

*F*AITH IN A BESIEGED CITY

David was in a deep pit—a really deep pit! So deep that in a moment of alarm he said to himself, “I am cut off from before Your eyes” (Ps. 31:22). Some of the deepest holes are those that make us fear that God has turned from us. Pits that leave us groping in the dark because we feel that God has lost sight of us.

“Behold, I go forward but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; When He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him” (Job 23:8-9).

New Testament scholar, D. A. Carson, once wrote, “That is the worst despair of all—to feel that God has abandoned you. It was part of Job’s torment. Job felt he could mount a case in his own defense, if only he could find God long enough to argue with him. But the heavens were silent, and the silence multiplied his despair.”

There you have it. It is a double torment—a “multiplied despair!” There are the problems and difficulties that dug the pit in the first place. And then there is the despair of a silent heaven. Somehow, that makes the hole feel a lot deeper.

We may never know the exact circumstances that led to David’s pit in Psalm 31, but most of us can understand how he felt. He describes himself as being surrounded in a besieged city (Ps. 31:21). In a besieged city there is no escape and all news from the outside that could possibly bring hope is cut-off. In a besieged city there is only the inescapable sensation that resources are running low and time is running out.

Many of us have experienced the same constricting and suffocating effect of deep pits with no clear way out and no end in sight. Paying the bills is absolutely no fun at times like this. Walking into the same dreary office day after day makes the hours feel like months. Waking up with nowhere to go breeds a silent humiliation. The ministry itself can be filled with dead ends, discouragements and frustrations.

At times like this we can all stand to learn from David. He was not one to conceal the travails of his

November Calendar

- Men’s Breakfast**
November 4
- Hospitality Homes**
November 12
- Thanksgiving-Office Closed**
November 23
- Office Closed**
November 24

December Calendar

- Women of Grace Ornament Exchange**
December 3
- Hospitality Homes**
December 10
- Office Closed**
December 22
- Christmas-Office Closed**
December 25

Dates To Remember

- Men’s Retreat at Wolf Mountain**
February 2-4
- Women’s Retreat**
March 16-18
- All-Church Retreat at Koinonia**
May 18-20

Growing Together in the Knowledge and Grace of God

Weekly Calendar

- Sundays:**
Prayer: 8:15 am
Worship Services: 9:00 am & 11:00 am
Christian Education: 9:00 am & 11:00 am
- Mondays:**
Home Groups: 7:00 p.m.
- Tuesdays:**
Home Groups: 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesdays:**
Home Groups: 7:00 p.m.
Senior High Youth Group: 7:00 p.m.
- Thursdays:**
Junior High Youth Group: 7:00 p.m.
Grace Period–DVC: 7:30 p.m.
Home Groups: 7:00 p.m.
- Fridays:**
Grace Period–Berkeley: 7:00 p.m.
Home Groups: 7:00 p.m.

CALLING ALL CHEFS!



The Women of Grace are delighted to sponsor a fundraiser to help raise donations for the Phase 2 portion of the church’s building project. In keeping with the theme of Phase 2’s Kitchen and Storage unit, we’d like to invite everyone—men, women, and children—to participate by sharing your favorite recipe to be included in the GBC Cookbook.

The deadline to submit recipes is November 26. We hope to have the Cookbooks ready in time for Christmas and will be available for pick-up for a donation of \$25 or more beginning December 3, 2006.

Please go to the church’s website, www.gbcph.org, and click on “Women of Grace 2006 Cookbook”. Then follow the suggested steps. **It’s easy to participate and should be fun for everyone!**


soul, but he also held on tenaciously to the promise of God's covenant loyalty. Even during these darkest of hours he fought off the temptation to trust in false gods. He rejected the whispers to look elsewhere for comfort or hope. He refused to consider solutions that would deny his faith.

"I hate those who regard vain idols; But I trust in the Lord" (Ps. 31:6).

Even before the silence of heaven David remained convinced of two essential things. 1) God sees him! **"I will rejoice and be glad in Thy lovingkindness, because Thou has seen my affliction; Thou hast known the troubles of my soul" (Ps. 31:7).** 2) God is forever true to His covenant promises. **"How great is Thy goodness, which Thou has stored up for those who fear Thee" (Ps. 31:19).**

Even in the midnight blackness of his dark pit, David didn't need any news from the outside. What God had already revealed to his soul was enough to survive on forever. Eventually he was able to say, **"Blessed be the Lord, for He has made marvelous His lovingkindness to me in a besieged city... O love the Lord, all you His godly ones! The Lord preserves the faithful... Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the Lord" (Ps. 31:21, 23-24).**

David's pit was deep and yours might be even deeper. But it was never his reputation that was on the line—it was the Lord's. **"In Thee, O Lord, I have taken refuge; Let me never be ashamed... Incline Thine ear to me, rescue me quickly; ... for Thou art my rock and my fortress; For Thy name's sake Thou wilt lead me and guide me" (Ps. 31:1-4).**

Tenacious faith in the Lord will always pay off. Not because faith has some quality to lift you up and out of the circumstances. But because genuine Christian faith has as its object a loyal covenant keeping God. You may not perceive Him to your right or to your left. Still, God is not far, even in a besieged city. He sees the troubles of your soul and will set your feet in a large place (Ps. 31:6, 8). 

The Diaconate

A YEAR IN REVIEW

I simply cannot believe we are about to enter the holiday season and another year is winding down. It seems like I just put away the tents and camping gear! I am not really mentally ready to put the winter coverings on the patio furniture.

It has been a great year full of God's blessings in many marvelous ways. What a joy it has been to work together with the men who comprise the Diaconate and the women who make up the Deaconesses. These folks are very loving saints and their hearts are genuinely given to providing mercy ministry for needy people. This year the Diaconate doubled from four to eight men. Eldon Hawksworth, Lars Sandberg, Vince Vega and Gordon Judd were appointed. This year we also divided the Diaconate general responsibilities into four specific areas of mercy ministry. A Deacon now provides leadership over each of the designated areas.

Bless our sister Shelley Werner! This year she agreed to assume the leadership of the Deaconess ministry. So it has been a huge encouragement to see that the scope and extent of the mercy ministry continues to grow and expand. But we have not just been organizing! In many practical ways God has graciously used each of the Deacons and Deaconesses in their efforts to assist people. The needs over this last year have taken many forms: transportation to doctor's appointments, meals for the sick and disabled, disbursement of funds for those in financial need, financial counseling, job interview and employment counseling, care for the widows and shut in's, and physical assistance for those in crisis situations. Much of this assistance has come from many of you who have helped us. We thank the Lord for the willingness of the numerous saints who have positively responded to the many requests for assistance with the above activities. Ask any Deacon or Deaconess about the blessings of being used by the Lord in providing practical assistance to those in need. They will tell you of their own personal experience of great joy in the act of caring and extending love in practical ways to people. I guess this is the best thing we can say about the events of this year, the pleasure of being used of the Lord to extend His love in such meaningful ways. We thank you for your prayers, support and encouragement. May God richly bless you during the upcoming holiday season.

Kevin Shea

Missions

Getting Acquainted with Mark and Debbie Christopher

God introduced himself to Mark through the U.S. Air Force. Mark had enlisted at 18, searching for personal satisfaction. The Air Force didn't provide that, but one day while waiting for a flight to a new assignment, Mark began a conversation with someone reading a Bible, asking him if he believed what he read. Like the Philip with the Ethiopian on the road to Gaza in Acts 8, this new friend explained the truth of God's Word, the content of the gospel, and the impact that should have on Mark. Confronted with owning his sinfulness, Mark embraced God's grace and was saved. The new friend disciplined Mark and brought him to church where Mark grew under the ministry of the pastor. When he completed his service in the Air Force, Mark enrolled in Spurgeon Baptist Bible College in Florida to pursue full-time ministry.

Debbie was born in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. During a class in religious instruction at a public elementary school, Debbie heard a presentation of the gospel. The teacher challenged the class with the fact of sin and encouraged each to surrender their lives to Christ. Debbie invited Christ into her life. Two years later, due to the threat of civil war, Debbie's family moved to South Africa. There she found a good church where she grew in the Lord during her teen years.

Spurgeon Baptist Bible College in Florida was also Debbie's choice for college. God drew Mark and Debbie together as a couple and began to lead them towards full-time ministry. They were married in 1987 at Debbie's home church in Newcastle, South Africa, and Mark was invited to be an associate pastor there. There God solidified the call to South Africa in their hearts.

In 1995, Mark and Debbie began their church planting ministry in Cape Town, assisting a veteran missionary couple. Working together, their church grew from 70 to 120 members, and church leadership was developed. A church training institute was also begun at this time, eventually developing into today's Shepherds School of Theology and Expository Preaching (SSTEP), which offers a B.Th program through Potchefstroom University.

In 2001, Mark and Debbie started Living Hope Bible Church in Cape Town. What began with five people and a weekly Bible study has developed into a church with nearly 70 people. Kilwa Anderson has joined the ministry of LHBC and SSTEP and is currently leading that church while Mark and Debbie are on a brief home assignment.

Living Hope Bible Church continues to grow and mature. Mark and Kilwa anticipate establishing the church's first elder board and diaconate during 2007. This will be a milestone event in the life of the church, demonstrating its maturity as a body to be self-governing.

Prayer Requests:

- Praise God for the good men preparing for church leadership.
- Praise God for safety in a place with growing hostility to Christianity.
- Praise God for all who have partnered in prayer and finances for this ministry.
- Pray that God will bless Kilwa as he leads the church while the Christopher's are in the U.S.
- Pray for additional finances the Christopher's need to return to South Africa.
- Pray for a permanent facility for the church to own rather than rent.
- Pray for the AIDS situation and for the high crime rate in South Africa (conviction rate is less than 3%). Only the gospel will bring a lasting solution.

"Praise God for safety in a place with growing hostility to Christianity."





Women of Grace

MINISTRY NEWS

Upcoming Classes

In late January we will offer two classes:

- (1) a study of the book of Philippians led by Sheri Sanelli on a weekday morning to be determined, and (2) a study of Jerry Bridge's book The Practice of Godliness to be held on Monday nights from 7:00-8:00 at Bonnie Copland's home in Concord.

Sign-ups for both classes begin in early January.
Watch the bulletin for more details.

Merry Mailbox

Beginning November 26

On Sunday, November 26, we will open the Merry Mailbox for GBC Christmas cards. Bring your cards to the church addressed to current attenders of Grace (no stamps needed) and drop them in the mailbox located in the church foyer. They will then be sorted and put into folders (next to the mailbox) alphabetized by last name. Check your folder often as any cards not picked up by January 7 will be tossed out and nothing will be forwarded through the U.S. mail. If you have any questions or would like to help distribute cards, please contact Don or Cindy Ribergaard at 513-6547.

Ornament Exchange

Sunday, December 3, 5:00-7:30 p.m.

Stacy Hampton will host this year's Ornament Exchange at her home in Martinez. **This festive gathering is open to all Women of Grace!**
Bring a wrapped ornament to exchange and a snack to share.
Please R.S.V.P. to Stacy at 370-7577

Winter Retreat

March 16-18 at Camp Koinonia in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Amy Smith of GBC is our speaker and you don't want to miss out on this special time. Mark you calendars now. The cost is \$135, and scholarships are available for those who need assistance with all or part of the fee.
Contact C.G. Senft at 323-0639 if you have questions.

Ladies Tea

Saturday, April 28, 1:00-3:00 p.m., GBC Fellowship Hall

Marlean Felix (2006 winter retreat speaker) will be our guest speaker. **All ladies are invited! Feel free to bring a friend (or mother, aunt, etc!)**

New Moms Group

Would you like adult conversation while spending time with your pre-school kids? Contact Tisa Mantle at 324-3897 about joining her and other moms in the church that get together once a month with their kids for a field trip or activity, maybe some lunch and encouragement/prayer time.

WOG Newsletter

Our quarterly newsletter is in need of reporters, contributors to articles and help in gathering the various components of the publication by set deadlines. If you are interested in any of these areas, please contact Eileen Stephens at 372-6469 or C.G. at 323-0639.

LIVING IN THE HOPE OF GLORY CITIZEN'S CORNER

"You are the light of the world. A city on the hill cannot be hidden... let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."
Matthew 5:13-16

Election Day

The 15th, 19th, and 26th Amendments to the United States Constitution guarantee the right to vote for every US citizen over the age of 18 regardless of gender, color or creed. On November 7th, every eligible American citizen will have an opportunity to exercise that right.

A couple of years ago, John Piper had this to say about a Christian's responsibility to vote:

"God has commanded us (as aliens and exiles on the earth): "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7). We are citizens of two kingdoms: the kingdom of God, our ultimate allegiance, and the kingdom of this world. The ambiguities are many. The complexities are great. The possibility of political miscalculation is real. But Christ came into the world to save sinners. Therefore we do not panic at the possibility of error. It is worse to run than to risk. Only a fool replaces the complexity of voting with simplicity of gloating."

By John Piper. © Desiring God.
Website: www.desiringGod.org.
Email: mail@desiringGod.org. Toll Free: 1.888.346.4700.

Though it is not the church's calling to change society through the electoral process, Election Day is a manner in which we, as Americans, may actively engage our elected officials and cast votes on ballot propositions that will impact our lives as American citizens and residents of California.

Don't let November 7th pass you by without your participation.

(If you have moved and did not re-register with your new address, you may want to call your county's election office to determine where you should vote. Contra Costa County residents call 925-646-4166. Alameda County residents call 510-663-8683)

News and Events

Simple Service Ministries

***“Now you are the body of Christ,
and each one of you is a part of it.”***

1 Corinthians 12:27

We have many ways for those of you in our church family to be a part of the ministry here at Grace Bible Church. In fact, we have many “simple” ways for you to do so.

Have you ever been blessed by the Tape Ministry? Why not volunteer to help duplicate and distribute them on Sunday mornings. Have you been blessed by the materials at the Book Table? Why not help maintain it? Do you enjoy meeting people? Become an Usher or be a part of our Welcome or Greeter Ministry. Do you enjoy that fresh coffee every Sunday morning? Why not help out in the Kitchen Ministry on Sundays. Do you enjoy wielding a hammer or gardening? Then help with the Building and Maintenance Ministry. Do you enjoy cooking? Why not volunteer to make meals for our brothers or sisters who are ill?

These are just some easy ways for you to be involved in the lives of this local church body. If you desire to help in any of these ministries, please call the church office.

Welcome New Members

At our 3rd quarter Members Meeting we extended the right hand of fellowship to new members of Grace Bible Church. They are:

Anthony Crockett
Ray and Lola Pargett
Esther Phipps
Julie Pons
Eric Remedios.

Welcome!

Regular Prayer Times

Sunday Morning:
8:15 - 8:45 am; Room 203

Friday Morning:
Men's Prayer
6:30 am; Room 203

Birthdays!

NOVEMBER

KEVIN SMITH ~ 3
PAULINA SANELLI ~ 3
MATTHEW REDMOND ~ 3
MATT TELLE ~ 5
CAROL WILSON ~ 5
GREG DUTSON ~ 6
CHRISTINA SEELYE ~ 7
TREVOR SEELYE ~ 8
EMILY JONES ~ 10
TIM DODENHOFF ~ 12
ESTHER PENA ~ 12
RENEE LAM ~ 13
ROBERT ALLEN ~ 13
DARLENE SHEA ~ 14
JUDY BRADY ~ 16
HYERAN ALBERT ~ 18
NICOLE BOTELHO ~ 19
JACOB SMITH ~ 20
MADELINE SMITH ~ 20
ETHAN MANTLE ~ 27
CINDY RIBERGAARD ~ 28
KELLEN DRESLOW ~ 28
PARKER DRESLOW ~ 29

DECEMBER

NICOLE SANELLI ~ 2
DAMON DUNCAN ~ 3
INGRID HEMPELL ~ 4
VICTORIA KRUGGEL ~ 5
RAFE SHELOOE ~ 6
ALEX STARCHANKA ~ 6
ROBB HEDGES ~ 7
BRIAN SMITH ~ 7
KELI JUDD ~ 8
CHARITY STARCHANKA ~ 9
TRACI SHARP ~ 10
GEOFFREY MORGAN ~ 12
KIM SMITH ~ 12
ANNIE KRUGGEL, ~ 12
GAYLE MOUSSA ~ 12
SHELLY WERNER ~ 13
DEBBIE CARROLL ~ 13
MOLLY KNIGHT ~ 13
PAM SCHRAG ~ 14
AMY SHEA ~ 14
TIM HAMMACK ~ 14
MARIAH MOUSSA ~ 14
CAROL AXE ~ 14
CHARLES CARRIGAN ~ 19
BILL MOORE ~ 19
STEPHANIE DUNCAN ~ 20
RAINIE CUOMO ~ 20
JOSIAH SHEA ~ 20
KEVIN SHEA ~ 22
MARIE PERRI ~ 27
THOMAS JOHNSON ~ 27
KELLY FLASHBERGER ~ 28
PENNY DOERING ~ 28
PAT ZENTNER ~ 28
TIM MENEZ ~ 29
OLIVIA CASTEL ~ 31