

The Grace of God

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Letter

I need more of God's Grace

Dear Saints,

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this issue of the brief, the teaching will emphasize practical application of the grace of God. That is because God is working in me to make me more gracious in my dealings with others. The only way we can find grace for others is if we have experienced God's grace for ourselves.

Throughout the body, people are deepening relationships. As we trust each other more, we are finding a real strength in being loved for who we are. At the same time, we are learning more about ourselves and our need for God.

This is what's going on with a lot of people in the body; I am no exception. Through relationship with my wife, children, and brethren, I am learning that I tend to get critical and judgmental. We are all asking God to give me grace as I seek Him for more of His character.

I have especially been aware of my need to be a gracious father, and have put Matthew on the alert to what critical means. I have asked him to point out if I ever get that way with him. There are also a couple of the brothers I am around more often, and they know what I am seeking God for. Brenda is always faithful to encourage me as I seek provision from God.

I wish every person in the world had the God that I have. I wish every person in the body of Christ had the kind of friends I have. I rest in the fact that a loving Father has sent such wonderful people that I can trust with my life.

I am believing God to open your heart to His ministry that He is placing around you.

Bless you,

Billy

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Pastor's Brief

This newsletter is published by Billy Henderson for members and friends of LCF. It is intended to clarify the vision of this church, as well as encourage and instruct.

*Fellowship Houses***Building relationships through living together**

Lexington Christian Fellowship has always been devoted to seeing the life of Christ lived out in the relationships of our people. One of the ways we promote building together is through fellowship houses. This is a group of around a half dozen men or women who form households with the purpose of furthering one another in God's purposes.

At this point, we have two households of women and one men's household.

The idea is that if we live together, it increases the opportu-

nity for relationship and mutual ministry. For some, it is a great sacrifice of the American standard of independence to choose residence in one of the houses. And, for all, it becomes a time of purging from selfishness through daily tests.

To detail all that is learned through a house would be difficult, so I've included some personal accounts (see article this page) in this issue of Pastor's Brief. But the results are always the same. Those who stick to their commitment are released into the joy of a

selfless life and go on to establish the Kingdom. Those who don't give themselves fully "spend forty years in the wilderness".

Fellowship houses aren't for everyone. But all are called to relationships. If you find yourself in a context that is grating on you, let your rough edges go.

What I've learned living with others

"Loving others with God's heart is God's desire for us. The house gives opportunity to learn how to love in practical ways. Encouraging others, opening up your life, being corrected, and being sensitive to others are a few examples."

John Lemaster

"To face things I normally want to run away from. Confrontation is something I used to avoid. I would end up dealing with disagreements the wrong way. Now, I'm learning to go to a sister in love. If I weren't living here I would run. It's been good."

Toni D'Auria

"God has used the relationships developed in the house to develop character. I've been encouraged, changed, challenged and made accountable. Differences that have arisen have been resolved through commitment and perseverance as we've sharpened one another and died to ourselves."

Robert Hartley

"Learning about myself and others. How to be good friends in good times and bad (for them and myself). Learning to grow in areas of personal weakness and to help others. Learning to be a friend to anyone you meet."

Theresa D'Auria

Singles break away; emphasis is on meeting God

As announced in the last Pastor's Brief, the singles will break away on February 17-18 to Lake Cumberland. Scott Williams will be our guest who ministers the truth of God's Word.

In a conversation between Jimmy and Scott New Year's Day, emphasis was placed on our meeting with God rather than coming together just because it would be a good thing to do. God is calling us to step back to a place in which we can receive a greater impartation of Him.

You should expect relationships to be the central on this weekend. Scott's vision of how the church should function flows with our vision for LCF. "The Bible is a book on relationships. We think it does not speak on how to relate, when actually God unfolds His whole plan there...And the reason for our developing relationships is not to exploit the results and benefits of friendship, but simply because God first loved us."

Lake Cumberland is an ideal setting. Adjacent to our sleeping rooms is both a dining room and "fellowship" hall, as well as a large beautiful lounge. We will leave for Pumpkin Creek Lodge Saturday morning at 8:00, check into our rooms, share lunch in the dining hall, and the remainder of the afternoon will be split between meetings in the fellowship and dining halls. We will commute to Cumberland Lodge for supper. Sunday morning will bring breakfast and a final meeting before heading home. Expect to be back around 3:30.

In order to meet with God and receive from Him, please purpose to pray toward this time. God has always been faithful in ministering to His people when given the opportunity. Registration is \$30.00 before February 1, and \$35.00 thereafter. Steve is assisting with registration, and questions may be directed to him.

Pastoral Care

Home Fellowships: God's Way

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Acts 2:46-47

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house." Romans 16:3-5b

Home fellowships are an integral part of the structure of LCF. Every committed member is vitally connected to one of the groups.

These fellowships are not something we dreamed up, but are instead, our way of following scriptural example. We didn't one day decide that it would be a good idea. As we searched the scripture for answers on how a body should function, we saw smaller groups gathering for mutual ministry as a key to healthy Christianity.

Along the way it has been hard to educate people to the importance of home fellowships. Some have the attitude of "Well, we'll see how they work out." That is not the attitude leadership has taken. Our attitude is that it is the word of God and that there is good reason to make the sacrifices necessary to authenticate these smaller gatherings.

VISION FOR GROWTH

As we grow, our desire is to continue to raise up men with the capacity to give themselves for the rest of the flock. Hopefully, by the time any group is too large to meet in one home, a man with the character and desire to serve others will have arisen out of that group.

The priority in looking for a small group leader is a man with a heart to serve others. Hopefully, we can avoid anyone who just wants to lead to be up front.

We are not just believing for a lot of people. We are believing God for many men and women who are ready to lay their lives down for others.

YOUR PART

The best way for you to serve the vision is to give yourself fully to the people in your home fellowship. The home fellowship leader's place is to make sure everyone is cared for. This is best done by encouraging everyone to be sensitive to the needs of others.

Of course there will be times when someone with greater insight is needed in a situation and the home fellowship leader is more than ready to be there.

On another level, your part is to pay the price to be with those in your home fellowship. This goes beyond just making meetings. It means thinking about how you can merge your life with those to whom you are called.

Billy, Gregg and Jimmy are all committed to meeting the needs of the body. You are encouraged to ask them how you can serve the cause of your home fellowship, which is the cause of LCF, which is the cause of the Kingdom.

Firm Foundations Doing the Word

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Matt. 7:24-25

There is a saying around here: "You don't do anything else until you get through the foundations." This is in reference to finishing the foundations manual.

I think it might be better to say, "You won't do anything else until the foundations get through to you."

The Foundations Manual covers three strategic areas: 1) All that is involved in coming to God, 2) Developing a devotional life, and 3) a. How to be knit in to the body, and b. How to help others be knit into the body.

Many people have "filled out the questions" but have not worked the truth into their lives.

The only thing that will make us a strong body is if every member knows who they are in God and are maintaining a life of prayer, praise, and Bible study.

That will work its way out in the way we live our lives together. It will also strengthen us to reach out to others.

Maybe you've finished your foundations manual. Now, why not let the foundations finish you.

**Home Fellowship
Leaders
want to help you get
founded in the Lord.
If you need help in
foundational areas call
your HFL today!**

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Mary's song, Our song

Rejoicing in the grace of God

God wants to meet man based on His Own Sovereign Graciousness. As man contemplates this thought it is foreign to his own nature of self serving. But God works with man to bring him to the place of light, that he might receive God's grace.

This principle is seen clearly in the account of Mary receiving God's word that she would be the mother of Jesus.

■ *"And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be."*

Luke 1:28-29

As God began the process to birth His Son through a woman, Gabriel told Mary two things. First, the messenger angel declared that Mary had found favour with God. The word favor means "graciousness" and is the same word translated elsewhere as grace.

Secondly, according to the angel, the Lord was with Mary. Specifically, God was involved in Mary's life working with and through her.

And what was Mary's response to this extension of His grace and presence? "She was troubled." The amplified says, "...she was greatly troubled and disturbed and confused at what he said..."

This is the first point to be observed from this scripture. Mary could not comprehend God coming to her and being with her based on His extension of favour. Somehow, she felt as though she needed to deserve God's presence before

He would come. This is also true of man today. As God would try to approach man based on the sovereign will of Himself rather than man's goodness, man goes into confusion.

The angel goes on to explain to Mary, "...you have found grace-free, spontaneous, absolute favor and loving kindness-with God." Luke 1:30

■ *"Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"*

Luke 1:34

Having heard that the Son of God would be born through her, Mary began to figure how she could possibly do this in the flesh. She had not even been with a man, and began to question God how this could be.

This is the same thought conveyed through the story of Abraham as he birthed Ishmael trying to come up with the son of promise. But since it was Sarah's idea and not God's, it only produced flesh.

And just like Mary and Abraham, we today try to attain to God's promise through our own reasoning and actions.

■ *"...The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee...For with God nothing shall be impossible."*

Luke 1:35b,37

The angel explains that it will be a move of the Spirit of God that will cause Jesus to be conceived in her. As proof, the angel mentions that Elizabeth, who had been barren, was now with child.

For the Christian, we must see the miraculous works of God in other times, people, and places. Then, we must realize that God wants to do a miracle in our own life.

■ *"And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."*

Luke 1:38a

When Mary realizes that this is God's work in her and not her work for God, two things happen.

First of all, Mary is humbled and sees herself as the handmaid of God. She assumes the role of a humble servant. Then, she responds in faith, "Do it Lord."

So we too, must come to the humble place of a servant of God, and receive what He wants to do in our lives. What He wants to do in us is much more important than what we think we could ever do for Him.

■ *"And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."*

Luke 1:45

After her encounter with Mary, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, encouraged this chosen virgin. She first commended her because she had simply put her faith in what God had said to her.

Then, drawing from her own experience with conception after years of bareness, she told Mary, God will do what He said He will do. Count on it!

■ *"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."*

Luke 1:46-47

Mary breaks into her famous song of praise to God who had looked on her in her low estate and place of hunger. It was after she realized that God had chosen her and that He was going to use her, that Mary could really praise Him.

For any Christian, genuine
Continued on page 8

Bringing obedience through "ingracing"

It is by giving our children the tools they need that we equip them to be obedient and bring glory to God. Ingracing is an important key to child training.

Parents have been given the admonition, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) On the surface it is easy to say "Sure, I'll do it."

However, finding the proper method to train a child is another story. The bottom line in child training is knowing God for ourselves. We can only teach our children to know and serve God as we have done so in our lives.

View of God affects approach to training

Our view of God greatly affects our approach to training our children. To put it simply: "If we see God as harsh and punitive, we will relate to our children in this way. If we see ourselves as always striving for God's approval then our children will become performance oriented and always feel like we are impossible to please.

On the other hand, if we know God as gracious and loving our children will sense our love to them. And if we believe we are accepted by God due to His goodness then our children will obey us because they love us rather than to seek our approval.

It is typical of a person who views God as punitive to catch on to the scriptural truth of spanking a child, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteth him." (Proverbs 13:24) Unfortunately, the spanking from this parent can be out of frustration rather than a

gracious encouragement toward growth.

Using the rod (applying the "board of education" to the "seat of higher learning") should

Our view of God greatly affects our approach to training our children.

be a means of helping a child see that there are consequences to disobedient actions. This reflects God's attitude toward and means of dealing with rebellion.

But coupled with knowing the results of sin, a child must learn that God is a reservoir of strength and deliverance. To train a child to walk free from disobedience by depending on God, we must give ourselves wholly to what I call "Ingracing" our children.

"Ingracing"

By the term "ingracing, I mean to convey the idea of "freely giving to our children all of the love, support, and knowledge they need to obey the commands, desires and wishes we express.

A recent sequence of episodes involving my (then) six year old son Matthew shows both the right and wrong approach in bringing a child to choose obedience.

I generally go to church an hour before my family. Matthew decided about six months ago that he wanted to start going with me. He seemed so excited to get to go early with Dad.

Another family, the Pascucci's go early for worship practice and their seven year old

son Mattie comes with them. That first night the two boys did what all six and seven year old boys do when they get together; they ran, jumped, and otherwise expended amounts of energy a 32 year old father could hardly conceive.

When I came to my senses, I pulled Matthew over and said "What are you doing! You know you are not supposed to run around like this inside a building." Then, I made him sit down next to me.

The following week the same thing happened. Twenty minutes after I had been at church, I realized that great energy levels were being spent by two rocketing objects ages six and seven. I followed the same procedure and almost imposed corporal punishment. But, something inside told me that wouldn't be righteous.

I thought about it through the next week and realized that I hadn't been faithful in preparing Matthew for the freedom I had given him. The next Sunday, we had a little talk before we went in. It went something like this:

Dad: "Matthew, you remember last week how you were running around?"

Matthew: "Yes dad."

Dad: "Well, that shows me you are not old enough to be left unsupervised with your friends in a big

However, I had not translated those expectations into "seven year old ese" so that he knew what was expected of him

open building. Tonight I want you to stay with me until the service

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starts."

Matthew: "O.K."

After a couple of weeks we had this conversation:

Dad: "O.K. Matthew, do you understand how I want you to act in the building?"

Matthew: "Yes."

Dad: "Yes what?"

Matthew: "Yes sir."

Dad: "What do I want you to do?"

Matthew: "You don't want me to run around and act wild."

Dad: "What else?"

Matthew: "You don't want me to be silly and talk about silly things."

Dad: "So what will you be doing?"

Matthew: "I will be sitting with Mattie drawing or playing with toys."

Dad: "O.K. I want you to stay with me for a while and then you can go spend some time with Mattie if you think you can act like I want you to. Do you think you can do it?"

Matthew: "I'll try my best."

He did great! (Of course we've had to further define what acting wild is. My definition of wild and his were different when we made the original agreement.)

Over the following weeks, I monitored Matthew's ability to control himself and am releasing him into greater freedom as he develops more self control.

The point to this account is that at first I thrust Matthew into a situation with certain expectations. However, I had not translated those expectations into "seven year old ese" so that he knew what was expected of him.

As the process continues, I am controlling him externally to build his own internal control. And, I am only putting him in situations that he has been prepared for. When I let him get into situations that are beyond his capabilities, I help him out.

When he chooses to be sloppy and not do what I asked him to do, I use the rod to let him learn that there are consequences to disobedient choices.

This same example could be applied to going to the park alone, spilling milk, cleaning a room or any other responsibility we give a child.

Ingracing isn't easy

"Ingracing" a child is not easy. It takes a lot more effort and concentration to build into a child what he or she needs than it takes to "punish them for not acting right".

Sending Christ is the great example of how much a father must give before he uses the rod. God only wants obedience from us to the extent that He has "ingraced" us. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (I Corinthians 10:13)

For earthly fathers and mothers, we must spend time considering how we can strengthen

Unfortunately the spanking from this parent can be out of frustration rather than a gracious encouragement toward growth.

our children. When we see a weakness we must know how to equip him to overcome. And, when the time calls for it, use the rod to bring to bear the seriousness of the situation.

Patience is another key in being able to "ingrace" the kids. God does not try to correct every-

thing about us all at once. He knows what we are capable of learning and does not try to make his six year olds carry the responsibility of eighteen year olds.

In the same way parents must know how much effort they have put forth and what level their child is on. Every child is unique and must be appraised by wise, discerning parents. One child might be potty trained at ten months. The next might take two years. The good parent knows when to expect what from each child and doesn't react from impatience.

(There is a difference between being frustrated and re-

Every child is unique and must be appraised by wise, discerning parents.

acting out of impatience. We will often feel like we want things to go faster. At those times, we must cry out to our Father for "ingracing".)

The principles of God are perfect and "ingracing" works. However, we are not perfect in knowledge and we cannot always flow in this principle as well as God. On the other hand, if we are aware of the principle and are working at implementing it, life will be much more full of grace for us and our children.

Parents have been called to train their children. Part of the training process is putting forth the effort to "ingrace" your children with the tools they need to be obedient. This is done both through instruction (explaining) and correction (applying the rod). As we get to know God better, we will more clearly reflect His character in our dealings with our children. ■

Women's Ministries

Getting our act together

Reports from the Women's Seminar, on Saturday the 21, have been fabulous.

The women got together for a day of teaching and fellowship. Topics dealt with scheduling as a single, a mother, and as a working wife, as well as a session on the relationships of women.

I asked Brenda Eadens, who made all of the sessions, what ministered to her:

"There were two things that seemed to stick out the most. First, scheduling breaks an independent spirit and promotes self-control.

Then, the common thread that ran through all the sessions was developing proper priorities. Whether in scheduling, working, developing friendships, living as a single woman or preparing for marriage, one must chose to do the right thing and not the easy thing," was Brenda's summation.

Laura Feeney did a special teaching on "The all around single woman", a talk on how to pull some of the many loose ends of life together.

During the discussion on the relationships of women, Brenda shared a review of the book, *The Relationships of Women*. A couple of the ladies shared how they had been working through a difficult time in their relationship with each other.

Chris Sacra, from Woodland Baptist, shared with our ladies some perspectives on how to juggle being a wife, mother, and having a job.

The favorite of most of the ladies was the session on scheduling. Catherine John shared on scheduling as a means of promoting peace and order in the home.

If you missed the seminar the tapes are available.

Home school support group organizing

Home schoolers from LCF have joined together with other Christian home schoolers in the city to form a home school support group.

The purpose of the group is: "To bring home schoolers in Lexington together to work toward common goals of educating and training their own children and thus fulfill the mandate "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it."

The objectives include everything from getting together with other home school families for encouragement and support to staying informed on laws concerning home schoolers. We also hope to be a resource for any who are considering home schooling.

The next meeting is January 31. At that meeting, we will be divided into small groups by ages to appoint leadership and set direction in keeping with the needs of that particular small group.

The support group is open to anyone who wanting to learn how to better train their children whether they attend public, private, or home school. For more info: call Billy Henderson at 277-2346.

Couple's Retreat

March 3-5

Lake Cumberland Pumpkin Creek Lodge

We are in the planning stage of a retreat for couples. We have the option of leaving on a Friday night or Saturday morning and returning Sunday afternoon. The rooms cost about \$40.00 a night.

The thrust of our time together will not be a lot of heavy teaching. It is more of a time to just get away and rest.

Please share any ideas or suggestions with Billy or Gregg. We need to know soon if you prefer one or two days.

Joshua's fish story

by Joshua Treen

Last summer I went to North Lake. I caught something on my hook but it wasn't a fish, it was an alligator. I started to skid on the water. I finally got it on shore. I took the hook out of his mouth. Then I went to the Pet store and got him a chain and a collar. Then I put them on him and took him home. My mon told me to put him back where I found him. So now every summer I go down to North Lake and ride my alligator.

THE END

*Pastoral relations***LCF has many friends in town**

The various pastors who are friends of LCF are a unique and special blessing.

What is unique about some of the pastor friends is that they live in Lexington (that's not mentioning those in other cities). You may wonder why that is so unique. Well, I hate to spread bad news to any who have not heard, but pastors can be competitive, jealous, and sectarian. As a matter of fact, many pastors have no friends in their own city and must go to fellowships at least 50 miles away to find a friend. It's not that way for us.

John Meadows, Steve Humble, and Dow Robinson, all pastors at Covenant Church, have been constant advisors and at times guest speakers at LCF. Each of them has lent their ministerial strengths to us as well as ministering to us as friends.

The ministers from Southside Church of Christ have been more than generous in helping us establish programs and find God's direction. Most of what we do in our children's church was passed on to us by Dan Stockstill, the Youth Development Minister at Southside.

Kim Carroll from Maranatha has been ever ready to share their ministry with us and encourage us in our vision.

Tom Benz from Hebron Fellowship has always been ready to help in any way we've asked.

And last but not least, my dear friend Ernie Sacra from Woodland Baptist Church has prayed for us, believed in us, preached to us, counseled with us, and believed our vision as one of us.

It is significant to our hearts desire that we can labor with other men in our own city. I believe that God desires us to be more committed to the rest of the body in Lexington, and He is giving us unique ways to do it.

I encourage every member of LCF to remember these other pastors and churches and pray for them as you would pray for us...because they are!

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Rejoicing in the grace of God

praise can only come as a result of understanding God's extension of grace to us. Too many people try to worship God in order to please Him. We worship God because He has made us pleasing to Him.

These principles can apply to any stage of Christian growth. If a person is unregenerate, then these principles apply toward being born of the Spirit.

If a person is a maturing Christian, each new work of God must come as a result of being in the place of humility and receiving in faith what God wants to do.

If you know that God has put a call on your life to befriend someone, take on a new job, or just simply grow in knowledge of Him, don't feel pressured to do it after the flesh. If God has purposed it in your life, He will perform it.■

**Pedro Basilio
to visit Lexington**

Sunday, January 28, we will be having an open house for those who would like to visit with Pedro Basilio. It will also be an opportunity for those who are interested in spending time with Dow Robinson discussing the tests in the wilderness.

The open house will be at the Henderson's and will begin immediately following the Sunday night service. It will last as long as anybody wants to stay around.

We are hoping that Pedro will be able to share how the work is going in Ayutla and Tepango. Also, we will have a time of prayer for Pedro. If you have any special gifts for Pedro or his family, this would be a good time to bring them.

You will also have an opportunity to meet our brother, Sebastian, an Aztec who labored with Dow among his people and continues the work today.

Dow will be available to answer questions (or not answer them) during the evening.

We need to know about how many to expect at the gathering, so please RSVP to Billy by Saturday. If the crowd projects to be too large, the open house will be moved to Woodland Church.

Pedro will arrive in Lexington on Friday, the 27th, and will be here for eight days. He will be staying at the Henderson's for the first part of his time here. If you would like to have Pedro and his wife visit with you for a meal during this time, you need to contact Brenda Henderson.

**Acts Class Begins
Monday, Jan. 31
Register Sunday night**