



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.

ELDERTALK: Use the Gifts UNDER the Tree to Point to The GIFT That Hung ON the Tree

JADAÉ FOX

This year’s theme at Grace Fellowship Church is “Grace on Mission.” So, what is grace, and how does it apply to Christmas?

As a young child my thoughts of Christmas were consumed with what I would get under the tree. I knew that these gifts came from my parents’ love for my siblings and me. It was not because I was such a *good* child or that I had somehow *earned* their gifts. These gifts were a form of *grace*—undeserved favor. Grace cannot be earned. It is something that is freely given.

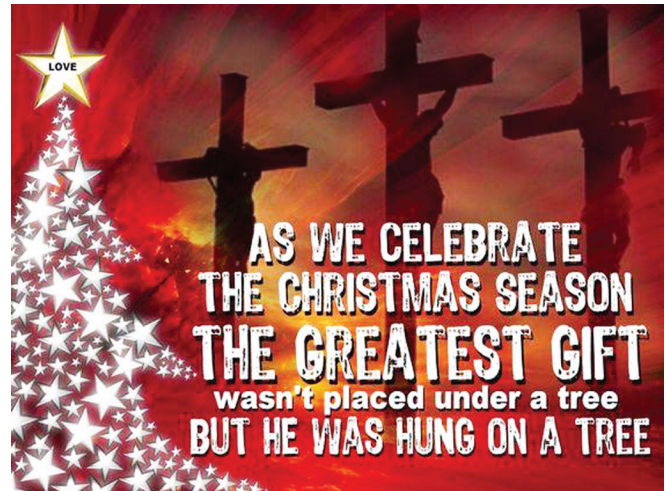
“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Eph. 2:8-10

As the greatest act of love the world has ever seen, Jesus died hanging on a tree (the cross). In doing so, He took the punishment for the sins of all of us. He knew all too well that most people would not receive this great gift of grace. But for those who do, they would receive forgiveness of their sins and eternal life. See John 1:12.

Being a parent, I now understand the struggle that generation after generation has faced: to remember that the true reason that we give gifts to our children is to point them to the greatest Gift ever offered to them and all of mankind, the gift of salvation.

As a parent, I need to resist the false need, commercial demand, and misconception that my



kids need and deserve a GOOD CHRISTMAS (as determined by the cost and number of gifts they receive).

So many people each Christmas

- spend money they don’t have
- agonize over the perfect gift or gifts
- run themselves ragged going to one Christmas event after another.

What if, instead, we slow down so we can remember that Jesus is the “reason for the season.” We are saved by grace to show grace through the Holy Spirit. I am not saying, “Don’t give gifts,” but that these gifts need to point to Jesus and His Great Gift!

To do that requires us to remember, demonstrate, and teach our children and others what the motivation for giving and receiving gifts ought to be. In this way, giving a gift that meets a need is as valuable as a gift that meets a want.

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Grace on Mission means remembering and telling others that the greatest Christmas gift was not **UNDER** a tree but **ON** one.

<p>X I need to earn God's grace.</p>	<p>✓ Grace is a gift received in faith.</p>
<p>X I will show others grace if they deserve it.</p>	<p>✓ No one deserves grace. But I freely give it like God does for me.</p>
<p>X We need to work to keep grace.</p>	<p>✓ God does not revoke His grace.</p>
<p>X Hardships in life are God withholding His grace.</p>	<p>✓ Hardship is a part of life where God's grace shines through.</p>
<p>X I will forgive other people only if they admit they are wrong and if I am no longer hurting.</p>	<p>✓ I will keep short accounts of wrongs, offering forgiveness freely, just like Jesus has forgiven <u>me</u>!</p>
<p>X God's free gift of grace means that my sin does not really matter. I can live the way I want.</p>	<p>✓ Disregard for the seriousness of sin is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "Cheap Grace." True understanding of God's grace brings true repentance with the fleeing from sin and running to the forgiveness of God.</p>

WHEN BILLY GRAHAM MET SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

adapted from
Billy Graham by
JOHN POLLOCK



The reports of the Billy Graham London Crusade so impressed Sir Winston Churchill that he agreed to give Billy five minutes on May 24, 1954, at noon. As the hour approached, Sir Winston paced back and forth saying he was nervous about the encounter. “What do you talk about with an American evangelist?”

At the stroke of noon on that Monday, Billy Graham was shown into the Cabinet Room, an unlit cigar in the hand of Churchill (intended for Billy!).

Billy was surprised to see how short a man he was. Sir Winston motioned Billy to be seated and said he had been reading about him and was most happy to have him come “because we need this emphasis.” Then he said, “Do you have any hope? What hope do you have for the world?”

Billy was naturally overwhelmed by meeting privately with the greatest man of the age but did not forget why he had been allowed the privilege. He took out his little New Testament and announced, “Mr. Prime Minister, I am filled with

hope.”

Sir Winston pointed at early editions of three London evening papers lying on an empty table and commented that they were filled with rapes, murders, and hate. When he was a boy, it was different...And the Communist menace grew all the time. “I am an old man without hope for the world.”

Billy said again that he was filled with hope. “Life is very exciting even if there is a war, because I know what’s going to happen in the future.” Then he spoke about Jesus Christ and began at the beginning, turning from place to place in the New Testament and explaining just as he would to an insignificant inquirer in his hotel room the meaning of Christ’s birth, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and how a man is born again. He moved quickly, inwardly agitated lest he should not put across the essentials in the short time given him.

Billy got the impression that Churchill was very receptive. He made few comments but listened closely, a different attitude from that which Churchill reportedly

had shown to ecclesiastical dignitaries. Perhaps Graham evoked in Sir Winston memories of the nanny of his boyhood, Mrs. Everest, who may have talked about the matters Billy was explaining. At any rate, beneath Churchill’s indifference to church affairs was that respect for the Bible which occasionally emerged in his writings and his profound faith in a guiding Providence which he had expressed vigorously to the nation in the worst moments of the war.

Billy went on to speak of the Second Coming of Christ, the belief often recited so glibly in the Apostles’ Creed. “He shall come again,” which to Billy Graham was a vital, future certainty. The Prime Minister continued listening intently. The five minutes which he had scheduled for Graham had long flown. The clock showed twelve-thirty. Sir Winston was sitting forward, drinking in every word.

The interview lasted forty minutes. At last, Sir Winston said, “I do not see much hope for the future unless it is the

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December 2023

- 1, 8, 15** Games Reach, Fridays, 3:30-5:00 pm at Madison South Elementary School.
- 2** Games Reach Game Night, 6:30-8:30 pm at GFC. Invite your friends!
- 3** **First Sunday of Advent** - Matt Godsil preaching: Luke 1:5-17.
- 5, 12** Games Reach, Tuesdays, 2:30-4:30 pm, Madison High School before vacation.
- 6, 13** Connect groups for all ages Wednesdays, 6:30-8 pm. Kay Berry leads the adults in the Lobby. Eric Byrom leads the teens in the Upper Room. Danny Gardner and Priscilla DiPadova lead Grades 2-5 in the Giraffe Room.
- 7, 14** Games Reach, Thursdays, 2:30-4:30 pm, Madison Middle School.
- 10** **Second Sunday of Advent** - Eric Byrom preaching: Luke 1:18-23, 57-80. 🍷🍷
- 14** Women of Grace Bible study, 9 am.
- 17** **Third Sunday of Advent** - Matt Godsil preaching: Luke 1:26-56.
- 20** Christmas Party, 6:30-8 pm.
- 24** **Fourth Sunday of Advent** - Eric Byrom preaching (10:00 am): Luke 2:22-40. 🍷🍷
Christmas Eve Service, 7-8 pm.
- 25** **MERRY CHRISTMAS!**
- 31** Fifth Sunday Worship & potluck.

Billy Graham and Churchill *(Cont. from p. 3)*

hope that you are talking about, young man. We must have a return to God.”

As he stood up, he shook Billy’s hand, and said, “This conversation is private, isn’t it?” Billy, who long ago had learned to keep confidences, assured him he would not divulge it, nor did he during Sir Winston’s lifetime.

Nor did Sir Winston reveal to his staff what they had talked about. But his private secretaries recall his comments that he found Billy Graham “most interesting and agreeable.”

All Billy said to the press as he left Downing Street was, “I felt like I had shaken the hands of Mr. History.”



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