

AUGUST 2020

GRACE MONTHLY

"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you, will perfect it until the day of Christ."

Philippians 1:6



God is Not Absent

by Isabel Bae

Lately, each day seemed to be a repetition of the day before as I lost count of the days. I would wake up thinking it was Tuesday, only to realize halfway through the day, that it was Friday. As I lost track of time and fell into the infamous, repetitive cycle of quarantine, I also found myself heading to a plateau in my faith.

It felt as if there was nothing new in each day. Of course, in my head, I knew that God was working, despite how I felt. Whether or not I could see it, God was doing something. I knew. However, I realized as I was writing this that I was subconsciously telling myself that God was working in the world - that He had a plan in mind amidst the pandemic and all the global issues at hand - but had not acknowledged that He was working in my life.

It was a weird realization. While I have been conscious about how God has been working in the world, its people, and everyone else, I had forgotten that He works also in my life. Consequently, I did not find myself noticing much of what He did, what He blessed me with and what I had taken for granted. Throughout quarantine, God had actually been taking care of my family so well. Both my parents run their own separate businesses and although COVID-19 had its negative impacts, we were doing better than the usual. In both businesses, there were unexpectedly so many ups despite the downs, but I had only focused on the downs, failing to see God's blessings in that situation and that God was, in fact, actively working in my life and watching over my family.

As Philippians 1:6 says, God, who started a good work in us, will perfect it until the day of Christ. No matter what season our faiths may be in, I hope that we would take joy in this truth, that in situations where God may seem very absent, He is even more present and working amazing things in our lives, perfecting His work until the end.

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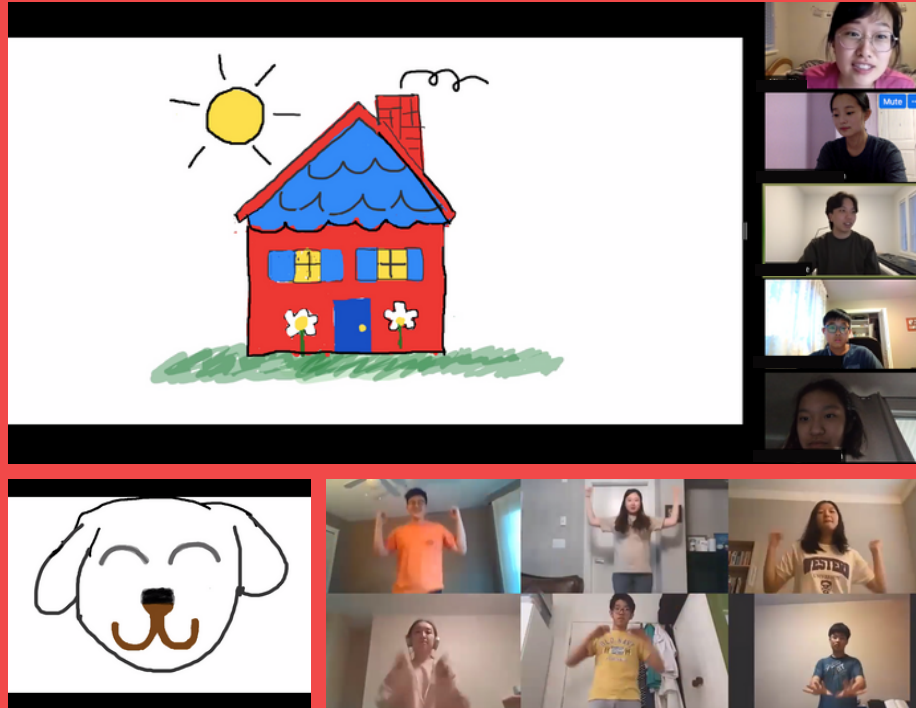
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JULY HIGHLIGHTS

ZOOMLYMPICS

On Friday, July 10th GEM Youth held their Zoomlympics. It started off with a fun ice-breaker testing their knowledge of the Olympics. Everyone then moved on to the Synchronized Dance event, where students were broken off into teams and recorded a 30-second clip of new dance moves to one of 3 VBS songs. Finally, the teams played Picture Puzzle relay where each person from the group would get a portion of a picture and the group would then try their best to draw the full picture together. At the end of the meeting, they watched their Synchronized Dance videos and ended Zoomlympics 2020.



ONLINE CHAPEL: "HEART OF GOD"

On Wednesday, July 22nd, Grace Youth and ABLE had their second online chapel. The night began with a video showing photos from previous mission trips to Lummi, Duncan and the Northern Villages leading to a time of praise and worship. Pastor Phil gave a short sermon from Jonah 1:1-17; how Jonah gives up on the mission he was called to, but God continues to work in His ways. He also gave a question to pray upon; "Are you spiritually numb about God like Jonah?" Pastor Kevin also reminded us that missions is truly understanding the heart of God. There was a time of reflection about our own excuses we have for our spiritual numbness, which led to reflecting on the second chance that we are given from God, just as He had given to Jonah. The night concluded with a time of prayer for the First Nations communities and the missionary families that God had placed on our hearts to remember.



Isaiah 58: 6-8 "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard."



Praise & Prayer

- The Children Ministries had their virtual VBS and HT camp last month, which included a series of fun activities for the children to do at home. **Praise** God for providing our church the opportunity to put these events forward during this difficult season, helping children to learn about the Gospel in their homes. **Praise** God for allowing leaders, pastors, and parents to become His hands and feet in the process of planning and executing these events, so that the children will come to know Jesus more and more.



- This past week, we have been blessed with bright, sunny, and warm days to spend outside and enjoy the sun. **Praise** God for the beautiful weather! It is a great blessing that we are able to take this opportunity to spend time with friends, families, or even by ourselves outside to see His wonderful creation whether we are walking in parks, swimming in lakes, hiking over the mountains, or picking blueberries in the farms!

- **Praise** God for all of the leaders who have been devoted to Grace Youth this year! It is God's blessing to have older brothers and sisters to guide the youth students in their lifelong faith journey. As the recruitment for leaders for the next year begins, **pray** that God will raise up servant-hearted leaders to serve in Grace Youth and the other Education ministries, and that He will continue to do His work through them to bless and grow the next generation.

- This summer, Grace Youth ministries were unable to go on Native missions trips to both Lummi and Duncan. Please **pray** that, even if they weren't physically able to meet with the First Nations brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit in each of their hearts would continue to speak words of truth and hope, and that God's will may be done in whatever circumstance that they may be going through in this season.



- Grace Youth and ABLE are having their 2020 Summer Retreat online, from August 10-12th. Please **pray** that this will be a special time for all of the participants, and that they will encounter God in an intimate way as they seek Him in prayer and solitude.

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- It has been half a year since the outbreak of COVID-19, and people all around the world have been experiencing many sudden changes in their lives. Let us **pray** that, as followers of Christ, we will not stay blinded by the uncertainties and worries of the future that seems so blurry, but rather focus on what is certain and true - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8 ESV), Amen!
- As the grade 12 students prepare their new path into post secondary, **pray** that their numerous decisions will be made only through God's wisdom. Also, **pray** that even after they leave Grace Youth, they will be rooted deeply in their faith and will continue to spiritually grow in Christ.



"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

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR AUGUST

Mon-Wed, Aug 10-12 Youth & ABLE Summer Retreat
Sunday, Aug 30th Graduation Sunday

Various meetups are also happening online at different times throughout the month.

Make sure to keep up with our latest updates with your small group leader, on our website, Instagram, or Facebook!

CHRIST-CENTERED HOPE

A Different Kind of Response to the World's Suffering and Injustices

Written by Hannah Byun

Oftentimes, we can feel hopeless when we experience negativity around us, and become afraid of what will happen in the future. In response to the global pandemic and the inequalities present in our world right now, anger can take root in our hearts, and our faith can be challenged. As believers in Christ, we question, how should we respond to these circumstances? What does God want us to do during these difficult times? We must not let hopelessness take control of us, but be rooted in the hope of Christ, firmly grounded in the truth and promises that God speaks to us through Scripture.

First, we find hope in the God of grace who has promised to all of us that **in Christ, we will be restored and strengthened** (1 Peter 5:10). No matter how terrible racism is in society, and no matter how undefeatable the virus seems, we can find hope in God's promise to restore us and strengthen us, for He is greater than all of the injustices in the world and all of our sufferings. Therefore, let us not be weary from the negativity we face, but let us remind ourselves of this promise, that **God will one day restore all things.**

Second, we must continue to **actively seek the Father for help.** There are times when our anger and frustrations may take control of us when we witness our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ suffering, or when we find ourselves in a hardship. Instead of being weighed down by our circumstances, we can take it to God. Our God is a God who cares for each and every one of us; we can "cast all of our anxiety on Him because He cares for us" (1 Peter 5:7). We must also not try to fight through it alone, but seek the Lord for He has said: "in me you may have peace" (John 16:33). Although it is not possible to be rid of all our worries and frustrations, **God promises that He will provide peace for our troubled hearts.**

Lastly, rather than being discouraged by the ongoing social distancing life, we must **be an encouragement to one another.** It is true that the future is uncertain, however, God knows the future and He has the ultimate power to continue to build His Kingdom. Nothing can thwart God from fulfilling His good, pleasing and perfect will. He has "plans to

prosper us and not to harm us, and plans to give us hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11). No matter what many of us are going through today – from losing loved ones, to fighting against inequality and a global pandemic – **we can still have hope because of this truth: that God is making all things new in Jesus Christ.** There are many who do not know of this truth and are feeling hopeless. As Christians who know there is hope in Christ, **we must not only believe in it, but share it,** and reach out to those who are seeking for everlasting hope, peace, joy and love.

We do not know how the future will unravel; if the pandemic will ever come to an end, when our lives can finally go back to normal, but **there is certainty in God's promises, and we can find hope in His Word** to fight through the negativity that presently surrounds us. As Christ-followers, let us continue to believe and share the hope we have in Jesus Christ who promises to restore and strengthen us, provide us peace, and who gives us a hopeful future to look forward to. ■