

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 Evangelism Discipleship Tool "101" *Jadaé Fox*

I remember reading about Jesus and His disciples when I was younger and thinking, "Wow!" How amazing it must have been to walk with Jesus, learn directly from Him, make mistakes, and grow. I wished I could have that same relationship with Him.

But as I grew in my understanding of Scripture, I realized Jesus had given us something amazing: the Holy Spirit! He is our Helper, who guides us, helps us understand Scripture, and empowers us to build up His church. He is the same Spirit who makes discipleship possible!

I can't believe we're introducing the sixth and final discipleship tool! We've covered How to Read Your Bible, How to Hear from God, Prayer, The Jesus Model, Forgiveness, and now The Evangelism Tool!

As believers, we're called to go into all the world and make disciples. You might recognize that calling in Grace Fellowship Church's mission statement:

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

That last part is important. How do we know we're making disciples? **Because they're learning to make disciples themselves!** That's why we teach these tools: to help believers grow in Jesus and equip them to help others do the same.

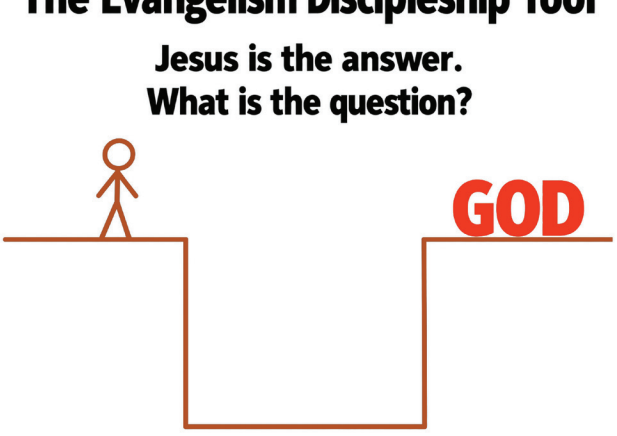
And we're seeing the fruit! We're already in our second generation of disciple-making and preparing for a third. I can't wait to see what God does next!

Our discipleship team has embraced a simple definition of what it means to be a disciple:

"Study, Imitate and Share Jesus"

Introducing the Evangelism Tool

The Evangelism Tool is a simple illustration that helps us explain what Jesus has done for us and how knowing Him changes our lives. It can be used to teach believers how to share their faith or to share the gospel with someone who doesn't yet know Jesus.



Look at the first illustration. A stick figure is separated from God by a deep chasm representing sin. We cannot bridge that gap ourselves. We need Jesus, who has provided the way through His work on the cross!

Our primary Scripture is **Romans 10:9–10**. I encourage you to read it with the person you're sharing with.

Completing the Illustration

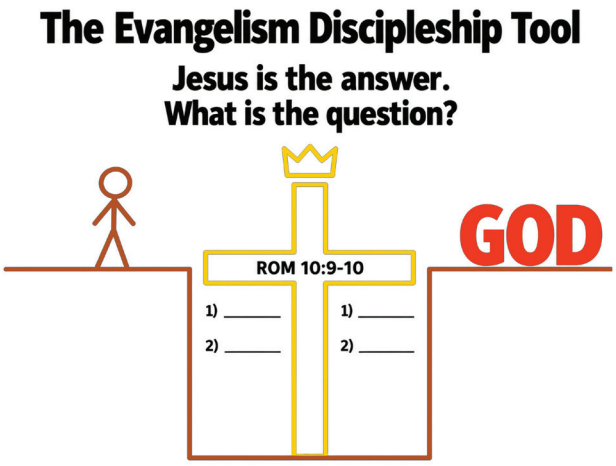
First, draw a cross bridging the chasm, then add a crown above it. Don't worry about your artistic

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The Evangelism Discipleship Tool

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ability! These tools are intentionally simple so that anyone can use them.



Next, beneath the crossbeam, write the numbers 1 and 2 on each side, leaving space beside each number.

On the left, share two examples of what your life was like before knowing Jesus. On the right, explain how knowing Him has changed those same areas.

Perhaps you struggled with fear and anxiety. You might still experience anxiety today, but you've learned to trust Jesus through difficult moments.

Or maybe you struggled with anger. You could explain that you still get angry sometimes, but surrendering that anger to Jesus has made it easier to manage.

The point isn't that we've become perfect. It's that we're different because of Jesus!

Try to make your examples relatable. Perhaps the person you're speaking with is worried about paying rent or providing his or her next meal. Have you experienced something similar? How did trusting Jesus help you?

Sharing relevant experiences shows that you're listening and genuinely care.

One word of caution: Don't make it up! Never pretend to understand someone's circumstances or claim experiences you haven't had. Be honest. Your testimony doesn't need to be dramatic to be meaningful.

This brings us back to the phrase at the top of our illustration: "Jesus is the answer. What is the question?"

Everyone is dealing with something. Maybe it's loneliness, a broken relationship, or wondering whether life has any real purpose. The question is, "How do I deal with what I'm going through?"

That's where your testimony comes in! By sharing how Jesus has changed your life and helped you through similar struggles, you're showing how He can be the answer to what they're facing, too.

Jesus Is Lord

Return to Romans 10:9–10 ("Level '101'"), which teaches us about believing in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead and confessing with our mouths that Jesus is Lord. Now point to the crown above the cross. It represents Jesus' lordship.

Lordship isn't a concept we commonly use in America today, but it was well understood in biblical times. It means submitting ourselves to someone else's authority and seeking to please that person.

When we put our faith in Jesus, we're surrendering our will to His. We're saying: "You're the boss, Jesus, not me. I'll read Your Word and seek to follow what You ask because I've put my faith and trust in You."

Do we do this perfectly? Of course not! But surrendering our lives to Jesus is part of acknowledging Him as Lord.

Putting Off the Old and Putting On the New

While this goes beyond the basic illustration, Colossians 3:8–10 ("Level '102'") beautifully describes what we're illustrating: putting off the old self and putting on the new.

Because we've placed our faith in Jesus, our lives should be noticeably different. We're still learning, growing, and making mistakes, but through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, we're being changed!

Want to Learn More?

Would you like a personal demonstration of this tool? Perhaps you'd like to be discipled or learn how to disciple others. If so, then email us at

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The Evangelism Discipleship Tool

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GraceFellowship01@gmail.com with "Discipleship" in the subject line. We'd love to connect you with someone eager to help you grow as a disciple of the Lord Jesus!

Update from Tamura City, Japan

日本・田村市からの更新情報

Thursday October 1, 2026 at 2:52 AM

2026年8月31日（月） 午後11時14分

Hello Everyone,

Japan is now halfway through the school year, with only six more months to go! With this, I am back in a steady routine with school. While most of my weekends are spent resting, I was able to visit Inawashiro Garden with some of the girls on my team in early September. That day was a fun and relaxing day as we were able to explore more of the countryside in Japan. Below, I have attached some pictures of our trip. We were very lucky to have beautiful weather for our trip since it has been very rainy here. For the most part, though, I have been living my common, day-to-day life.

During this time of year, we also had Silver Week. Silver Week is a week where three holidays fall back to back. We had half of the week of school off due to this. I used this time to rest as I know the holiday season is quickly approaching. Our team has been planning many events for this coming season! This past month my school schedule has been packed with many classes and an observation. My Japanese teacher of English (JTE) and I had 15 teachers from other schools and the Board of Education come to watch one of our sixth grade lessons. While they were not evaluating me, it was still very nerve-racking. Overall, my JTE and the students did very well, and I even got the opportunity to sit in the meeting afterwards (Great Japanese practice!), and they were able to share their comments and/or concerns. Overarchingly, they loved our teaching methods and how we worked together.

As for this coming month, my school will have an upcoming sports day. This is a very big event for Japanese schools, where classes compete with one another in different sports. From my understanding, it sounds like a more intense version of a field day, which my school did growing up. I am very excited to participate, and this will be a good time to meet students' parents as well. Please pray that relationships continue to grow at school and for health as flu season approaches.

The church has also been in the same routine. The pastor has been going through Acts the past few weeks. One of the ladies who attends the church invited our team over for dinner. I was able to go with two other teammates last week. She and her niece made us a home-cooked meal consisting of soba (noodles and broth), tempura (fried veggies and shrimp), salad, kimbap (seaweed-wrapped rice and veggies), baked cheesy potatoes, and for dessert, fruit and rare cheesecake. Her kindness was greatly appreciated, and she showed us many photos of church members and former team members. It was truly a great night! Please continue to pray for the church and its growth. We hope to bring more people in during this coming holiday season, so please pray for open hearts with ears willing to hear.

Thank you for your prayers,

Maria

Maria M McCreadie マリア・マクレーデ

Inawashiro Herb Garden

猪苗代ハーブ園



Forest 森

Lake view 湖の眺め

Mountain 山





"Umbrella Sky Art Exhibit"

「アンブレラ・アート展」



Below are some "comments" from a couple of the early Church Fathers and one Reformation era theologian on the Romans 10:9-10 passage, which was the basis for this month's ElderTalk article. I thought their insights might add an additional "punch" to the excellent *ElderTalk* article on discipleship, which Jadaé Fox has written for us this month.

Theodoret of Cyprus (423-457):

"For there is need of both: of true and firm faith, and of confessions made with boldness, so that the heart may be adorned with the undoubted character of the faith, and the tongue may shine brightly as it fearlessly proclaims the truth."

Gennadius of Constantinople (?-471):

"For according to His *[Christ's]* custom, He distinguished 'unto righteousness' and 'unto salvation,' assigning the former to the faith of the heart and the latter to the confession of the mouth, as each properly corresponds to each."

John Calvin (1509-1564):

"'That if thou wilt confess, etc.' Here is also an allusion, rather than a proper and strict quotation: for it is very probable that Moses used the word 'mouth,' by taking a part for the whole, instead of the word 'face' or 'sight.' But it was not unsuitable for the Apostle to allude to the word mouth in this manner: 'Since the Lord sets His word before our face, no doubt He calls upon us to confess it.' For whenever the word of the Lord is, it ought to bring forth fruit; and the fruit is the confession of the mouth."

"'For with the heart we believe unto righteousness, etc.' This passage may help us to understand what justification by faith is; for it shows that righteousness then comes to us when we embrace God's goodness offered to us in the Gospel. We are then for this reason just, because we believe that God is propitious to us in Christ, but let us observe this, that the seat of faith is not in the head (*in cerebro*—in the brain), but in the heart. Yet I would not contend about the part of the body in which faith is located: but as the word 'heart' is often taken for a serious and sincere feeling, I would say that faith is a firm and effectual confidence (*fiducia* - trust, dependence) and not a bare notion only." [From: *Commentary on Romans*]

NOVEMBER 2026

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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

1, 8, 15 Operation Christmas Child shoebox collections

1 Greg Frankenfield preaching on Matthew 8:14-17.

2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Men's Keys to Freedom Followup, 1-3 PM. (In the GFC kitchen lounge)

4, 11, 18 Connect groups for Adults and Teens, 6:30-8 PM. Parenting class, 6:30-8 PM.

8 Elder Jadaé Fox preaching on Matthew 8:18-22.

15 Jay Shifley preaching – Global Outreach Sunday.

21 Worship Dance Workshop at GFC, 9:15-11:45 AM.

22 Elder Jadaé Fox preaching a Thanksgiving Day message.

26 Thanksgiving Day—give thanks!

29 Celebration Worship with potluck lunch following.

Grace Fellowship Church
365 Straub Rd. East • Mansfield, OH 44903
419-526-4699 • gracefellowship01@gmail.com
Eric Byrom Presiding Elder/ Pastor
(A complete list of functionaries will return next month)