



Atlanta Church of Christ in Gwinnett

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The birds of the air come and perch in its branches.

- Matthew 13:32

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In this issue: New opportunities to learn and grow! – p. 1
Sobering questions for our hearts – p. 2
Catching up with Travis Keating – p. 3-4
Celebrating with the Women Who Walk – p. 5

New journeys await!

On August 17th-18th, Dr. Tim Sumerlin introduced us to Disciples InMotion, a counseling program that equips us to help ourselves & one another overcome the obstacles that hinder us in our walk with God.



Beginning Sunday, September 29th, everyone is invited to meet from 8:30-9:45 a.m. every Sunday for nine weeks at Meadowcreek High School; each session will include a general group meeting with a lesson focused on how Jesus heals, followed by very small group meetings where everyone gets the opportunity to share whatever is on his or her heart in complete confidentiality. Participants will need to purchase a \$10 workbook to follow along with the class. It promises to be life-changing!

But that isn't the only great opportunity for growth coming this fall—



Financial Peace classes begin September 15th; the next Grief Journey group begins meeting September 22nd; and Dynamic Marriage meetings begin October 13th. You can still sign up! For more information about any of these groups, please check your email, or ask Mike and Chloe Rowell (Disciples InMotion), Thomas and Jenifer Hood (Financial Peace), Steve and Barb Collier (Grief Journey), or Glenn and Sheila Hayes (Dynamic Marriage). Here's to where our new journeys will take us!

What Are We Without Love?

I have been studying 1 Corinthians over the last several months, and realize that the more I learn, the more I find I don't know. So, I want to share something that I have been thinking about a lot lately. Do I really understand what it means to love?

You might well be very familiar with 1 Corinthians, and know that the Corinthian church was struggling in several areas: unity, Christian liberty, the concept of marriage, the Lord's table, spiritual gifts, the resurrection, and money. Paul, of course, addresses each of these areas throughout the book, but then he does something interesting in chapter 13. The Holy Spirit stops to describe love, and to impart that without this kind of love, all we do and all we are comes to nothing. His point seems to be that, in view of all he has been addressing in this letter, none of it matters if it is not changed in a spirit of true love.

As I read 1 Corinthians 13 again, it struck me that my own understanding of love is still very worldly. It is incomplete at best, and selfish at worst. As with the Corinthians, the issue seems to be that so much of what I do is not necessarily rooted in love—and so, as Paul says, the danger is that in the end the things I do are meaningless. I am but a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal, and though I may have understanding and faith, without love I am nothing.

This is a sobering thought, and it led back to the Spirit's description of love: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7, ESV). After reading this again, I realized that I have work to do.

And I asked myself: Am I really striving to be patient and kind in all my interactions – personal and professional? How often do I allow myself to be envious of others, or worse, to brag and possibly evoke jealousy in them? Can I be arrogant or act rudely at times, not exhibiting good manners, not being considerate of others, but instead insisting on my own way of doing things, or that I am right and they are wrong? Have I allowed myself to become irritable or resentful when I don't get my way? Have I rejoiced over what I know to be wrong, instead of remaining focused on seeking out goodness and truth in the world? Am I really willing to deal with things as they come up, without getting upset because the situation isn't how I imagined it? Am I willing to believe in the good of people instead of focusing on their shortcomings? Do I keep my hope set on higher things instead of getting sucked down into the mire of worldly living? Am I able to endure hardship without shutting down and becoming self-centered?

– Alex Neumann

Catching up with...



Travis Keating

Where are you from originally? What would you like people to know about where you're from?

I was born in Philadelphia, right outside New Jersey; we moved South in 1996 because my parents wanted another kid and wanted to raise us in a different atmosphere, and to get away from the snow. Plus, they liked the lower living expenses here.

How did you come to live in the Atlanta area?

I was raised here in Lawrenceville—in the same house I live in now. We visit up there now and then because we have a lot of other relatives up there. I love my family! My mom is one of eight children—you get them all together and it's crazy. All eight are married with kids, covering a huge age range; my youngest cousin is three, and the oldest is in their 30s. We were all together for my grandma's funeral two years ago. One of my cousins is a catcher for UGA, so his family just moved here and we see them more often; they stay with us when they come to visit him. The other side of the family is much smaller—only my dad and my uncle.

What do you do for a living? How did you come to be in that field?

I do inventory control and purchasing for a company that outfits service vans, putting shelving in vans for plumbers, electricians, etc. My dad is a business consultant for the same company, and has worked there for as long as I can remember. He told me from the time I was a junior in high school, "You're going to work." I worked in their warehouse for most of college; I got my degree in computer programming, but by the time I figured out I didn't want to work in computers, I only had two semesters left, so I went ahead and finished. So now I work in inventory control and purchasing.

Tell us how you first got involved with disciples – what was your first impression of them and of the church?

I was met by Malachi Groover on my first day on campus at GGC. I knew Malachi in high school, and thought he was inviting me to the same church he went to then. I studied with him and Fred, and at first, when they talked about confessing sins to one another, I said, "I like you, but I don't know you like that, so—no." But then Fred confessed all his stuff, and I thought, "Okay, now I have to." At the time I was getting disillusioned with the church I'd been going to—I worked in the soundbooth there, and saw how they were, both in and out of church. It was a major production, and it was all about numbers. I butted heads with the pastors as a volunteer in the student ministry; they were looking for warm bodies, so if you passed the background check, it was "Now you're a small group leader; here you go with your group of kids." It felt like daycare! So the timing came together perfectly—I was done with that church while I was doing the studies. Still, it was tough because my parents used to go to that church, but now they just recently left for similar reasons.

What has surprised you most about life as a disciple?

I thought that it would fix everything—but no, it didn't. Some things are easier, others are harder. Being a disciple has made it easier to deal with hard times, because I can let things go. Dealing with family is hard as the only disciple, especially discussing certain doctrines—they know what I believe; they used to debate me about it, but, "This is what it is." At work, it's harder to get close relationships because a lot of guys at work don't want to hear about it. It's good that I have disciples to hang out with, brothers I'm close with that I can rely on.

What lesson have you learned as a disciple that still helps you today?

When it comes to certain things I can't control, I can let it go; you just do all you can, be obedient; and it's up to God to take care of everything else. "Why is it taking so long? I did all I can"—so then you let it go, and don't stress so much, though that's easier said than done. It's all in the book of Ecclesiastes—some people think it's depressing, but not to me. It tells me I don't have to worry, that in the end it's worldly things so they don't matter, which is a relief. The best thing for us to do is to worship the Lord and enjoy the food of the labor and what God gives us. It's a book about contentment. Do what's in your power and let the rest go—it really helped me with work issues, and other things you can't control.

What do you wish other people outside the church knew about following Jesus?

It's a book about contentment. Do what's in your power and let the rest go—it really helped me with work issues, and other things you can't control.

What has your biggest challenge been in following Jesus? How do you deal with it?

Forming deeper one-another relationships, and accountability. It's not in my nature to reach out and talk to people, but it's crucial—we all need accountability. I've done it, but it's not easy. I have some social anxiety in large groups, but I'm dealing with it, talking with brothers I'm close to about it. They encourage me, and I'm also working with a counselor who is helping me, and gives me tools. Obviously it's not easy, but I'm learning new techniques, changing my mindset—I'm a work-in-progress, retraining the pathways in my brain, making gains.

What is your favorite scripture?

"Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life **because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.**" – Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 (ESV)

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I play D&D, sometimes with Ron—we switch off as dungeon masters. I also paint miniatures, and I play video games and board games.

What might someone be surprised to know about you?

Apart from the fact that I don't play basketball—people assume I do because of my height—I did a lot of mountain biking in high school. I had plenty of wrecks: bruised bones, hanging off cliffs, with my dad and uncle pulling me back to safety—now, I see it's crazy. One time I went up into the mountains in Kentucky and was biking on a trail less than three feet wide with a cliff on one side; I had an accident I still don't remember—lost my memory of that whole week. I woke up in the hospital with a concussion and a double compound fracture to my left arm. They couldn't set the break, so I drove back to Georgia for surgery; it took 13 screws and metal plates to fix it. Spent two years in a cast—I was still in that cast when Malachi invited me to church—but there was no damage to the bike. I took it as a sign: "Not mountain biking anymore." I still miss it.

If you could speak to yourself as you were ten years ago, what advice would you give yourself?

I don't know; everything bad and good led me to where I am now. Everything comes together, everything happens for a reason. Why would I want to change it?

Celebrate!

On Monday, September 9th, the Women Who Walk met at Sugarloaf Mills Mall as usual to get some healthy fellowship along with healthy exercise. But this time, after their walk, they didn't head back to their usual routines—they took the opportunity to treat Fredria Sterling to lunch to celebrate her birthday (which had come the day before). They had a great time together at Shoney's! Take a look—



With thanks to Sherry Rouse for pictures and information!



We welcome news and pictures on interesting personal stories, family group activities, and more. Please send them to Nancy Berry, nberry2@gmail.com. Thank you!

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