

# MINISTRY UPDATES

Greater Grace Newsletter from Mike Thompson

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## Mike's InFaith Mission Focus

Here is a brief overview of my ministry focus with InFaith.

1. **Planting and strengthening residential recovery ministries** and rescue missions through developing, and coaching leaders and providing structure and gospel centered recovery related curriculum.
2. **Strengthening churches and non-profit ministries** by equipping leaders & teams to align their ministry with their God-given

## Front Lines Updates

### GOSPEL CENTERED RECOVERY HOUSES

If you know of a church or group of people that are wanting to start a residential recovery center I'd love to help advise them as a blessing. I have had the privilege of helping several recovery centers, ministries and churches from the ground up. Most groups begin with a big mission but not much money, experience or the right tools. I have had the privilege to incorporate, write bylaws, mission and vision statements, organize boards and teams and work out the planning process for starting new ministries and gospel centered recovery houses for men and women. It is amazing to see how God can take a simple but powerful vision and turn it into something tangible that helps transform people from addicts to overcomers. I do this as a missionary because smaller communities and smaller ministries do not have the budget to hire a consultant, lawyers and accountants to get the process started. And I do this work because addiction is an overwhelming problem that can be solved by the gospel of Jesus and an investment in those who need help. Addiction is a major factor in homelessness, and most crime is drug related. We have an opportunity to make an impact and glorify God through this important ministry of gospel centered recovery ministries. If you are led to invest in this ministry you are investing in souls who need Jesus, strong mentoring and whole life transformation. Thank you for all who have joined this important cause.

### New Project

I have just completed a research project for a recovery ministry that demonstrates the need for more recovery ministries. The findings are that recidivism of crime and addiction are high. Addicts involved in gospel centered recovery ministries have 25 to 30 percent higher rates of success than those who do not engage in faith based approaches to overcome addiction. This research has been helpful and shows how important it is to invest in gospel centered recovery ministry. Soon we will take this research and turn it into a business plan for a newly started residential recovery ministry with which I am involved.

### CHURCH STUFF

I continue to serve as interim pastor of Fish Lake Chapel, which is an InFaith associated church. As an InFaith missionary I am serving this church beginning with a one year commitment as Interim Pastor. During this time we plan on introducing a church assessment and working on vision, mission, values and forming a plan to assure Fish Lake Chapel has a thriving gospel centered future for decades to come. I have written the assessment tool and we will engage the congregation at our next congregational meeting. As a missionary I am able to bless this congregation with high quality tools and training due to your support. Thank you for making this possible!

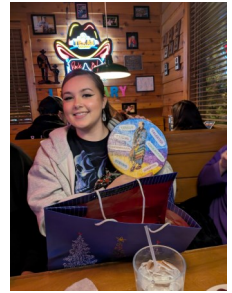
### PERSONAL UPDATES

Dawn and I just got through a busy holiday season with lots of travel and visits with families. We are also making connections with many people. Dawn is such a blessing to her family and this community. I'm a lucky / blessed dude! Dawn is working overnight at a wonderful healthcare facility 20 miles away. Much better than her traveling nurse job that saw her traveling away from home many days each week.

WORKSHOP To see wood products we make and sell to support our mission work check out our Facebook site: *"Mike and Dawns Wood Products"*

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61560611692441>

## UPDATES IN PICTURES



## Praise Reports Prayer Requests

PRAISES	PRAYERS
We sold several workshop items that help partially fund our mission work	Increased financial support is needed to fully fund my position
Dawn's women's study is thriving and well attended	Many will come to faith in Jesus Christ
People are coming to faith in Jesus and others are growing in their faith.	We pray for conversions and growth at Fish Lake Chapel
Growing ministry opportunities to serve churches and recovery houses	Ministries that are asking for help to become even more effective

## Contact & Other Information

MINISTRY PAGE: <https://infaith.org/ministries/michael-thompson>  
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Note: Ministry page (QR Code and/or web site link above) has a ministry overview and a link/button for donations

**InFaith Home Office:** (send checks via U.S. mail)  
 145 John Robert Thomas Drive, Exton, PA 19341 / 610-527-4439  
<https://infaith.org/>

# Bonus Devotional Thought

**Romans 3:9-11** <sup>9</sup> What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. <sup>10</sup> As it is written:

**“There is no one righteous, not even one;  
<sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands;  
there is no one who seeks God.**

As a young man new to the faith I found it surprising that anyone would turn down the gospel if it was communicated well to the unbelieving person. On one occasion I remember presenting a very compelling case of why Christianity was true and all other religions fell short. No founder of a major religion except Christ had laid down their lives for their followers. No other religion had an acceptable sacrifice for sin. All other faiths give lists of rules that none keep perfectly.

Jesus calls people to confess their sins and humble themselves trusting his sacrifice will cover their sin resulting in a new and powerful walk with Jesus. All others call people to straighten up and do things according to a new pattern, but in their own power by their own human will. Why wouldn't people choose Christ? He has done what no other had done. He paid for sin to give us a brand new start.

But that is where my naivety blinded me to the reality that people generally want to save themselves and do not want to trust someone else to save them. They want the credit for saving themselves. They do not want to be told the truth, that we will never get past our independence, self-sufficiency, and pride to admit we can not straighten up. We believe we are worthy to save ourselves.

Here are some truths that I absorbed from a study of Romans which makes sense of why many do not, or can not choose Christ without an heavenly intervention. And it revealed why there is much resistance to admitting we can not save ourselves.

A person is not morally sick, he is morally dead. Morally dead people can not see, hear or absorb the truth about their eternal condition. Dead people do not see, think, hear or contemplate anything. And that is what our text tells us. Jews and Gentiles alike are “**under the power of sin**” and are dead in their trespasses.

Jonathan Edwards proposed: “*The will is not bound but will never choose God, like a lion will never choose oats over meat.*”

In other words, we have a will and have choices but we will never (apart from God's gift of faith) choose Christ. We will choose ourselves and the allurements of the world. There are three views of humanity, two of which differ from what I (and Edwards) propose.

## 3 Views – Well...sick...dead

1. People are Well: We will eventually evolve and solve our problems.
2. People are morally Sick: The solution is to take 'spiritual medicine' and fix ourselves up a bit. Focus and work at it.
3. People are morally Dead: We are spiritual corpses and act accordingly. We need a resurrection.

The Problem: The problem with assuming we are well or just a bit sick is we equate our righteousness with God's righteousness. We assume we are righteous enough to straighten up. But that is like trying to do business with monopoly money: **Rom 10:3** suggests relying on human righteousness is buying God's favor with the wrong currency. Here is the truth about our self righteousness as I read the text.

- A. God pursued us. We can't and won't seek God on our own.
- B. God gives us understanding that we do not have apart from His.
- C. God gives those who are saved a foreign / alien righteousness that we can not come up with on our own. It is HIS righteousness that is gifted to us so that we are no longer dead but can see, hear and contemplate the truth of faith in Christ.

**BONDAGE OF THE WILL 3:11 “none seek God”**

**Eph 2:1** We were dead in our trespasses

**Jn 6:44, 6:55** No one can come to God without help

## Pelagius vs Augustine

There was a famous debate of ideas between Pelagius and Augustine born only a few centuries after Christ.

Pelagius Stated: The will is neutral, and sin is only chosen. People can live free of sin if they want to. A person's will saves them.

Augustine Stated: We are not able to not sin and are saved by grace alone

Luther Proposed: the Bondage of the will. We can't even call for mercy unless God convicts us and calls us

Edwards: (defines the will) the will chooses what the mind values the most. Our mind will always de-value and reject God unless God helps us.

## **What Difference Does This Make?**

You might be wondering, “why is Mike spending so much time on this subject?” Here is where the rubber meets the road. When I was younger I used to plead with and beg people to come to faith in Christ. Often I would argue with people at length and even pressure them to come to faith. After all, their soul and eternity was at stake.

Now, I take a more relaxed approach. I am not relaxed about the state of people's souls. I pray urgently and share each time there is an opening. But I realize that unless God gives people the faith to believe, there will be no positive response. If someone comes to faith in Christ it will be the “**Father who draws them.**” (John 6:44) I can take no credit for anyone who places their faith in Christ. I was just there to help people make sense of what God was doing in their hearts.

The result is that sharing my faith is less forced and manipulative. People who are contemplating and exploring faith in Christ find it easy to speak to me without feeling like I will take over their process. And as a result I have seen many people come to faith in Christ and stay with Christ.

Missions work is about sharing the gospel, but I have found that I can serve and love my mission field in a less anxious manner giving love and service with no strings. If people come to faith as God uses my witness I realize it is to God's credit and glory and not my own. And this (against all intuition) has made 'my' ministry more effect and joyful. My aim is to see where God is already at work and join Him there.

Blessings and love in Christ

Mike Thompson