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A NOTE FROM OUR PASTOR

The Word and Prayer in 2012

I'll be out of the office much of the week between Christmas and New Year's, so I sent this one in early to help you get your new year off to a bang up start. One of our goals in 2012 is to help you grow in your knowledge of God's word (and of the God of the word) and in your practice of prayer. As far as the prayer piece, we will offer you a low cost seminar in late February based on the book A Praying Life. I want to encourage you in some ways to allow the Bible, the word of God, to help you grow closer to God.

Bible Reading Plan: On our Welcome Table are free Bible reading plans available to help you read through the entire Bible in one year, by using 25 "sessions" per month. In other words, you don't have to read every single day to complete it. Each day you read from four different places in the Bible- 2 Old Testament and 2 New Testament readings. Yes, you have to wander through passages that give you details that seem irrelevant to your life. In time, you will grasp connections between these passages and the rest of the story. Meanwhile, you are reading in 3 other places in the Bible at the same time. If you are like me, you will find yourself picking one of the readings to spend more time on. I used another plan this past year and am personally looking forward to returning to this method again.

In case you want to print it out at home, the link to this plan is at

<http://www.navpress.com/uploadedFiles/15074%20BRP.dj.pdf>

A simple alternative plan is to read 1 Psalm, 1 Proverb, 1 Old Testament and 1 New Testament chapter every day. You can flex that plan any way you like. You will read part way through the New Testament a second time before you finish the Old Testament.

ESV Study Bible: Do you own a good study Bible? The value of such a tool is hard to estimate. Of course, the study notes are not infallible, and they all have the bias of the writers. I like the “bias” of the ESV Study Bible! The notes in the back are like a mini seminary course and are worth planning some time to read through. How can you use a Bible like this in a Bible reading plan? When you start a new book of the Bible, read the introduction at the beginning of the book. That will show you where you are in history, and give you some important background to the material you are reading. After all, the books weren't written FIRST to people in our day. Before we can understand what it means for today, we need to see what it meant back then.

Topical Memory System: If you have never experienced the benefit of memorizing and mulling over (meditating on) scripture, a way to get started is by purchasing the Topical Memory System. This little kit has 66 of the most loved passages of the Bible arranged by topic. There is a booklet with it that has some explanation of each verse. It is easier than you realize. There are only two verse cards for every week, and the first few verses are short and simple. It is a fun tool to do in your home with other family members- you can quiz each other and encourage each other along the way!

This year in preaching at GCC I will try to help you get a better grasp on the Bible. Here is our plan. If God proves this to be His will for us... We will start by looking at two key parts of the Bible- the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. Then, with your help, we will look at the Top Ten Bible Texts of all time, as compiled by you, the members and attenders of Grace Community Church. I will reserve the right to take some liberties in the list, as we just preached through Romans 8, so thought that will no doubt make the list; we won't cover it again for now. Lastly, we will help you next fall look at 100 essential texts of the Bible over the fall of 2012 and winter of 2013. This is a tool that will get all ages reading the same parts of the Bible, while we look at some of the key verses in those 100 essential texts.

If you haven't really gotten into Bible reading, I hope you will take the plunge. Even if you start and don't reach your goal, you will get further than you would have without trying! For some of you, this year might begin a lifelong blessing of regular reading of the Bible, which will aid you in your path of discipleship.

In Him,

Don

THIS WEEK AT GRACE

NO FOUNDATIONS CLASSES UNTIL JANUARY 8, 2012

CHURCH OFFICE SCHEDULE

The Church Office will be closed Monday, January 2, 2012 for the New Year's holiday.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!!

This week we would like to wish the following members a very blessed and Happy Birthday!!

Benjamin Fountain 1/2

Morgan Shaller 1/5

Ariel Mellott 1/6

Brian Pinkston 1/6

FOUNDATIONS CLASSES

Join us weekly for our Foundations classes at 9:30am on Sunday. Each age group receives high quality Christian teaching in an interactive format. For adults, we are currently running our Gospel Centered Marriage Course in the main worship center.

INTERESTED IN SINGLES FELLOWSHIP?

The first Sunday of each month we will meet at Panera at the Hollymead Shopping Center at 7pm. **Due to the New Year's Holiday our group will meet on January 8th.** If you are interested or have any questions contact Steve Kalman at sekalman@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

JAPAN 2012 MEETING

The next Japan 2012 Meeting will be at 10:00 AM on January 7th, 2012 here at GCC!

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING, JANUARY 15, 2012

Mark your calendar for this meeting immediately following the 10:30 AM worship service. This is the meeting where the congregation meets to concur with Pastor Saville's resignation as Associate Pastor of GCC. Dave will remain in our service into 2012 in a different role.

DISCOVER GRACE BEGINS JANUARY 29, 2012

Interested in learning more about GCC? Our five week Discover Grace course will run during the Foundations hour (9:30am) and will answer your questions about our church, and about membership at GCC. Sign up by writing "Discover Grace" on the red clipboards or email (dawn@gcchurch.com).

COMMUNITY INTEREST

LOST AND FOUND ITEMS

There are several Bibles which have been left at the church. They are in the office on the desk. Please check to see if any of these might be yours and if so please take it home with you. Thank you. Also, we have dishes and containers that have been left here at the church from various functions. Please check to see if any of the items are yours and take them home with you. Thank you.

ABRO 2012!!

It seems ridiculously early to be thinking about next summer, butplans must be made. If you have room in your summer for a Belarusian child, please pray about being a host family for ABRO next June and July. Dates are not firm, but arrival is likely around June 14-21 and they should return home between July 26 and August 2.

The American Belarusian Relief Organization (ABRO)-Charlottesville hopes to host a small group of children from Belarus in the summer of 2012. The children involved in this medical respite program live in or near the radioactive fallout zone from the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster. (Are they radioactive? No,

not in a way that can harm you or your family at all. Do they have serious health needs? Some do, but the ones coming to Charlottesville are basically healthy kids in need of a respite from their environment for a few weeks.)

We believe that six weeks away from their environment significantly improves their immune systems and quality of life. While here, the children are given medical care, dental care, and a vision screening. The most important thing they receive is the love of Christ expressed through a person or family who welcomes them with a grateful heart. We will provide Bible lessons in Russian as well, so that they can go home with God's words in their minds and His love in their hearts.

(Wait a minute—they speak Russian? Meaning they don't speak English? That's a problem, isn't it? Not really. You'll be amazed at what you can do with a few strategic phrases and pantomime. Also, there is a bilingual chaperone with the group, available to help with any "sticky situations.")

There are many ways to participate. (Ok, I'm in! What do I do?)

- The biggest part of the mission falls to host families who volunteer to care for a child in their home for a six week visit. These families or individuals need to pray, ask questions and fill out an application by the end of January. Then they need to raise money to pay for the child's airfare, visa, etc. (\$2,000-\$2,500/child) Seeking to maintain close relationships, we've chosen to limit the size of our ABRO 2012 group to around ten guests.

- Another big piece is the funding: maybe you are not called to host, but want to support the effort. You can donate to a host family's mission fund or be on our fundraising team.

- Others may want to be a relief host. If the host family needs to leave the guest for some reason, relief hosts take over for a day, an evening, whatever's needed. Relief hosts may sign up to support a particular family or to relieve any and all full time hosts. This year we also need a chaperone host and a "back up host", prepared to take over full time hosting in case of extreme circumstances. Relief hosts must apply by the end of January as well.

- Finally, once the children arrive, there will be many opportunities to bless them and be blessed by them: by donating clothes or school supplies, by inviting a child and his host family to a meal or a fun activity. Do you have a pool? A ping pong table? Can you smile and hug and give high fives?

This program is open to Christian families in the Charlottesville area, not limited to any one congregation.

To learn more: www.abro.org Stephen and Beth Walls Mathis 434-985-9986

bethwallsmathis@gmail.com Chris and Erica Knights 434-990-6061 5knights@earthlink.net

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