



## 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. This is a monthly publication of Grace Fellowship Church, Mansfield, Ohio.

## ElderTalk: Words are important

MIKE TERMER

Words are important. Choosing the right ones at the right time can be critical in a culture of war on words. One of the biggest communication obstacles that we face today is understanding the meaning behind our words. The challenge lies in the fact that meanings change over the course of a generation. A word such as “gay” thirty or forty years ago carried the expression of a person being happy. We can even hear the word used this way in the classic Christmas song, “Deck the Halls.” Over the last 30 years or so, that same word has morphed into being a word of “a person’s ungodly sexual orientation.” Another word that has changed over the course of time is “like,” which used to mean “to be similar to.” Social media has turned it into “expressing approval over something.” According to the website <https://www.ideas.ted.com>, the word “nice” used to mean “silly or foolish,” but today it is a favorable compliment, and the word “awful” carried the meaning of “worthy of awe” as an expression toward God, and now it carries a negative connotation of dislike. One more, the word “naughty” used to be understood as “a person who had naught or nothing,” but today it is defined as “one who is evil or practices immoral behavior.”

If words are important and yet they can change their meaning over time, then what is a person to do when it comes to communicating the importance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Now here is the good news. God’s Word never changes. What Scripture meant two thousand years ago means the same thing today. No generation, social influence, or moral norms can change the meaning of the words in the Bible. However,

we have misplaced the true meaning of a few key words that are in the Bible. These words are so important that they can be a matter of life or death.



Actually there are two or three words that I am specifically referring to. Let us first examine the word “death.” Death in the purest sense does not mean that a person ceases to exist. All people ever conceived will live for eternity. Each human being has a beginning (start of life) and has no end to his or her existence. The biblical definition of death used the majority of the time, is *thanatos*, which primarily means “to be separate from.” Paul says in Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death...” This is a declarative, stating that because we sin we will be separated from God for all eternity. We will exist forever in all eternity without God’s grace, covering, protection, provision, light, guidance, blessings, and, most importantly, His presence. In death we will exist in darkness, pain, fear, vulnerability, suffering, and so on. The good news is the second part of that same verse, “...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Eternal

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## Words are important

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life are the two other words where their meanings have been misplaced. Many fall into the trap thinking that eternal life is making it to heaven. Let us not be mistaken; heaven is a real place, but that is not the meaning and/or intention behind eternal life. If “death” means “to be separate from God” then “life” must and does mean “to be in union or communion with Him.” Jesus said as much in John 17:3, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

Jesus shared these words with His disciples in prayer so there would be no mistake, that eternal life starts today with us knowing God the Father and Jesus the Son. The word “knowing” carries the meaning of “deep intimacy,” even greater than the closeness of husband toward his wife. God wants us to know Him intimately (heart, soul, mind and strength) and to commune with Him today. Let us not be haunted by our understanding of *that* word, if when we will stand before Him one day and hear, “depart from me, for I never *knew* you.” Be certain that you *know* one another!

Words and how we communicate them are important. They can be a matter of “life” or “death.”

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Editor’s note: Michael Termer is the pastor of Newman Christian Community Church in Hesperia, Michigan. I am also proud to call him my son-in-law. Here is what he has said about himself to his own church flock:

*I grew up in small-town America with eight brothers and sisters. I had a variety of jobs from being a chef, a volunteer firefighter, a rocket scientist (actually engineer – rocket scientist sounds smarter), a human resource person, a teacher, a director of children’s ministry, and now a pastor.*

*By the blessing of God, I was able to obtain an Associate’s Degree in Electrical Technology, a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Management, and a Master’s Degree in Theological Studies. I am ordained through Christian Global Outreach Ministries as an independent Christian clergyman.*

*I have a lovely bride, Nancy, who is my best friend, and two sons, Caleb and Hayden. We love to spend time together as a family playing sports, being outdoors, kayaking, and spending time playing games with friends. My personal hobbies include doing home improvement projects, classic cars, watching football, reading thought-provoking books, cooking, and target shooting.*

## Between resurrection... ?

### ...40 days... ? ...and ascension

*adapted from Leo the Great and Scott Hahn*

What happened during the forty days between Easter Sunday and Ascension Thursday? Scripture is strangely vague about this period of time. Both Jesus’ Resurrection and the later account at Pentecost are covered in some detail, but the primary record of those 40 days is what we are told in Acts 1:3: “He (*Jesus*) presented himself alive to them (*the apostles*) after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.” What exactly did Jesus tell them? We simply don’t know!

This same question troubled the early Church Fathers and those who followed in their footsteps. It remains a mystery to this day. The Church over the centuries has simply referred to *those* teachings of Jesus as “mysteries.” Many have attempted to discern what those “mysteries” might have been and then pass on that interpretation to their followers. This is a process referred to as *mystagogy*.

In 445 AD Pope Leo (the Great) preached a sermon on the subject which set forth several subjects which Jesus may have some given clarity to:

1. Jesus breathed on them. This was proof of His having conquered death. The gift of the Holy Spirit helped as well! (John 20:22)
2. He opened the Scriptures to them on the Emmaus Road and broke bread with them. (Luke 24:13-35) They really “got it” when He did so again “behind locked doors” just before His Ascension. (John 20:19-29)
3. By ascending bodily to the Father, Jesus signified to those gathered at the Ascension that because of what He had done on the Cross and the Resurrection, humanity was exalted through Him and that one day there would be a bodily resurrection.

Yes, the mystery remains—but we have clues!



Christ Appearing to the Apostles after the Resurrection by Szymon Czechowicz, 1785, National Museum, Kraków, Poland



**When the pray'ers marched...  
on March 2**



*The prayer warriors assembled...from behind...*



*...and from above...*



*...and at "work!"*

**and Image sang...**

**on March 8**



# April 2026

	1	2	3	4			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
26	27	28	29	30			

- 1, 8, 15, 22, 29** Connect groups for all ages.
- 1-3** Prayer walk in the GFC sanctuary.
- 4** Games Reach Family Game Night, 6:30-8:30 PM, Foursquare Gospel Church.
- 5** **RESURRECTION SUNDAY!** Pastor Eric Byrom preaching.
- 6, 13, 20, 27** Women's Keys to Freedom study, 6-8 PM, Elena Jackson's home.
- 7, 14, 21, 28** Men's Keys to Freedom study, 6-8 PM, at GFC.
- 12** Pastor Eric Byrom preaching on Matthew 5:13-16. 🍷🍴  
Kids DTS Team planning meeting, GFC lobby, 12:45 PM.
- 19** Elder Matt Godsil preaching on Matthew 5:17-20.
- 25** Worship Dance Workshop, in GFC sanctuary, 9:15-11:45 AM.
- 26** Pastor Eric Byrom preaching on Matthew 5:21-26. 🍷🍴

## Grace Fellowship Church

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Eric Byrom Presiding Elder/ Pastor  
(A complete list of church functionaries will return next month.)