new giving campaign slogan last Sunday: "I Upped My Pledge--Up Yours."

Summer is Ended (continued)

might even ask the person to come back on Sunday and wait for the invitation. There seems to be an hour set aside each week when people have the opportunity to get saved and that's it.

The church in the Book of Acts, where three thousand were saved in one day and then day by day people continued to get saved, didn't even have a building to meet in. It got started by a small group meeting in what we would call an apartment for prayer. Then as God began answering their prayers in phenomenal ways (oops, there I go thinking that church was not normal) it says, "***They were continually devoting themselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer***" (Acts

"A lot has changed in 2,000 years."

2:42).

How did the church grow so fast and furious? Because they were excited about the Lord. I'm sure the people of that church couldn't let a conversation go by without talking about Jesus or telling everyone, "You need to come and see what I saw, and hear what I heard."

A lot has changed in 2,000 years. Now we have "proper" ways of doing church and non-threatening environments in which to do church. We have food courts and stages and casual attire. We have hired musicians and singers to entertain, and talk show hosts instead of preachers.

We have lost the awe and the zeal and the wild abandon of God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We somehow have replaced the miraculous and the fantastic with order and control and programs and systems. We have confined God to a box—and of course since

each church has a different sized box for God we cannot socialize with them because we are the church of the 12x12 box and you are the church of the 15x15 box; but that's a subject for another day.

I mentioned that a lot has changed in 2,000 years but one thing has not changed—God! God has not changed and that means that the way He deals with people has not changed. God still works in the hearts of people today the same way He did in the Book of Acts. So everything that has changed for the worse is due to us (and it must be for the worse because I don't read about or hear about 3,000 people getting saved to start a church, or people being saved day by day to add to the church). The people of the church have changed. The way we view God has changed. The way we view salvation has changed. The excitement and the enthusiasm of the church has changed. God has become boring in our eyes.

The prophet Isaiah understands the problem of the church today, for it was the same problem unrighteous Israel had: "***Behold, the Lord's hand is not too short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear***" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

The issue is we truly believe that our private sins are our private sins. It doesn't concern anyone else and it doesn't hurt anyone else. But these little "private" sins buried deep within your heart keeps the Lord from using you at the present moment. And the little private sins of the next person has the same result, and on and on it goes until the Lord has nobody He can use at the present time.

This condition causes us to not have the courage to ask the questions when we are in the company

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Grace Church Monthly Calendar (unless otherwise noted)

Praise & Prayer is scheduled on the second Friday of each month at 7:00 p.m. We meet at Dick & Jean's home.

Monday night Bible study at Chuck & Judy's home at 6:30 p.m. each week.

Wednesday night Bible study at Pastor Al & Connie's

home at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday evening worship service. 6:00 p.m. for coffee and fellowship, 6:30 p.m. for the worship service.

Ladies Fellowship is usually every third Saturday, 9:00 a.m. at Ginny's home - check the church bulletin or website for exact schedule.

Grace Church Happenings

Sermons

On occasion I am questioned as to how I determine what topics or Books of the Bible I teach and preach on. I personally prefer going verse-by-verse through a Book of the Bible but more so I rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit. At one point recently the Saturday sermon, the Monday night Bible study, and the Wednesday night Bible study were all topical. As we move into May, the Saturday sermon is still topical (***A Passion for Holiness***) but the Monday night Bible study is verse-by-verse through Hebrews and the Wednesday night Bible study is verse-by-verse through Isaiah.

I have learned to be flexible as the Holy Spirit reveals specific needs within the Body. I am committed to preaching and teaching expositively (building the sermon or lesson from examining and explaining a specific passage or passages of Scripture) but the issue of verse-by-verse or topical will depend on the Holy Spirit.

Building & Property Update

Although there is not a whole lot of new information, we are progressively moving forward each week. Please continue to pray for the leadership of Grace Church that all will be unified in our decision making and that we will have the discernment to use the funds we have wisely.

If the Lord leads you to have a part in seeing this building go up debt-free this year, please send your donations to Grace Church, PO Box 216, Jefferson, CO

80456. Make a notation on your check for the “building fund” and make sure we have a current address if you would like a donation receipt for your 2009 taxes. But mostly, just pray—we know God will provide!

Quarterly Church Celebration

Although we had a smaller crowd than normal this quarter, we still enjoyed a wonderful time together celebrating the Lord’s goodness. Summaries of the meeting and quarterly financial reports are available upon request.

Evangelism Training, Preaching & Teaching

In the month of May we will begin a series of services and gatherings and Bible studies centered around the topic of evangelism. On Friday evening, May 8th at our monthly Night of Praise & Prayer, we will focus on praying for the salvation of our friends, family, and people in our community. We meet at 7:00 p.m. at Dick & Jean’s home. On Saturday, May 23rd, I will begin a series of sermons on the topic of evangelism. And on Wednesday, May 27th, we will once again take a break from our study of the Book of Isaiah and begin a Bible Study program called “The Way of the Master” which includes DVD training from Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron, Bible study & group discussion, and the opportunity to role play in order to help all of us become more comfortable with witnessing. Please join us for all of these gatherings—more details in the coming weeks.

On the Lighter Side

A pastor, apparently disgusted with the excuses people offered as to why they didn’t attend church, included “Reasons Why I Never Wash” in the Sunday bulletin:

- I was forced to as a child.
- People who wash are hypocrites - they think they are cleaner than everybody else.
- I used to wash, but I got bored and stopped.
- I wash only on Christmas and Easter.
- None of my friends wash.
- I’ll start washing when I get older and dirtier.
- The bathroom is never warm enough in the winter or cool enough in the summer.
- People who make soap are only after your money.
- I don’t like the songs people sing in the shower.
- I know how to stay clean without washing.
- The last time I washed, someone was rude to me.
- I know someone who washes every day and still stinks.
- Cats and dogs never wash, and they’re always happy.
- Washing is for women and children.
- Washing is for people much dirtier than I am.
- I will wash when I find the bathroom that is exactly right for me.
- I only believe in things I can see; I can’t see bacteria.
- I watch other people washing on TV.
- We just moved here six years ago and haven’t had a chance to wash.
- I bought a bad bar of soap once, so I swore I would never wash again!
- I never wash when I have company.
- Washday is the only day I have to sleep in.

**GRACE CHURCH OF
SOUTH PARK**

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*"To know Jesus and to make Him
known"*

"We will diligently strive to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, IN ORDER that we can help them grow spiritually, IN ORDER that we can make disciples of Jesus Christ, IN ORDER that we can fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord by reaching the world for Christ."

Summer is Ended (concluded)

of the lost; or you don't have the confidence to ask, "Can I pray for you?" when we see someone hurting. There is no urgency to proclaim the gospel message.

There is a story of a meeting of all the demons. Satan asked what the next strategy should be against the humans. One jumped up and said, "Let's tell them there is no God." Satan said, "We tried that and it didn't work." After Satan refutes many other suggestions one stand up and says, "I know, let's tell them there is no hurry."

And that is the attitude of the church today. There is no hurry to talk to your friend about Jesus. There is no hurry to start a conversation. After all you have plenty of time, don't you? Your friends have plenty of time too, right?

Jeremiah 8:20 says, "*Harvest is past, summer is ended, and we are not saved.*" What a sobering statement from the prophet. It would be easy to shrug your shoulders and just think Jeremiah was talking about faithless Israel but the message rings loud and clear about the church today. Not only should this message spur all of God's genuine children to proclaim the gospel message, but it should also be a wake up call to those who are just playing the game; those who attend church but never truly believed to the point of genuine salvation.

Jesus says to those who only think they are saved, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast our demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'*" (**Matthew 7:21-23**).

The will of the Father is that you "*Confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart*

that God raised Him from the dead" (**Romans 10:9**). Jesus is the only Way to salvation and there are multitudes of people who only think they are saved but have never truly followed the Way of salvation. These are the ones who can quote Jeremiah and say, "*Harvest is past, summer is ended, and we are not saved.*"

For those of us who are truly saved, Jesus uses the illustration of a past harvest as well in **John 4:35**: "*Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white to harvest.*"

Beloved, summer is ended for many who are playing the games of religion and who have been deceived into believing there are many roads to heaven. Summer is ended for many who are faithful in their attendance and service to the church. But summer is not ended for the true church; the ones who have genuinely confessed and believed. We still have time, even if the time is very short, to go into the fields and reap a bountiful harvest. We still have time but we must be about the business of confessing every sin so Jesus can use us. We must be obedient to His Word and we must pray that the Lord will restore the joy of our salvation and give us the boldness to proclaim the gospel message to those who will believe.

God is merciful and God is patient, but at some point God will proclaim, "*Harvest is past, summer is ended.*" Redeem the time and make sure you are prepared to take advantage of every opportunity.

Pastor Al

Scripture Memory

This month's challenge is to memorize **Jeremiah 8:20** - "*Harvest is past, summer is ended, and we are not saved.*" (NASB).