

Studies in Grace

Studies in Grace exists to herald the loving sovereignty of God over all creation through the presentation of Biblically based educational courses, conferences and seminars. Studies in Grace seeks to help people see and respond faithfully to the scope, breadth, depth and power of God's saving work in their lives.

Issue 16

March 2010

Trace's Corner

All the pundits and prognosticators have had their say on 2009. Let me add a few words. Yes, it was a hard year, but it was good. In this space a year ago, I said Studies in Grace was moving into the on-line education world. Well, we have certainly taken a few steps in that direction and Vicki announced we received our first on-line order this week. For me this transition has been especially difficult because whereas I am oh-so comfortable with the in-class environment and format and pace, what do I know about long-distance learning? Or about the special needs of a small group in Westchester or Pango-Pango? All right, we have had no requests for materials from Pango-Pango (or from Westchester, for that matter) but before such requests can come our way, we have to write materials that will be useful – not frustrating – for the Pango-Pango and Westchester folks, alike.

What to do? How to even begin? I did not know. So, of course, what Jesus does when we are stuck or confused is what he always has done. He comes to us sacramentally, with skin on, in the shape and form of brothers and sisters who care and who share a common vision for a new kind of Christianity, a faith-beyond-the-building, world-changing way of life. Paul Michaelson, one of the first to show up with skin on, said, "Trace, you are having analysis paralysis!" (I don't remember what he actually said – something much more tactful, probably – but that is what I heard). He was right. I got past it and am now cranking out first iterations of stuff that will surely need to be revised once they hit the fan of real persons who want to use them.

Then another real person showed up, Mary Eliassen,

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[read Mary's article inside this newsletter] who found herself thrust last fall into the amazing position of needing to provide independent small-group materials for a group of women at her church to study InDepth Ruth. So, she met with the group, broke up some Ruth audio which we provided to fit her emerging format, collaborated with me on small-group questions and

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Annual Spring Banquet Fundraiser

Mark the date: May 7, 2010 from 6:15-9pm.

Join us and share the vision to bring God's redemptive story around the world. We will laugh together, share a meal and enjoy the wonderful sounds of the Higher Call Quartet.

Studies in Grace has no doubt touched your life. You can continue that life-changing work by supporting Studies in Grace as Trace continues to share the story. Hope to see you there!

For more information and a registration form you can email us through our website at www.studiesinGrace.org.

SINCERE “THANK YOU” FROM THE BOARD

*Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...
Rom 12:2a*

We are so excited about the Studies In Grace ministry. As we begin a new year, it is good to look back and see how God has blessed us this past year and where He is leading us in 2010 and beyond.

We were able to finish the past year in the black (just!) and so much was accomplished. Year in the Bible classes have blessed many, new in-depth courses have been developed and delivered, the new website continues to evolve, new technology is being evaluated and new product development underway (watch the website). God is good!

None of this would have been possible without the support of you, our faithful partners in this ministry. So on behalf of Trace, Vicki and the Board of Trustees, a huge “THANK YOU” to all who supported us in any way and we look forward to your continued partnering with us.

Lee Wyman, Chairman, Board of Trustees

Trace's Corner

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we had our first small group study. Mary and master audio recorder, Jim Fisher, are now working on a re-edit of the audio to fit the new format. And now her small group (whom I have never met) are all fired up to do A Year in the Bible in the same one hour, fifteen minute format. A much bigger job. We'll see what we learn as we build materials to help us get this work out the door, beyond the small classes here in “the Cities.”

Another Jesus-with-Skin has been Christopher Erickson [read Christopher's article, also inside]. He has been tireless in promoting Studies in Grace at Westwood, his church, for the past several years. Now his efforts are bearing fruit. You plan and you dream yet when you act you find nothing is as simple or as easy as you wished it would be, but in the end, it is good.

Last year in this space I told you about quality guru, W. Edwards Deming who died at age 92, working right up to the very end, but leaving no real successor to his work. I wrote:

I do not plan to follow Deming in this matter. I turned 60 last year and I have half-joked about retiring

at the nice round age of 73 and a half! ... So, what will I leave when I, God willing, walk out the door of Studies in Grace in February, 2022?

I have not worked these ten years to see it all close down behind me a decade or so from now. ...[This] work ... needs to be shared. What got us this far will not get us where we need to go ...if the Lord is willing, then we shall share this work, all over!

To that end, the amazingly cool web site – www.studiesinGrace.org – is up and running, with bits and pieces added to it weekly. Thanks to Corrie Anderson our web-master and to all those who had a hand in designing and funding the site. Thank you!

Meanwhile, Charlie Pickard is faithfully video recording Terms 2 and 4 of A Year in the Bible. Terms 1 and 3 are already “in the can.” Plus, we have a good bid on video editing from Tom and Carol Myrick's son, Ben. And Tom is working with me to find the foundation grant funding we will need to pay that bill.

Step by step. Some things are harder, more outside our comfort zone, than others but it is all good.

Live this year in God's grace and let it show!

Peace and grace,
Trace James

An exciting stewardship message that does not impact your monthly budget and allows you to give your first fruits to the Lord!

By Christopher Erickson • Board Member and Graduate of AYB Class 7

When I think of the Lord's work and those that have been called to be the hands and feet to accomplish His tasks here on earth, I think of TRUST!

Proverbs 3:5-6: Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

The Lord throughout history has told His workers to depend on others for support. Financial support specifically. Studies In Grace is no different. Our Lord has called out Trace to continue a movement of sharing His promises, His story, His great commission to those that may not believe and also to those that want to know our Creator more intimately!

The truth of creation and redemption! The Promise of a loving God for all eternity! When I think of that God, I think of selfless acts. I think of trusting in the Lord and allowing Him to be in control of our lives and not the world. I think of a generous God freely giving to us everything that we own. I think of first fruits and what He deserves back from everything He has given us for His creation and glory. Most of all I think of joyful giving! Giving back to my Lord that thought to create little old me. The Creator God that loves me despite my sinful nature. The Lord that sent His son to suffer and die on the cross so that I may live for eternity with Him. I think of a God that always fulfills the promises He made so long ago.

Trace James and Studies In Grace need your help to accomplish the Lord's calling! We can all make simple changes that will make a great positive impact! We can all make simple changes that will make great positive changes for Studies in Grace. Here are some of the ways my family has personally changed to impact Studies In Grace. Changes your family can implement immediately too.

1. The first is the simplest...have you heard of www.goodsearch.com? GoodSearch is a web search engine like Google. The big difference is the "payoff" when you "Good Search" for something on the web – GoodSearch will pay \$.01 directly to Studies In Grace for every internet search you make. Set your home page to "Good Search". Designate Studies In Grace as the organization that you want to "Good Search" for.

Imagine if just the 600+ people that A Year in the

Bible has impacted made the switch to GoodSearch. Imagine all the searches you do on the internet a week, a month, a year. Now imagine the hundreds of dollars that will flow into the ministry and the lives that will ultimately be changed. This simple change could have lasting financial gains for Studies In Grace. (Refer to the Nov2007 Newsletter for instructions on changing your home page on your PC or Mac, or the SIG website.)

2. Where do you shop for consumable goods necessary for your home? Items such as your personal care products, cleaning and laundry, supplements, the products in your medicine cabinet, and your skin care and cosmetics. What if I told you that there was a store that is willing to partner with Studies In Grace to give back 5% of everything you spend to Studies In Grace? What if this store not only gives back 5% to SIG, but also gives you, the consumer wholesale pricing on the over 350 products the store produces and ships themselves? What if this store not only made and shipped everything in the U.S., but also guaranteed all their products were safer than grocery store brands and were less expensive, even delivered to the door. My family, Trace James and many others have made the switch to such a store. You can too! Just think, a way of giving to an organization that we all believe in without adding any money to our charitable giving budget! No New Money! Please contact Christopher Erickson, a graduate of A Year in the Bible and current Studies in Grace board member, for more information concerning this amazing opportunity!

Christopher Erickson
christopher@ericksonphoto.com
612-618-0536

3. Does your house ever feel cluttered? Do you find yourself wanting to have a garage sale, but not wanting to go through the trouble to organize it all? Have you heard of a website called:

www.minneapolis.craigslist.org

This is the ultimate online garage sale. My suggestion is to create an account and then start posting your items you would like to sell. All of the proceeds

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Stewardship message...

from these sales can then be donated to Studies in Grace. Again, No New Money! Christopher Erickson would be happy to help here as well with any questions!

4. Do you believe that God has created everything? Do you believe that everything we possess comes from Him? The basic way to give of your first fruits is to look at your monthly income and decide what portion God has put upon your heart to give back to further His Great Commission. The Old Testament stated 10% was the portion off the top that was to be gifted back to God. Jesus abolished this law at Calvary. For those that have been given much, much is expected. Jesus said in Luke 12:34 "Wherever your treasure is, there the desire of your heart will also be." Is your treasure in this world or in the next?

Studies In Grace has partnered with www.givemn.org as a vehicle for online giving. A small transaction fee is associated with each donation. We are encouraging all givers to elect to cover the transaction fee as well so your full gift is received at the Studies In Grace Office.

5. Have you heard of automatic withdrawal from

your checking, savings, debit or credit card? Have you ever written checks in advance, placed them in donation envelopes, delivered them to the organization with the agreement that the organization would deposit one envelope a month for the next year?

Studies In Grace in a recent newsletter issued a challenge to all its readers to get on board the 50/50 plan. We were looking for 50 people willing to give \$50 per month. We have made a few steps forward to embrace this challenge. Others have taken this a step further at \$100/month and more. What works for your family? \$20/month, \$1/day, \$500/month, \$1,000/month? What has the Lord placed on your heart?

Where does Studies In Grace fit into your budget? Take a moment and prayerfully consider how the Holy Spirit is moving in you to utilize your financial resources He has provided. We, the hands and feet of Studies In Grace, THANK YOU for any and all you are able to give to further this ministry.

Contact us with any questions:

Vicki Groth at the SIG office – 952-920-2408

Christopher Erickson

Board Member and Graduate of AYB Class 7

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How to search on GoodSearch

GoodSearch is a web search engine like Google. The big difference is the "payoff." When you use Good Search for something on the web, GoodSearch will pay \$.01 directly to Studies In Grace for every internet search you make.

Below you will find step-by-step instructions on how to add GoodSearch to your home page and how to designate Studies In Grace as your Non-Profit organization of choice.

How to get started:

1. Simply go to www.goodsearch.com
2. Under the "search" text line type in "Studies In Grace" and click once on "verify."

Now SIG will receive 100% of your search revenue.

3. Switch your home page to Good Search so you never miss an opportunity to "GoodSearch" for Studies In Grace.

Make GoodSearch your home page and every time you start your web browser GoodSearch will automatically load and be the first site you see. Plus, no matter

where you are on the web, you can always click your browser's home button and return to GoodSearch instantly.

There is absolutely no cost to you! The advertisers on GoodSearch pay for the service. In addition, you will find shopping engines with which you can make purchases and 5-25% of your total will be donated to Studies in Grace!

For Mac OS Users using Safari or Firefox:

1. Select Safari/Firefox | Preferences...(Command Key or Apple Key & comma key
2. Select the General Tab
3. In the Address text box, type:
<http://www.goodsearch.com>
4. Your home page is now GoodSearch.

For PC Users:

Microsoft Internet Explorer users:

1. Select Tools | Internet Options.

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Goodsearch...

2. Select the General tab.
3. In the Address text box, type:
<http://www.goodsearch.com>.
4. Click OK.

Netscape Navigator users:

1. Select Edit | Preferences.
2. Select the Navigator category on the left side.
3. In the Location text box, type:
<http://www.goodsearch.com>.
4. Click OK.

Firefox users:

1. Select Tools | Options
2. Select the General tab.
3. In the Location text box, type:
<http://www.goodsearch.com>.
4. Click OK.

That's it! Now GoodSearch will be your browser's home page.

Questions? Call or email Christopher!

christopher@ericksonphoto.com
cell: 612-618-0536 home: 952-470-5319

Testimony of Faith

By Mary Eliassen AYB Class 13 & current small group leader

I started studying the Bible about 18 years ago (wow, seems like yesterday). It was then that I started seeking God and His will in my everyday life. The bible was such a gift to me. It was refreshing, and offered wisdom and insight into my life and relationships, and most importantly, helped me get to know God.

I have had some nagging questions though. The biggest being, "Is the God of the Old Testament the same as the God of the New Testament?" I mean, I know He is.....but really, is He? They sure appeared like different Gods to me! Pushing those thoughts aside, I chose to apply what I learned in the New Testament and muddle through the Old Testament when I had the time – especially Psalms and Proverbs.

A dear friend invited me to take the Studies in Grace, A Year in the Bible class with her. I LOVED it! I could feel different areas of my brain being activated as I looked into the lives of Moses, the Israelites, Ruth and all the Old Testament characters.

Trace brought the Bible to life as he filled in the gaps with information about the other kingdoms of the times, the customs, the people, the land and even more adequately translating Hebrew. He encouraged questions and laid a platform for the spirit to help me see the big picture of God's plan and how the same gracious God of the New Testament is the God of the Old Testament. The New Testament is so much richer with a deeper understanding of the Old.

Without Trace's knowledge, patience, wisdom and grace I would have a much more incomplete knowledge of God's incredible word and love for us all.

How gracious is our God and undeserving are we. By the end of the A Year in the Bible class I looked forward to being a table leader for the next class. I had heard from previous table leaders that starting again at Genesis, with a foundation already laid by taking the class, was powerful. It has proved to be. It has also been a blessing to see others grow in their knowledge and faith.

God also placed before me an opportunity to share Trace's studies with some women at my church. Looking to start a group book study, I thought to myself, "God, I wish these women could do Trace's study." Just then, one of the women asked me if I would be willing to teach them what I have learned in my "other" study. God is good.

It "just so happened" that Trace was happy to start a beta study to keep the balls rolling for his plans to have Studies in Grace classes going in multiple locations. So, I have facilitated the Ruth study. It has been a privilege and a stretch for me to facilitate this group and while I am no "Trace James," the women are loving his study and wanting more. Next year I hope to facilitate an A Year in the Bible Class for my church as well.

I can't stress enough how this study has changed me and my walk with our patient and gracious Lord. I thank God for Trace and his heart to teach "us" what he has learned. I have probably grasped an inch of the miles of his knowledge but I am so thankful for that inch!