

GRACE INSIDER

FEBRUARY 2025

THE FIGHTER REMAINS



REACH THE WORLD FROM
YOUR DINING TABLE

ALL-CHURCH
SUPER BOWL PARTY

SUNDAY MORNING
BEHIND-THE-SCENES

HAPPENINGS

Learn more and sign up for events at graceb3.org/events

ALL-CHURCH SUPER BOWL PARTY

Whether you're a diehard football fan or just coming for food and fellowship, this event is for everyone! No registration is needed to come, but we do need volunteers! Sign up to help make this a success. Feb 9 • 5pm till end of game

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MEN'S PRAYER NIGHT

All men of Grace are encouraged to come together and ask God the Holy Spirit to bring revival, refreshment, and redemption of our church, communities, and the world.

Feb 11 • 6:30–7:30pm

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MEMBERSHIP CLASS

If you consider Grace your home church, this class is for you. Membership means you're deciding to be an active part of the vision, goals, and leadership of Grace. Additionally, the pastoral staff and elders can better care for and disciple you. Feb 16 • 11:45am–1:15pm

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LEGACY GRANDPARENTING SUMMIT

Join us and experience the impact of intentional Christian grandparenting in passing on your faith, and be equipped with effective tools to do so. Feb 22 • 9am–4:30pm (*Doors open at 8am*)
Lunch not included.



Sunday Morning **Behind-the-Scenes**

By Children's Ministry Lead Coordinator Natasha Miller

**IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN IN THE
BACK HALLWAY OR THE EAST
WING ON A SUNDAY MORNING,
YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED
MANY CHILDREN PARTICIPATING
IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY.**

You may not see the number of volunteers who await the children each week, the people who serve in a behind-the-scenes manner and often go unnoticed. However, those of us on staff with Children's Ministry see all they do and know that serving the number of children we do each week would be impossible without them. We have decided to share some **ways we've seen God working in and through these volunteers** this past semester. Each of these stories comes from one of the Children's Ministry staff members, but this is certainly not an exhaustive list of all God is doing.

- I've seen **more and more college students volunteering** in our kids' classrooms and I love how they haven't hesitated to get to know these kiddos and their families on a deeper level. College is a time when students are often pretty busy with their own schedules and other activities, and it is a blessing to see them taking the time to invest in the lives of the kids at Grace.
- I was so blessed by a volunteer who sat out in the hallway with a PreK kiddo who was having difficulty coming into class. His parents were trying to get him to go in and she just patiently sat out in the hallway with them and talked

to him - didn't force it but just took the time to make sure he knew he was welcome and loved no matter what. He eventually came to class and had a great time! We have had several 3's and PreK kids, this year in particular, who have had a harder time adjusting to their new classrooms and ALL the volunteers have so **patiently loved them through difficult mornings**. Sometimes, they readjust the schedule just so they can sit and hold or hug a little one. We keep our curriculum flexible exactly for this reason. Sometimes, just simply loving these little ones, like Jesus would, is more important than getting through a whole lesson. God is working either way!

- I have seen a teacher **incorporate the good news of Jesus' coming to earth into an Old Testament lesson**.
- I've seen a volunteer welcome kids into the class by **greeting the child by name and helping them engage** in the activity.
- I've seen volunteers **prepare games, crafts, and lessons in unique ways that meet the children where they are**.

- I have seen **one child take another under his wing**, sit beside him, play games with him, and ensure his friend was included in whatever the class was doing.
- I've seen child check-in volunteers **greet new families**, help them welcome them to Grace, and navigate them to their child's classroom.
- I've seen the **volunteer who prints and restocks the children's bulletins in the auditorium come in during the week to prepare for Sunday.**
- I've had **conversations with volunteers about how best to meet the needs of children in their classroom.**

I pray these glimpses into the behind-the-scenes of Children's Ministry are encouraging. **Please pray for the volunteers and their interactions with the kids as they share the gospel through word and action.** Please take a moment to **thank the volunteers** in your children's classes when you drop them off or pick them up next Sunday; they are doing a tremendous job of partnering with the parents of Grace to disciple the kids of Grace, and we are thankful! 🌿



Simulcast Legacy Grandparenting Summit • 2025

Learn more or register at graceb3.org/legacysummit

Feb 22, 2025 • 9am – 4:30pm
Doors open at 8am • Grace North Liberty
Cost: \$39*
**Lunch not included.*

EXPERIENCE THE ONLY NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHRISTIAN GRANDPARENTING!

Gather with other Christian grandparents for this simulcast from Birmingham, Alabama, hosted by Grace Community Church. It is designed for grandparents who desire to be intentional and develop a spiritual legacy. You'll receive wisdom and direction from an incredible line up of speakers, and find spiritual inspiration through music and worship.

This year's conference theme is "For This Purpose" and will empower grandparents to embrace their divine purpose and the crucial role they play in their families' spiritual journey.

The Legacy Grandparenting Conference is for you if...

- You want to see your grandchildren follow Christ
- You desire to leave a lasting legacy of love
- You want to influence generations of your family for Christ

You'll also learn about the grandparenting ministry at Grace Community Church.



ALL-CHURCH SUPER BOWL PARTY

By Student Ministry Director Brian Hagedorn

Last year, every department teamed up to host a Super Bowl party for the entire church family. We had such a great time with everyone that we decided to do it again! So come on Sunday, February 9, from 5:00 pm until the end of the game as we host a party where you and your family, friends, and neighbors can socialize, share snacks, play games, and watch the Super Bowl! Save the date, plan your favorite appetizers, and gather your favorite team gear to wear to the party! 🌿

Date: February 9

Time: 5:00 pm until the end of the game

Location: Grace North Liberty

Needs: Bring an appetizer/snack to share if you plan to attend!

Remember 'Your Joy

A WOMEN'S MORNING BIBLE STUDY
Fridays starting March 7. Childcare provided.
Register at graceb3.org/events

This 9-week study, with an emphasis on biblical theology, traces the promise in Genesis 3:15 through seven Old Testament accounts. Each story gives us a glimpse, a foreshadowing, of the greater salvation Jesus wins. In each encounter, we'll see how God faithfully fulfilled his promise as He prepared us for the ultimate offspring who brought our eternal salvation. Our hope is that you will remember the joy of your salvation - and praise the One who accomplished it - as you consider the battle he won on your behalf.

Features:

- In-person teachers each week!
- 5 days of study each week—observing, interpreting, reflecting on, and applying the text
- Memory verses
- Small group discussion questions
- Optional video teaching (to supplement our in-person teachers)

Date: Friday mornings, March 7 - May 9, 2025

Time: 9:30 - 11am

Location: North Liberty Campus

Childcare: newborn to Pre-K

Cost: \$30* for book and hospitality

**We do not want cost to be a hindrance to anyone participating.*

Please contact the office.

THE FIGHTER REMAINS

TAKING HOLD OF OUR
UNION WITH CHRIST

By Lead Pastor Brooks Simpson

CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO
WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY
OF THE CALLING WE HAVE
RECEIVED (EPHESIANS 4:1).
THAT WOULD BE SIMPLE... IF
NOT FOR THE WORLD, OUR
FLESH, AND THE DEVIL. AN
ENEMY WHO HATES US AND
OUR SAVIOR WITH INTENSE
MALICE OPPOSES EVERY
STEP WE TAKE WITH JESUS.
VICTORY WON'T COME
WITHOUT A FIGHT.

For most of my life, I have viewed myself as a fighter. In my youth, I sought to dominate other young men who were intent on doing the same to me. I wrestled in arenas against “flesh and blood.” But when I began following Jesus in 1988, I began a new type of fight—the fighting moved from Carver-Hawkeye Arena to my home, my church, the streets of my community, and the rest of the world.

Before deciding to follow Jesus, my opponents were flesh, like me, who needed sleep, who got weak, and who could become sick or hurt or hungry. Since trusting in Jesus, my opponents are spiritual principalities, with vastly superior intellect and strength and no need for sleep or physical nourishment. My new opponents want more than a win; they seek my demise and the complete undoing of my person, my family, and the Lord’s church. This is one reason Paul exhorts us to take up that spiritual armor and stand firm.

¹⁰ FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT. ¹¹ PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL. ¹² FOR WE DO NOT WRESTLE AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE AUTHORITIES, AGAINST THE COSMIC POWERS OVER THIS

**PRESENT DARKNESS, AGAINST
THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL
IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES.**

**¹³ THEREFORE TAKE UP THE
WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, THAT
YOU MAY BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND
IN THE EVIL DAY, AND HAVING
DONE ALL, TO STAND FIRM.
EPHESIANS 6:10-13**

I have always taken pride (good and bad) in continuing to fight until the end. I didn't always win on the mat, but I never walked away from a fight, I never quit, and I always went back into the fight. Since taking up the armor of Christ, I've brought those same habits to bear in my spiritual battles: I have not always won the day-to-day, and I have been wounded, but I have never quit. Still, I have entertained thoughts of walking away at times. Wrestling flesh and blood is hard, but wrestling against unseen principalities is harder. At times, I relate to the final verse in Paul Simon's song The Boxer.

**IN THE CLEARING
STANDS A BOXER
AND A FIGHTER BY HIS TRADE
AND HE CARRIES THE REMINDERS
OF EVERY GLOVE THAT
LAID HIM DOWN
OR CUT HIM TILL HE CRIED OUT
IN HIS ANGER AND HIS SHAME
"I AM LEAVING, I AM LEAVING."
BUT THE FIGHTER STILL REMAINS**

I have stood in the ring for twenty-eight years in the same church. This year, as my family experienced one health crisis after another, there were times I lay on the canvas—knocked down, bloodied, angry, and full of shame—and imagined leaving the ministry. Does it trouble you to read your pastor admit he has had thoughts about walking away? They are just fleeting thoughts, not plans. Paul Simon’s fighter yells, “I am leaving, I am leaving,” but the fighter still remains.

Have you ever pondered leaving your marriage, church, job, family, or faith? Have you been knocked down repeatedly and, in frustration, anger, and shame, brooded about whether this fight, whatever it is, is no longer worth it? Have you seen other Christians who seem scar-free or all those happy pagans who couldn't care less about Jesus and asked, “Why don’t they ever seem to get pummeled?” Have you asked, “Why should I get back up and fight when I don’t even sense God’s presence? What if I stayed down? What if I threw in the towel and walked off?”

If you have had those thoughts, you are not alone.

If you haven't had such thoughts yet, it might be because you haven't been fighting long enough. No one ever plans to quit before they get in the ring. Like former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson said, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." Everyone has a picture of how our life will look—how we plan to serve God, what our marriage and family will look like, what that job is going to be like, and more. We have everything planned out in our minds, and then comes an unexpected blow. We feel pain and see stars, and we hear the ref standing over us, counting to ten. If you have never been there, your turn is coming. Just as Christ suffered, we are also called to suffer. When suffering comes, the only question is whether or not the fighter will remain.

Whether we get up and fight or head to the nearest exit sign will depend on one thing: our union with Christ, the fighter who always remains.

**³⁵ WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST? SHALL TRIBULATION, OR DISTRESS, OR PERSECUTION, OR FAMINE, OR NAKEDNESS, OR DANGER, OR SWORD? ³⁶ AS IT IS WRITTEN, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING KILLED ALL THE DAY LONG; WE ARE REGARDED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."
³⁷ NO, IN ALL THESE THINGS WE**

**ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS
THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US.
38 FOR I AM SURE THAT NEITHER
DEATH NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS
NOR RULERS, NOR THINGS
PRESENT NOR THINGS TO COME,
NOR POWERS, 39 NOR HEIGHT NOR
DEPTH, NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN
ALL CREATION, WILL BE ABLE TO
SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF
GOD IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.
ROMANS 8:35-39**

The fighter who remains is not you or me. To be sure, we are called to remain steadfast and stand firm in the Lord's strength and power (Ephesians 6:10-18), but Scripture says our victory and staying power are based upon our union with Christ. Paul wrote, "In all these things, we are more than conquerors..." These things include tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, betrayal, illness, violence, and death! Think about his words literally for a moment: a Christian is stripped naked, thrown into the center of an arena for sport, and run through with a sword to slowly bleed out to the sound of Romans cheering his death. How is that the picture of a conqueror? Is Paul delusional? No, he is not. Because he references our union with Jesus. In Christ, we are more than conquerors of sin, death, and hell through him who loved us (Romans 8:37).

**CHRIST IS THE FIGHTER
WHO REMAINS.
NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US
FROM THE LOVE OF GOD
IN CHRIST.
CHRIST IS OUR VICTORY.
CHRIST IS THE ONE WHO
CONQUERED SIN AND DEATH.
CHRIST IS THE ONE WHO MAKES
A PUBLIC SPECTACLE OF HIS
AND OUR ENEMY.
CHRIST IS THE ONE WHO HAS
RESURRECTED FROM THE DEAD.
CHRIST IS THE ONE
INTERCEDING FOR THOSE OF US
WHO STAND TOE-TO-TOE WITH
AN ALREADY DEFEATED FOE.**

Christ is VICTORIOUS! And if you have been bloodied by blow after blow, you will stand firm by holding fast to your union with Christ. When the final bell rings, in Christ, we will raise our hands above our heads in victory while our foes are cast into the lake of fire for eternity.

We want to learn how to take hold of our union with Christ, so we plan to start studying Romans 8 on February 2 and running through Palm Sunday. Not one of us will stand firm in Christ without knowing who we are in him. Paul's letter to the church in Rome will help us remain in the fight as we discover that Christ is the fighter who remains, and we are in Christ.

Mark your calendars, open your Bibles, lace up your shoes, and stay in the fight. 🌿

“Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?”

Acts 8:30-31

International Student EASTER 2025

By Wade Summers

This timeless exchange echoes through the centuries, reminding us of God's ongoing work.

While we may marvel at Philip's encounter, we often overlook the opportunities God is giving us.

Over the past decade, I've witnessed firsthand how God uses ordinary people to illuminate the Scriptures for those seeking answers. One student from the Middle East got a ride for an

International Neighbors event and enjoyed connecting with his driver. As their friendship grew, the student's curiosity about Christianity led him to join a community group where his friend got to help him understand the meaning of God's word. Now he has begun to weigh the cost of following Jesus. All because someone took the time to welcome him and explain the Scriptures.

Students who have come to our community from places like Iran, China, Iraq, India, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea seek clarity about the real story of the Bible and why Christians believe Jesus is God. Many come from countries where they don't have access to the Bible or know Christians who could explain it to them. Some, like the Ethiopian eunuch, have attempted to understand the Scriptures during their time in America, only to realize they need someone to explain the meaning. Add to the mix chocolate Easter bunnies and plastic eggs and what they have to do with the meaning of Easter.

To address this need, Grace Church partners with other local churches to host an International Student Easter celebration.

Eighteen American families open their homes, each with the help of a co-host, to welcome two or three international students for a simple Easter meal. Following the meal, everyone gathers to hear Pastor Brooks deliver a message about the secular meaning and true meaning of Easter.

After Brooks' message, hosts and co-hosts debrief the talk with their guests, clarify any misunderstandings, and continue helping the students understand the good news of Easter. These one-on-one interactions over dessert and after the event make a real difference.

Can I invite you, like Philip, to help the internationals who are coming into our community understand the true meaning of Easter? You can contribute in various ways:

Host: Open your home and prepare a simplified Easter meal.

Co-host: Provide transportation for international students and assist with meal preparation.

Provide Dessert: Contribute a delicious dessert for the group discussion.

Volunteer: Help with setup, teardown, and other behind-the-scenes tasks.

[Sign up here to be a part of the International Student Easter this year.](#) 🌿



baptism class

Our two-part baptism class is for anyone who wants to learn about baptism and/or pursue being baptized at Grace. This class is a requirement to be baptized at Grace.

[Register here](#)

*March 2 & 9
8:30am*

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward work of God in man.