



Grace 2 U Newsletter

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Over the last few days my co-leaders and I have interviewed about 30 high school sophomores who have applied for inclusion in next year's cohort of the Youth Leadership Dawson program that we facilitate via Dawson County High School and the Chamber of Commerce. We have asked them to share with us their definition of leadership, leaders they have observed and admire, opportunities they have been given to step up in a group setting, and reasons they have for wanting to participate in our program. At 15 & 16 years old, many of the students we meet have little to no experience in face-to-face interviews, much less with a panel of four adults. Most of them are at least a little bit nervous, and a few are visibly anxious as they attempt to make a good impression while trying to sound articulate and intelligent in spite of their nerves. I saw more than one person attempting to hide the shaking of their hands as they sat in the "hot seat."

My final question to every candidate is, "What is the best sandwich?", borrowed from a popular talk show quiz on late night TV. It is my attempt to lessen the obvious tension of the interview process and to help these students end the session on a more relaxed note, so they can leave the room feeling a little more upbeat after being subjected to a challenging new experience.

One of the best parts of this whole exercise to which we introduce these kids is watching them when they hear that last question. They almost always visibly relax a little and nearly every one of them smiles, even if they hadn't been smiling much up to that point. The enthusiasm with which everyone describes one of their favorite foods is a joy to witness, especially if the act of trying their best to sound well-informed while looking calm and self-assured has required a tremendous amount of mental energy.

Frequently, this change in demeanor opens up the door to casual conversation with our candidates, and allows us to get to know them in a more personal way, and vice versa.

Early in the second day of interviews, we discovered that the high school grapevine had revealed this particular question as a feature of the appointment, and some of our candidates arrived prepared to share their sandwich preference with even more enthusiasm than those whom I had surprised the previous day. At that point I began mixing it up a little, throwing in a few of the other TV quiz entries, like "favorite smell," "scariest animal," and "favorite action movie," with similar success. To my recollection, at the end of each interview we sent every student on their way with a laugh and a smile, hopefully feeling good about a positive experience while doing a new and difficult thing.

If you are at all like me, there may have been times you have approached your life of faith in a similar fashion as our sophomore applicants. "Do I believe the right things?"

"Can I articulate the essentials of my Christian faith in a way that makes me sound like I have any idea what I'm talking about?"

"If I were required to explain my qualifications for acceptance in the kingdom of heaven, could I make a compelling case for my inclusion?"

"Will my nerves get the better of me if I find myself standing before God's throne of judgment?"

Maybe we can take comfort in the knowledge that in a situation like this, there is a question for us that just might ease the tension and open an opportunity for fellowship and intimacy between us and our Savior:

"Do you love me?"

It is the question Jesus asks of the disciple Peter very specifically. It is what Jesus asks of all his followers in general. And it is the question Jesus is asking you and me on a daily basis. When Jesus asks us, ***"Do you love me?"*** it opens up the conversation for us to understand better who we are, what we believe, and why we do what we do. It helps us to rearrange our priorities and clarify our intentions as people of faith. This question dispels the tension about whether we are smart enough, good enough, or disciplined enough to be the right kind of people, and allows us to relax, smile, and shed our anxiety about the shortcomings or failures in our discipleship efforts.

For those of us who may worry whether we meet the standard or can pass the test for entry into the kingdom, we needn't be concerned. Jesus has already provided for that by his own saving grace. He just wants to ask us one more thing while we're here:

"Do you love me?"



ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Here is the Administrative Team's Quarterly Report:

1. Finalized and presented the 2025 budget to the congregation for approval.
2. Finished the approval and refurbishing of our HWY 53 sign.
3. Began study of replacing our existing stairway to the basement and will present to the session in March.
4. Continued to complete our security protocols by locking all exterior doors soon after services begin and monitor services for any areas of concern.

Peace,
Joe



DISCIPLESHIP TEAM

The Cost of Following

Lately, I've been reading a book titled The Gospel of the Kingdom of God by George Eldon Ladd (1911-1982). Dr. Ladd, a professor of Biblical Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, wrote it in 1959 but to me it was as timely as anything I have ever studied about the Kingdom

of God and what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

Dr. Ladd does not minimize the cost. Discipleship always costs. There is a price to pay. The rich young ruler had to give up everything. God's government demands complete submission. His subjects must put Him first.

He asserts that following Jesus isn't a casual commitment, but a demanding transformation. He argues that Jesus' teachings emphasize a complete loyalty to God's kingdom, one that takes priority over everything else. After all, that's what a kingdom is – we, as subjects, are 100% loyal to the King. This means being willing to put God before family, personal comfort, and material possessions. The phrases "self-denial" and "cross-bearing" represent a real willingness to give up our own desires and endure hardship for the sake of the kingdom. This kind of dedication is essential for God's subjects.

Dr. Ladd also focuses on Jesus' warnings about wealth and possessions. He points out that while not everyone is called to a life of poverty, everyone is called to a life of detachment from material things. Money and possessions can easily become idols, distracting people from their devotion to God. True disciples understand that everything they have belongs to God and should be used to serve Him. This means living with a spirit of generosity and putting the needs of the kingdom before personal gain. We show genuine discipleship through obedience to Jesus' commands about living a life that reflects God's values of love, forgiveness, and service.

This book paints a picture of discipleship as a radical and challenging path. He stresses that being a follower of Jesus requires a complete shift in priorities, a willingness to sacrifice, and a commitment to obedience. By highlighting these demands, Ladd reminds us that entering God's kingdom is not a passive experience, but

an active participation that requires a total surrender to Christ's leadership. It's a journey that demands a deep commitment and a willingness to embrace the cost of following Jesus.

Peace,

Church



GRACE NOTES

Our Lenten journey is approaching its end, and we joyfully anticipate the celebration of our risen Lord at Easter. The choir has been working hard to prepare some wonderful music over the next few weeks that we hope will be joyful and inspirational.

We have been blessed to welcome Jared & Kellie Dixon to the choir loft. They have been a wonderful addition to the chancel choir, and I get to continue my streak of welcoming previous students (Kellie) into the church. I also want to thank Emma Teems for stepping in as assistant director during my absences, she is a blessing to have here.

I know I always say it, but I truly mean it, we are a welcoming group and are always looking for new members to join us. If you have children who are in high school (or will be this fall) and perform in their school choirs, we encourage them to also join us. It would be wonderful to welcome them to our ensemble.

We look forward to celebrating another beautiful Easter service with you on the 20th!

Grace2U, Gene Seese



The first quarter of 2025 has been blessed with well attended Bible Studies and Ladies Luncheons for the Ladies of Grace. Sara Achuff graciously led two studies, "Prodigal God" written by Timothy Keller and the current study is "Life Lessons from Philippians" by Max Lucado.

The January luncheon was a chilly weather menu of soup and salad, with wintery decor provided by Peggy Thornton. In February, Richard Smith prepared and provided a delicious, authentic Italian meal, festively decorated by Joann Keller and Shirley Schmelzinger. Upcoming in March, the ladies will visit Trattoria di Monteluce, arranged by Priscilla Taylor.

All ladies are encouraged and welcome to attend both Bible Study on Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m. and the Ladies Luncheons on the third Tuesday of most months as announced. For more information contact Crystal Seymour in the church office or members, Peggy Thornton or Marsha Loftin.





In Our Prayers: John and Susan Adams (Marsha Loftin), Susan Atkins, Frank Ball, Ruth Ann Ball, the Barnes Family - Carey and his son Baron (Mary Ann Sheehy), Dick Beacham (Husband of Jane), Sarah Ellen Beavers (Marsha Loftin), Bill and Sandy (Dan Scott), Gretchen Blackwell, Carmen, Cathy (Kristi Deutz), Lynda Clark (Marsha Loftin), Lisa Conn, Trey Courtney, Patricia Crain (Ruth Ann Ball), Darren (Chris Yarbrough), Joan and Randy Davis, Mary Delasota (Bob Thornton), Mike Eason (Joey), Jim Hambright, Patrick Hawkins family (Shirley), Clara, Hogan (Shirley), Margaret Hunt (Jim Hambright), Irena (Gretchen Blackwell), Jenna (Reece Neidlinger), Doug Jones (Margie O'Byrne), Julia (Kristi Deutz), Cynthia Kodua, Shelby Lee, Linda (Jaycey), Lindsey (Marsha Loftin), Martha's Family (Dan Scott), Penny McDaniel (Kay), Anna McQuilken (Kristi Deutz), John Murray (Betty Banks), Eric Nelson (Katie), Mrs. Nichols (Lynette), Margie O'Byrne, Betty Powell, Mandy Power, Brenda Reagans (Kristie), Roland Family (Marsha), Kathy Silvio (Marsha Loftin), Nancy Smiley (Ruth Ann Ball), Gran Stiemke and family (son of Jane), Jacob Stone (Nancy McCue), Susan (Ruth Ann Ball), Emma Teems, Thos -Thomas (Mary Ann Sheehy), Viviana Torres, the family of John Trammel (Emma Teems), Theresa Tucker (Chris Seese), Carol Watkins, Bill and Sherry Weeks, Sandra White, Wilma & her husband (Sandy), Anonymous leukemia patient

Assisted Living: Sandy Grimes, Zoe Putnam

USHER /LITURGIST SCHEDULE

Liturgists:

April

4/6 Susan Atkins
4/13 Chris Seese
4/20 Grace Walden
4/27 Joey Homans

Liturgists:

May

5/4 Margie O'Byrne
5/11 Gene Seese
5/18 Peggy Thornton
5/25 Richard Smith

Liturgists:

June

6/1 Nathan Steritz
6/8 Chuck Achuff
6/15 Richard Smith
6/22 Bob Thornton
6/29 Lynette Steritz

Ushers:

April

Margie O'Byrne,
Barbara Quintrell,
Priscilla Taylor
Joey & Kristie Homans,
Jane Miller
Marsha Loftin, Bob &
Peggy Thornton
Mike & Joyce Ball,
Nancy McCue

Ushers:

May

Jerry & Susan Atkins,
Elaine Coker
Bill & Joann Keller,
Barbara Quintrell
Gordon & Jeannette
Brand, Margie O'Byrne
Marsha Loftin, Bob &
Peggy Thornton

Ushers:

June

Elain Coker, Jane Miller,
Priscilla Taylor
Joey & Kristie Homans,
Joann Keller
Mike & Joyce Ball,
Margie O'Byrne
Bill & Joann Keller,
Barbara Quintrell
Jerry & Susan Atkins,
Nancy McCue



April Birthdays

- 11th - Dallas Kelley
- 12th - Nathan Steritz
- 13th - Daniel Miller
- 13th - Dan Scott
- 17th - Gretchen Blackwell

May Birthdays

- 3rd - Bill Weeks
- 9th - Martha Lynn
- 11th - Mickie Schaide
- 14th - Warren King
- 22nd - Sara Achuff
- 24th - John Kinney
- 26th - Barbara Crouse
- 27th - Marty Horne
- 21st - Rachael Lorenz
- 29th - Logan Collins

June Birthdays

- 1st - Gene Seese
- 7th - Mike Ball
- 7th - Karen Permenter
- 10th - Sharra Kelley
- 16th - Mary Ann Sheehy
- 22nd - Ruby Lorenz
- 23rd - Alexander Herrit
- 24th - Sandra White
- 26th - Bill Keller
- 26th - Amanda Herrit



April

18th - Gretchen & Roy
Blackwell

29th - Barbara & Tom
Quintrell

May

22nd - Christy & David Jordan

June

3rd - Joann & Bill Keller

4th - Jeannette & Gordon
Brand

6th - Elaine & Ron Coker

12th - Linda & Andy Clemons

14th - Margie O'Byrne & Jim
Hambright

17th - Sara & Chuck Achuff

30th - Kristie & Joey Homans