

Words from the Woodwards

May 2023

"[May we] comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:18,19).

C. A. Coates observed: "There are three steps in appreciation of God's love for us. *First*, I learn that He loves me so much that He saved me. He is our treasure 'My Beloved is mine' (Song 6:3). The *second* step of affection is the consciousness that He loves me so much that He has a right to me. He would have me for Himself. 'I am my Beloved's' (Song 6:3). The *third* step is the consciousness that He loves me so much that He wants my company 'His desire is toward me' (Song 7:10). Love's delight is found in the company of its object. May we know in a deeper way, and in a fuller measure, the sweetness of personal intimacy with 'the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me' (Gal. 2:20)." Amen!

This month Luther Rice College and Seminary will graduate another class of students. The years have flown by since I crossed that stage (for the D. Min.) in 2014. As you recall, we have the privilege of helping some of these students complete their degree practicum. GFI alumni Donna Kruse receives her bachelor's degree and Rob Semco receives his master's. This semester we had four Luther Rice students in the GFI track of their practicum.

Our GFI associate in South Africa, Nehlsie deBruto, has reactivated her ministry. She has taken to mourn the home-going of her beloved husband and co-laborer, Hendrik. Nehlsie published an article in Afrikaans in a Christian magazine there. We posted an English translation at ELCmatters.org titled "Every Christian Should Be Able to Counsel." Now the magazine has requested to publish an article that I have written on overcoming depression. Nehlsie's new web site is Curarecc.org

May is considered "Mental Health Awareness Month." There is such a chronic need to go beyond the symptoms and statistics to fruitful, Christ-centered counseling. We still receive a steady stream of men and women contacting GFI who are in need of deliverance from crippling mental and emotional problems. Yesterday I had initial sessions with two who called from Georgia. Today a sister from Illinois (who is visiting Pigeon Forge) dropped by to say hello. She testified how life-changing it has been for her to learn and appropriate the fuller message of the Cross.

In the photo, Linda and I are reunited with friends who came to GFI for personal discipleship 16 years ago. We give thanks for their testimony and fellowship in *the rest of the Gospel*.

And thank you, friend, for your faithful support. May the joy of the Lord continue to be your strength.

Yours in Christ,

John



Thank you for everything Dr. John. I really enjoy reading all of the inspirational materials that you have been sending out to me. I am honored that you continue to reach out to me. I feel like a family member of Grace Fellowship International. Hopefully I will be able to come back there and visit with you all. Thank you for your encouragement; I shall always have a special place in my heart for the time I spent there with you all. May the grace of God continue to smile on you all! I would like share this good news with you: on May 19, 2023 I am graduating with my Master's in Biblical Counseling. Thank you once again. Blessings unto you and your immediate family.

W. - Georgia

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