

GRACE CLASSICAL ACADEMY

··· Κατανῶμεν ···

Let us consider...



#keeponnotquitting by Luke Shawhan

Mr. Shawhan teaches 7th–12th grade classes at GCA and has been at the school since 2012.

My mother has lost over 100 pounds in her lifetime—twice. She leads Weight Watchers classes, and one of the ways she encourages her groups is to #keeponnotquitting. You know, baby steps. Just put one foot in front of the other. No one loses significant amounts of weight overnight. They must commit to the journey of building new habits and rejecting old temptations.

But, there is this age old problem when it comes to losing weight—and any other task worth doing—it's hard! Sometimes the scales don't look like the work put in. Coworkers bring in donuts. Drive thrus are easier than cooking. The list can go on.

Our church has been reading through the Gospel of Mark. As I have read, I try to pay attention to the different kinds of responses Jesus receives for his teaching and miracles. Depending on the group of people,

The mission of Grace Classical Academy is to provide an education designed to help our children know the love, grace, truth, and holiness of our glorious God and, from this understanding, strive for excellence in knowledge, wisdom, and service.

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the response is different. There are the crowds, scribes and Pharisees, hometown folk, demons, and the disciples. The crowds are repeatedly astonished by Jesus' actions. But, they do not understand what they see. They keep asking, "Who is this Jesus?" But, they don't seem to take the next step to understand the answer to their question. Next, there are the scribes and Pharisees. They also experience shock but are more aghast than astonished. They are ready to kill Jesus at the beginning of chapter 3.

In chapter 6, Mark gives his readers a picture of how Jesus was perceived in his hometown. At this point in the story, Jesus has cast out demons, raised a little girl from the dead, healed a man with a withered hand, and calmed a great storm. Jesus comes home and teaches. The townspeople respond, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him." Notice the confusion: where did he get these things? This confusion is understandable: Jesus grew up with them. They thought they knew him. "Yeah, he is the carpenter." But, they don't actually know him. They don't understand him. So, they are offended by him and refuse to believe his teachings. They quit on Jesus. Jesus actually doesn't perform any miracles there due to their lack of faith.

Strikingly, there is only one group of beings who fully understand Jesus. They know who He is, where He is from, and what He plans to do. One of them articulates it very well, "I know who you are—the Holy One of God." This group is the unclean spirits and demons. They had total knowledge of God's plan, but still opposed Him at every opportunity. I try to remind myself of this when I struggle to be faithful due to a lack of understanding. Trying to understand everything about a situation does not necessarily increase my faith, so it may not be a good worth seeking.

Finally, there are the disciples—notorious for their confusion. Imagine the moment with Jesus teaching the 5,000. You are one of the twelve. You check the position of the sun; it's getting late. Your stomach rumbles. You did not pack any food and neither did your buddies. You can hear children calling to

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their parents, asking for food. The Sunday service lunch timer rings in your ear. “When is Jesus ever going to finish?” Finally, you get a chance to say something to Him. “Jesus, we need to let these people go. They need food.” Then Jesus responds, “*You give them something to eat.*” Talk about a confusing, astonishing statement. Nearly a year’s worth of salary won’t buy enough food for these people! But, instead of walking away, taking offense, or plotting murder, you keep on not quitting. You think to yourself, *I have seen him do other unfathomable deeds. I guess I will try.* Can you imagine the conversations the disciples had? “Alright, let’s go around and see what food we have available.” So you go and search and tell people that Jesus wants them to bring all their food to him. You have no clue what Jesus is going to do; all you know is to do the next right thing. So, you collect the food (all five loaves and two fish), give what you have to Him, and trust Him with the results. With this formula, you get to witness a miracle. Thousands of people fed: all due to a lunch a boy brought and the obedience of the disciples to the sovereign God.

The feeding of the 5,000 is not the only moment of confusion for the disciples. They don’t understand Jesus when he tells the parable of the sower, but they ask for explanation. Later, Jesus tells them to beware the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees, and they start discussing their own hunger. At one point, Jesus explains the eternal plan of His death and resurrection, and they try to talk Him out of it! Later, Jesus is arrested, and they scatter.

But, after each of these events, they do not quit following Jesus. Even though they are confused, even though their hearts were hard (6:52), even though Jesus chastises them (8:17-21), even though Jesus calls them “Satan.” Even after his death, they gather together. The disciples are marked with blunder after blunder. But, they do not quit following Jesus, being obedient, and doing the next right thing.

I don’t know about you, but I find much encouragement from this reality. On the cross, God purchased and sealed our salvation. All He asks for us is to stay faithful, be obedient, do the next right thing, #keeponnotquitting. Whatever this looks like—picking back up with spiritual disciplines even though you have not opened your Bible app in a month, pursuing your spouse when the marriage looks rough, drilling spelling words with your child even when they seem to melt down on test day, demanding discipline from and loving a difficult teenager—God is faithful in these moments. All He asks is that we give Him our meager “lunch” and trust Him to work with the crumbs of our faithfulness. So, let us #keeponnotquitting with whatever situation He has placed us in. Even if we don’t understand, it will be worth it.

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Staff Birthdays

December

12/26—Tracy Mercer

January

01/20—Lisa Loyd

01/30—Jedidiah Moss



February

02/01—Jeanette Johnson

02/04—Phil Mendenhall

02/15—Angela Bounds

02/24—Janelle Schriver

March

03/25—Crystal Strong

03/30—Luke Shawhan

Matching Gift Opportunity

It has been and continues to be an amazing thing to watch God bless this school! I could fill hours (no exaggeration!) telling you stories of how God's provision has been a faith-building, ever-present reality in my life and the life of this school, and I want these stories to glorify Him while encouraging others. He has provided teachers and families and students and a building and finances. He continues to show that He is Jehovah Jirah—Our Provider.

This year, I have once again received a matching gift challenge for the 2020-2021 school year from one of our grandparents at the school. God has given him a vision for GCA to be debt free, and he has generously agreed to match every dollar that is given up to \$10,000. This would allow GCA to receive \$20,000 total if another \$10,000 is given by the end of the current school year. But wait there's more! :-). Another family has agreed to match the next \$10,000 (for a total of \$40,000) and yet another family has agreed to match the next \$10,000 for a possibility of \$60,000! I am humbled and amazed at how God uses His children to do His work. Paying down our debt will allow us to be able to bless our teachers in greater ways in the future, so if you feel led to give to this cause, please let me know and put "PAY DOWN DEBT" in the memo of any check given for this purpose. As of the printing of this newsletter, we have received \$16,600 (for a total of \$33,200 with the matching).

All of these blessings (both past and future), I do not hesitate to acknowledge as coming from the gracious hand of our Lord Jesus through His faithful and obedient servants. We offer our praise and thanksgiving to Him and pray His blessings on those who obey His leading.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of this great adventure!

With a grateful and overflowing heart,
Jedidiah Moss

Christmas Blessing

What an amazing time of year! This time of year is a treasure trove for educators. It involves all the senses—smell (Christmas trees or cinnamon or baking ham), taste (eggnog or gingerbread or baked ham), touch (the feeling of a blazing fireplace, the feeling of a warm cup of hot chocolate in your hand, or the feeling of baked ham fumes permeating your being—Do you see a trend here? I love ham!), hearing (Do I even need to give you an example? Christmas has its own soundtrack.), sight (the manger, the star, Christmas trees, lights, angels, the baby Jesus). Every educator knows that the more senses you involve, the more impact it has on students. But, although all these things are exciting and trigger memories in an instant, they are not what make this season so great.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.
All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.
In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...
The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world...
But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name,
he gave the right to become children of God...
And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory,
glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...
For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.
(John 1:1-5, 9, 12, 14, 16)*

The “Light of the World” came into this world in “the fullness of time” and in humility in a stable in Bethlehem, so that one day He could end up on the cross as He bore the punishment for our sins and brought salvation to mankind. This is what makes this an amazing time of year!

I pray that God blesses each of you this Christmas and that each of you rejoice in the celebration of His birth!

Around the School



We have had a wonderful school year up to this point. Enjoy some pictures from the classroom, America the Beautiful Day, Class Act Day, the kickball and speedball Tournaments, and History Day!



1st-8th History Day





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Return Service Requested

December 2020

1	Tuition Due
4	Elementary Christmas Choir Concert: 7:00
7-16	7th-12th Grade Finals
17	Christmas Dress Day All School Chapel Early Out: 11:25
18	First Day of Christmas Break
25	Christmas Day
31	New Year's Eve

January 2021

1	Tuition Due
4-5	Christmas Break Teacher Training
6	First Day of 3rd Quarter
18	MLK Jr. Day: No School
28	High School History Day
29	Camo Day

February 2021

1	Tuition Due
9-10	Optional Parent- Teacher Conferences
18	President's Day: No School
19	Junior High Drama Production of <i>Seussical, Jr.</i> : 6:30
26	Literary Lads and Lasses Day