

Why 8 Years with Faith in Future Grace?

Part 2 of Behold Our God Intro & Adult SS Purpose Talk Pt. 1 Now Retaught 8/31/25

September 21-October 26, 2025

back to my life; what was I doing from 1997-2012? Largely working with the youth, music, little bit of teaching adults like mentioned, (what was youth group? What had been passed on to me--Devotional, games, trips—but started thinking, where heading, what goal as youth groups starting to be attacked, youth pastors getting thrown out; heard if aim at nothing, hit it everytime, so knew needed specific goals for youth group—started teaching 3 main goals in opening meetings of youth group 2002—win souls, disciple—be one, then make one, teach roles; (youth group is microcosm of church as whole—came from starting w youth group—no one questioned what went on there—bothered me at Pine Grove that never asked what would teach, just wanted kids there, involved, safe according to whatever they thought safe/important—started teaching goals to advisors so they not just “keeping kids safe, making brownies, and running games/events”, then realized that took forever for them to get them/ repeat them, but what about DRIVE THEM—I Cor. 5 love of Christ constrains—that verse has haunted since I’ve heard that it means propel like missile, submarine); desiring the youth to get established in faith, hearing trainwrecks in youth groups led to summer of 2005, started trips w books “Don’t Waste Your Life”); noticed change in youth, but hard for youth to be stable when adults not on same page; this came to head w massive blow-up in 2006--(remember, New Hampshire solid, New Jersey rough but familiar, Pine Grove rough and unfamiliar only 2 years and growing youth ministry but hard to keep momentum w/o main church on board, Cornerstone rough b/c pioneering) thought had foundation to work with—coming out of that blow-up, January 2007, started extensive class for men as piddly attempt to get at root (Uncle Bill had told me to watch 80’s movie Stand and Deliver—impacted me on how to work w impossible—raise bar to impossible, then encourage true movement—also as went to pastor at Millersville Bible Church—showed discipleship material he had developed through some of these same issues and talked about culture where awkward silence if some of the drama we spoke of happened there b/c church unified on some of these definitions/purposes); did class again in 2010

Purpose:

1. Cultivate the Heart of a Disciple (Matt. 16:24, 28:19-20, II Tim. 2:2)
2. Increase our biblical understanding of God (Jer. 9:23-24, Phil. 3:10, I Tim. 4:16, Jn. 17:3)
3. Increase our understanding of the current Christian climate (I Chron. 12:32, Dan. 11:32, Lk. 12:56)
4. Grow together as men of Cornerstone Bible Church (Heb. 10:24, I Thess. 4:9, I Pet. 1:22, Heb. 3:13)

Meeting: 8:30 am – 12:00 pm the second Saturday of every month following Men’s Fellowship beginning **January 13, 2007**. The class will meet for ten months (no meeting July & August), with the last meeting on Friday night, December 7.

Cost: \$60 for textbooks

Requirements to Complete the Class:

1. **90% Attendance** (1 absence allowed from each of the four sections=1 total session)

2. **100% Textbook Reading & Worksheets**

Note: Only those who have read the section may speak during the discussion. Hand in worksheets one week prior to class which will list your 5 top statements from each reading and list any questions you would raise for discussion.

3. **100% Outside Reading & 5 Book Analysis Papers**

Requirements for Book Analysis’ are as follows:

1. 2 Pages (4 page Maximum). Double-spaced. One-inch margins. 12 Point.
2. No more than one paragraph summary. The rest of the paper consists of interaction with ideas from the book.
3. End with your personal opinion of the book.

About same time in 2007, realizing that youth needed more and more foundation—but would be almost impossible to get there without also working on the adult level (heading towards 40, fat, bald and no easy job—more and more counseling, deeper and deeper, people hungry, but no structure w other members to hold when things blew) , goals for advisors became goals for youth as recognized that advisors came from youth—they had different agendas for being at youth group than parents, then me/other leaders—needed to be on same page—so fall of 2007, taught goals for first time, then in 2012, then in 2020—longer each time as recognize how little foundation for these);

Thoughts? So back to December 2, 2012 – this is 6 years after MASSIVE blow-up here and well into no easy path—LONG RANGE goals that head towards w youth, plan to help MEN get on board—helpful, but realized a long way home; Started w just finishing a book and needing another—SO, when book father gave as suggestion—no problem w it, but when heard application points of another book—it had foundation for the applications given, VERY concerned becoming issues based w/o any expectation for change—don't think formulated it as much as I have now through the years—but thought, what happens if focus on character/deep-rooted issues and don't get to roots where those issues lie? Just dealing w surface parts and like warts, come back; even more importantly, those roots not deal with vertical dimension (relationship with God instead of just obedience/right/good), then we will not be changing “by faith in future grace” – WE still center helping ourselves and thinking we are following God; let me say another way; We need not just what interests us, we need what God says is central—(verses about Christ being all, determined to preach Christ (not just say “Christ,” but redemption history) so that in all things, God may be glorified—preaching God as central HAD to have direct ramifications on worry, anger, etc. or we only have moralism and behaviorism – willing to skip God as long as we got quick conclusions about “God's way” to handle worry, anger, depression, etc.; the study of God (theology proper) and gospel led to fascinating or annoying debates, but irrelevant to life – which meant that the issues we struggle with were NOT rooted in concern about how misrepresenting God—just concerned about what we were concerned about EVEN when came to issues (never forget someone “cleaning out” and handed me back forgiveness book—said, here, don't need this anymore—not helpful)--So we did the book – heavy wading—didn't expect debtors ethic and other issues that came up—problem was—I didn't quite understand reasoning and I was teaching—I had to wrestle w it—immerse myself in it—but then, what happens when I get my head around it and then you don't? as wrestled, then tried to help you get around the issues, recognized that pandora's box as each had different learning style, backgrounds, understanding, can hear Mark Devers saying SLOW, and then SLOWER still – but as worked w Future Grace let alone faster look through other books—started recognizing SLOW was a problem – people didn't want to learn something different—had already made up mind--discouraged when seemed that few read—weight on teacher to make it come alive w/o any work put in; as those issues came up, had options (summarize and move on, try to find those hungry, paying attention and help them get it and hope it spreads as can't please everyone and some not as invested—but that created questions? Why? parable of the soils, but also, what is the place of SS? Who said we need to finish a chapter a week or 2-3? What happens if only 2 people get what is going on? slowly started realizing that no matter how many long-range plans, too many other variables w/o structure to hold together—goals not likely to ever happen EVEN if were God's goals; too much against—can hear someone I trusted in 2006 who had been so excited about change in youth—I brought that to his attention as he walked away and he said, where are they now—I recognized as never before that it would be massive hurdle to get youth past adults who kept blowing up because of independence; All this led to, if we as a church can't work to get at least a little out of the theological and practical issues discussed in Future Grace, then not healthy foundation EVER (I could study it 10 times and get something more out of it without understanding or agreeing with all of it) Thoughts? Let me summarize:

1. Sunday School needs a clarified purpose that contributes to the common goals of a healthy church.

Dangerous to have SS without specific expectations/goals. Concerned that SS ancillary to growth and life under Christ--nothing expected because nothing asked--just another Bible study, book study--NOT life change. Therefore, w/o purpose leads either to apathy and death of SS (corporate growing together in this fashion) OR fosters individualism as instead of us having common goals together, we would have own agendas that want to fulfill (people

can teach, be in classes that “fit” with everyone’s individual goals) leads to more and more focus ELSEWHERE, then wanting church to focus elsewhere as well

2. Gospel change must have Gospel roots, not just behavioral or moralistic change.

Concerned that if not expecting life change from SS, then only value would be in teaching topics that value—Concerned that have different expectations, understandings based on gospel given you AND culture, personality, and experience, so feel very strongly that “felt needs” are true needs—because of this, pastors/shepherds/those teaching constantly feel the pressure to “reach people where they are” but struggle when can’t get to what believe they need; Teaching felt needs/issues needs a clear tie to theology leading to worship. (even Bible study topics, let alone marriage, Christian living, church and government, money, marriage, God’s will for life, depression, anxiety, etc.) Dangerous to talk about felt needs/sins/issues without theology tie--focus on them and “godly solutions” rather than learn about God--worship, then follow through issues based on His character and purposes; Bible exists more to give us what we want/think we need--miss gospel which brings us back to God--Ps. 119--O how I LOVE thy law, meditation day and night--II Cor. 11:4 simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ--Heb. 4--boldly to throne of grace b/c recognize that CAN'T obey Christ w/o Christ—THIS is why felt uncomfortable NOT dealing with roots behind topics that interested us in Future Grace—never get to God, just “answers that helped”

3. The vision of the elders must be shepherded, then reproduced, not just taught or the elders will wear out or adapt their vision.

Concerned that pastors forced to submit to felt needs and not to what trained and called to do--shepherd souls to yield to Spirit according to word, living in dependence on God by following Christ TOGETHER w other believers so can be built into God's intent for us together Eph. 4:15-16, I Pet. 2; we SAY want this, but assume this and focus on elders/pastors/teachers who teach how we want, what we want—style, personality, goals; means that Elders not carrying vision—Dangerous to have Elder’s vision left to one on one Concerned for main services not being valued because don't see them as foundation for life, growth, obedience Like riding a tandem bike—leaders and body must both pedal; say Elders lead, but if don’t like it (if focus either something don’t agree with OR think already know OR not real problem), if not careful, stop pedaling instead of seeing where CAN pedal and then humbly working through it; say, can’t disagree—yes, but must lighten load WHILE disagree—(which part of vision/goals can you trace to Head of Church and LIGHTEN THIS PART of elders load—how can you do more than just “coming”/Listening, but not doing work to take it apart and work towards pieces that seem in line w Head of Church? —when feel communication breakdown—why make elders do all work to find what you mean/assume—how do we honor Christ as Head of Church and figure out what THEY mean, assume) would take willingness to learn/study what don't think need to learn/understand; need time to work through definitions; must be willing to learn to consider what not seeing by acknowledging that some of what not seeing might be valuable; learn to have awkward as have pieces that don't know how fit--then see that can't get there from here and everything messed up--must learn how to live in between, perhaps THIS would be life of faith that few have lived as want it to make sense NOW— If Elders drowning doing all these things that no one values PLUS doing what everyone values, they won’t make it—definitely not Heb. 13:17 making it a joy for them or helping them fulfill their calling; what does it mean to have Christ as head, serve NOT as we desire and proof text, but learning of Him and serving from that growing knowledge under pastors and teachers who don’t replace Christ, but are under Him to take people where they aren’t always focused; Thoughts?