

What God Taught Me on Sabbatical

2 Peter 3:18 – August 9, 2026

Back to School Sermon Series

ASKING FOR A FRIEND	
Seeking Answers to Questions That We All Want to Ask	
Date	Message Title
Aug 16	PROBLEM OF EVIL: If God is Good and All-Powerful, Then Why is There So Much Suffering, Disease, and Tragedy in the World?
Aug 23	OUT-DATED BOOK: Doesn't the Bible's Views About Slavery and Women Make It Unreliable and Not Relevant for Today?
Aug 30	HYPOCRITES: Why Should I Come to Church When It's Made Up of a Bunch of Hypocrites?
Sept 6	INTOLERANCE: Isn't It Intolerant and Unfair to Claim That Jesus is the Only Way to Heaven? What About Other Religions? What About Good People Who Have Never Heard of Jesus?
Sept 13	SCIENCE: How Do You Reconcile Scientific Evidence Like Evolution with the Creation Story? Don't Science and the Bible Contradict Each Other?
Sept 20	PURPOSE: What on Earth Am I Here For? What is My Purpose?

Overview of My Sabbatical

- **Goal of sabbatical:** After 30 years at Grace Fellowship, spend 90 days seeking to restore my soul, fill my tank, sharpen my saw, rest, be, grow in skills, be with my family, be alone, recharge my batteries, and press into Jesus in order to glorify God and in order to be an effective pastor in my final season of ministry as senior pastor of Grace Fellowship.

Key Trips

Date	Trip	Date	Trip
May 5-6	156-mile bike ride to Austin	July 12-19	Lake Buchanan
May 8-14	NYC to meet Anna	July 21-29	Aspen
May 27-31	Florida family wedding		
June 7-13	Pine Cove with 5 grandkids	All other dates	Home sabbatical office and back porch
June 25-28	NYC to Noah's Ark to Katy		

Training Courses Taken:

- (1) "The Art of Preaching" by Carey Nieuwhof
- (2) Spiritual Direction – personal training for the spiritual life

Books Read

The One Year Bible (3 months)	Tame Your Thoughts (Lucado)	At Your Best (C. Nieuwhof)
None Like Him (Wilkin)	Come Help Change the World	Philippians (James M. Boice)
In His Image (Wilkin)	Killers of the Flower Moon (DG)	The Glory of Christ (Owen)
The God Catchers (Tenney)	The Widow (Grisham)	Becoming Like Jesus (MC)
Little House (first two books)	The First Time I Saw Him (LD)	Woodrow Wilson (Cooper)
Revolution (Eric Metaxas)	Theo of Golden (Allen Levi)	Legacy Letters (C. Hodges)

- Thank you, Grace Fellowship, for the gift of this sabbatical!!!!

The Main Thing God Taught Me on Sabbatical (2 Peter 3:18)

- Be a person who never stops growing until the day you die.
- Following Jesus means never graduating from growth.
- If you're still breathing, then God is still growing you.

As long as your heart is **going**, keep your spirit **growing**.

Four Ways to Keep Growing (This is the outline of 2 Peter)

1. Grow in spiritual maturity by **knowing Jesus** (1:2-8)

- Notice how many times that Peter uses the word "knowledge" here (1:2,3,6,8).
- Verse 3 makes it clear that we grow in life and godliness (spiritual maturity) through knowing Jesus.
- What God taught me on sabbatical: A deep dive into the attributes of God through journaling and through studying 4 books:
 - Jen Wilkin's "*None Like Him: 10 Ways God is Different From Us*" – ten of God's incommunicable attributes: God is infinite, incomprehensible, self-existent, self-sufficient, eternal, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, sovereign.
 - Jen Wilkin's "*In His Image: 10 Ways God Calls Us to Reflect His Character*" – ten of God's communicable attributes: God is most holy, most loving, most good, most just, most merciful, most gracious, most faithful, most patient, most truthful, most wise.
 - John Owen's "The Glory of Christ"
 - Terry Johnson's "The Identity and Attributes of God"
- The #1 attribute of God that I grew in knowing: The glory of God. Notice that God's glory is the attribute that Peter highlights in his concluding summary of his letter (2 Peter 3:18).
- What is the glory of God?
- God's glory is the visible manifestation of His infinite beauty, perfection, and character. It represents the weight and grandeur of His Presence, encompassing all of His attributes – such as His holiness, love, justice, and power – made evident to humanity through creation, His actions in history, and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Sneak peak of September 20: We will discover how our purpose in life centers around the glory of God. You become what you behold (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:2). So, spend your time and energy beholding Jesus in order to become more like Him.

2. Grow in grace and knowledge by **digging into God's Word** (1:18-21)

- Verse 19 says that we are to pay attention to God's Word like we would to a lamp shining in a very dark place.
- Michael Houdmann: "The image of the prophetic word as a light shining in a dark place is particularly striking. It suggests that the more sure word of prophecy functions like a beacon, illuminating the path for believers in a world filled with confusion and spiritual darkness. Just as light brings clarity and safety in a dark environment, so does Scripture reveal God's truth and guide believers away from error and danger."
- "pay attention" = *prosecho* = "give your undivided attention to"
- What God taught me on sabbatical: 90 days of Bible reading
 - May 14: Saul thought too little of himself (1 Samuel 15:17)
 - June 18: Elijah and the gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:12)
- Some gentle whispers that I heard during sabbatical
 - "I love you, Jim. You are My son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)
 - "The Spirit of My Son lives inside of you. This is your hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)
 - "Get to know Me. Study My attributes. Experience My attributes. Especially My glory."
 - "Even when you can't see it, I am working" (the Lord's 7000)
 - "Trust Me for all of West Houston and for 10 UPGs."
 - "Love Lisa like I love My church." (Ephesians 5:25-33)
 - "Finish preaching all 66."
- Sneak peek of 2026-2027: Deuteronomy ("Remember"), 1 & 2 Chronicles ("Chronicles of Revival"), 2 John, 3 John, and Nahum.
- Sneak peek of August 23: We will get to know Nashon (Numbers 7:12). There is something very profound about his life and faith.

3. Grow in grace and knowledge by **rejecting the lies of the world** (2:1-3)

- The Apostle Peter was warning his listeners against the destructive voices of the world that were trying to exploit them and turn their attention away from the truth of God's Word.
- Four Trojan horses in 2026:
 - (1) HORSE #1: The relentless distraction of digital culture and social media that floods our minds with endless scrolling and polarizing voices that effectively silence deep spiritual focus and conviction.
 - (2) HORSE #2: The "prosperity gospel" that distorts grace, commercializes faith, and prioritizes material gain over spiritual growth.
 - (3) HORSE #3: The culture of relativism that urges believers to tone down and soften biblical, absolute truths for the sake of comfort, societal acceptance, and influence.
 - (4) HORSE #4: The constant accusation of internal voices that replay past mistakes, negative family of origin messages, and comparison with others driving people toward despair rather than God's grace.

- What God taught me on sabbatical: The paradigm of the Kingdom of God is radically different from the world. Upside down Jonathan. Beatitude study in Matt Chandler's "Becoming Like Jesus."
- Sneak peek of August 30: We will examine how a young prophet listened to the wrong voice and the needless tragedy that resulted (1 Kings 13).

4. Grow in grace and knowledge by **watching diligently for Christ's Return** (3:8-15a)

- Jesus will return at a time and date that we do not know. His Return will drastically surprise people. We must be ready for His Return by living godly lives and sharing our faith with those who do not know Him yet. This is what it means to "watch" for His Return (Luke 12:35-40; 21:34-36)
- What God taught me on sabbatical: The urgency of the Great Commission as I reread Bill Bright's "Come Help Change the World."
- I want to dedicate my remaining years of ministry to getting RADICAL about helping fulfill the Great Commission and asking God for unreached peoples as my inheritance (Psalm 2:8).
- The local church is God's Plan A for fulfilling the Great Commission, and He does not have a Plan B.
- Sneak peek of September 6: We will wrestle with the urgency that if Jesus is the only way to the Father, then we must get RADICAL about telling the world about Jesus.

My Application Question Today – How will I grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ this Fall and for the rest of my life?

- ☐ I'm going to study the attributes of God seeking to know Him more by reading a book on the attributes of God.
- ☐ I'm going to plug into a group at Grace Fellowship that is studying God's Word.
- ☐ I'm going to listen for the gentle whisper of God's voice through a daily Bible reading plan and through times of silent listening and journaling.
- ☐ I'm going to guard my life and family against the world's Trojan horses by purposefully spending way less time on my phone and digital world and by spending significantly more time with the people I love and with God.
- ☐ I'm going to approach my responsibilities as "get-to" privileges rather than "have-to" chores.
- ☐ I'm going to live as though Jesus is coming back this week!!!
- ☐ I'm going to get radical about telling others about how to have forgiveness of their sins and to have eternal life through Jesus Christ.
- ☐ I'm going to come to the "Asking for a Friend" series myself every single Sunday, and I'm going to invite someone to attend with me.

Bottom Line: As long as your heart is going, keep your spirit growing.