



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. This is a monthly publication of Grace Fellowship Church, Mansfield, Ohio.

ElderTalk: The Bible Reading Tool – Feeding on the Bread of Life

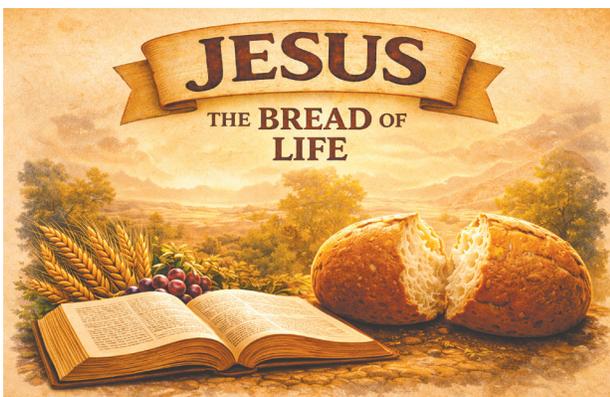
JADAÉ FOX

It’s been said many times that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. This is because it kickstarts our metabolism and gives our bodies the energy and nutrients they need as we begin the day. For some of us more than others, skipping a meal can have a devastating effect on our body’s chemistry. I, for one, get very “hangry” if I skip a meal. In the same way skipping spiritual meals has a devastating effect on our walk with Jesus!

The Bible, in many places, uses the analogy of bread. I believe this is because bread is one type of food found in almost every culture around the world. Bread represents that primary staple of nourishment we all need to survive. And it is this very analogy that Jesus uses in John 6:22–59, especially in John 6:35:

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’”

This illustrates that just as our bodies need food to survive, our souls need nourishment even more. Jesus invites us to be nourished by His written Word and by a relationship with Him as the WORD and the BREAD of LIFE.



At Grace Fellowship, a team of six has worked for over a year to develop a discipleship process with simple tools to help people grow as disciples—and help disciples make disciples. This supports our mission:

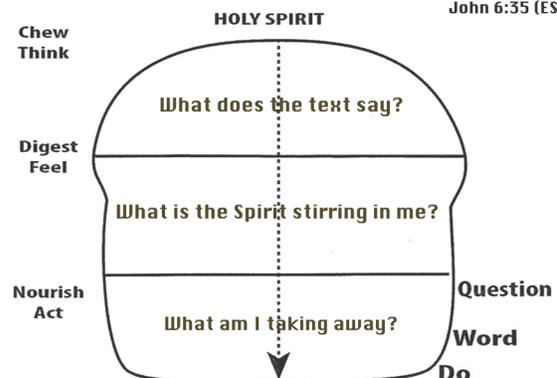
“A family for God who will go into the world and make disciples who make disciples.”

Of course, this comes directly from the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16–20.

➔ If you missed it, I encourage you to read last month’s ElderTalk by Pastor Eric, where he shared another tool called the **JESUS PATTERN TOOL**.

THE BIBLE READING TOOL

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’”
John 6:35 (ESV)



The Bible Reading Tool is a way to help us read and understand Scripture. It is also repeatable and replicable—meaning once you learn it and begin using it, you can teach others to use it, too! It’s designed to help us slow down as we read the Bible so we can reflect on the text and listen to the Holy Spirit.

As you can see in the above image, The Bible
(Continued on page 2)

ElderTalk *(Continued from page 1)*

Reading Tool is shaped like a slice of bread and divided into three sections, each with its own guiding question. As you read a passage at least three times, you'll also notice an arrow running down the middle of the bread. This reminds us that the Holy Spirit is at work throughout the entire process of reading and understanding Scripture.

1st – *We Chew on It* – **WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?**

Ask questions like:

Who is talking? Who are they talking to? Where does this take place?

- Slow down. Observe words, people, and actions.

2nd – *We Digest / Feel* – **WHAT IS THE SPIRIT STIRRING IN ME?**

Ask questions like:

What is God saying to me? What jumps out to me?

Consider:

John 10:27 – *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”* (ESV)

John 16:13 – *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.”* (ESV)

Jesus speaks to His sheep, and we—as His sheep—want to grow in hearing His voice. (More on this with the Hearing God Tool.)

3rd – *We Nourish / Act on It* – **WHAT AM I TAKING AWAY?**

Ask questions like:

Do I need to do something? Remember something? Ask God something? Trust God in something?

- What is God inviting me to believe, change, or obey?

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” — James 1:22 (ESV)

We don't just look at bread.

We don't just smell it.

We eat it—and it becomes part of us.

In the same way, when we read the Bible and listen to the Holy Spirit, Jesus and His Word become more a part of us.

This tool has been helpful for me personally as I read my Bible. It forces me to slow down and

think about what I'm reading—to take time to ask the Holy Spirit what He wants me to do with it. And I feel equipped knowing I have a tool I can share with others so they can feel more prepared to study God's Word and receive the Bread of Life.

Bible reading has the greatest impact when it is practiced regularly, and this tool can help you—and help you help someone else—develop an effective habit of reading and responding to Scripture. I recently read an article listing nine benefits of reading your Bible four days or more each week. Here they are – **9 Tangible Benefits of Bible Reading for Your Church:**

1. Feeling lonely drops 30%
2. Anger issues drop 32%
3. Bitterness in relationships drops 40%
4. Alcoholism drops 57%
5. Sex outside of marriage drops 68%
6. Feeling spiritually stagnant drops 60%
7. Viewing pornography drops 61%
8. Sharing your faith jumps 200%
9. Discipling others jumps 230%

You can read the article for yourself at <https://research.lifeway.com/2021/01/20/9-tangible-benefits-of-bible-reading-for-your-church/>

So let me ask:

- Are you regularly feeding on God's Word (5–7 days a week)?
- Are you helping others learn how to do the same (discipling others)?

Let's use The Bible Reading Tool to grow deeper in Christ—and help others do the same.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” — Psalm 119:105 (ESV)

Grace Fellowship Church

365 Straub Rd. East • Mansfield, OH 44903
419-526-4699 • gracefellowship01@gmail.com



Eric Byrom Presiding Elder/ Pastor

Jadaé Fox Elder

Matt Godsil Elder

(A complete list of church functionaries will return next month.)

February 1, 2026 - 2026年2月1日

Hello again from Japan!

またまた日本からこんにちは!

MARIA McCREADLE

I have heard that America has been experiencing a lot of snow and very cold temperatures. Although it has been quite cold here, I must admit that I do miss the Midwest snow.

This month, I was able to enjoy a traditional Japanese New Year dish, called *osechi ryōri* **おせちりょうり** (*Ed.: literally means New Year's meal or food*), with my team. Each dish has a meaning that is enjoyed within the first few days in the new year. Our team went on the eighteenth and had an amazing time! Below, I have attached a picture of the meal.



With the holidays being over, I am finally settling into a schedule with school. I like to get to school early and greet all the kids when they come in. I have not been able to participate in many after-school activities as the students are getting ready to wrap up the school year. The school year here ends in March, which is crazy to think about. It feels so soon, especially with having a late start!

As for the team, we just finished the book of Acts and are excited to move into Philippians and Colossians. Our schedules are very full, but it is an amazing opportunity that we have the time to gather once a week to be in fellowship with one another. Please pray that this time is fruitful for our team. The high school Bible study is also going smoothly. With the end of the school year

coming up rapidly, we have not had many attendees. I am hopeful that with the new school year, we will see a shift in attendance, as we have many strong relationships with graduating junior high students. Please continue to pray for this study as we teach English using stories from the biblical text. Below, I have attached one of the worksheets I have made for the study so you can have a glimpse of the material we are covering.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Bible Study - Luke 19:1-10

BEFORE YOU READ

- Where does this story take place?
This story takes place in Jericho.
- Who is Jesus?
Christians believe Jesus is God who came to earth to save them from their sins.

NEW WORDS

chief tax collector - 徴税官
sycamore tree - 式木ノキ
sinner - 罪人
hurry - 急ぐ
receive - 受け取る
sinner - 罪人
defiant - 反抗する
grumble - 不平を言う
joyfully - 喜んで
salvation - 救い

Luke 19:1-10

Zacchaeus

He [Jesus] entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when the crowd saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."

ROUND ONE Write the letter for the correct answer.
What was Zacchaeus' job? ()
a. Office Worker b. Tax Collector c. Teacher d. Banker

ROUND TWO Write the answer.
Question One: Why did Zacchaeus climb a tree?

Question Two: Why were the people angry Jesus chose to stay at Zacchaeus' house?

ROUND THREE Translate.
たとえ群衆の間にいたとしても、イエスはザカカイの家に行くことが重要であることを知っていました。ザカカイはイエスに自分のしたことを認めました。イエスがザカカイを救ったのは、ザカカイが貧しい人々にお金を与え、それを返した人々に愛を戻したからです。

Ed.: You will be able to read this if you enlarge the page on your screen or use a magnifying glass.

Overall, this month has been smooth sailing. We are continuing to build relationships and meet new people. There have been lots of opportunities to travel and try new things. We are also excited to have a new teammate join us this spring.

Please continue to pray for God to work through our team as we continue to strive to show the love of God in our everyday lives. I hope everyone is staying warm!

Maria M. McCreadle



Ed.: The biggest and most colorful holiday of the year in Japan is around New Year's Eve and centers on the feasts served during the holiday period, which lasts for three days. At the center of the festivities is this grand array of colorful foods.

Some news from the Wideners

Rick wrote: I was able recently to visit with Eric Byrom (pastor at Grace Fellowship Church in Mansfield) and Ray Nethery (former president of our Table Fellowship group of churches and a dear friend). It is a gift when we can both encourage and be encouraged in our times with others. We are so grateful for all of your prayers for us and especially for Joanne. She went to the ER on January 16 and was admitted. On January 21 she was transferred to rehab, which is closer to our home. When she entered rehab, she could barely walk. On leaving February 11, she was walking 150 to 200 feet. It could have been more, but her left shoulder pain keeps her from going more. Last month I mentioned some unexpected expenses that came. God is amazing! Before we even shared about those, He was taking care of them. We received some offerings above what was normal for the month! To those who made those offerings, know that God was moving.

Taking up a good portion of my time has been preparing for our Table Fellowship Annual Conference in April. Registration is now ready and available at our website, tablefellowship.org. We would love to see you there. This year we are in Spooner, WI.

Joanne wrote: Won't you be glad when you don't have to read about hospital stays, ER visits, and rehab center tours when I'm writing my part of our newsletter? For those of you old enough to remember the sitcom, *Cheers*, you also know that as soon as you walked in the door "everyone knew your name!" Well, that's kind of how I feel when walking into the aforementioned experiences. Everyone is so nice and welcoming; it's me that feels embarrassed. You see, I am walking into their established community, and I have to learn their way of doing life.

It's their way or the highway, and depending on how poorly I am feeling at the time, my level of cooperation can ebb and flow. If you've ever asked our God to send you to the mission field open ended, be careful of what you ask. My mission field has drastically changed. There is a plethora of souls in any of these new arenas of activity, and I would say depending on my need at the moment, my awareness of those around me can change. I have had several touching experiences of such cases.

Thank you ever so much for your prayers, love, and support; they mean the world! You are greatly loved.

[rickwidener@gmail.com &
joannewidener@gmail.com]

(Ed.: Excerpted from their February newsletter)

March 2026

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

- 1 Pastor Eric Byrom preaching on 1 Corinthians 13. We honor Judy Nichols for her years of service to GFC. Potluck lunch and a members' meeting after worship.
- 2 GFC hosts the March of Prayer, 6-8 PM.
- 7 Daylight Savings Time begins tonight! Spring forward!
- 8 Eric Byrom preaching on Proverbs 24:13; 25:16; and 26:4-5. Mansfield Christian School "Image" choir joins us for worship.
- 10-20 Pastor Eric Byrom's mission trip to Kenya with globalLead team.
- 15 Elder Matt Godsil preaching on Philippians 3:7-16. Kids DTS leaders' meeting for summer camp planning, 12:45 PM.
- 20-21 American Heritage Girls use our facility Friday evening and Saturday.
- 22 Elder Jadaé Fox preaching on "Being Passionate." (Exodus 14:12 and Luke 1:39)
- 24 Pastor Eric meets with the women's group, 4 PM, at Panera Bread.
- 29 Palm Sunday - Celebration Worship with Eucharist.
- 30-April 3 Lenten Prayer Walk in the GFC sanctuary.