



The Christian life is a journey.

TrailNotes speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the “landscape” we are passing through in this trail-laced wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. **TrailNotes** is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we’re learning and doing.

ElderTalk: Praying for Our Children

ERIC BYROM

The other night at Adult Connect on Wednesday evening the group was discussing how we pray for our children. One of the prayers I have prayed for my children and those at Grace Fellowship over the years has been that they might be a blessing to their families and to the world. I also pray that not one of them would be lost because if they have a vital relationship with Jesus Christ, they will be a blessing to their families and to the world.

Jesus said in John 15:5, *“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in Him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”* It occurs to me that the key here is not only a relationship with Jesus but abiding in Jesus. We can’t rest on our laurels on praying a prayer when we were little, but that prayer we prayed should motivate and point the way towards a current relationship with Him in the present.

Our theme this year is *Grace on Mission*, and the theme verse is Hebrews 12:15a: *“See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God.”* *Grace on Mission* means making every effort to make sure that no one in our sphere of responsibility is missing the grace of God. What would cause people to miss this grace or to fail to obtain it? As we have been looking at the book of Hebrews, we notice that it is full of warnings regarding missing God’s grace. A thorough reading and re-reading of this book would be wise on our part to understand the potential pitfalls that stand in our way and the way of others to obtaining the grace of God.

In this article, I would like to focus on the warnings and challenges that we have received from covering the first three chapters of Hebrews. It seems that the dangers the writer of Hebrews deals with are those of neglect (2:3) and unbelief (3:12). We can be neglectful of considering Jesus (3:1) and understanding who the biblical Jesus really is and the claim that He has upon our lives. We often think of Jesus as “meek and mild” rather than Jesus “King of kings” and “Creator and Sustainer” of all things.”

(concluded on page 2)

Meet Sydney

DONNA KURTZ

Sydney Kurtz is one of our granddaughters. She lives in Lakeland, FL, where she attended Southeastern University (Her dad, Paul, is the cross-country coach at SWU.) There she received her BA and an MA in counseling. During that same time, she began a ministry with Young Life.



“I work with WyldLife, the middle school ministry in our area. This role is helping to equip and prepare me to serve and love the middle school students in Polk County. Our WyldLife has been growing so much. We consistently have 75-to 100 kids coming to club each week. Getting to know them, seeing our team connect with them, forming beautiful relationships and getting to be present in their school and in their lives has been such an honor.”

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Praying for Our Children *(concluded)*

We can be unbelieving like the Israelites in the desert, who, even though they saw many mighty works of God, still did not believe that He would take care of them. They ran after (or back to) other things rather than trusting God to deliver and establish them. We can be tempted to do the same things. As we pray for our children during these days, let's pray that they will reflect on who Jesus really is and the claim that He has upon their lives. Let's pray that they will have a soft, believing heart that trusts God and runs after His salvation. Let's make every effort to see to it that each one can obtain the grace of God.

November 2023

4 Men's Retreat with Harvest Christian at GFC. 9 - 5:30 pm.

4 GFC hosts the monthly family game night. 6:30 - 8:30 pm.

5 Worship. Hebrews 4:14-16. Operation Christmas Child collection of shoeboxes.

12 Worship. Hebrews 5:1-10.



Operation Christmas Child collection of shoeboxes.

16 Women of Grace Bible Study and prayer. 6:30 - 8:00 pm.

19 Worship. Hebrews 5:11 - 14.



26 Worship. Hebrews 6:1 - 8.

Meet Sydney *(concluded from p. 1)*



"Middle school students are my favorite people. I think they are perfect examples of how Jesus sees us—a little messy, a little awkward, a little too hyped-up on sugar sometimes, but just trying to find their place in this world and to give love. I love that our team of leaders gets to be people that tell these kids, 'I want to hear you, even if no one else takes the time to listen.'"

"My intention behind doing student staff is rooted in a call that I feel is from God to this organization and mission. I want to obey and follow that call. As big as that call is, even bigger is the fact that God has called all of us to love. And there are these kids, these beautiful, crazy, messy kids that need to know that we love them."

Syd's email is sydneymkurtz@gmail.com if you'd like to learn more about the work of Young Life.



Conversing with God

RAY NETHERY

Christianity without prayer is like a family without communication. Communication—speaking and listening—is a key to successful personal relationships. This is true for husbands and wives, parents and children, friendships, and work relationships. How much more true this is for a personal relationship with God, one in which we grow in knowing Him and being known by Him.

Good communication is not like an instant cake mix: open the package, pour out the contents, add water, stir, bake and enjoy. Communicating doesn't happen that way; communication skills and sensitivities need to be developed.

Prayer practices often fall into two extremities. One is pompous and overly formal prayer which implies that God is removed, heavenbound, untouchable. God is lofty and regal and majestic. Yet, at the same time, He has called us as His children and given us freedom to pour out our hearts to Him without fearing the results of our openness.

The other extreme is overly familiar prayer that lacks respect for God. In this type of prayer, God is related to as "the man upstairs": a divine peer whom we may approach with no sense of wonder or awe. God created the world and wants lordship over every part of it. His plan is that we cooperate with Him, allowing His presence and power to permeate our lives and affairs. But when we fall into formalism or overfamiliarity in prayer, we shut down a vital line of communication through which He normally communicates His will.

So prayer is different from a casual conversation between human beings. After all, God is almighty, the creator of the universe, redeemer of humankind. He is divine; we are human. He is unlimited; we are finite. He is the greater; we are the lesser. He independent; we are dependent. The way we speak to Him should reflect our position under Him: dependent, reverent.

We also bear God's image. One of His attributes is creativity. Creativity lifts prayer out of the doldrums of formality, the endless hours of wondering if God even exists as we repeat words that long ago lost their meaning for us. Through creativity, each aspect of prayer comes alive:

- ◆ Thanksgiving for life, provision and relationships
- ◆ Praise of God for His character and work in creation and redemption
- ◆ Adoration of the Trinity, One God in Three Persons
- ◆ Intercession for God's people and the salvation of the world

- ◆ Confession of our sins and shortcomings to the God of forgiveness
- ◆ Devotional reading of Scripture, allowing God's Spirit to speak to us
- ◆ Contemplation and listening to God
- ◆ Solicitation of God's Spirit for grace and empowerment
- ◆ Crying out for help in times of need

Note: This is a reprint of an article written by GFC's beloved Elder Emeritus, Ray Nethery, which originally appeared in the Spring 1986 issue of Commonlife, a publication of Grace Haven Ministries.

Praying Hands of Albrecht Dürer

One of the best known pieces of religious art ever created, this small (7.8"x 11.5") pencil drawing was done on bluish paper, handmade by the artist himself.

It was a sketch made in 1508 while he was working on a large altarpiece in which the same hands are represented, attached to one of the Apostles in prayer.



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(The complete list of church functionaries
will return next month)

Scores Killed in Blast at Gaza's Only Christian Hospital

Scores of Palestinians were killed on Oct. 18 in an explosion in the parking lot of Gaza's only Christian hospital.

The Hamas-run Palestinian Health Ministry, which estimated a death toll of over 500, blamed the attack at al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City on Israel. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said the blast was a failed rocket launch from Islamic Jihad, a Hamas-aligned militant group. United States President, Joe Biden, visiting Israel on Wednesday, referenced data from the Department of Defense backing Israel's account.

Al-Ajli was founded by Anglican missionaries and has existed in the region since 1882. For some decades in the mid-20th century, it was operated by Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) missions. It currently sits under the Anglican Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

Known colloquially as al-Ma'amadani or "the

Baptist" in Arabic), it is one of 22 hospitals in northern Gaza. After Israel's evacuation orders in the area, hundreds of Palestinians had taken refuge there, with families sheltering in the courtyard where the explosion took place, according to news reports.

"We are here as an instrument in the hands of God to show the love of Jesus Christ for all people. We are proud that in all conflicts, this hospital was there to eliminate the suffering of the needy, the poor, and to help those in need of a compassionate heart," said al-Ahli director, Suhaila Tarazi, in an earlier appeal to Christian supporters.

"This hospital will continue to be a place of reconciliation, of love."

Tarazi, an Arab Christian from South Carolina, has navigated high unemployment, power cuts, and unrest during her 30-year tenure in Gaza. Weeks before the Israel-Hamas war, the Christian hospital was already overwhelmed and underfunded. Tarazi told one group that her workday began at 8 am and ended at 4 am.

"I am exhausted," she says.

(From an article by Morgan Lee which appeared in its entirety as a part of the online CT Weekly Newsletter on October 18, 2023, and is used by permission)



Photo by Belal Khaled/Anadolu via Getty Images

Palestinians carry usable items from the heavily damaged al-Ahli Baptist Hospital building after the bombing in Gaza City, Gaza, on October 18, 2023.