

# GROW IN GRACE NEWSLETTER

**Volume 40, No. 21, May 27, 2014** / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter is a weekly Bible Study, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church. It is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

## **JUST RELIGIOUS TALK OR CHRISTIAN REALITY?**

We say we believe the Word of God! What we really believe is WHAT WE PRACTICE— all the rest is just so much religious talk! What we say may only reveal religion. What we practice reveals who/what has our hearts! JESUS STILL SAYS, ***"If you love me, keep my commandments!"*** (John 14:15) ***"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"*** (Luke 6:46)

**"... Andrew... first findeth his own brother** Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. **And he brought him to Jesus...**The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me... **Philip findeth Nathaniel**, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:40b-45)

**Genuine Christianity is all about RELATIONSHIPS!** The primary relationship is, of course, a personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. **The next vital relationship** is that of fellowship in the body of Christ— specifically of being together **in a local church** with other brothers and sisters in Christ. (Acts 1 & 2; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4)

**In reality, it is primarily in a local church CONTEXT that** we are able to carry out the various ‘one to another’ this-is-what-love-looks-like ministries which are stated over 50 times in the Epistles. **In the Christian Home and in the local assembly of saints in Christ,** Christ is our exalted HEAD and we are ‘serving members’ in His Body of which He is the Head; and in His Body we are to live in submission one to another in the fear of God. (Eph. 5:21) **AS AN OVERFLOW of these primary relationships** we are called and motivated by the indwelling compelling of the Holy Spirit to move out into our world to advance the cause of Christ.

**As we see in the Word of God** the Gospel advancing along lines of relationships: **Andrew** went to Peter; **Philip**, to Nathaniel; **the woman at the well**, back to her city. **Cornelius** went to his household; **the Philippian jailer**, to his household; **the demonic of the Gadarenes** now sitting at the feet of Jesus, fully clothed and in his right mind was told by Jesus to go back to his home people and tell them what great things the LORD had done for him! O my, what a simple but powerful strategy!

**Indeed, if something good or bad happens to us—** among the first people we want to tell is family, friends and close associates. It is normal for life to unfold in the context of relationships. Therefore, look at the circles below. These are called **Concentric Circles**, because all of the circles are related to and have a specific connection to the first circle. **These Concentric Circles illustrate the normal experience of relationships.** Jesus told the disciples, ***“You shall be my witnesses in [1] Jerusalem; [2] Judea; [3] Samaria and [4] to the uttermost part of the earth.”*** WITNESSES— that is, **we are to** demonstrate by our lives real evidence of Christ in our lives **to the people in our world, starting with those closest to home!** This is the ‘music’ of the gospel which makes the gospel tracts, sermons, Bible Studies, etc, all the more believable!



**REALITY:** All too often we have hidden ruptured and/or strained relationships in our Bible believing Christian churches and homes that hinder the spread of the Gospel of Christ!

This is one reason that we find it easy to **jump past** family, relatives, friends, neighbors, business or work associates, and even acquaintances and go to Person X to evangelize!

**We run out to “Person X”** and we give them the gospel or a tract; and then, we run back to the safety of our home or church! (Rabbit holes— places where we are isolated from the world!)

**CRITICAL TRUTH:** The Gospel is spread along lines of relationships. If we ‘close our curtains’ and live to ourselves **and/or** if our relationships are ruptured and/or if our lives are unholy— then, it is very difficult for the Gospel to advance. **Thus, all across the land, churches,** (lacking the true ‘Gospel Music’ of flowing love, joy, peace, kindness, forgiveness and holiness) **dumb down to trying to advance the gospel by means of various forms of entertainment.**

### **THE CONCENTRIC CIRCLES!**

**Person X may be in** the high crime streets of a big city or in a third world, poverty stricken country, or in a rescue mission or jail— **we go to them!** We evangelize. We come home. We tell others about our efforts. We go back to our business, job, home, church and/or daily routines; and every so often we repeat the cycle. Others may commend us for being willing to ‘go to the streets’ or to a foreign land and minister for a few hours, days or even weeks.

**Now there is no doubt about it:** Person X needs the Gospel and they are a part of the world that we are called upon to evangelize! **Ministry to Person X is valid and needed!**

**HOWEVER, the question in this article is— WHY is it that all too often we do not GO TO THE FOLKS IN CIRCLES 2-6?**

Well, it could be because they know us— they know our salty language, lustful looks, greedy grasping, anger, business deceit, gossip, etc. They see how we are at work or at school or in our home. We might need to, first of all, ask for their forgiveness or give forgiveness. (Which if that is what we need to do— just do it! That is powerful witnessing!)

**Also, with Person X, we don't have to deal with our 'hang-ups' and we can 'love them and leave them!'** We make a 'quick trip' to a third world country, (Or even stay 45 days as I have!), but then we come home. Again, yes, there is need and a place for such endeavors. **But frankly, such labors** are usually simple and easy as compared to witnessing to those in circles 2-6!

**With 'Third World' type missions/evangelism right in our own town, or with outreach efforts toward neighbors just down the street— it's different and far more difficult! Why? How so?**

Again, the folks around us KNOW us— warts and all! BUT ALSO, with ministry in Circles 2-6, it's week after week, month after month, year after year. Ministering to those in Circles 2-6 is much like the career missionary: we have to be there for the long haul— planting, watering, praying, and waiting for the LORD to give the increase! We can't leave them.

We can't just do Sunday School or Children's Church or ministry to a neighbor or to a co-worker once or twice a year. Rather, we minister to them week after week and year after year— or at least maintain availability to minister, being alert for the next opportunity!

We can't just 'walk by on the other side' nor can we 'love them and leave them'— leaving the hard work of 'on-going follow up' ministries to others. **To folks in our Circles 2-6, WE ARE THEIR career missionaries or their full-time Rescue Mission Ministers, etc. Thus, we have to stop and give sacrificially of ourselves and our time.**

## **HAVE WE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED THIS—**

**If** we minister to someone in our local Jail, **are we not also obligated** to pray, think, plan, prepare as to how we can continue to minister when they get out?

**If** we find an ‘open door’ with a family, with an individual— **do we not have to be prepared** to follow-up week after week and even beyond?

If at Church services, we discover a need in someone or that a visitor is present— **doesn’t the the Sunday School class or you have opportunity/responsibility** for follow-up ministry?

**OR... AM I** content to just do ‘rabbit-hole’ evangelism... **or to do no evangelism or other outreach ministries? (For after all, ‘that’s what we pay the preacher to do!’)**

Over the years a good number of dear ones have told me that they felt **it was so much easier to minister the Gospel in this particular foreign land or that one.** “God is obviously at work in such and such place or nation— that’s where I want to be!” In contrast, they proclaim that gospel ministry can be so hard here in America. Besides, Americans have already heard the gospel. **But here is some larger reality:**

**If we were the actual ones living in and ministering in that ‘third world’ country or in a big city Rescue Mission every day, 365 days a year and year after year— we would not think it easy and we would see and experience their intense spiritual warfare!**

Again, years back I had spent 2 weeks in India, and then one month; but it was not until I had later spent 45 days in India! **All of those folks were in my Person X! But all who were Person X to me— those same folk were the people of Circles 2-6 to the Indian pastors and gospel workers— 365 days a year.** On three different occasions I, along with others, walked the streets of major cities in India all day for a week at a time, passing out tracts and doing street preaching. Many of our folk have done good ministry in Mexico or at the Jail or Rescue Mission. **These are all ministries to our Person X group. Praise the LORD!**

But our ‘Person X’ group is the Rescue Mission’s and India’s and/or the Mexico pastor’s or Christian worker’s **Person 2-6 Group!** That’s where most of the real work is done. Yes, we can have a valid ministry to Person X, especially when we leave them connected to local churches and

ministries. **But EVERY REAL farmer knows that he must do more than scatter a bunch of seed and then leave town!**

**Yes, whatever we do among Person X is a 'piece of cake' when compared to the labor required from the native pastors or from the Rescue Mission Staff! THIS IS ONE REASON WHY PRAYER FOR THOSE IN SUCH PLACES IS SO VITAL!**

**BUT, again, the PRIMARY QUESTION of this article is— WHO IS GOING TO TAKE THE GOSPEL TO THOSE IN GALLATIN, SUMNER COUNTY— OUR '2-6' WORLD?**

**And the answer is that I MUST! AND SO MUST YOU! But, we protest: "The people in my "2 to 6" world are not responsive to the gospel!" ... 'And, it's so hard... and what if it requires me to spend time with them every week...?'"**

**YOU KNOW: It is amazing the amount of time we spend EVERY WEEK on STUFF that does not have ETERNITY written on it!... but we hold back on spending quality and quantity time with SOULS who do have eternity written on them!**

**Moreover,** we are poor judges as to what is really happening. Many a great harvest has come after a number of apparent crop failures! Let us keep planting, watering. God will give the increase!

**Second,** we are called to be faithful.

**Third, look in the Bible— very often God has His servants in 'gospel-hardened' places! Just ask Noah! And then remember, that Jesus says that the last days will be like the days of Noah!**

**Forth,** beware of modeling after the apparent success methods of the entertainment oriented religious harlot! Our lost world does not need PLAY ACTING visuals! They need REAL VISUALS— Christians who genuinely love and forgive, who are manifesting

joy and hope in trials and tribulations, who manifest the COMPASSION of Jesus and who are walking in holiness.

**A MASTER KEY:** With the folks in our “2-6” world, life tumbles in for all of them. They have both good and ‘bad’ things that happen to them. **And the same things happen to saints in Christ!** They do not have resources to help them deal with the trials and troubles. BUT YOU AND I DO!

**As they WITNESS you winning the battle** over bitterness, revenge, hate, fear and resentments— the Gospel is being seen in Circles 2-6! **The MUSIC of the gospel is flowing from you. You are making them ‘THIRSTY’ and HUNGRY for good news, for GRACE to handle life!**

Thus, when life does tumble in, we often have FRESH OPPORTUNITIES or “points of contact” to sow seeds of kindness and love! Love is, after all, meeting real needs.

**Thus, real ‘2-6’ evangelism/missions/witnessing starts with how I treat** my wife, my family, those closest to me, those who are neighbors, those I work around and/or those I may casually meet in the town/county where I live.

**Real ‘2-6’ evangelism/missions/witnessing starts with being a congregation that loves, that forgives, and that seeks to live holy and pure!**

IF WE CANNOT OR IF WE REFUSE TO manifest love, forgiveness and holiness in these settings— we become guilty of hypocrisy; we grieve the Holy Spirit; and ZEAL for TELLING the gospel shuts down!

**Psalm 51 prescribes great healing medicine for this common spiritual disease!** (Concepts for this article are edited from and the diagram is from *Concentric Circles of Concern*, by W. Oscar Thompson, Jr.)

**Great Grace to each and every one!** James Bell

## **SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!**

**TUESDAYS:** Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Questions call Bradley Pennington at 615-804-3054.

\*\*\* **WEDNESDAYS:** PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! NOTE: Jody Allen is ministering to young Children, up to about age 10 during Prayer Service. Older children, but not old enough for the Youth Group... will be with their parents in the Prayer Service. YOUTH GROUP: Wednesdays 6-8pm... led by Byron Smith

**NEXT LADIES BIBLE STUDY— Thursday, May 29, 11:00AM,** led by Cindy Bell

\* **SATURDAY MORNINGS @ 8am:** Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! \*

### \*\*\* **SUNDAY SCHEDULE FOR JUNE** \*\*\*

**REGULAR SCHEDULE FOR JUNE 1, 8, 15:** [June 15, Father's Day, give Gideon Bibles!]

1. **9:30am-** Sunday School Bible Study and Small Group Fellowship
2. **10:45am-** Morning Worship / Children's Church
3. **NOON-** Covered-dish Fellowship Meal
4. **1:00pm-** Early afternoon Service

\*\*\***SPECIAL SCHEDULE FOR JUNE 22 and 29:**

1. **9:30am-** Sunday School Bible Study and Small Group Fellowship
2. **10:45am-** Morning Worship / Children's Church

**JUNE 22— LORD'S SUPPER;** no meal or afternoon service at church.  
**HOME MEETINGS!**

**JUNE 29—** No meal or afternoon service at church. CHURCH-WIDE SINGING, PRAISE, SCRIPTURE READING, TESTIMONIES AT 6:00pm

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**SOUTHSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL!** Children are like young plants in a garden— while young and tender they must be protected.



Southside Christian School works in harmony with the local Church and empowers parents!

<http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>

## **COMMITMENT TO JESUS CHRIST for ministry to our '2-6' world!**

**From the start, (Acts 2:42-47), it is clear** that those redeemed by Christ are placed by Christ into local congregations where **the Biblical, Holy Spirit empowered NORM is** members committed to and **LOVING** one another— thus revealing **COMMITMENT and LOVE** to Christ.

**QUOTE:** “If my commitment to the health and well-being of my physical body and physical health was on the same level as my commitment to Christ and His church— **WOULD I BE HEALTHY, VERY SICK, or DEAD?**”

**In the following, let each of us make the kinds of decisions and commitments which we will be glad we made when we stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of our stewardship!**

**1. \*\*\* OUTREACH MINISTRY— NEEDED:** 4 Teams with combinations of 2 couples; and/or a couple and 2 men; and/or a couple and two ladies. (We will ‘team up’ individual Outreach Ministry folk with others, as needed) **1. TO BE ON CALL** for ministry... one week every month. In other words, seek to be **AVAILABLE** for ‘sudden, unexpected needs; **2. SET ASIDE ONE EVENING and/or one daytime segment of time** to actually **MAKE VISITS** to widows; shut-ins, elderly, local hospital, a family who may have visited the church, and/or a church member needing encouragement; and/or **SOMEONE** with whom there may be an open door to share the gospel, etc.

**2. \*\*\*SUMMER CAMP: July 6-11**

**3. \*\*\* MEN: Elders; Deacons; OTHERS: EQUIPPING and/or preparation for PRESENT and/or possible future ministry:**

**1. Commit to** specific studies; **2. Engage in** various ministries; **3. Cultivate** personal walk with God. Tailored to each person's needs, gifts, time availability, sense of calling, etc.

At the end of the way, ***participants may or may not be led/called*** to specifically serve as a deacon or as an elder; but ALL will be far better equipped for ministry unto the LORD through the local church.

4. \*\*\*\*The New Testament calls us **to church-wide prayer Meetings!** WHO WILL SEEK TO BE FAITHFUL TO WEDNESDAY NIGHT PRAYER SERVICE?

5. \*\*\* **FIFTH SUNDAY EVENINGS** filled with those from our local assembly SINGING (Individuals, families, duets, trios, quartets, families, Choir, etc.); Reading/Quoting SCRIPTURE; TESTIMONIES **THE FIRST ONE: JUNE 29, 6:00 pm**

**FINAL NOTE:** Let each of us make the kinds of decisions and commitments which we will be glad we made when we stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of our stewardship!

Grace to all! James Bell