

## *A Note From The Pastor*

### GOD'S WORD: FUEL AND GUIDANCE FOR PRAYER

*"This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."*  
(1 John 5:14-15)

What a stunning and heart lifting promise! Every Christian would readily agree that this word of promise regarding prayer brings encouragement and ignites a new desire to pray. But why do we need such prodding to avail ourselves of such a privilege? Why is it often so difficult to persist in prayer? We all freely confess that prayer has a vital role in the church and in our Christian walk. Yet, surely no area of the Christian life causes such consternation and embarrassment.

One central reason is confusion. Our generation lacks a deep biblical theology of prayer. Another reason is our love affair with instant gratification, easily learned techniques and quick measurable results. Prayer requires us to slow down, labor in stillness and silence and then wait upon the Lord. Prayer, as the Puritan Richard Sibbes wrote, "is a kind of wrestling and contending with God, a striving with Him." This requires spiritual energy, patience and time... precious time.

Having said that, I do want to offer in this brief article is a suggestion for fueling and shaping prayer "according to His will." If we can grow in this one area alone, our prayer lives will begin to become more effective and encouraging.

If prayer according to God's will means that we pray with His values, righteousness, kingdom and glory in mind. How can we get our arms around such priorities in order to ensure that our prayers are fueled by the Lord's concerns and hence are according to His will?

The simple answer is to lay a foundation of meditation upon God's revealed Word before we pray. Two key verses stand out in my mind. The first is Psalm 1:2 "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." The second is Romans 12:2 "...be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Meditation is a biblical principle that provides a much-needed bridge for prayer in accordance with God's will. New Age mysticism has given meditation a bad reputation among bible believing Christians. But there are stark differences between eastern or New Age concepts of meditation and biblical meditation.

- In eastern meditation the individual is encouraged to empty himself.
- In biblical meditation the individual is encouraged to fill himself with God's revealed truth.
- In eastern meditation the individual is encouraged to look within himself, the object being the higher self.
- In biblical meditation the individual is encouraged to look outside himself, the object being the Lord who alone is on high as the Almighty!

I recently heard a lecture regarding Luther's view on meditation as a foundation for prayer and found it most helpful. Of all the reformers, it was Martin Luther who most wrote about and practiced persistent prayer. He unashamedly believed the truth that great gifts from God are always given in response to prayer.

In order to meditate deeply upon the truths of Scripture Martin Luther suggests that we ask ourselves three questions regarding every truth we encounter in our biblical reading. These questions will help us renew our minds and inform

our prayers. In short, his three questions are:

- 1 – How does this truth lead me to praise God?**
- 2 – What sins should I confess in light of this truth?**
- 3 – What should I ask God for in light of this truth?**

I recently put these questions into practice in my personal devotions and journal. Reading from Hebrews 4, I focused upon the central truth that Jesus is the Great High priest whom I may approach for grace and mercy in my journey of perseverance. I praised God for providing a priest who sympathizes with me. I thanked Him for grace and mercy and thought about what those mean. I confessed that I do not often seek Jesus my priest, as I ought. I confessed that I often don't battle unbelief in perseverance, as I ought. I then asked the Lord for wisdom in recognizing the creeping influence of unbelief and laziness in perseverance. I asked Him for greater confidence in prayer and less self-confidence. This is just a synopsis of a much broader time of meditation and devotion.

I hope this brief example will help and encourage each of you to consider how you might fuel your heart and mind with the very truth your prayers are to be informed by. The point is not to emulate Luther but to "renew the mind" and "meditate" upon God's word so that you might know and prove what the will of God is. Your prayers will be shaped more and more "according to His will" and hence your prayer life will be more fruitful and regarding.

–Tony Sanelli



## DEACON'S BENEVOLENT ANNOUNCEMENT

As the Samaritan in Luke 10 cared for the beaten, robbed and helpless traveler on the Jericho road, Jesus asks us to "Go and do likewise."

Recent disasters in Asia have left millions in great suffering and agony. The body of Christ, through prayer, serving, and sacrificial giving has the opportunity to minister to these hurting people.

The devastating cyclone that ravaged Burma on May 3rd has claimed the lives of over one-hundred thousand people, and left countless in need of food, water, shelter and medical treatment. Christian Freedom International (CFI) has done extensive work in Burma over the last decade, bringing the Gospel to those that have never heard it, helping protect persecuted Christians, and ministering tangibly to the needy. CFI is continuing to effectively serve the hurting in Burma at this critical hour with wisdom in the face of corrupt government interference.

The earthquake that shook China on May 12th has had a similarly devastating effect. Over fifty-thousand people

have died and millions have been left homeless. There is a great need for shelter, food and clean water at a massive scale. Consider the orphans, the parents that lost their only child, and the hurting. Samaritan's Purse is a ministry that has been serving the needy around the world and promoting the Gospel of Jesus Christ for over thirty-five years. They are currently airlifting much needed supplies to the affected regions of China and have a team assisting in relief work.

We would like to encourage those of you that are able, to give to Christian Freedom International and/or Samaritan's Purse to provide tangible mercy to the many currently suffering in Burma and China. Please pray for God's compassion on the hurting, that the body of Christ would be encouraged in the devastated areas, and that the Gospel would go forth.

To donate to CFI go to:

[www.christianfreedom.org](http://www.christianfreedom.org)

To donate to Samaritan's Purse go to:

[www.samaritanspurse.org](http://www.samaritanspurse.org)

## JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- Kathi Wihlon ~ 2
- Robert Duncan ~ 3
- Rebekah Dodenhoff ~ 5
- Ginger South ~ 5
- Louisa Sharp ~ 7
- Marylee Oliver ~ 8
- Janece Shellooe ~ 10
- Shannon Hoye ~ 11
- Caleb Smith ~ 12
- C.G. Senft ~ 15
- Usha Menon ~ 17
- Nathanael Shea ~ 17
- Ben Shreve ~ 18
- Vance Hardisty ~ 23
- Bradley Nissen ~ 24
- Dale Sigmundson ~ 24
- Ines Johnson ~ 26
- Jennifer Kearns ~ 26
- Bob Lytle ~ 27
- Ken Zentner ~ 27
- Margaret Genendlis ~ 28
- Robert Contino ~ 29
- Sarah Moussa ~ 29
- Keith Flashberger ~ 30
- John Goodson ~ 30

## MEN'S MINISTRY

### Father Son/Daughter Backpacking Trip

The men's ministry is sponsoring a father son/father daughter backpack trip August 3rd - August 7th this summer in the beautiful Trinity Mountains in Northern California. We are limited to a maximum of 20 people and will therefore be taking reservations for these spots on a first come basis.

Please call Brian Smith (944-6003) or Edd Simmons (408-3461) for more information on the trip.

### Couples Retreat

The men's ministry is also sponsoring a couples retreat scheduled for September 19-21 in the Carmel/Monterey area.

Writer and speaker, Jay Wegter, founder of Gospel for Life, will be our guest for the weekend. Please mark your calendars and keep an eye out for future details.

## WOMEN'S MINISTRY

### Backyard BBQ and Pool Party

Monday, July 7, 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. GBC women are invited to lunch at C.G. Senft's house in Concord during which we will spend time eating, praying and getting to know each other better. Please bring a salad to share. Drinks, meat and dessert will be provided. An R.S.V.P. to C.G. at 323-0639 is recommended and appreciated.

### Game & Gab Night

Friday, July 25, 7:00 to 11:00 p.m. at Christine Nichols' home in Concord. Come enjoy playing board games, or gabbing, or both with your Grace sisters. Bring your favorite snack and game(s) to share. Call Christine at (925) 674-9811 if you have questions or need directions.

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*What's going on at Grace?*



## MISSIONS UPDATE

June is a busy month for missions. Pastor Tony will be ministering in Honduras Thursday-Saturday, June 5-7, at MEDA (Ministerios Evangélicos De Las Américas). They are expecting close to 100 pastors from Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador to attend this weekend conference on the Theology and Practice of Sanctification. Pray for Tony's fluency of thought in Spanish as he teaches. Pray for the travel (two days to go, one long day to return). Pray that Tony can be an encouragement to MEDA missionaries Adrian Donato and Carlos Montoya while he is there.

The San Quintin ministry trip begins near the end of June. That means final preparation takes place this month, and final fundraising. Support the trip by enjoying the BBQ lunch on June 1, and by getting your car washed on June 8th. Pray that God will prepare the hearts of men, women, youth, and children who

will hear the gospel. Pray for those from the San Quintin church who will be leading the various ministries. There are many logistics to arrange for this trip. Pray for Ben Nissen as he leads this trip.

The Gustafson's return to Asia in mid-June. They expressed their appreciation for the hospitality, prayers, and interest our congregation showed them while they were with us at the end of May. Pray for continued favor with the local authorities, and wisdom to lead and direct Team Hope in all of their various activities and projects.

The Missions Ministry

## NEWS & EVENTS

### All-Church Retreat

Our Lord works and moves in ways that at first can seem unclear and cause us to wonder, "What are you doing Lord?"



In the days leading up to this year's retreat, many on staff had to wonder this very thing as we received news that an associate pastor with Grace Church of the Napa Valley suddenly went home to be with the Lord.



Our retreat speaker was to be Pastor John Fernandez with Grace Church. Though John agreed to speak until Saturday afternoon, the last thing we wanted him to be burdened with was speaking at our retreat. "What are you doing here Lord?"

Thankfully, God knows exactly what He's doing and used this circumstance to bring out our dear brother and missionary from Indiana, Dave Mikulsky, to speak to nearly 200 people from our church. He spoke on the life of Joseph.

He shared with us "Gems from Genesis", and what Gems they were! Dave encouraged us all with the Truth that while we may not understand the difficulties we face or the trials we are bearing up under we can rest assured that God's ways are infinitely better than our own, and that He will use them for our good and ultimately for His own glory. If you missed our retreat this year, mark your calendars for next year. It's always

the weekend following Mother's Day.

### All-Church Camping Trip

Join us from Friday, Sept. 5th thru Monday, Sept. 8th for our all-church family camping trip in the Eldorado National Forest at Big Silver group site. The cost is only \$25 per family for the entire time. You can enjoy swimming, fishing, hiking, and biking on paved trails around the water. You can relax around the campfire while roasting marshmallows. Give Barbara or Max Sanabria a call for details (284-3476). Watch for sign-ups in courtyard.

### Church Picnic

The first church picnic of the summer is June 8, following the 2nd service. Join us at the park across Gregory Lane for a BBQ! We'll supply the burgers, dogs and refreshments. Last names beginning with **A-G**, please bring a dessert; if **H-Z**, please bring a salad. If possible, please bring your items in disposable containers.

GRACE  
BIBLE CHURCH

### JUNE CALENDAR

**Church Picnic:** June 8

**55 Plus Lunch:** June 19

**San Quintin Mission Trip:**  
June 21-29

### FUTURE DATES TO REMEMBER

**Kids Camp:** July 7-12

**Jr. High Camp:** July 14-19

**Sr. High Camp:** July 21-26

**VBS:** July 28 - August 1

**All-Church Camping Trip:**  
September 5-8

**Mailing Address:**

140 Gregory Lane, Suite 180  
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

TEL [925] 676-1584

FAX [925] 677-2192

[www.gbcph.org](http://www.gbcph.org)

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## 55 PLUS MINISTRY

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In May, the "55 plus Ministry" conducted their first semi-annual event for Shepherds Gate. They were able to collect and deliver many items, that were on the Shepherds Gate "On-Going Needs List".

The next "55 plus Ministry" luncheon is scheduled for **Thursday, June 19th** at noon in GBC Fellowship Hall, if construction permits. If there is construction interference, then they will meet in room 202. Note: Each individual is to bring their own lunch. Drinks and dessert will be provided. Ben Nissen, a GBC staff member, will be our guest speaker.

"55 plus" individuals who enjoy pets and good food, won't want to miss the July 17, 2008 event! We will meet at **ARF** (Animal Rescue Foundation) for a tour of their facilities which will begin promptly at 10:00 am. ARF saves the lives of countless dogs and cats each year whose

time had run out in public shelters and who were scheduled to be killed. A team of trained volunteers and expert staff make sure each ARF animal receives good nutrition, medical evaluation and treatment, spay/neuter surgery, training and lots of love while waiting for their new adoptive homes

This tour is guaranteed to warm your heart and to bring a smile to your face as you see how well cared for and loved these animals are in their "Five Star" accommodations.

After the tour, we will drive 1&1/2 miles to the **Black Bear Diner** for lunch, It is located in the Country Wood Shopping Center at 700 Bancroft Road, Walnut Creek, CA 94598. Their telephone number is (925) 941-0000.

Beginning at noon we have reserved the Banquet Room under the name Ken Vought. This is a recent good find for a pleasant place to eat. It is guaranteed

to give you very tasty food and excellent service in nice surroundings. Be sure to come with a big appetite, because even their "Senior Menu" items provide very generous helpings of food.

Due to the nature of this meeting, you are encouraged to bring your Grandchildren and/or a friend to this event.

Note:

- You will need to pay for your own lunch.
- The tour at ARF is free.
- The ARF (Animal Rescue Foundation) address is:  
2890 Mitchell Drive, Walnut Creek.  
The telephone number is (925) 256-1273.

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## WOMEN'S MINISTRY (CONTINUED)

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### Fall Conference

September 26 and 27, (Friday night & Saturday) Betty Price (our ladies tea speaker) will bring four hour-long sessions on Portraits of Women in Scripture and what we can learn from them. Please prayerfully consider attending and bringing a friend as it will be a rich time of teaching, learning and fellowship. The cost is \$35 for Saturday lunch and event expenses. Sign-ups begin Sunday, August 30.

### Study of James in a Day

Saturday, October 11, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Though Chris Kiiskinen did not get to speak at our winter retreat, we have another chance to hear his series on "Living by Faith in a Fallen World" from the book of James during this one-day seminar to be held at the church or a location nearby. Lunch will be provided for a suggested \$5 donation. Look for more information in future publications and put this on your calendar as you won't want to pass it up!