

Grace Notes



Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Lutheran Church in Newton, NC

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9:30am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service with Communion

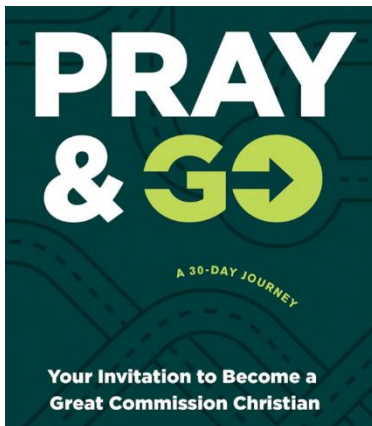
Volume 228, Number 8

AUGUST 2025

DO YOU WANT TO BE A DISCIPLE OF JESUS ENGAGED IN DISCIPLESHIP?
BECOMING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS, A GREAT COMMISSION CHRISTIAN
PRAY AND GO 30-DAY JOURNEY STARTS ON AUGUST 3
YOU ARE INVITED!!!

A message from Pastor Doug Hefner

Matthew 28:18-20 ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”



Dear Grace Church Family, Grace and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ! I hope and pray that you have been blessed through our sermon focus in June on the parables of Jesus. God’s Word both comforts us and challenges us, and that’s exactly what Jesus’ parables do to us as we listen in faith and ask the Holy Spirit to help us to truly hear Jesus and put His Word into action (see the parable of the wise and foolish builder Matthew 7). The parables point to the Gospel. Take the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector – both come before God in prayer. One (the pharisee) focuses on himself and his “attempts” to be righteous, including putting down others he thinks don’t measure up. The tax collector, knows his sin, and

falls to his knees asking for God's mercy and grace. Jesus says that the tax collector went home justified, made right with God. We know that we are saved by grace through faith! We fall down before our Lord Jesus, confessing our sins and brokenness, and receive from Him grace and mercy, salvation, abundant and eternal life.

The parables of Jesus also remind us of our calling as God's people. The Parable of the Good Samaritan reminds us that we are Great Commandment Christians – called to love God and love neighbor and self. This becomes challenging when we realize that we can put no limits on who our neighbor is. We are called to be the neighbor, following the example of Christ, who is our Good Samaritan,, who saved us when we were dead and enemies of God! The Parable of the Sheep and Goats remind us that when we serve and love the least of these we are serving Christ Himself. The Parable of the Treasure and Great Pearl, remind us that all of our earthly treasure is merely rubbish compared to the surpassing value/worth of knowing Christ as our Lord and Savior. In the parable of the great banquet, the master of the feast sends his servants out to invite others to the great celebration. Likewise, you and I have the great privilege of being ***GREAT COMMISSION CHRISTIANS – “GO MAKE DISCIPLES, BAPTIZE, AND TEACH IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, SON, HOLY SPIRIT.”***

Most church and ministry experts would say that evangelism and discipleship, being Great Commission Christians, is the greatest weaknesses of many Christians and Churches. The Great Commission is all about sharing the gospel of Christ with unbelievers and then helping those who commit their lives to Christ to grow as his disciples. So, how can something so important, the very heart of who we are (sharing the Good News with others to disciple them in Christ) become our strength? It can happen only in Christ and in His power. So how do we receive this power to do this? Acts 1:8 above reminds us that if you are in Christ, you have received this power, the power of the Holy Spirit. Ok, so how can I tap into the power of the Holy Spirit and become a GREAT COMMISSION CHRISTIAN? Devoting ourselves to Prayer and God's Word! What if we prayed each day that the Lord through the power of the Spirit would help us grow in our faith and give us to courage to share the Gospel with others? And what if that prayer time also included being in God's Word, where the Holy Spirit can transform, shape, and empower us to be Jesus' disciples?

As I have been preparing to preach on Jesus' parables about prayer on August 3, the Lord brought to my mind a 30 day prayer and discipleship journey called, **“Pray and Go: Your Invitation to Become a Great Commission Christian – A 30-Day Journey.”** On

Sunday, August 3, each home will be given the book, **“Pray and Go!”** and invited/challenged to enter into this 30-day journey of Praying and Going to become in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, Great Commission Christians, Disciples of Jesus! August 3 will be Day 1 and that evening you will read the first chapter (very short a page or two) and then complete the assignment, which is to pray that our Lord would open your heart to reach others with the Gospel. Here is a quote from chapter 1: ***“On this first day of the thirty-day challenge, please pray for yourself. Pray specifically that God will use you in supernatural ways over the next month. Here are some suggestions on areas for prayer: For a heart that prioritizes reaching others with the gospel. For open opportunities to share the gospel and invite people to church. For good time management—to not be so busy that you can’t do the work God has called you to do. To be an encourager for others in your church to become Great Commission Christians as well. To have the right words to say, or not to say, when you have the opportunity to share the gospel or invite someone to church. To be the type of servant to others that causes them to be drawn to the Savior who works through you. You are praying that God will make you a consistent Great Commission Christian. You want your heart to be receptive and your eyes to be open to the world as Christ sees the world.”***

You can do this 30-Day Pray and Go Journey individually and/or as a couple and/or as a family. Each chapter is short but as the days pass you will be invited/challenged to be a Great Commission Christian in specific ways. This is another quote from the book: ***“Once you have completed the thirty days, you will have taken fifteen days to pray about becoming outwardly focused. You will have studied five key Bible passages about reaching beyond yourself to others. You will have prayed in front of sixty homes in your community. You will have sent a note or email to five people who are not part of your church. And you will have specifically invited eight people to visit your church.”***

This 30-Day Pray and Go journey will change your life and Christ’s Church here at Grace. Imagine if 40 people accept this invitation/challenge. What would the result be? 1200 days of prayer and being in God’s Word, prayed for 2,400 homes in our community/neighborhoods, sent a note or email to 200 people, and invited 320 people to visit Grace to worship with us and encounter the love and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus! Can you imagine the impact this could have on our personal life, marriage and family, in our work places and schools, and in our church and community. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, *Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to **accomplish***

abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

I can't wait for August 3 to get here. We all, if you are willing to accept the invitation and challenge, will be engaged in prayer, God's Word, and Going/Discipling in the name of Jesus to share the Gospel. So, the 30 days will end on September 1. As we do this for 30 days, I hope and pray that this will become who we are in Christ. That we will pick this up again for another 30 days and on and on, so that being Disciples of Jesus and Discipling others will become a way of life for us and for Grace and all we meet and encourage! And this 30-day Pray and Go challenge will also help to prepare to celebrate our 228th year at Homecoming.

HOMECOMING CELEBRATION ON SUNDAY SEPT. 7!
Listen God is Calling! Theme for Homecoming Sunday, Sept. 7
Celebrating God's Love and Faithfulness for 228 Years!

“Listen God is Calling” is a hymn (WOV712) that was written at the Lutheran Theological College in Tanzania in 1968 and has been translated into English for American congregations to sing in worship. The words are beautiful and powerful as they remind us of God's call to experience God's gifts of forgiveness, comfort, and joy and to also share the good news of God's love with others. *I chose this hymn for our worship together when I was installed as your pastor on December 7, 2024.* Here are the words:

Refrain: (Listen), Listen God is calling, through the Word inviting, offering forgiveness, comfort and joy.

- 1 (Jesus gave his mandate:) share the good news (that he came to save us) and set us free. *Refrain*
- 2 (Let none be forgotten) throughout the world. (In the triune name of God) go and baptize. *Refrain*
- 3 (Help us to be faithful,) standing steadfast, (walking in your precepts,) led by your Word. *Refrain*

Verse 1 reminds us that this Good News comes to us in Jesus, God's Son, who came to save us and set us free through his life, ministry, death and resurrection. Verse 2 reminds us of our calling, that none would be forgotten as we minister in Jesus' name and go and baptize in Jesus' name. Verse 3 is a prayer for the Church “the called out ones”: Help us to be faithful, standing steadfast, walking in Your Precepts, let by your Word. The song reminds us of the very heart of who and whose we are and what our calling and mission is as the people of God. That is the reason I chose this song to begin our journey together

as pastor and congregation.

“Listen God is Calling” will be our theme as we celebrate 228 years of God’s blessing and calling as God’s people on our Homecoming, September 7, 2025. Worship will be at 10:30am and a covered dish meal will follow in the fellowship hall and shelter. Please invite your family, neighbors, former members, friends, and coworkers! We are preparing in the office a card that can be mailed or handed out.

Listen God is Calling: As we engage in Pray and Go for August, we will have another opportunity for prayer and ministry. In Worship on Sunday, August 24, we will have our Back to School Blessing and Prayers with the blessing of the Book Bags. Please bring your book bags or back packs. All students and faculty will receive a blessing and a gift for the year ahead! Invite your family, friends, and neighbors to come! We will also pray for parents and school faculty and staff.

I am thankful to be your pastor and to be a part of such a loving, generous, and faithful fellowship here at Grace. I look forward to seeing the amazing transformation our Lord Jesus will bring to our lives, church, families, and community. So, get ready to Pray and Go Be a Disciple and Make Disciples in our Lord Jesus who loves us and gave His life for us and calls us to be His own beloved and treasured people!

In Christ’s Love, Pastor Doug Hefner

Join Us for Worship 10:30am Sunday Mornings for the Sermon Series on the Parables of Jesus: “The Amazing Life-Changing/Challenging Stories of Jesus”

August 3 – Parables on Prayer: Persistent Widow, Friend in Need at Midnight, Pharisee and Tax Collector

August 10 – Guest Preacher Rev. Gary Coble, Lectionary Readings

August 17 – Parable of the Great Dinner, Invitation, Luke 14:15-24, Wedding Feast Matthew 22:2-14

August 24 - Back to School Blessing of the Bookbags, Parables about wise living: The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids Matthew 25:1-13 and the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

August 31 – Parables about the Coming of Christ – Parable of The Faithful and Unfaithful Servants as They Await The Masters Return (Matthew 24:45-51) and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

Congregational Meeting on Sunday, August 17 to quickly approve a small change in the Carolinas Mission Region Constitution. It will take just a few minutes to vote by

hand. The Mission Region needs us to vote because all Mission Region decisions need to be ratified at the congregational level. Please see July newsletter for the change that we will vote on.

RIGHTNOW MEDIA Don't forget to activate your free membership to RightNow Media, the world's largest streaming library of video Bible study resources. You should have received an email invitation for FREE access – if you haven't received it yet, be sure to check your spam or promotions folder. To get started, simply click the link in the email, create your free account, and start browsing more than 20,000 inspiring videos. We pray that RightNow Media will be a blessing to you and your family! Visit <https://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/glcnc> OR text the code GLCNC to 49775. Please share this information with family, friends, neighbors, or anybody that you want to share the Gospel with and invite to Grace. This is our gift to all we meet.

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR AUGUST

❖ Lector	Stormy Shull
❖ Ushers	David Wilfong & Jack Parris
❖ Communion Assistants	Shelly Scronce & Cindy Bivens
❖ Altar Preparation	Cindy Bivens
❖ Offering Tabulators	Todd Childers & Tim Eckard

*Please be mindful of your commitment to serve. If you are unable to fulfill that commitment, be reminded that it is **your** responsibility to find someone to serve in your place.*

FLOWER CHART FOR AUGUST



8/3	OPEN	8/10	OPEN
8/17	OPEN	8/24	OPEN
8/31	OPEN		

If you wish to place flowers on a given Sunday, please list your name on the chart in the narthex. *You are responsible for ordering the flowers from a florist of your choice.* The liturgical color of the day is listed to assist you in selecting flowers appropriate for that Sunday. Please notify the Church Office by the Tuesday prior to your selected Sunday to ensure correct information is printed in the bulletin.

ATTENDANCE AND GIVING TO OUR LORD'S WORK FOR JULY

	6/29/25	7/6/25	7/13/25	7/20/25
Sunday School	8	7	9	10
Worship	44	36	42	48
General Fund Offerings	\$7,620	\$2,190	\$1,900	\$1,480

The Story Bible Study: Finding Your Story in God's Love Story!

Join us for a new Bible Study that we will be using during our Sunday School time (9:30-10:15). The Bible is central to our faith but many people are intimidated by its scope and size. The Story gives us a way to journey from Genesis to Revelation together in 31 Bible Studies so everyone understands God's story and how their story intersects with it. It is true that God's Word, the Bible, is "The Greatest Story Ever Told" and it is an amazing story of God's love for us! Consisting of 31 chapters of carefully-selected Scriptures sequenced in chronological order, *The Story* presents the Word of God in an engaging format, reading like a novel. After all, it is the greatest story ever told!

ASHURE MINISTRY FOOD ASK for the month of August is canned food with pop tops. We are doing great things at Grace in helping feed the hungry in our own community. Let's try to donate 2,000 in 2025! That would be around 170 pounds per month. We can do it! Let's come together to help reach this goal! Year-to-date the disciples at Grace have donated 750 pounds of food.

FRED T. FOARD SENIOR LUNCHEON will be held **on Wednesday, August 6th at 12:00 noon** here at Grace. All are invited!

THE GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST will be held on **Saturday, August 9th at 9:00am** at Four Peas in a Pod Restaurant on Highway 70 in Conover. Great food and great fellowship! Please come and bring a friend!

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE LEADERSHIP MINISTRY BOARD is scheduled for **Monday, August 18th at 6:00 pm**.

WORSHIP ASSISTANT VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED! - Please offer your services as a Lector, Usher, or Communion Assistant for the upcoming months. Worship Assistants help to make our worship experience more meaningful. If you would like to serve during a particular month, please notify Todd Childers.

Grace Notes

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