



BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

January 2022

Editor Janelle Daum

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“And the Lord said to Gideon ‘With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his own home.’”

Judges 7:7

I have recently been studying the life of Gideon. He is relatable because he sees himself as being just a normal person. He doesn't see anything special about himself. But God does. When the angel of the Lord (an appearance of the preincarnate Christ) appears to Gideon He greets him this way, “The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.”

Gideon shows his ordinary nature when he misses the point of the message and questions this heavenly visitor. The message from the angel of the Lord was, "The Lord is with you." Gideon reinterprets the message in a broader context, "Please, my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all of this happened to us?" The Lord then clarifies the message, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" That wasn't enough for Gideon as he starts to raise objection as to why he could not do this. He is like Moses who is confronted by the Lord and still makes all kinds of excuses as to why he can't do what God was calling him to do. Finally Gideon is reduced to asking for his first sign. In Judges 6:17 he says, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me." He receives the sign and suddenly realizes that he had seen God face-to-face. His response is worship.

That quickly changes when God gives him his first assignment to tear down the altars to the false gods that his father had constructed. Gideon obeyed, but in 6:27 we find that he did it in secret at night because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town. When the men of the town found what Gideon had done they tried to kill him. That's when God causes Joash, Gideon's father to stand up for him and his life was saved.

That was a major growth point in Gideon's life. He changed from an ordinary farm boy who was threshing wheat in secret to a bold leader of men. When the Midianites and the Amalekites came together to attack Israel the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon and he raised a mighty army to confront the oppressors. He still had his doubts before the battle began. He ended up asking twice for the sign of the fleece because he didn't think that the men of Israel had a chance. He was still focused on his own strength. He makes that clear when he says in 6:37, "...then I will know that You will save Israel by my hand..."

He was uncertain about whether God was going to carry through on His part of the battle. God went along with the sign of the fleece and dealt with it.

Gideon still had a lesson to learn. He thought that he was doing this in his own strength. So God stepped in again. He told Gideon that his army of 32,000 men was too large. So he ended up with 22,000 men going home. His army was still too large. So God told Gideon to take the remaining 10,000 men down to the river to watch how they drank the water. The result was that only 300 men were kept for the battle. There was no question that Gideon had to trust in the Lord for this battle.

God sent Gideon alone into the Midianite camp to hear how God had prepared the way for the battle. That gave Gideon the courage to obey. The result was a great rout of the vastly superior force. The hold that the Midianites had over Israel was broken that night.

As we look at a new year it's always a good idea to question ourselves about how big our God is who we serve. We are all just normal people who will face different challenges and events in this coming year. We have to remind ourselves that we don't face them alone. We don't face any challenges or battles in our own strength. Our great and powerful God is the one who goes before us and prepares the way for victory, whatever that might look like.

You will never face anything too big for God. I heard a message a long time ago that made the point that $1 + \text{God} = \text{a majority}$. We don't need signs. We don't need great courage. All we need is the faith to trust God and obey. So, the challenge for this new year is to let it be a year of great victories that God wins through you.

Blessings, Pastor Randy

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR JANUARY AND BEYOND

EVENTS CALENDAR 2022:

Sunday's

9:30 a.m. Worship Service

10:30 a.m. Fellowship

10:45 a.m. Sunday School for the Whole Family

One Room Sunday School for Preschool (age 4) - 8th grade

Wednesday's

6:30 p.m. Awana Clubs

7:45 p.m. Middle & High School Youth Group

Thursday's

3 p.m. Prayer & Women's Bible Study at BVBC

6:30 p.m. Women's Evening Bible Study meets at various homes.
Contact Stacy Frost for location.

Saturday's

8 a.m. Men's Bible Study on Zoom
(1st & 3rd Saturdays of the month)

Saturday, January 1, New Year's Day

Monday, January 17, Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Sunday, January 23, Newsletter Articles are Due

MISSIONARY UPDATES

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



December 1, 2021

GROWTH

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.

He is like a tree planted by water,
that sends out its roots by the stream,
and does not fear when heat comes,
for its leaves remain green,
and is not anxious in the year of drought,
for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Growth is painful and yet beautiful at the same time. When we're in seasons of great growth, we don't usually want to be there, as those seasons cause stretching and stress and pain. But when we get to the other side, we can look back at where we once were and see that the process was worth it. That process of growth builds deep roots that give us a firm foundation on which to stand.

That's why I love these verses in Jeremiah 17. They remind me that these times of growth help me stay grounded in the future seasons of growth and whatever storms may come my way. They give me confidence in the Lord and in His work in my life, so that even in times of drought, I can bear fruit.

These past couple months have been a season of growth (that I believe is not over for me yet). It has been a chance for my faith to be tested... will I trust God to provide, or will I rely on my own wisdom and strength? Will I allow myself to leave my place of comfort and move into a place of deeper growth and change, knowing that it will not only benefit me by deepening my roots in the Lord, but also that it will benefit those around me by providing fruit and shelter for them?

As much as I want to stay comfortable, I know that I will not regret taking the path that leads to growth. And it is such a delight to look back on my life and see how God has grown me and changed me, whether through big events or through the smaller, often unrecognizable times of growth. I've done a lot of reflecting and processing lately on my personality and tendencies, and it is amazing to me to see how far I've come from when I was in college. I have become so much more rooted and grounded in Christ. I've been through many trials and times of growth but also times of sweet rest and fellowship and peace.

I'm excited to share with you in coming months some new ministries God is leading me to—some new ways that I am trusting the Lord and am SO excited to watch Him work in ways that only He can.

May you be rooted in Christ this Christmas season. Without Him, we would have no roots at all. But because He came to this earth and lived as one of us, we can know Him and have a relationship with Him. What an amazing thing!

I pray that you will have a very Merry Christmas! Thank you for walking with me through this journey for another year!

Amanda

Praises

- Things have opened up a lot in the Philippines in the last month! We

are at the lowest new cases since June 2020. Some international schools have started in person already, and we have submitted our plans to do so!

- Praise for all the ways God has been growing me. It's so neat to know He is working, and I'm excited to see what He will continue to do.
- Praise that I've had some great quality time with people in this last month! I love the people God has put in my life.

Prayer Requests

- Pray that our plan for in-person school will be approved so that we can start face-to-face school in January (we will be providing a hybrid model, at least initially). It would be really helpful to know soon so that we can start to make more definitive plans for next semester.
- Pray for wisdom on managing responsibilities next semester. We are working on a schedule for me that will work, but so much is dependent on what the daily schedule will be for next semester. Right now I am doing an extra class, as we were short a high school math teacher, but that will be harder to maintain if we are in person and may not even work with the schedule. I also will be adding 8 students to my English class, which means I'll have 50 students in that class. Pray that God would provide a workable solution.
- Pray for a strong finish to the semester (less than 3 weeks left!) and a great break. I'm planning to spend the holidays with some friends, then go camping on Corregidor Island.

December 9, 2021

Approved!

Twenty months.

That's how long it has been since the Philippines shut down for Covid. That's also how long we have been doing distance learning.

But now that is going to change!

On Monday this week, our Head of School, along with a few other staff members, met with our Local Government Unit (LGU) to get their support and approval in order to go back to face-to-face school. They approved our plan, so the next step was having the Department of Education, the

Inter-Agency Task Force (the group that has been making all the Covid rules and regulations), and the Department of Health came to inspect the school. Before they left, **they gave us verbal approval to start face-to-face school in January!!!!!!** We should be given the official letter next week. Praise the Lord!

We will be starting a hybrid model of school when we return to school on Jan 10 (we finish this semester on Dec 17). We will run full school days, with half of the kids attending in person and the other half calling in on the video call. They will come in two days a week, and Fridays will be all online.

We are SO excited to finally get to teach our students again in person. However, this is going to be a rough transition for everyone. Some of our students haven't been around others for nearly two years. Staff have never had to manage teaching online and in person simultaneously, while also figuring out Covid protocols. Some of the students have never even been to school and will need to learn how to get around. Despite our excitement, there are still many details to work out.

Please be praying with us as we prepare for and make this transition. Thank you to everyone who has been praying with us towards this end. Continue to pray for the rest of the Philippines, too. We are only able to go to school because the government decided to consider international schools separately from the rest of the schools in the Philippines. There are still millions of children here not in school. Pray that the rest of the Philippines will also be able to start in person school soon, too.

Thank you!
Amanda

December 15, 2021

PowerUp! Prayer Update

Praises

- We have two more days of school until Christmas break!!!!!!!
- I got a package this week! That was a fun blessing! :)
- We have had more students on campus this week. It's been so great to

see kids around, to help them with work, and to get to hand out candy!!!

- We have worked out some things for next semester so that I won't be at 120% as we go into hybrid teaching (I added high school Algebra this year, since we are short high school math teachers). Another staff member who used to teach middle school math is going to take my Pre-Algebra 7 class, and I'll continue teaching Algebra. I didn't know this would be a possibility, so I love how God provides answers in ways that we don't expect.

Prayer Requests

- I have a lot to do in order to be done with grades for this semester. It's been a very busy week with all the Christmas parties and other activities. Pray I can get work done before grades are due. Thankfully I have until Monday and Tuesday to get the work done...I just had hoped to be done by Friday. :)

- Pray for the stress level of staff and students as we start to think about being hybrid. We have a plan in place, but no one really knows what it's going to look like, and it seems quite stressful to figure out. There will be a big adjustment for everyone for being back together all day again!

- Pray that this upcoming break would be restful and refreshing. I will be spending the time around Christmas with some of the other single ladies in my Bible study. We will be able to get away to camp for about four days between Christmas and New Year's as well. I'm excited for the time with them, a chance to get away, and then time in January to prep for this upcoming semester.

Ongoing Prayer Requests

- That God will revive the hearts of the staff and students this year, that we would passionately follow after Him.

- That God will give us wisdom as we continue to navigate the Covid situation, and that we would be able to meet in person at some point this year.

- That God will lead me to opportunities to disciple students this year.

HARLAN MOSS - PRISON LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY



December 2021

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” II Corinthians 9:15

Since we just had Thanksgiving, we know Christmas is around the corner. Businesses spend millions of dollars on advertising things that they want us to believe that we can't do without! It is sad that Christmas is so much about external things! Christ still is and always will be the center of Christmas. Without Christ there is no reason to celebrate!

Last month I sent out information on how to help financially with the Christmas sacks for the inmates. I know some of you responded generously and we received more than expected! Thank you to those who gave! It is a reminder to the men that they are not forgotten!

Nate, who is one of the men I have been visiting with weekly, told me, “I believe a good shift is taking place in my walk with the Lord! Recently another inmate told me that I did it wrong when I put something in the laundry cart. In the past I would have told him, ‘You can't talk to me like that’, but instead I went back and did what he said. In prison you don't back down to another inmate because it shows weakness. In the past I would have gotten in a fight because I couldn't let another inmate talk to me like

that, but this time the Spirit of God took over!" A few days ago, I visited with Nate again and he said, "I am excited about the Bible verse God gave me yesterday! It was from I Thess. 4:13 which says, 'You may not grieve as others do who have no hope!' My brother died a year ago and I was letting anger control my life."

Nate said, "Now I realize that we Christians don't grieve as others who have no hope. I recognize that I was grieving through my anger. I got so excited about what the Lord had shown me through the I Thess. passage. Other inmates didn't understand my excitement. They said to me, 'your drunk'." PTL that the truth will set us free when applied to our lives!

I have known Bill for seven years because he was doing quite a long prison sentence. He was released on parole several months ago. Bill came back because he didn't stay away from some of his old friends, and he fell back into drugs. He is only back for a short time. Bill seemed very serious about God when he came back. We prayed together and he asked the Lord to forgive him for the anger he was carrying. A short time later he transferred to the Hill, so I didn't see him for a couple of months. When I was visiting one of the men on the Hill, he talked about his concern for Bill's spiritual life. Bill admitted he quit reading the Bible and going to church. After talking about some of the issues that were pulling him away from Christ, I asked him what he wanted to do. Bill said, "I need to repent and confess my sins to the Lord." In his prayer Bill said, "God I am so sorry for my sins and turning my back on You! I want to follow You and live for You." Then he started to weep as he said, "God, I miss You so much and I am so lonely without You! I need You and want to stay close to You!" His prayer touched my heart!

Last week at the prison church service six men were baptized! We heard some great testimonies about what God is doing in their lives! God is at work at the prison!

Thank you for all your generous support this past year by your prayers and financially! Please consider this ministry for your year-end giving. Have a blessed Christmas and New Year!

In Christ, Harlan

PAUL & JANET HARKNESS - AWANA



December 14, 2021

Greetings at this Christmas time. We pray you are experiencing a joyous and happy season.

Ours has been joyous; how else could it be when you know Christ? But it hasn't been all that happy. We received word that my sister, Twilla, passed away yesterday morning. It was not a big surprise as she was battling a wicked brain disease. But the finality of it makes it tough. She is the oldest in our family of six kids (I am the youngest). I am happy to report that she is with the Lord, having trusted Christ as Savior.

She is also now reunited with her husband, Kent. He went home only ten days before on December 3rd. So we have had one family reunion in December. I am waiting to learn what day will be the next one.

For all of us though, life is 100% fatal. We must be ready for that day when we step into eternity. We won't cease to exist on that day. We will step into either eternal life or eternal death. That choice is up to us. The baby in the manger we celebrate now grew up to open the way to eternal life. Each of us has the choice of whether we will trust in His finished work on the cross to receive eternal life. What do you choose?

I am using up the last of my vacation days for 2021 now, then going right into the Awana Christmas break. I will see you in 2022.

Have a blessed Christmas!

Paul

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Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: SEND International
PO BOX 513, Farmington, MI 48332, Missionary #169352

Paul & Janet Harkness:

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To partner with us by your donations:

Go to <https://www.awana.org/missionary/harkness/>

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How To Give to North American Baptist Missionaries:

Step 1: Go to the NAB's new missions webpage nabonmission.org.

Step 2: Click on the "missionaries" label.

Step 3: Click on the national missionary to whom you would like to designate your support.

Step 4: Click on the "give to.." button on the national workers page.

Step 5: Fill out the form. All gifts given through the NAB are tax deductible.

**BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
PRESENTING A CHANGELESS CHRIST FOR A CHANGING WORLD**