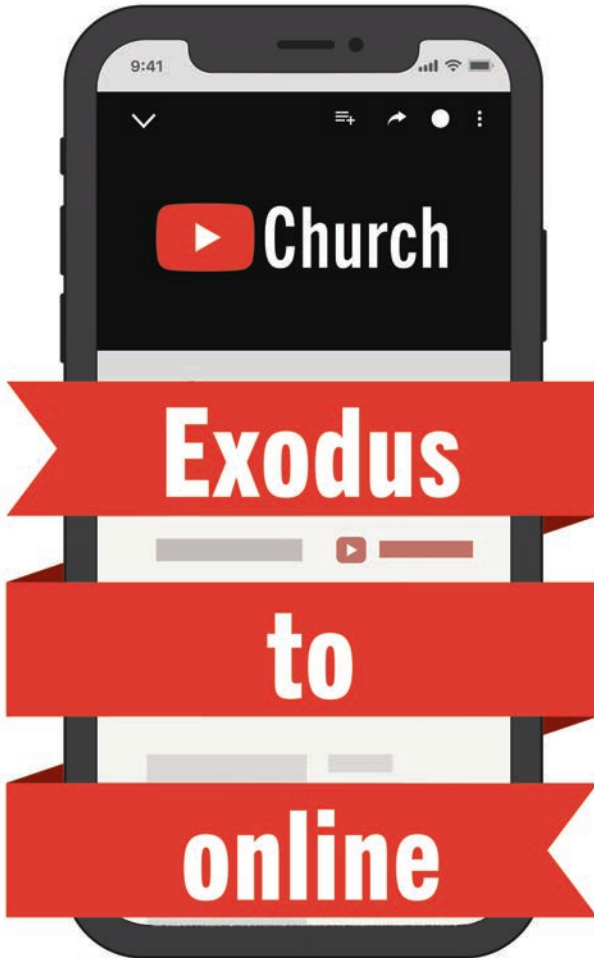


GRACE Insider

making disciples



May 2020

GRIEVING WITH HOPE

A Soul Care Snippets Series

by Aimee Marino

Words are incredibly powerful.

God spoke words, and the very world was created. They are a gift to us to not only communicate with each other, but to help anchor our thoughts, feelings, and processing. Having a word to capture and encompass an emotion or experience can be empowering - grounding, even. Here's one I hope will help you as you are processing this season in your life.

There is a common experience, a common word that links us right now as a church body, as a nation, and as a world: **Grief**.

We may be grieving different things in different ways; from those who have lost jobs and loved ones, to students grieving hopes for their spring semester, to those feeling loss of control over their immediate future. Some are grieving comfort, some are grieving physical distance in relationships, some are grieving unmet expectations. We are all grieving

parts of what we thought spring 2020 would be. Jesus Himself grieved loss, brokenness, suffering, and sin as He walked this earth. As followers of Jesus, we are free to grieve things that aren't as they should be. As we wait for our true home in a perfect heaven, we are acutely aware of the brokenness that makes up the space between "the-way-it's-supposed-to-be," and "the-way-things-are," and we are free to grieve alongside our God, as we pour out our grief to Him. What a gift it is to be able to grieve with our near and present Immanuel- our "God Who Is With Us." But it doesn't end there. Jesus sacrificed Himself for us so that we would have incredible hope in Him: hope for the world to come, and hope for the empowered life we live in Him today. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 reminds us that even as we grieve, as followers of Jesus, we grieve with hope. It is by this hope that we can rejoice even in our suffering- that we can genuinely lament and genuinely rejoice as equal parts of a

biblical grieving process. Though our reactions to grief may be different, we can choose how we respond. We can glorify God and run to His comfort, or choose to rely on ourselves and allow grief to consume us.

This is what we will be tackling in the new Facebook Soul Care Snippets series, "Grieving with Hope." We will explore different grief reactions that you may be experiencing and how we can respond biblically. Some of these reactions may surprise you, but the truth and hope of Jesus remains steadfast and sure for the believer.

In preparation for this series, consider these words and circle those you have felt in the last month:

Confusion. Shock. Frustration. Despair. Anxiety. Anger. Hope. Helplessness. Meaninglessness. Irritation. Peace. Adjustment. Overwhelmed. Hostility.

You may resonate with one of these; and you may resonate with all of them! These can all be a part of grief. I repeat: these are typical, normal reactions. However, we must remember that our responses to these reactions are what can lead us toward the peace and comfort of Christ, or away.

Spend some time with the Lord, believer, taking those circled feelings before Him honestly. Identify what part of the thing you are grieving is "not as it should be." Grieve this with Jesus. Turn your mind to Him, turn your hope to Him, and thank Him that He grieves with you. Rejoice that He is a God of purpose, and is making all things new. He is in control. The purpose of grief is not always to allow us to be "okay" with sin or suffering, but to turn us to the God who conquers sin, and redeems suffering. Turn to Him, believer, and rejoice in the fact that we are free to grieve and free to hope in the God who is - always! - making all things new.

FIELD STAFF UPDATE



Alex and Tricia Ludvick in Indonesia

We are well overall. Alex is waiting on some paperwork to get a certification he needs, so he isn't flying now. Also, most of the country is in lockdown right now due to the virus and the high rate at which TB is prevalent in the nation.

They are mostly just flying medical emergencies right now, but we are safe and won't be infected ourselves most likely. We are hitting it off with the family that is serving with us, and are in a very good place overall.



John and Lorna Abrahamse in South Africa

We are living in an interesting time... South Africa is going into lockdown tomorrow night, so our annual trip to Israel has been postponed. We know that many of you are experiencing the same all over the world. We are driving to Johannesburg to go to Camp Eden, as we thought it would be a good opportunity to do some work at the camp site, give Jamie, Jordan, and Nate open spaces and also be with John's dad.

We almost feel guilty asking for prayer requests at this time as so many people are experiencing so many difficulties and concerns, but for those who have capacity to add to your prayer lists, here are a few requests:

- J-Life knows who God has called us to and what we need to be doing to mobilize the church. In these times please pray that the Lord would help us

discern the NEW 'HOW'. It cannot be business as usual.

- Dealing with corona is obviously going to have a financial impact on so many across the globe. Please pray for our donors and for the ongoing financial support of J-Life.
- Camp Eden has had all camps cancel for the foreseeable future. Please pray for wisdom in how to support the

staff—with our income gone. Camp Eden has always been self sustaining, so we need wisdom to navigate this. Please continue to pray that the farm is sold even in these crazy times.

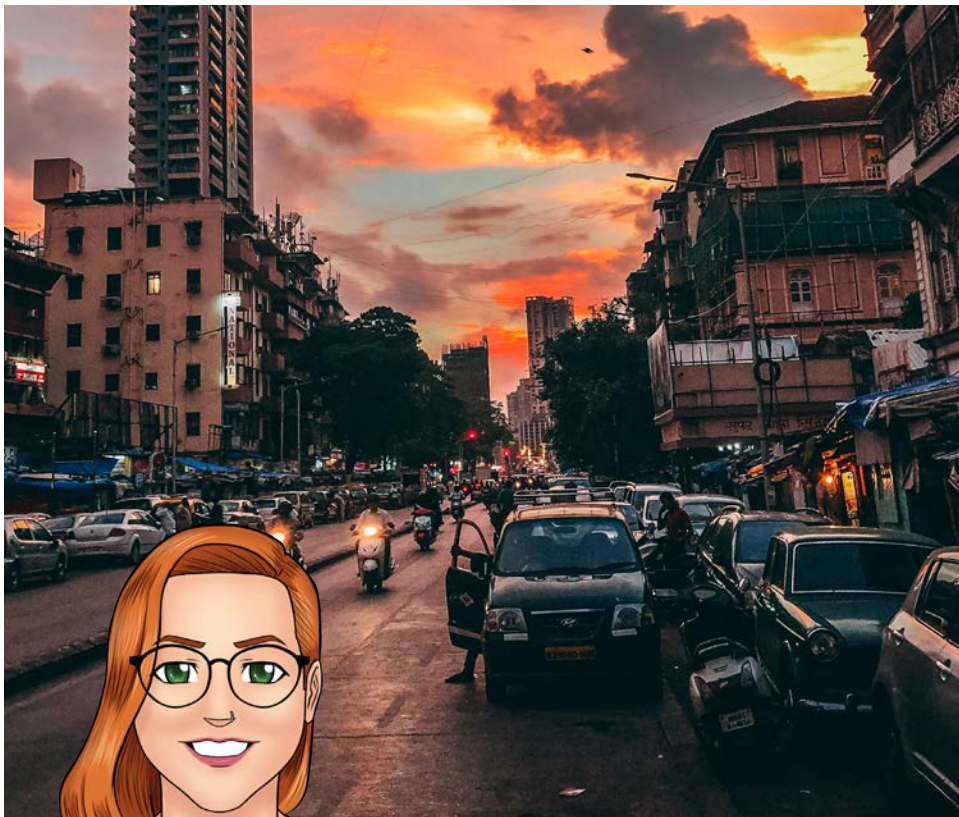
Thank you for your continued love and support.

Psalms 91 and Jeremiah 17: 7-8 are some scriptures we have found meaningful to trust in the Lord and continue bearing fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

⁷Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.

⁸He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.



Evening rush hour in southern Asia.

Olivia Merriweather in southern Asia:

Note from her U.S. team: Things moved very quickly for Olivia. Her country was later than the U.S. in beginning heightened measures, but then it changed overnight. Olivia's given us some messages of encouragement and also requests.

I live in a country that isn't my own. I'm the foreigner. To those around me, they know the virus (COVID-19) to be something foreigners brought to their country. The fear of the virus

has brought hostility to foreigners in my city and nearby areas. I have lived here for over five years and I have never felt unsafe living overseas, but the current climate towards foreigners has me wanting to be invisible. My anxiety about being safe, even in my own home, has risen with accounts of police knocking on doors of foreigners and taking them to the hospital for quarantine, even without symptoms. I know the Lord is on the throne. I know that even if I get hospital quarantined for simply having lighter skin, the Lord is in control. But when I look inward, I can't help but allow the fear of others to feed my own.

I believe, Lord. Help my unbelief.



John & Lauren McIntyre in western Asia

As you probably are aware, we are taking a five-month sabbatical right now. We decided that the

best place for it, as a family, is right here where we are. This way the kids have their school, friends, etc. and we can focus on sabbatical - especially during the school days. We started at the end of January and so are now about two months into it! But as you well know, much has changed recently!

The government announced the cancellation of school, all public gatherings, and sports events. The following day, they announced that a 24/7 curfew would start the next day for the entire country and last for two weeks! Over 1300 people were arrested for being out on the streets during the first few days of the curfew; they are taking it very seriously! On day 4, the government started rolling out a food delivery program starting with bread

and bottled water. After trying that for a day, they decided we needed to all have access to our own groceries. So the policy from day 5 on has been that people can walk (no driving allowed) to neighborhood markets from 10am until 6pm. After 6pm, we're back to the curfew. Fortunately, we were able to stock up on food before the curfew began, so we haven't had to buy much so far.

As a family, we're doing fine. The kids are doing their schooling online and we are balancing household and parenting duties with continuing our sabbatical. We're enjoying more family time together - more shared meals, games, puzzles, movies, exercise, etc. so that's been really good. In terms of the sabbatical process, we're just transitioning from the "rest" phase to the "reflect and refocus" phase. This is the phase where we are looking at how God has used us in the past, along with the gifts, abilities, and strengths we have. We're excited about this phase but, at the same time, it seems a bit daunting. We'd appreciate your prayers for this phase!

The local markets are usually pretty busy in western Asia.





Children playing in the street, East Africa.



Alan & Pearl Bourne in Southeast Asia

Sometimes in this world God allows situations where

outer trappings and distractions are minimized, and He gives us opportunities to really focus on the most important things in a given season. We feel that in many ways that is what is taking place globally in these days. It's as though God were trumpeting: "Thousands of years ago, my Son was crucified on a cross for all of you. Three days later, He rose from the dead—overcoming sin and death so that ALL of you MIGHT HAVE LIFE in Him."

Many of you read in our previous letters that SERVED has felt led to focus on two projects in Africa for this coming

year. Below is a current summary of the projects and where the fundraising is in regards to each project. Both have had some response, approximately 25–50% of the funds needed have come in. Please pray with us for God to graciously raise the full amount for each project.

No doubt the COVID-19 situation has changed many things for the entire world, and as much as it has impacted us in the U.S. and the West, it has been devastating for the peoples and lands that live in poverty and barely survive hand to mouth, month to month all the time. The people we are attempting to help are hanging on by a thread in good economic times, with everyone in the family who are able working in some way to help bring in finances. With these places being on lockdown from COVID-19 as well, the economic

wave from this is creating devastating havoc and could likely be causing even greater living disparity for quite some time to come. Whether it is now, or when the "stay at home" orders are lifted and we see what the overall economic outcomes will be, we would ask you to pray with us that the Lord would provide for these dear people, and that you would prayerfully consider being a part of their solution as well. The outstanding amounts needed are:

Mombasa, Kenya

Pastor Alex: \$55,000 (USD)

Kasese, Uganda

Pastor John: \$4,600 (USD)

If you feel God leading you to participate in either the Kenyan or the Ugandan project, please go online and donate to **SERVED.ngo**, under "General Fund." Or, you may send a check to SERVED, at:

19225 Bothell-Everette Hwy
Bothell, WA 98012

Be sure to write the specific project on the memo line. We truly appreciate your generosity and prayers!

A corner gas station in Kenya.



EXODUS TO ONLINE



Pastor Jason Blackley recently sat down to share how this spring has impacted Grace Downtown, the downtown ministry, and Iowa City.

In February (before), what did the downtown church look like?

The majority of our people were in some sort of biblical community, whether at Grace or a student ministry on campus. We were just in the middle of a season called, 'Getting Rooted' which encourages people to get into community and rooted into spiritual disciplines when the quarantine started.

How has your ministry changed since the beginning of March?

The biggest factor for the Downtown church is that so many of our folks live someplace else than they did in February. Many of our attenders were living in apartments or on-campus

residence halls, but they've moved back home, which can be anywhere in America. So now we're ministering to folks who are not only social distancing, but may be located in other states.

How has the Downtown church body and the Iowa City community been affected?

Even if the quarantine was lifted, there's no possibility of meeting in person with those people right now. The majority of folks who attend the Grace Downtown aren't married, so they're living alone or in their parent's basement, after being surrounded by community continually before March. Since so many people aren't from Iowa City, they're either stranded here and can't get home, or were evacuated and cannot get back.

The changes they've experienced are more dramatic than those of us who are quarantined with roommates or our family.

The Iowa City area, being a diverse community, has folks in a number of different type of environments right now. This means social distancing, COVID-19, etc. are a completely different experience for people with different ethnic traditions, communities, and socio-economic status, so ministry looks different to each of these different groups.

Many of our attenders were living [locally] but they've moved back home—which can be anywhere in America.

How have these changes affected you?

Besides my kids being home 24/7, one of the on-going major duties that we normally spend a lot of time and energy on is the weekly service, which looks

completely different now. I've preached sermons on pretty much every day of the week, which are posted online later. The Sunday service is normally a reunion for people in our church—our attenders, volunteers, and staff all get together and have fellowship. But that just isn't possible right now—it's really hard.

Where do you find comfort and encouragement?

Knowledge of the presence of God with me, and with the people I'm ministering to right now. It's hard

to get a sense of how people are doing when we're not meeting with them, but God is present with me and with them. In this season, there's only so much I can do to be a conduit for them, which is both difficult and, strangely, a good thing. I say it's 'good' because I need to realize that God can minister to people without me. God can speak the words





someone needs to hear without them coming out of my mouth.

How is Downtown meeting now?

Much like the North Liberty campus, we're meeting online on Sunday evenings during our normal service time at 5pm. We primarily use Facebook Premiere but the service is also on YouTube. We're also participating in the elder's 'Ask Me Anything' sessions each weeknight on the Grace Community Church | Eastern Iowa Facebook group.

Our community groups have also transitioned to meeting virtually. Overall, it's been a positive shift for people who want that deeper connection. There's been more opportunity to check-in, share our lives together, and walk with Christ, but for folks who don't have as deep of relational ties, it's been harder for them to stay connected.

For others struggling with fear/anxiety in our present season, what would you say to them?

This season is challenging for each of us, but it does show that the Lord is with us all of the time. It's easy to look toward good God-given things like service, community, and fellowship for encouragement—and the sense of the Lord's presence—but rely less on the word and the spirit of God's presence. Since His spirit is in us, and we still have access to His word, we can receive those things straight from Him.

What are some ways we can help others in the church body and our community during the quarantine?

- Folks who need help should visit our website graceb3.org/help or call the church at 319-626-2040.
- If you want to connect with other believers, visit graceb3.org/connect.
- People who want to help support our church and community can visit graceb3.org/action to see the current needs.

TALENT FEATURE

with Marissa Yorgey



Marissa Yorgey has been attending Grace Downtown since 2017 and has been a member since 2018. Marissa currently serves as a children's check-in greeter as well as the downtown Children's Ministry Coordinator—training, scheduling, and helping get materials for volunteers each week. Marissa was attracted to Grace Downtown because of the family atmosphere and small community. She loves really knowing every family person that comes and fellowshiping with them each week. While downtown she's connected with people her age, growing deep relationships as they share life together.

Marissa's passionate about athletic training, and works as an athletic trainer at Linn-Mar High School in Marion. She also has a heart for sharing the gospel to those who cannot get access to it.

Her passion for missions has taken her to 12 different countries, including living in Belize for several months after finishing graduate school.

Growing up as an only child in northeast Iowa, Marissa lived in Iowa her whole life, with the exception of college and graduate school. She currently lives with three fantastic housemates who are more like sisters. With their busy weekday schedules, they have a weekly roommate dinner, while frequently spending weekends together and hanging with other friends.

Marissa wants to take the gospel overseas so that every tribe, tongue, and nation hears the word of God. Ideally she'd employ her love of sports—football, basketball, baseball, softball—to share the gospel.

SERMON FORECAST

by Pastor Jason Blackley



Ruins at the pyramids of Giza.

As we conclude our journey through the book of 1 Thessalonians, we find words that have been a deep comfort for the church in the past and can offer us great comfort for today. When we planned out this series, we had no idea that a global pandemic would be a part of our everyday reality. However, the one who wrote the scriptures knew and prepared us accordingly. God, in His sovereignty, gave our church and each of us individually the words we needed to hear.

In 1 Thessalonians 5, we read helpful, practical, and timely words such as:

- *Admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all (v. 14).*
- *Do not repay evil for evil (v. 15).*
- *Rejoice always (16).*
- *Pray without ceasing (17).*
- *Give thanks in all circumstances (18).*
- *Do not quench the Spirit (19).*
- *Hold fast to what is good and flee what is evil (21-22).*

What practical and helpful advice! But this is not the end of what Paul says and this is not the end of the good news that God has for His people. The good news is found in verse 24, ***“He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it!”***

That’s the good news! This is what makes us “Good News People.” The good news is not that we have what it takes to be right with God, be on mission for Him, sanctify ourselves, or navigate a global pandemic. The good news is that HE will do the work. He has done the work in us and through us. If we lose sight of that and think it is all by or about us, we will sink very quickly into defeat, despair and/or pride.

Let’s look back at what God has done, look at what He is doing, and look forward to what He will do with this in mind, “He will surely do it!”

As we look ahead to summer, we will walk through the book of Exodus where we see God and His powerful hand deliver His people from their enemies and sometimes from the enemy within themselves, the flesh. We will look at deliverance, idolatry, the role of women in the Exodus and in the church, our covenant-keeping God, and the sovereign hand of God guiding His people.

As you can see, this series is also timely designed and appointed by our God for such a time as this.

MINISTRY UPDATES

Outreach Ministry Wade Summers

Thank you, Grace Community Church, for responding like the Macedonian church in this time of great need. Because of your generous donations, we raised \$41,122 in one week—simply AMAZING. We have already given \$20,000 to local non-profits that are meeting the basic needs of those impacted by COVID-19. We were able to support Shelter House who is helping those without a home shelter in place while doing their best to keep everyone safe.

IC Compassion, one of the four food banks we were able to support, saw

the number of families they serve double in one week (from 100 to 200). Your generosity covered the cost to feed those additional families for the next couple of months so the team at IC Compassion could focus on what they do best, feeding refugee families impacted by COVID-19.

What I love about Grace is we don't just give with our finances; we give with our whole selves. When IC Compassion asked for help delivering groceries to families without transportation, we had more people offer to help than they had need. I echo the words from one of the non-profits we supported "Praise God for the Body of Christ."

Women's Ministry Kat George

Let me just say WOW, yes WOW. There are so few words (well, clearly I am finding a few), to share what my heart is feeling about how the ladies of Grace have been handling this strange season. From the moment this quarantine began, I have been blown away, humbled by the response.

As we started this "stay at home" season, we were blessed to take our Bible study online almost immediately. We stumbled through awkward Google Hangout sessions, and dogs barking, learning to utilize the "mute all" feature. Through all that hysterical bumpiness, the ladies of Grace, simply put...they showed up.

The gals of Grace have shown up in a big way. They have shown up by being their most authentic selves, sharing with others all their struggles, big and small. They showed up by sewing masks, delivering food, praying without ceasing, and looking beyond themselves to the needs and care of others. Well done!

Practically speaking we have taken the business side of Women's Ministry completely online. I have had the joy of checking in with folks twice a week on Facebook Live, Tuesdays at 2 pm and Thursdays at 7 pm. I am also completely thrilled that due to the flexibility of gathering digitally, we chose an additional Bible study and are continuing to meet on Tuesdays at 7 pm and Friday at 10 am to talk, pray, and study the word together.

Men's Ministry Pastor Dave Kirk

When I think of the men in the Men's Ministry at Grace, I think of 1 Timothy 6:11-12. Our goal is to develop spiritually mature leaders and disciple makers. I am so thankful for the army of men at Grace who are living in pursuit of this verse as they grow and bring glory to God on a daily basis.

Our Men's Ministry focuses on equipping men with the tools they

need to follow the Lord, lead themselves and their families, and to be a leader in the church and community. We do that primarily through community groups, where men, week in and week out, can grow, develop, and grow in spiritual leadership. We also equip with Bible studies, Thrive classes, and other focused events for men.

As we have moved into this time of sheltering in as a nation and as a community, the Men's Ministry at Grace has continued to help guys connect to live out the verses above. We currently have a couple of Bible studies going on for men. A study currently open for newcomers is called 'Fellowship of the Bean.' It's led by Andy Schaeckenbach and meets

online on Wednesday mornings. We have a couple of authentic manhood groups that are led by Larry Espy and Jeff Miller. We also have partnered with Bible Study Fellowship to offer a Monday night Bible study for men. Men's Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) just completed a short study on the book of James while everyone was sheltered in place. There's also a new group, which just started up, that's open for more guys. It's a guy's weekly, one-hour, online

'lunch bunch' meeting to connect for laughs, prayer, encouragement, and equipping.

It's not just Bible studies though; many of our community groups are continuing to meet where men are leading, serving, and connecting online for now. We also continue to do our coaching meetings for community group leaders twice a month, where leaders are encouraged, equipped, and prayed for.

If you are interested in finding out more about getting plugged into these opportunities, please contact Dave Kirk at davek@graceb3.org