



# THE *Able* LIFE



WINTER 2018-19

Stories of ordinary people in the Carmel Family cultivating lives which abide in Christ to build relationships and live the Gospel with everything.

every age  
every situation  
every season

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# ABLE TOGETHER

Carmel Family,

Welcome to 2019 - and the second edition of *The Able Life*! I hope the God stories we share in this publication encourage you as much as they've encouraged me.

As we walk into a new year I want to ask if you are walking in community with others or walking alone?

A recent nationwide survey of adults by Cigna\* noted the following:

- Nearly 50% of all Americans feel lonely
- 40% of adults lack meaningful relationships and feel isolated from others
- Generation Z (adults ages 18-22) is the loneliest generation

Wow! Despite current technology, we still long for community and friendship.

In January and February, we'll study Psalm 23 in a series called "Never Alone in a Lonely World." We'll take 8 weeks to study how our Good Shepherd leads us....together as a flock. Bring your Bibles and a hungry heart.

On another note, we are pumped to have Bob Goff with us on March 13! Bob is an incredible story teller who will both encourage and challenge us as we seek to live out our mission to make disciples. Check out the back page for details.

2019 is going to be great! Let's walk together in the Word and in community, surrendered to God, and it will be quite an adventure!

Love you Carmel,

Pastor Alex

\* Published May 1, 2018 by Cigna Corporation



## WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

The Carmel team would love to hear your story! How is God at work in your life? Share your story with a member of our team or email it to [pastor@carmelbaptist.org](mailto:pastor@carmelbaptist.org).



# ABIDING IN CHRIST

## THE POWER OF PRAYER

*Through individual prayer, corporate prayer, prayer gatherings and prayer studies, Carmel seeks to be a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:7).*



### MEN IN PRAYER

**Brian has a heart for prayer.**

*"Prayer is one of the most powerful tools we have as Christians, but often one of the most underutilized. To grow in our relationship with the Lord and serve as a light in this dark world, we must seek God daily so we can live out the Good News in everything we do!"*

**Brian also has a heart for men praying together.**

*"As men, we have a great responsibility to lead in our families and other circles of influence. We must prayerfully ask God to help direct our paths daily. If you don't have another guy you can call on and pray with, find one today - your Discipleship Community and the Thursday morning Men's Journey group (see page 15) are great places to start. The time I've spent praying and studying God's word with these men has tremendously strengthened my faith."*

*"I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling..."*

*I Timothy 2:8*



*Oh Lord, give us a new-found passion for prayer.*

### MORE BATTLE READY

In early 2014, a small group of women began to gather regularly at Carmel with the sole purpose of praying together. They called themselves Daughters of the King (DOK). This group - open to all women - gathers to encourage, build up and pray in one accord for each other and the needs in our church, our city, our nation and the world.

One of the recurring prayers of Daughters of the King since they first gathered has been "Lord, please bring other women who desire to pray."

Linda is among the women the Lord has added to this group. Her journey began with a desire to take her decades-old faith to a deeper level. That led her to the Battle Plan for Prayer study at Carmel. Through the curriculum and among this community of women, Linda was reminded of the basic truths of prayer and transformed in discovering the true power we have as believers to pray in faith and victory in the authority we have in Christ. When the study dismissed each week, Linda would immediately go to the Prayer Room to gather with the Daughters of the King and live out what she'd been learning. Being surrounded by women prayer warriors of all ages truly stirred up within her an earnest desire to become a more disciplined intercessor.

Linda's new-found passion for prayer was contagious and she actively engaged her husband and closest friends to pray more boldly, authoritatively, humbly and expectantly. The combination of the study, the encouragement of other women with a heart for prayer and participation in DOK has been powerful and made Linda even more "battle ready."

In response to a recent situation, Linda says confidently, *"If this happened 10 years ago, I would be flattened. But that is not the case today. I'm in a valley now, but I feel stronger than ever because of all I've learned and because I am able to pray corporately with intercessors."*

The Holy Spirit is drawing more and more people at Carmel to prayer. We are excited and expectant as to what God will do through His church because of this commitment.



*"No matter how long you've been a Christian or the state of your prayer life, you will greatly benefit from all God has to teach you about prayer."*



# PRETEEN MILESTONE

## OXYTOCIN + TESTOSTERONE

*To help equip parents as their child's primary disciple makers, Carmel has created a discipleship pathway that includes 6 Milestones: Parent/Child Dedication, Salvation, Preparing for Adolescence, Purity for Life, Rite of Passage and High School Graduation. In 2018, Jean - a single mom of three - participated in her son's Preteen Retreat as part of the Preparing for Adolescence Milestone. As a researcher, Jean explains her unique perspective of why the Retreat was so powerful.*

*I am regrouping after a wonderful Preteen Retreat weekend with my 12-year-old son. We attended Carmel's annual event for preteen boys and their fathers (and in my case a single mother), as the boys stand at the cusp of adulthood and peer into their futures.*

*As we concluded the weekend and descended the mountain (literally and figuratively), I allowed my mind to wander and think about what made this weekend so special and how the benefits of this weekend will be encrypted in my son and me for the rest of our lives?*

*Two words came to mind: oxytocin and testosterone. Yes, the neuroendocrine hormone, oxytocin, and the male hormone, testosterone.*

*Oxytocin is the neuroendocrine hormone that leads to attachment. It's released every time we look into one another's eyes. It's released when we read stories and feel empathy for the suffering and triumph of the characters we're journeying with. It's released when we touch, when we see one another smile and when we hear one another laugh. Testosterone is the reproductive hormone responsible for the development of male reproductive tissue, the deepening of the voice, the facial hair, and the competitive warrior spirit.*

*But less understood is the combination of oxytocin and testosterone. One researcher studied the combination of these in the men of the Tsimane tribe in Bolivia. After a successful day of hunting, their testosterone soared. And so did their oxytocin. The testosterone led to their success as a warrior and hunter. And the oxytocin surge led them to generously share their kill with their tribe and bond them to their social group and to family. And the combined surge of testosterone and oxytocin led to muscle regeneration, needed after a long hunt.*

*The Preteen Retreat evoked a similar result. Our men (young and older) held bows and shot arrows at targets. They kept score. Winning mattered. They moved next to the power tools - symbols of this generation's ability to conquer home building, repairs, and other key survival skills. The whirl of the power saw and the smell of the wood sent powerful stimuli to the pituitary gland which houses the command center for all things hormonal.*



*A challenging hike (albeit not the Bolivian jungle hunt) caused the men and boys to sweat.*

*The shields and logs made the trek more difficult. But the testosterone levels elevated by the earlier events with the power tools and bows and arrows kicked in to keep all focused on taking that mountain. The generosity and socializing impact of the oxytocin helped them share the load between each other, and work together as a team. Testosterone would have had them competing against each other; oxytocin brought them together in a shared experience and outcome. As the men and boys returned to the base camp, faces beamed with the look of 'I conquered it, now let's eat'. The socializing among the tribe continued.*

*When night fell, a special time of prayer and connection released oxytocin. Men and boys, previously casual church or school acquaintances or friends at best, prayed for one another. Fathers and sons looked deeply into each other's tear-filled eyes. They carried out biblical traditions, told stories, gave blessings, hugged and cried, and created a bond like no other.*

*"We are hard-wired to be socially connected  
and united as a family, both a family unit  
and a larger family of faith."*

*And we are wired down to our DNA, our hormones, and our receptors to give and receive love. When we intentionally set the stage so body, mind, soul, and spirit can be involved -*



*Oh Lord, help us to be united as a family unit and a family of faith.*



# REFRAMING GLOBAL MISSIONS

## LANGUAGE AS A CHURCH-PLANTING TOOL

*Over the last several years, the people of Ukraine have experienced civil unrest, war, and the displacement of thousands of families. Ukrainian Baptist Theological Seminary (UBTS) is the largest Baptist seminary in Europe and on a mission to plant relevant churches throughout Ukraine for the next generation. Carmel actively collaborates with this Lviv-based seminary to train pastors and church planters.*

This past fall, a small team from Carmel joined UBTS and the local CRU\* team - called Campus Lviv - to host ESL (English as a Second Language) classes to help the young church reach those who are far from God. The students in Ukraine have a passion for English and fluency represents a hope for a better future. They have studied English throughout their schooling, but what they long for is an opportunity to engage with native English speakers. That's where we came in. Our team went to build relationships with those who are lost and through this context, live the Gospel and introduce the next generation to Jesus.

### TRIP REFLECTIONS

#### DAVID: A New Way

*I would tell anyone considering Ukraine that if they desire a relational mission opportunity that involves gospel conversations with college and young adults that the Lviv trip is for them. I did not know that mission trips could be so conversationally driven and personal. I have made friends and developed relationships through this trip that will last a lifetime. The connections go far beyond one week of ministry. This is something I never considered possible through a short-term mission trip. The people of Ukraine - particularly students - are wide open to gospel conversations. The city of Lviv is ripe for many fruitful ministry opportunities if only we are willing to go and let God use us to reach the city.*

\*CRU - formerly Campus Crusade for Christ



*Oh Lord, change the way we see people in other countries.*



#### KELLY: Perspective

*I was so blessed by the people of Ukraine, the ministry that is going on there and the commitment of the local believers. I truly believe there is nothing more impactful than seeing God at work around the world. Being with believers who have committed to full-time mission work was so encouraging and allowed us to build relationships with them to continue to support them through prayer and encouragement. With those who are not believers, we had the amazing opportunity to share our faith with them as we provided them with something they place a high priority on - learning English. When they saw our willingness to teach them English, they were open to hearing our message. Thanks to technology, we have the ability to continue investing in their lives, building upon the relationships we established there in Ukraine. I am now burdened by the need for more believers to disciple those who were there waiting, willing and open to the gospel. It is a true picture of Luke 10:2 - "the harvest is plenty but the laborers are few."*



#### BEN: Relationships

*This trip was all about relationship building. I saw it in both big and small ways - from students tagging us on Instagram after we left the country to one student coming to the airport as we departed, just to say thank you. Some students told us that they didn't know Christians could be such genuine people. Others said they were open to Christianity for the first time because of their time with us. But it didn't stop with the students - the shared experience built strong relationships among the Carmel team. God's church is truly worldwide and although we may live in seriously different circumstances our need for His gospel is universal. Global mission trips provide a unique opportunity to participate in kingdom building. If you are relational, enjoy helping people understand and apply God's word and have a heart for students/young adults, Ukraine is for you - even if you've never taught English and don't know a bit of Ukrainian. This trip changed my understanding and the way I see the Ukrainian people.*



# THE MARKS OF EVERYTHING

## COUNTING THE COST OF FOLLOWING CHRIST

*This past September, Pastor Jeremy had the experience of a lifetime – walking through ruins in ancient Asia Minor alongside a biblical scholar. As he hiked, the Holy Spirit prompted a question: “For what am I willing to sacrifice my life?” Here are his reflections:*



TEAM PRAYING TOGETHER IN THE CITY OF APHRODISIAS (TURKEY)

As I sat on the ancient stone road in Ephesus, I sensed an awareness of awe and gratitude. The blood of some of the first followers of Jesus had flowed down this street 19-20 centuries ago. Timothy was young when he accepted the invitation to pastor God’s people and his life was cut short on the street on which I sat. Every Christian in that area would have paused at the stain left on that Roman road, marking the spot where Timothy gave everything for his Lord. Historically, this moment was a tipping point for the gospel spreading throughout Asia Minor.



*Oh Lord, show us what sacrificial living looks like for our lives..*

Ephesus was not the first place where the reality of blood-stained streets gripped me. The Apostle Philip left Jerusalem when the stain of Stephen’s blood still marked the place where he was stoned outside the Lion’s Gate. He traveled through Samaria to Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) to plant churches. He was brutally whipped, imprisoned, and crucified by idol worshippers who saw the gospel as a threat. He was the second Apostle to give everything to follow Jesus.

Leaving the areas of the seven Revelation churches, our tour took us into the Aegean Sea to visit the tiny island of Patmos and study the life of the Apostle John. As an older boy, he was an apprentice with his father’s fishing business in Capernaum. Jesus invited John to leave everything that a young man would desire in his teenage years. He called him not only to leave his trade, but his family, too. Instead of making entrepreneurial promises, Jesus declared, “You will suffer in my name.”

John would leave more than a home town and business he would have inherited. He left the entire region to travel into the heart of Greco-Roman depravity. Yet, we do not see his disgust of Greek culture in his letters, the Gospel, or the Revelation. We see the heart of a pastor who loves his sheep well.



DESCENDING STEEPEST STEPS IN THE WORLD AT HELLENISTIC THEATER - PERGAMON (TURKEY)



TEMPLE OF APOLLO - ANCIENT CITY OF CORINTH, GREECE

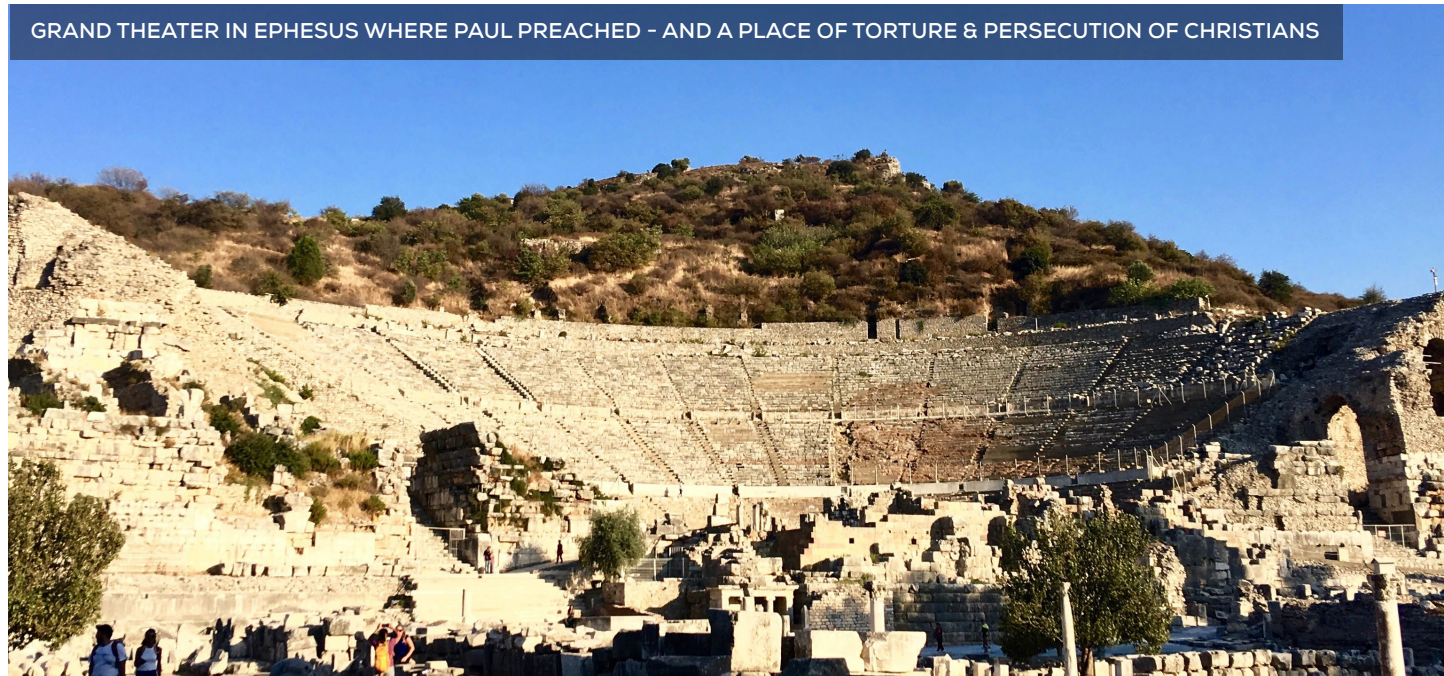
With everything, John persevered. Following the execution of Peter and Paul, Emperor Domitian ordered John to be slowly lowered into a vat of boiling oil, a death preceded by the skin “melting.” But the method failed when the oil had no effect on John’s body. Jesus had a different plan for John. The emperor banished John to Patmos to limit the Apostle’s influence. The Lord, however, rescued John to reveal to the world that God is in control, now and in eternity. This isolation provided the perfect place for John to hear and see what God was going to do in the future.

**"There is a stark contrast between our obsession today to preserve our lives and the expectation of the first Christians."**

Jesus gave His everything for our salvation. The first Christians considered it pure joy to suffer with everything for their Lord. We cannot live an \*ABLE life and hang on to the Christian culture that thrives around us. Consumeristic religion is the opposite of an “everything” mentality. Showing up to “church” to check the box on a weekly to-do list is not the ABLE\* life.

\*ABLE life - **A**biding in Christ to **B**uild relationships and **L**ive the Gospel with **E**verything





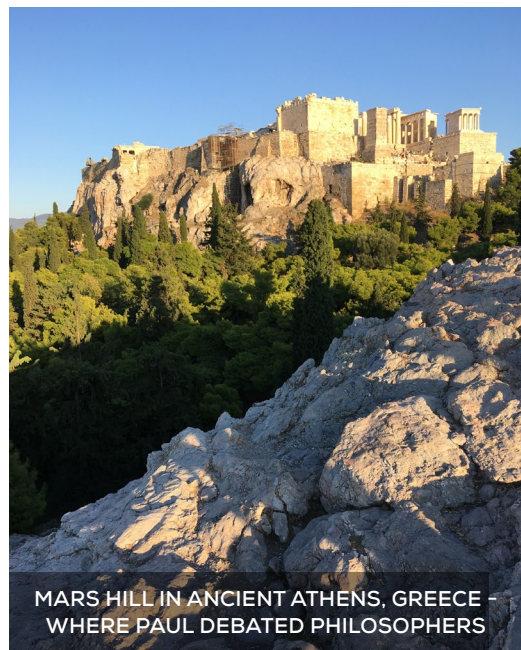
A comfortable and easy Christian life does not make disciples of Jesus.

The first disciples sought to continually abide in Christ. They overcame cultural barriers to build relationships. They lived out the Gospel as outcasts among the pagans. But their greatest impact resulted from their willingness to sacrifice everything to make disciples.

The blood of Timothy, Stephen, and a multitude of others was washed away from the streets almost 2000 years ago. But the gospel they proclaimed remains. The second century theologian Tertullian declared: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

Since the first moment I stood on that ancient Roman street in modern-day Turkey, I cannot get this question out of my mind: *"For what am I willing to sacrifice my life?"*

Carmel, our mark may not be a blood stain on Morehead or Trade Street. Yet, I pray that we would count the cost of following Christ and offer Him nothing less than everything to make disciples of the Lord Jesus.



MARS HILL IN ANCIENT ATHENS, GREECE - WHERE PAUL DEBATED PHILOSOPHERS

**"You and I are called by God to abide in Christ with every breath we take. We are to build relationships with everyone God places in our path. We are to live the Gospel with everything God has given to us, even if 'everything' includes our freedom, our wealth, our dreams, or our very lives."**

# ABLE AT ANY AGE

## PURPOSE IN EVERY SEASON

**"Being a Christian doesn't have a retirement age!"**

- Wyatt, actively serving at 85 (see article on Page 16)



### THE NEXT GENERATION SERVING THE NEXT GENERATION

9-year-old Taylor serves alongside her mom and dad in a Twos class on Sunday mornings. She's beloved by the preschoolers for her enthusiasm to play kitchen, stack blocks and care for baby dolls. And it's a race to grab her hand for the walk down the hall to Large Group Worship. This past fall, a guest family attempted to drop off their son, who was unsure and upset. When Taylor saw the boy not wanting to enter the classroom and

overheard his mom speak to him in Spanish, she quickly used the Spanish she's learned at her immersion school to invite him to join her and the other children. Taylor's familiar sounding invitation got this little boy's attention and calmed his fears, which allowed his parents to leave him and head to worship. What does Taylor like about serving on Sunday mornings? *"I like helping the kids. And playing with them and reading to them. It's also fun to serve with my mommy and daddy!"*

### TRANSFORMED BY ABIDING IN THE WORD

*I am very happy now because I am finally understanding who God is to me personally. Until recently, I have only taken from others who God is to them and tried to apply it to my life. But I've been challenged to let God reveal himself to me through scripture and I have figured out that He is good even when circumstances aren't. He is constant even when the things of this world aren't. He is a refuge for me no matter what. He is always there. He loves me so well, His love is so, so powerful. He has an unwavering love for all of us and it is so beautiful...* - Avery, a Carmel Student

### THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIP

*The girls I lead on Sunday mornings are starting to really open up and it is so beautiful to see what God is doing as they are trusting each other and Him as we grow in our faith and relationships. We are all learning together and it is starting to feel like a family being intricately woven together with the love of Christ. So many are struggling, yet they are realizing that they don't have to struggle alone and they can have the support and comfort from others who have been through similar things.*

- Lori, Student Ministry DC leader



*Oh Lord, use us right now to minister to people - despite our age or stage in life.*



# #WeAreStoryTellers

## STUDENT MINISTRY

The best way to proclaim Jesus is to simply tell your story. At the start of the school year, Student Ministry talked about this idea that #WeAreStorytellers. Each one of us that have professed faith in Jesus has a story to tell – the experiences we have had, how He has shown us grace, how Jesus is currently moving in our lives. Authentic followers of Jesus confess His name with great courage. Our students were challenged to tell their stories through three words on a letter board, through which they could share their faith journey.



### David Marus: "Light. Slave. Faithful."

**Light:** I was born in Charlotte, NC, and was raised in a Christian household, or in other words I was raised in the Light. I have been going to church from the time I was born. When I was seven years old I chose to accept Christ as my Lord and Savior. However, it wasn't until 7th grade that I learned more about what it meant to live in relationship with Christ, rather than just believing in God because my parents did.

**Slave:** It was then in 7th grade when the Lord revealed to me that God is who He says He is and that's when I first believed this truth for myself, and not because my parents believed it. Although, over the next three years I became a slave to the things of this world and was living a two-faced, lukewarm life. It was the summer before 10th grade that God revealed my sinful and hypocritical life. That summer the Lord showed me I was not living a life of a child of God, and that belief in Him produces a relationship and life echoing His Love and not the things of the world.

**Faithful:** Though God showed me all these things that summer it wasn't an instant change, I often struggle with things of this world, but by His grace, it is nowhere to the extent as it was before. I continue to see God's faithful love and grace when I ponder the days before when I was immersed in a life of sin. I am awestruck by His faithfulness even when I am an unfaithful servant.

### Parker Jackson: "Jesus. Family. Friends."

**Jesus:** Jesus has had a big impact on my life and I am very thankful for that. I am lucky for all that I have, and I give Jesus thanks for all of it. Without Him, I wouldn't be where I am today.

**Family:** I have such an amazing family that helps me through all of life's struggles. My family is one of a kind, and we all look out for each other, which makes it even more great. I am truly blessed.

**Friends:** My friends are so encouraging and are always looking out for me. It's great to have such amazing friends and I am truly grateful for all of you. Thank you for being such a great impact on my life.



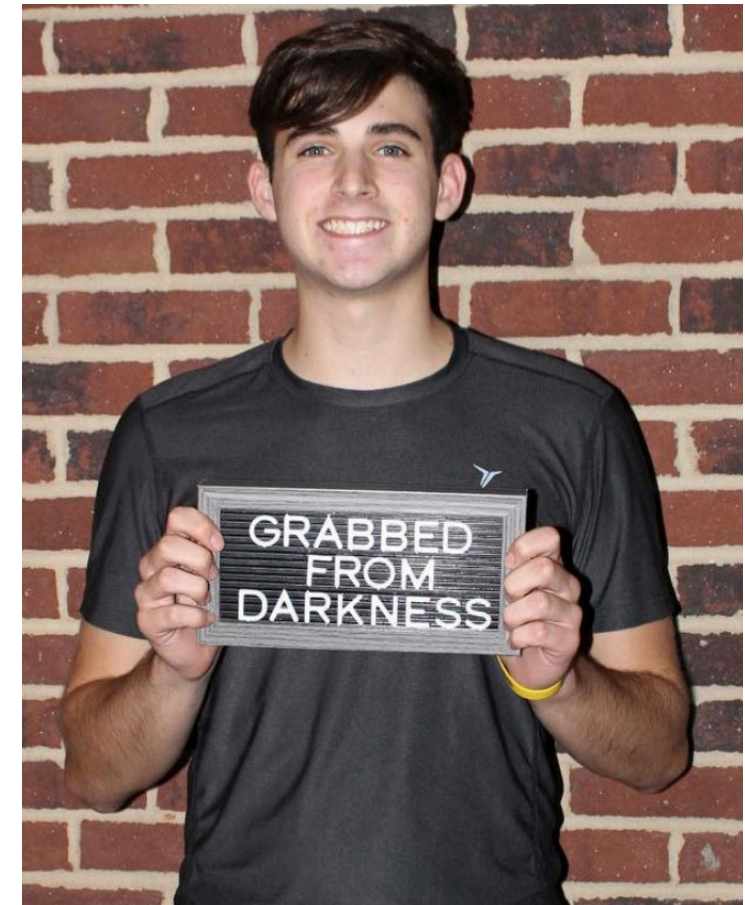
### Josiah Bass: "Grabbed from Darkness"

I grew up in Central Asia for 14 years of my life before we moved back to the States in 2017. What you may not know is why we moved...

When I was 13 I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior at a youth group retreat. It was the best decision I have ever chosen to make in my life. What I did not know was that the few years after I began to follow Jesus I would be tested drastically. From the time I was 11 to the time I turned 15 I said goodbye to over 30 close friends who moved away. I sunk into a dark pit...one that I almost didn't make it out of, if it wasn't for the loving hand of God who grabbed me right before I slipped.

I had written a letter to myself in which I described all the things I hated about this world and how much I did not want to be a part of it. My mom found that letter on my floor one day and everything changed. It was God who made her find the letter in the midst of all that was happening.

Long story short, that's how I ended up at Carmel. Now I have some of the most wonderful friends in the world. I thank God every day for giving me a second chance to be redeemed and healed from the scars of my past. That's why I chose "grabbed from darkness" as my three words. When all seems lost He will be there to grab you as well.



### Megan Griggs: "Blessed & Growing"

**Blessed:** I grew up in a Christian home with parents and teachers who helped me on my walk with Christ and loved me no matter what. But this family has moved 9 times over the course of 15 years. Some of the time was difficult (leaving friends and leaving family) but we always had each other. I have also been blessed with friends that helped me on my walk with Christ as well as my walk through life.

**Growing:** My story isn't over yet, I'm constantly growing and learning how God can work through me. I have grown stronger in my faith ever since I went on mission to Peru this summer. Seeing the joy that the people had when they were surrounded by darkness taught me that God helps you grow when you are on the hilltops of life, but even more so in the valleys.



Oh Lord, give our students a profound realization of their identity in You.



# IRON SHARPENS IRON

## FINDING TRANSPARENCY IN COMMUNITY

*The Journey – launched this past fall – reminds the men of Carmel that they are never alone, and challenges them to lead, love and serve well. Approximately 200 men met for 11 weeks in groups of 6-8 in an effort to foster intentional community.*



Chuck helped rally five other men to join him at one of The Journey tables. Their goal as a group – to move beyond the “normal guy fodder of news, sports and weather” and be transparent while tackling hard topics, sharing the highs and lows of life, and exploring God’s word together.

"Through The Journey, God showed me that iron truly sharpens iron. Men need each other in a much deeper way than most of us feel comfortable allowing in our lives. God showed me that we need to get over ourselves and trust Him to show us how enriched our lives can be."

The beauty of these newly-formed relationships was displayed on November 10 when Chuck experienced a cardiac episode in the mountains while on a 20th anniversary get-away with his wife, Leigh.

*"After a early morning work out in the hotel gym, I began to feel clammy, my breathing was weird and I had a small pain on the lower right side of my chest. Leigh took me to the ER and after several hours, they determined I needed to have a heart catherization to see what was going on.*

*While in the ER I texted my [Journey] guys to let them know what had happened. I asked them to pray. Within minutes I heard back from them, one by one, offering up prayers for me and my family, offering to help with the kids and anything else needed. It was a beautiful display of His love. God truly used my weakness to show His power."*

**"There are times to be a husband, father, business owner, friend, etc. In that moment [in the hospital] I just needed to be the son of my Father and let Him be there for me."**

Chuck received a stent and the news that there was no damage to his heart. And he's ready for another semester with his Journey group and encourages all men at Carmel to consider investing in this Thursday morning opportunity. Why? In his words:

*"Being in community with a small group of men like this fills a hole in your life that nothing else does! First Corinthians 13 says 'Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.' That sums up the men in my Journey group."*

# LEADING THROUGH LOSS

## EQUIPPED FOR THE “NEW NORMAL”

GriefShare is a 13-week care group that includes video teachings, small group discussion, and personal Bible study to help people face the challenges of loss and move toward rebuilding their lives.

Everyone is impacted by the loss of a loved one at some point in their life.

When Wyatt's wife of 59 years died in 2013, the waves of grief he experienced were at times so crippling he thought he was going crazy. At the encouragement of a pastor, Wyatt channeled his desire to better understand the grieving process and his compassion to help others maneuver their own loss by facilitating GriefShare at Carmel.

Lauren co-leads Griefshare, prompted by an invitation from Wyatt and the sudden loss of her adult daughter to complications from living with Type 1 diabetes. *"Because of GriefShare, I better understand my own grieving and am equipped to be more comfortable around others who are grieving."*



**"We're not 'moving on' from our loss – that implies leaving something you love behind. Rather, we're 'moving forward' – working through our loss." – Lauren**

Together Wyatt and Lauren have co-lead 9 GriefShare groups at Carmel. They've had participants who've lost spouses, children, siblings, and friends. Some who've been struggling with loss for 2 weeks and others who've been struggling for 5 years. *"A unique camaraderie develops in the group after just a few sessions,"* says Lauren. *"By the end, we're equipped to abide in God's word in a way that is comforting and walk in our new normal."*



When asked how to comfort a person who has experienced loss, Lauren says to not let the fear of what to say keep you from being with someone who is grieving. *"There is no need to say anything,"* Lauren says, *"the simple ministry of presence is powerful!"*

Wyatt confesses *"I'm still ambushed at times with grief, but I am no longer concerned or embarrassed. I understand that these feelings are normal."* And laughter is a measure he uses to know people are moving forward in their grieving.

**"Laughter is my guide. When you hear it, you know people are getting better." – Wyatt**



*Oh Lord, place us in authentic community – that we may know and be known.*



# DISASTER RELIEF

## LESSONS FROM LUMBERTON

*When natural disaster occurs in our part of the country, among the first to respond are the NC Baptists on Mission. And Carmel leverages their expertise and leadership to participate in disaster response and recovery.*

### WEEKEND WARRIOR

Adam Houser usually spends fall weekends at the beach or visiting with extended family. But this past fall, God prompted him to join other men from his Discipleship Community (DC) for a Saturday of disaster recovery work in Lumberton.

**What I saw:** *Amid neighborhoods completely devastated by flood waters stood piles of debris scattered along the sides of the road. The water line in the house we served in was about 2-3 feet high. The smell was formidable.*

**What happened:** *It was a great opportunity to deepen friendships and build community among new and old friends. I was able to build relationships with men from our DC as well as the homeowners we served. We were able to live the gospel by giving our time and abilities to those who needed help.*

**What God taught me:** *I don't have to be highly skilled at a task, just willing to be used by Him. Through the hurricane victims, I was able to see the joy of living in Christ in the worst of situations.*

**What I'd say to others:** *GO! The NC Baptists are very well organized and they make volunteering very easy. We don't often have the opportunity to help disaster victims so close to home. You don't have to be a professional handyman - they will train you! It will be a rewarding experience.*



*Oh Lord, dismantle our biases and free our hearts to serve.*



### BEYOND BIAS

Burt Lohoff-Gaida was among those from Carmel who spent a week assisting those in Lumberton impacted by Hurricane Florence. Afterward, he shared this lesson he learned while serving:

*The minute I saw Chris I knew I wanted nothing to do with him. Dreadlocks, pierced ears, tattoos. Who was this guy and how was I going to avoid him for the next five days?*

*Hurricane Florence brought us both to Lumberton, NC to serve those impacted. The disaster relief station had around 100 volunteers serving up to 18,000 meals a day and de-mudding 400 houses. It was hard work with 12-hour shifts.*

*I was part of the kitchen crew, washing cooking utensils and hundreds of plastic containers that were sent out into the impacted areas, filled with food. Chris seemed to always be darting across the huge parking lot, directing semi-trucks, unloading incoming supplies and sending off Red Cross trucks filled with life-giving provisions.*

*For the first three days I just observed Chris. I wasn't interested in getting to know him. He made me feel uneasy. As I watched, I noticed that people really seemed to like him. He always smiled and made others laugh. He was an encourager and a helper. And he worked harder and longer than any of us. Chris was an ox, lifting and stacking wooden pallets as if they were toothpicks. In the evening, after dinner, in the darkness, he was still working.*

*It wasn't until the fourth day that I finally decided to meet Chris and find out more about him. He had been working for the Red Cross for over 10 years, moving from one disaster area to the next. He had a passion for helping people; making money wasn't important to him. We had a lot of good laughs over the course of the next two days. Chris had a heart of gold even though his exterior looked a bit tarnished to me.*

*We all have biases. When we challenge our own thinking, question our stereotypes and move toward those who look different from us, life gets really interesting. I almost missed out on getting to know Chris.*





**REGISTER EARLY**  
space is limited!



*"It's easy to confuse a lot of activity with a purposeful life." - Bob Goff*

# **A NIGHT WITH BOB GOFF**

## **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13 | 6:30 - 9:00PM**

**\$7 PER PERSON | REGISTRATION OPENS SUNDAY, JANUARY 20**

This year's Life in Christ speaker is New York Times Best-Selling Author of *Love Does* and *Everybody Always*, Bob Goff! Bob is also an advocate for endangered children and one of the most gracious and winsome speakers you will ever encounter. He will encourage and challenge the Carmel family to boldly live lives that ABIDE in Christ to BUILD relationships and LIVE the Gospel with EVERYTHING.



Carmel is committed to making disciples of those Nearest, our Neighbors and the Nations.

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