

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...



WHO LOVES YOU?

JOE HUNT



EDITING AND INTRODUCTION BY
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Who Loves You?

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Joe Hunt

Edited and with Introduction and Eulogy
by
Joe Griffin



Joe Griffin Media Ministries

St. Charles, Missouri

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Contents

Foreword.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
<u>Part One: Bad News, Good News</u>	5
This Was Not on My Day-Timer	7
“Who Loves You, Baby?”.....	9
For Those Who Do Not Choose Christ	19
For Those Who Have Chosen Christ.....	19
<u>Part Two: Trails to Treasure</u>	21
“Do Your Duty”	23
Do You Know the Way to Santa Fé?	24
My Own <i>Jornada del Muerto</i>	27
“Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven, but Nobody Wants to Die” ...	28
Pressing on toward the Prize	34
Winner- and Loser-Believers	35
The Nike Awards.....	37
My Desire for You	43
“Who Loves You?”	46
Suggested Bible Study Resources.....	49
About the Author	51
Bible Verses – <i>Who Loves You?</i>	53
The Eulogy of Joseph Anthony Hunt.....	61
Epilogue	85
Titles of MP3 Files: 1989 Basics	86
MP3 Disk: <i>1989 Basics</i>	Inside back cover

Foreword

Dear reader:

My father was a man of integrity, love, and dedication. This book is a condensation of his heart and soul. To have had Joe Hunt for a father is a blessing that is truly wonderful, a blessing that continues to provide encouragement and inspiration.

“Who loves you, baby?” is Dad’s legacy. Within these pages, his wisdom and its applications to daily life will hopefully guide many toward the Christian way of life. My father wrote this book with you in mind. He was passionate about Bible doctrine and wanted everyone to give the gospel of Jesus Christ an objective hearing.

I know Dad would agree that life is too short to not live it to the fullest. He knew this was not possible without a personal knowledge of Scripture. This book was written for you because he loved you. Joe Hunt was able to love all mankind because he first loved God. He loved God because He first loved him.

In Christ,

Nicki Hunt Jacobsmeyer
O’Fallon, Missouri
April 2016

Introduction

Joe Hunt was my friend. I first met him in 1986 when he and his family joined Grace Doctrine Church. His gregarious personality was immediately infectious and his organizational skills soon made him an obvious choice for the Board of Deacons, on which he served for many years. This decision was validated most recently by his work as chairman of the New Facilities Committee, which ultimately led to the purchase of property upon which now stands our new church.

Joe and I were Seamheads. We each suffer from a bipolar disorder common to many in St. Louis known as Cardinal Fan. For two decades we made the pilgrimage to old Busch Stadium for regular- and post-season games, where we exulted in victory and agonized in defeat. We even lowered ourselves on one occasion to attend an interleague game. These were good times past when fond memories were made. We were looking forward to the 2006 season, and the excitement of watching the Cardinals play in new Busch Stadium for many years to come. But, suddenly, something happened that permanently changed our plans.

Joe learned in late October of 2005 that he had terminal cancer. He immediately appealed to his brother Tim and me for help. His plea had nothing to do with his illness but rather his passionate desire to reach out to those whom his soul loves. Beyond his large family, Joe knew numerous people in

the St. Louis area—hundreds of friends in both church and community and thousands of associates from his years of employment with Color-Art. It was decided that he should put his thoughts in writing. This book is the result, but it does not dwell on the fact that Joe was dying. Instead, it emphasizes the reasons why he had no problem with it.

Joe and his entire family had been members of Grace Doctrine Church for twenty years. What attracted them was the importance we place on Bible study. The premise is that if a Christian learns what God has revealed in Scripture it will change his life. It's one thing to proclaim this but quite another to execute it in real life. Joe proved the veracity of this proposition, especially over the course of his last few months.

Joe approached his worship at our church with the kind of dedication I would hope characterizes each of my parishioners: he was consistent in his attendance; he concentrated on what is taught; he made every effort to apply it to his life. The spiritual payback from this process was demonstrated by the end result. Knowing he was going to die, Joe remained the same happy person he was the day before he heard the news. How this became possible for Joe and can become so for others is the central message of this book. It was his desire that those he loved would also acquire the same hunger and thirst for the Word of God that motivated and sustained him. It was Joe's contention that his inventory of biblical truths prepared him to accept his imminent death with a tranquility of soul sustained by the confident expectation of life eternal promised to those who believe in Christ.

The perfect English word to describe Joe's disposition is magnanimity. It is derived from the Latin and means "great-

ness of soul.” English definitions expand on the idea: “a lofty and courageous spirit enabling one to bear trouble calmly” and “that dignity of soul which encounters danger and trouble with tranquility and firmness.” These are the qualities that describe how Joe lived and how he died. The story that unfolds on the following pages insures that his legacy will continue long after his promotion to be with the Lord, thus fulfilling the Latin proverb *triumpho morte tam vita*: triumphant in death as in life.

Growing up, my best friend was my next-door neighbor. He, too, was a Seamhead. As we grew in grace and learned about the plan of God we once had a discussion about when, from our human viewpoint, would be the ideal time to die. We decided on February since football would be over and baseball not yet begun. At age 51, my friend, Bo Gaylard, died in the middle of a baseball diamond while umpiring a high school game. It was February. I miss Bo. Now, I miss Joe Hunt. But I miss them most of all whenever I hear the umpire call, “Play ball!”

Joe Griffin, Pastor
Grace Doctrine Church
St. Charles, Missouri
August 2010

Part One

**BAD NEWS,
GOOD NEWS**

This Was Not on My Day-Timer

At 10 o'clock on Saturday morning, October 29, 2005, I sat down in my living room and in a wink of an eye my human life here on earth changed dramatically. All my life I have been blessed with the ability to talk, communicate, and laugh with those around me. You could say I have the "gift of gab." But suddenly I could not speak a word and before the day was done I found myself in Chesterfield, Missouri's St. Luke's Hospital going through a battery of tests to determine why I was unable to do what always came easily for me. Within a few days a team of neurologists gave me the answer. I was diagnosed with a Grade IV astrocytoma, an aggressive brain tumor that, according to the doctors, would soon end my life.

This was not something that I could organize, as I do with everything else in my life. I thought to myself, how could this be? I'm active. I run and exercise several times a week. I'm in excellent health. I have a wonderful family: my devoted wife, Dee Dee; two beautiful and loving daughters, Nicki and Kelly; a son-in-law, Ryan, whom I love; and a precious little grandson, Andrew Joseph, born to Nicki and Ryan on February 2, 2006. I have so much going for me and so much to live for. Life is good! Then suddenly I had to come to grips with the fact that the end of my wonderful time here

on earth is drawing to a close, and my eternal destiny is no longer a matter of faith but a fast-approaching reality.

I don't mind telling you it takes some time to orient and adjust from having a "normal life" to accepting the fact that you are about to die. But, for me, it took about a day to come to the conclusion that I am good with this. There's no question that I face a challenging situation. There are details that have to be addressed to make sure my affairs are in order, but this is a small problem. People die instantly in freeway accidents every day with no time to make such preparations. So, I'm fortunate that I have the luxury of saying good-bye to my family and friends.

Many today believe that there is no life after death, that human life on this lonely planet is all there is and, once finished, there is nothing more. I can tell you that if I believed this I would not possess the peace of mind that I enjoy today. I have great expectations of a magnificent transfer from time into eternity. I look forward to riding the crest of the wave of God's perfect plan into the promised eternal destiny that He has prepared for me.

This book is my way of conveying to all whom I love so dearly my thoughts about dying, and why I am okay with it. This attitude did not just come to me out of the blue, but is the culmination of twenty-five years of following a plan that prepared me for this moment. In the following pages I want to share with you some of the things I've learned about this plan and how you can come to know it too.

“Who Loves You, Baby?”

Joe-Moe does! And because I do love you, I want to ask you a question: If you were to die tonight and God were to ask you, “On what grounds should I allow you entry into My heaven,” what would you say? Would you respond, “Because I have been a good person and led a good life?” Or, “I attended church regularly and took the Eucharist?” Or would you tell God the reason is, “Because I was baptized as a child?” According to God’s Word, none of these is the right answer, although there was a time when I would have given the same responses. But then one day, I learned that I had a problem none of these good deeds could overcome. I had made the assumption that I could acquire favor from God as a result of things I do. But, God is perfect and I am imperfect and a righteous God cannot have a relationship with anything imperfect. The fact we are imperfect creatures presents an intractable problem between God and us. In fact, *the* problem we all face is that of original sin. It turns out our original parent, Adam, sinned when he chose to eat of Eden’s forbidden fruit and, because he is the father of the human race, his sinful nature was passed down to me.

For as through the one man’s disobedience
[Adam’s original sin], the many [the human
race] were made sinners. (Romans 5:19a)¹

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Bible references are from *The Scofield Study Bible, New American Standard Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Bracketed commentary correlates the quotation with the topic at hand from the Bible class lectures of my pastor, Joe Griffin.

So as a result of this original sin, we are *all* born spiritually dead, separated from God, and in need of a Savior.

Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and [spiritual] death through sin, and so [spiritual] death spread to all men, because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)

Because of this spiritual death, I learned I did not have a relationship with God. Why? Because a righteous God cannot have fellowship with any creature who is unrighteous and Adam's sin made me unrighteous in the eyes of perfect God.

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. (James 2:10)

Since I have sinned, I am guilty of all. This eliminates any system of good works on my part to resolve the problem since a guilty person cannot do *anything* to make himself innocent. I was in a hopeless situation and helpless to do anything about it. I realized that if there was a solution to my dilemma then it had to be one provided solely by God. And if God provided it, then it could not in any way compromise His integrity. It would be His plan, accomplished through His work, and made available from His love.

Here is what I have learned about the integrity of God: His righteousness condemns anything that is unrighteous and demands that His justice judge it. On the other hand, I have learned that His righteousness approves what is righteous and demands that justice bless it. If unrighteous mankind is to

become righteous, then God's grace must initiate the process and man must have the ability to accept or reject the offer.

God is always fair. In His grace, He provided a way for me to acquire His righteousness. First of all, I have the power to choose. I have free will. I can think rationally. I am able to take in information, analyze it, and draw conclusions. With this power I can accept or reject the propositions that are communicated to me. However, I am responsible and accountable for these decisions. If I am to make good choices, then I must have all the information I need to do so. I am convinced beyond a doubt that a just and fair God provided me all the information I needed to resolve my sin problem and acquire divine righteousness. This provision comes to me through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

God made Jesus, Who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:22-23)

He who believes in Jesus is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

I believed in Him! I believed that He took my sins upon Himself and was willingly judged for them in my place. Because of this I have been made righteous before the justice of God. I have been vindicated by the work of the perfect, impeccable, innocent Jesus of Nazareth Whom God resurrected from the dead into eternal life.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
(John 3:16)

“Whoever” means you and me: anyone, though spiritually dead at physical birth, can believe in Jesus Christ and possess eternal life. This is possible because of the Lord’s impeccability. He is eternal God, undiminished deity, coequal and coeternal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He took on true humanity on that first Christmas Day. Because He was born of a virgin means that he was not imputed Adam’s original sin and was therefore born without a sinful nature. This made Him uniquely qualified as perfect humanity to go to the cross impeccable, “without spot or blemish,” to be judged for our sins:

“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29b)

When, as an unbeliever, I placed my faith in Christ, God the Holy Spirit took the faith of a spiritually dead person and made it effective for my eternal salvation. God’s magnificent grace and undiminished love eliminated any system of works

that I could perform and granted salvation and eternal life to me.

The very fact of hearing and believing in the saving work of Christ was a nonmeritorious function of my volition. I was helpless, impotent, and incompetent, unable and incapable of doing anything for salvation. God the Father was impressed with only the work of Jesus Christ. This is the concept of Paul's presentation of the Gospel to the Ephesians:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that [salvation is] not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The saving work of our Lord was accomplished entirely on the cross as indicated by His statement:

“It is finished [in the past with results that go on forever]!” (John 19:30*b*)

This means the judgment of our sins was completed at that moment. Nothing more is necessary to remove our sin problem. Nothing more than faith in Christ is required in order to be saved. Any attempt to add something more, such as, commitment, baptism, church membership, making Christ Lord, inviting Christ into one's heart, or any other category of human works, does not result in salvation for it is “not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:9).

Salvation does not depend on any human activity, any energy of the flesh, or human dynamics of any kind. Faith

alone in Christ alone is the issue. How did I receive eternal life? By believing in Jesus Christ as my Savior. I believe the Scripture is crystal clear on this point, so I want to share with you several passages that confirm it:

“Whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” (John 3:15)

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son, will not see [eternal] life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

Jesus said, “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.” (John 6:40).

Jesus said to her [Martha], “I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26).

Jesus said to him [Thomas], “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6).

These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have [eternal] life in His name. (John 20:31)

“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.” (Acts 16:31a)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” (Romans 1:16)

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Romans 3:28)

Now to the one who works [for salvation], his wages are not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to one who does not work [for salvation], but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly [spiritually dead], his faith is credited as righteousness. (Romans 4:4-5)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died [as a substitute] for us. (Romans 5:8)

“... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.” (Galatians 2:16)

For you are the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:26)

These passages make it abundantly clear Who loves you. Sure, I do. But God loved you first. We are able to love others because of this.

We love, because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

And He demonstrated His love for us by giving to the world His own Son. You can become the beneficiary of this love by making the decision to believe in Jesus Christ.

Over 25 years ago I made the most important decision of my life: to believe in Christ as my personal Savior. I ask you to examine your own soul and ask these questions: “Am I without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world?” “Do I reject the idea of an eternal destiny?” If your answer is

“yes” to each of these questions, then you have not made the most important decision there is in life.

You need to know that Jesus had you personally in mind when He went to the cross. Every sin that you have committed, or will commit, was imputed to Him and judged. This means that right now, you can have eternal life. It is as close to you as your own soul. The principle is very simple: in the privacy of your soul, you have the freedom to make a decision to believe in Christ. Salvation may be appropriated by faith alone in Christ alone, which may be summarized by this statement:

“I believe that Jesus is the Christ; that He was judged on the cross as a Substitute for my sins. I understand that anyone who believes this receives forgiveness of his sins, is given eternal life, and will go to heaven when he dies.”

If this is your true conviction, then you are a Christian with eternal life and your eternal destiny is certain. If it is not, then you will remain lost in your sins and under the wrath of God:

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36)

“Which way will you choose? You’ve got everything to gain; you’ve got everything to lose.”²

² From the song “Which Way Will You Choose?” by Ron Block. © 1996 by Moonlight Canyon Publishing. All rights reserved.

For Those Who Do Not Choose Christ

There may be those who have read this narrative thus far who have not been convinced about the claims of Christ. I've told you what I firmly believe, and I've backed it with biblical references. But I also know that what was true in the Lord's time is also true today: "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men" (Mark 7:8). This is your choice, and I respect it because grace demands that your volition remain free to accept or reject the Gospel of salvation. Thank you for hearing me out and allowing me the opportunity to convey what changed my life for the better, and what I truly believe would do the same for you should you ever reconsider Christ. Until then, you need not read further for what follows is directed toward those who have made the decision to believe in Christ for salvation and eternal life.

For Those Who Have Chosen Christ

Before I give you the rest of the story it is important for us, as believers in Jesus Christ, to be in fellowship with God and filled with the Holy Spirit, so we are able to understand the message of God's grace. In order to do that the Word of God gives us the unique prerogative of acknowledging our sins to God in the privacy of our souls.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

By doing this we are filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), restored to fellowship with God (1 John 1:6-7), and thus empowered to understand those things that the Spirit reveals to us in Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:1-14). It is my desire to convey to you the true happiness that I have acquired from my study of the Bible. If you will allow the Spirit to guide you as you read further, then you, too, may come to know the tranquility of soul I now enjoy.

Part Two

TRAILS TO TREASURE

“Do Your Duty”

When his eldest son was at West Point, Robert E. Lee wrote him a letter of fatherly advice and instruction. He counseled, among other things, “Duty is the sublimest Word in our language. Do your duty in all things. You cannot do more, you should never wish to do less.”³

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have entered into a new life as a member of God’s royal family and you are now a Christian. You might be asking yourself the question, “What does it mean to be a Christian and what is my duty?” I propose to you that your duty, while alive, is to grow in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). To do this you must consistently take in God’s immutable Word so that you can be filled with the knowledge of His will and advance to spiritual maturity (Colossians 1:9-14). This knowledge will prepare you to apply truth to the circumstances of life and provide the capacity to realize your blessings from God, for both time and eternity.

“Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of

³ H. W. Crocker III, *Robert E. Lee on Leadership: Executive Lessons in Character, Courage, and Vision* (Rocklin, CA: Forum, 1999), 187-88.

man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9)

Jesus said to His disciples:

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)

Consistent advance in the knowledge of God’s Word requires you to make the effort to learn it through consistent study at a local church:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13 KJV)

Do You Know the Way to Santa Fé?

Have you ever read the story of the Santa Fé Trail? It provides a great lesson and illustration for how believers should, and should not, live the Christian life. Before the West was won and tamed, there were rumors and stories about great trade and big money to be made in Santa Fé, Mexico. Businessmen from the East wanted to take advantage of this opportunity, so they set out to deliver their goods to this oasis

of profit. Merchandise was shipped out of St. Louis up the Missouri River to Kansas City where wagon trains would gather the cargo and head out to Santa Fé. However, at the beginning no one really knew the best way to get to Santa Fé. As these pioneers began their journey, not knowing the safest or easiest way to reach their destination, many of them failed. They ran into situations of no water, too much water, thousands of rattlesnakes, mountains, desert, quicksand, severe weather, hostile Indians, and terrain that was often impassable.

Ultimately the quickest route to Santa Fé was a leg of the journey that became known as the *Jornada del Muerto*, or the “journey of death.” This was a stretch of desert beginning at the Arkansas River near Cimarron, Kansas, spanning sixty miles to the Cimarron River in the southwestern corner of the state. Often arrival at the river found nothing but its empty bed sapped dry by prolonged drought to the west. But having gone this far they were forced to press forward through the present-day Oklahoma Panhandle with hopes of making it to Fort Union, (New) Mexico, where food and water awaited. After many attempts, and loss of life and treasure, these pioneers developed a path of least resistance that became known as the Cimarron Route, a trail which, if followed while making good decisions and assisted by divine Providence, would allow a wagon train to make it to Santa Fé—the hoped for Promised Land that held the prospect of great riches and glory.

The Christian’s prospect is eternal riches and glory in heaven—our spiritual Santa Fé. Our *Jornada del Muerto* is our time here on earth. How we ride this trail determines

whether we receive great rewards in eternity or suffer their loss.

Far too many Christians have lives filled with miseries they cannot bear, problems they cannot solve, and challenges they cannot manage. Sadly, they ride the trail of life with no idea of where they are going, no confidence in what they are doing, and no knowledge of what the journey is all about. They will spend eternity in heaven, but with no rewards for service rendered to the Lord.

Believers who are guided by the Word of God use its principles to make good decisions from a position of strength. They have lives filled with peace and contentment and enjoy great blessings and rewards in time and eternity.

Whether miserable or contented, all believers arrive in heaven, the former after having ridden the trail tattered, battered, and bewildered, the latter happy, serene, and relaxed. It is obviously a journey best taken with a full knowledge of God's Word and the wisdom it provides to face and endure the circumstances life presents.

During His thirty-three years on this earth, Jesus Christ, in His true humanity, remained impeccable. This perfection was sustained by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the Lord's application of biblical principles. Whether challenged by Lucifer himself, the Pharisees, Pontius Pilate, or even on occasion, His disciples, the Lord never sinned or failed under pressure. He succeeded by executing a unique spiritual life whose techniques are now available to every Christian and can enable each of them to advance to spiritual maturity.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set out be-

fore Him endured the cross, despising its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

My Own *Jornada del Muerto*

On that fateful October morning when I was struck mute I realized I was facing a problem that was bigger than any human solution. Later, following several tests at the hospital, the doctor told me the brain tumor I have is the “worst of luck in the worst of locations.” I truly believe that it is the best of luck and could not be in any other location. You see, this is God’s perfect plan for my life’s journey. I am in a “no-water” situation in my own *Jornada del Muerto*. My solution is to depend upon the water of the Word from the well that never runs dry.

What will you turn to when you run into your “no water” situation? When you face a challenge in your life, be it from loss of health, accident, unemployment, or any number of things that are not on your Day-Timer, will the Word of God in your soul be more real to you than the reality you face?

Many of you have asked, “What caused this tumor?” Or “Why you, Joe? You are a healthy guy who for the most part has not been sick a day in his whole life?” Well, why not me? Two decades ago I was introduced, by the grace of God, to Bible doctrine and began my own mission of inculcating it into my soul. During this time I have had the opportunity to grow in grace and gain a clear understanding of God’s perfect plan including divine problem-solving devices. I am truly at peace with God’s plan for my life and can say with all conviction that I look forward to my eternal destiny. This, however,

is not the normal response when one greets the news that he suffers from a terminal illness. Why? Because:

“Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven, but Nobody Wants to Die”

This is the title to a Gospel song written and recorded by Loretta Lynn. It emphasizes the paradox that exists in the souls of most Christians. But why should this be? The Bible reveals that for those who go to heaven “there will no longer be any death; mourning, crying, or pain” (Revelation 21:4). Christians learn that heaven is a place of perfect peace where believers spend eternity in the presence of the Lord. When a loved one dies, those left behind are certain the dearly departed is in heaven and they, too, will go there when they die. When Christians go to church the preacher teaches them that those who go to heaven are free of all earthly cares and are far better off than they were before. And the members of his congregation believe what he says is true. What is absolutely amazing to me is that even so, everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die. No Christian should harbor such inconsistent thought.

Those who have placed their faith in Christ ought to clearly understand that by doing so they have eternal life, will go to heaven when they die, and will spend eternity in a resurrection body (1 John 3:2). No one has ever lived, that did not die. In fact, the day you were born is the day you began the dying process. Our physical, biological life is destined to return to the dust of the earth (Ecclesiastes 12:7). But the person who has placed his faith in Christ has received the guarantee of a new and different body in which his soul and spirit

can live eternally with God (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). This is an incredible promise that certifies his one-way ticket into the environs of God's heaven.

So the question to ponder is, "Why do Christians, who believe in life after death, dread the idea of dying?" I believe it is because of fear. Fear that what they have been told about heaven is not really true; that the real truth is exactly what the agnostic proclaims: when you're dead you're done and that's it. If you have doubts about whether you really have eternal life, then you have no confidence about what happens after death. This causes fear of dying.

Fear rushes into the soul when we perceive a problem for which we have no solution leaving us without any means of managing the crisis. Fear is an emotion and the Bible regards it as a sin.

Since the children [believers] share in flesh and blood, He [Christ] likewise shared in their humanity, so that through death He could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14-15 NET)⁴

There is no place for fear in the Christian life. The more things you surrender to fear, the more things you will fear. If you are afraid of dying then you are afraid of living.

⁴ Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated (NET) are from the Holy Bible: The NET Bible® (New English Translation™). Copyright © 2001 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. www.netbible.com. All rights reserved.

No one really knows what will happen in the future. What we know about the future we must accept on faith. It is a system of perception that is based on one's confidence in the *source* of the information under consideration.

Faith is one of three basic methods by which people acquire knowledge. For example, if your mother tells you to stay away from the fireplace because the fire is hot and would burn your hand causing great pain, you believe her because you are confident she would not tell you a lie. She is a source in whom you have great confidence.

Another way of learning is through rationalism. You look into the fireplace and see the blue-orange flames lapping around the logs and the red-hot glow of the embers. You've read about fire and learned that it is hot, and, if touched, burns and causes pain. You therefore rationalize that this fire must also be hot, will burn, and cause pain.

The third way to acquire knowledge is through empiricism. You run an experiment to test the theory that the fire is hot. You put your hand into the flames, they *are* hot, your hand *is* burned, and it *does* hurt. These conclusions confirm your mother's contention that fire is hot, burns, and hurts. Now you believe it without reservation.

Which method must the Christian use to become confident about his eternal future? Faith! But, this faith must have an object. Not only that, the object must be a source he can trust to tell him the truth. The only legitimate source of information about the eternal future is the Bible. If you are willing to place your faith in what the Bible says, then you can place your confidence in its Gospel message that promises eternal life to anyone who believes in Christ. Anyone who has done this, need not fear death.

Hebrews 4:12 refers to the Bible as the “Word of God.” Second Timothy 2:15 calls it the “Word of truth.” Paul in his epistle to Titus wrote:

Faith and knowledge resting on the hope [confidence] of eternal life, which God, Who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time [eternity past]. (Titus 1:2 NIV®)⁵

If we are to rid ourselves of fear regarding the great mystery of “life after death,” then we must place our faith in a source that can be trusted to tell us the truth. And the most trustworthy Person to give us assurance of the veracity of the Word of God is Jesus Himself:

“Sanctify them in the truth. Your Word is truth.” (John 17:17)

The truth that Scripture teaches is that by believing in Christ you *have* eternal life. It is yours right now. It becomes operative at the moment of your physical death when you become absent from the body and face-to-face with the Lord. There is no reason to fear dying. The most reliable Source of truth affirms that your eternal future is secure:

The testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have

⁵ Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of International Bible Society.

the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:11-13)

I have total confidence in what the Word of God says. I know that someday soon I must depart this earth, move on into eternity, and enjoy the provisions that the Lord has prepared for me:

“Do not let your heart be troubled [Do not fear]. You believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” (Matthew 14:1-3)

It has become clear to me that in God’s perfect plan the time has almost arrived for Him to call me home to that “dwelling place” the Lord has “prepared for me.” I am ready to go for I have no fear of dying, and I am confident since you have believed in Christ, you will join me there in due time.

I’m not saying because our eternal future is assured that we should lose interest in living this life. The confidence that results from having eternal security frees us of fear and enables us to live life to the fullest. Our duty while alive on this earth is to not only serve God but to do so in accordance with His plan. Once our allotted time to accomplish this purpose is completed, He will call us home. I can tell you that as

I prepare for the transfer I have come to a clear understanding what the Lord meant when He said:

“If you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” (John 8:31-32)

My pastor has quoted this line by a famous poet from St. Louis named T. S. Eliot: “In my beginning is my end; in my end is my beginning.” The Bible takes these seemingly contradictory statements and transforms them into truths that enable me to have no fear of dying. I am free of its power. God gave me life was for the purpose that I might be counted among His children, through faith alone in Christ alone, and have the opportunity to serve Him through spiritual growth. I have advanced in His plan and it is my desire to attain spiritual maturity before the day arrives that my earthly journey is complete. But regardless of these things I can say with Paul:

I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead; I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)

Pressing on toward the Prize

Have you ever wondered about your life and why you are here? The Scripture tells us that we are here to advance in our knowledge of Jesus Christ in order to glorify Him:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18a)

As we advance in our knowledge of Christ we come to know Who, and what, He is and how He thinks. As we acquire His thoughts we accumulate divine truth within our souls. The more we rely on this inventory of ideas, the more we function on principles of His integrity. If we continue this advance it will lead us to spiritual maturity where we glorify God to the maximum while exhibiting to the world the virtues of divine integrity. We are promised that if we accomplish this objective, we will be given great blessings and rewards in both time and eternity (1 Corinthians 3:11-14; Ephesians 1:3-4; Revelation 2:7,10,17, 26-28; 3:5,12,21). These blessings, which exceed all we could ask or imagine, are *available* to all but only *granted* if we fulfill God's plan for our lives (Hebrews 10:35-36).

In the eternal future, all believers will be assembled before the judgment seat of Christ for the presentation of these rewards. The Lord will ask each one, "What did you do with the greatest spiritual life ever offered?" What will you say to Him? Will you be able to say that you did your duty? That you fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7)? Will Christ say to you: "Well done My good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few

things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's happiness" (Matthew 25:23)? This is my goal and I encourage you to make it yours.

Winner- and Loser-Believers

Mankind is provided with free will and the power to make choices, but with it comes the responsibility to make good decisions and assume accountability for them. Whether you fail or succeed with regard to God's plan for your life is strictly up to you. But once you die, your options are closed. You will leave behind a record of choices, some good, some bad. Your loyalty to God's Word determines whether you will be a winner- or a loser-believer in the plan of God.

At some point in the future there will come a time when all believers will be evaluated before the Supreme Court of Heaven at a tribunal referred to in the Bible as the judgment seat of Christ. The manifestation of the believer's works is in question in this judgment. It is most emphatically not a judgment of the believer's sins.⁶

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
(2 Corinthians 5:10)

This is where all believers' lives will be examined to determine if their service to God was motivated by the ministries

⁶ Merrill F. Unger. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. 3d ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 622.

of the Holy Spirit or by the energy of the flesh. Some will be found to have made the advance to spiritual maturity and will be given great rewards. But, unfortunately, all too many believers will be found to have done nothing constructive with their spiritual lives and will be denied their rewards. Nevertheless, there is great comfort in knowing that they will never be denied their salvation, eternal life, or resurrection bodies.

No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

This means there will be great inequality in heaven. Some will stand before the Lord as fully decorated winner-believers who were good soldiers for Christ. The rest will realize how important learning God's Word is, but it will be too late. Sadly, they will remain standing in a resurrection body but it will be shamefully minus any rewards, making obvious their status as loser-believers.

When a believer dies, all that goes to heaven is his soul and what's in it. To be a winner-believer it must contain a high inventory of biblical truth. The time to start filling your

soul with it is now. The rewards for doing so are beyond all you could ever ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

The Nike Awards

Excellence in human endeavors has been historically recognized through the presentation of awards, medals, prizes, and trophies. Some of the more widely known are the Academy, Emmy, Tony, and Grammy awards, and the Nobel and Pulitzer prizes. The military has a collection of medals it awards to those who distinguish themselves in combat or honorable service. Sports have a large number of awards and trophies that are given to stellar performers. Each one of these awards is won by human beings who make whatever sacrifices are necessary to maximize their own natural-born talents and abilities and excel in competition against others of similar expertise.

This was true in the ancient world as well. When a Roman soldier performed heroically in battle he was welcomed with a parade through the streets of Rome. He rode in a chariot accompanied by one of his slaves who stood behind him holding a *corona*, or wreathed crown, above his head. In order to remind him to remain humble, all along the route the slave would whisper continually into the warrior's ear: *sic transit gloria mundi*, or so passes away the glory of this world. Such cannot be said of the blessings which are imputed to winner-believers. They will endure forever!

You may be curious to know some specifics about these blessings and rewards. They are spoken of in some detail by our Lord in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 where He uses the term *tōi nikōnti* to reference those who are recipients. In the

New American Standard Bible the phrase is translated “to him who overcomes.” The verb *nikōnti* is part of a very interesting word group. Its root verb is *nikaō*, which means “to conquer.” The noun form is *nikē*, a word widely recognized today as the name for a well-known athletic shoe company and for good reason since it means “victor” or “victory,” the ultimate objective of those who compete in the arena. Therefore, a modern-day translation of the Lord’s phrase, *tōi nikōnti*, would be “to the winner.”

What do winner-believers actually receive at the judgment seat of Christ? We have noted how achievements in worldly areas of competition are recognized by a number of awards with catchy titles. Since there can be no greater achievement in human history than fulfillment of the plan of God, it follows that our eternal blessings deserve an appropriate title. My pastor calls them the Nike Awards. They serve as an additional motivation for the believer to advance in his knowledge of what the Bible teaches and to apply its principles to his life and circumstances.

The Lord’s disclosure of these awards occurs in seven paragraphs.

Nike Award #1:

“To him who overcomes [*tōi nikōnti*], I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.” (Revelation 2:7b)

Our original parents were permitted to eat from this tree in the pristine perfection of the Garden of Eden. Winners will be

permitted to partake of its fruit in the heavenly Garden of God in eternity.

Nike Award #2:

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.” (Revelation 2:10c; 2:11b)

This is granted to the mature believer whose loyalty to truth under pressure has such great impact on history that it benefits family, community, state, and nation. This crown is testimony to the fact that no believer will be called before the Great White Throne judgment at the end of human history where all who rejected Jesus Christ as Savior will be sentenced forever to the lake of fire, known as the “second death” in Revelation 20:11-15.

Nike Award #3:

“To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.” (Revelation 2:17)

Manna is the heavenly food that sustained the Israelites’ physical life as they wandered in the *Jornada* of the Sinai Peninsula following their Exodus from Egypt. Manna in Revelation 2:17 refers to the winner-believer’s maximum knowledge of biblical principles hidden in his soul which becomes

the target for the Lord's imputation of the Third Nike. The white stone refers to his perfect resurrection body to which a new title of aristocracy is assigned.

Nike Award #4:

“He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.” (Revelation 2:26-28)

Here the winner-believer is delegated rulership authority over a nation in the divine theocracy of Jesus Christ in which he will administer the Lord's policies. In addition, he will be awarded the “Medal of Honor” for service reflecting loyalty, steadfastness, and intrepidity in the conflict between good and evil, or as referenced in Scripture, the Order of the Morning Star, a title given to our Lord in Numbers 24:17, 2 Peter 1:16-19, and Revelation 22:16.

Nike Award #5:

“He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” (Revelation 3:5)

Just as the glory of the Lord was revealed on the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:2), likewise the winner will also be clothed in glory as an eternal blessing. This uniform of glory will adorn his resurrection body forever. As with all those who have believed in Christ for salvation, the winner's name will never be blotted out of the book of life since he possesses eternal life. Further, he will have the honor of being presented to the Father in the throne room of heaven and before His angels.

Nike Award #6:

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.” (Revelation 3:12)

The “pillar in the temple” refers to the eternal library that maintains the history of winner-believers' exploits in the spiritual battles on earth. This record will never vanish but be on file forever. In addition, winner-believers will be presented an eternal coat-of-arms blazoned with three devices of heavenly heraldry: (1) the name of God: *Elohim*, (2) the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2), and (3) the new name for Christ in the eternal state: King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16)

Nike Award #7:

“He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Revelation 3:21)

The last award mentioned has to do with the privileges associated with the Fourth Nike which gives winner-believers authority to rule nations in the Lord’s kingdom. The Seventh Nike grants these leaders the privilege to assemble with Christ as part of His administration that oversees a global government of peace and prosperity for all.

These seven Nike Awards belong to those who stay the course, plug away, and throughout life’s journey consistently make themselves available to the teaching of the Word of God. All believers have these options. Few will take advantage of them.

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.” (Revelation 22:12)

It has been and remains my objective to pursue these blessings by learning what the Bible teaches and endeavor to apply its principles in my life. Although I may not have taken the prize, I continue to pursue it following this challenge by Paul:

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in

such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)

All of us have or will face trials and challenges in life that will test our mettle. It is at this point that winner-believers come to realize and appreciate that they could never bear up under the pressure without divine viewpoint in their souls.

You can choose to live life apart from God's Word as a loser-believer, but there is no happiness in this. The only way to live this life, the only way to die, the only way to enter into the eternal state is as a winner-believer. I implore you to be a winner. Study the Bible each day of your life. Grow in God's grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And if you do, when you arrive at the judgment seat of Christ, you will be among those to whom the Lord will say, "*Tōi nikōnti*"—"To the winner."

My Desire for You

Many people have touched me in a special way. I have had a great time working with, serving with, knowing, and loving them all. I am grateful for the friendships that I've been privileged to develop over the years. I would be most blessed if the reason our paths crossed was so I could introduce them to the power of the Word of God.

I can say without any hesitation that the counsel and guidance provided by the Bible has changed my life. It will

change yours, too, and my departing prayer will be that you will take up the challenge to discover this truth for yourself.

I am in the process of dying. So are you. Someday you will enter your own Death-Shadowed Valley. When you travel your *Jornada del Muerto* will you be afraid? Will you enter it with guilt for having ignored your duty? Will you be bitter about the circumstance that brings you there? Or will you be filled with true happiness and tranquility? Facing death with true happiness is only possible if you possess its Source: Bible doctrine in your soul. So the only question that remains is, "How are you going to spend the time you have left here on this earth?" Do your duty now. Redeem the time given you so you may be prepared when the day arrives for you to ride the trail into your spiritual Santa Fé.

I have been called to run the final leg of this magnificent race that will deliver me to my final destination. The exact date of my departure is not known to me. Yet, I already have a tremendous feeling of peace and tranquility in my soul and there is great excitement building within me. I feel comfort, joy, and true happiness. In life we are to apply Bible doctrine, and in death we are to live Bible doctrine. The fullness of this knowledge within me is ever present. I am consumed with the thought of my final destiny. My focus is on the eternal state. The things I will leave behind are becoming less and less significant as I feel this great sense of urgency and energy within my soul. I feel no remorse or self-pity. No anger or bitterness as to my plight. There are worse things in life than dying. As for me, I have just the opposite feelings. It is wonderful to know my eternal future is imminent. Through God's grace I have been given the opportunity to come to a full understanding of His tremendous love for me, His perfect plan for my

life, and the comfort that comes from growing in this knowledge. As the apostle Paul writes:

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
(Philippians 1:21)

I have redeemed the time given to me as best I can. What will you do with the time given you? It is my desire that you become serious about your spiritual life. I implore you to seek out God's truth and begin the renovation of your soul so you can enjoy the same happiness that I have found. I want you to understand why it is important to me and why it needs to be important to you. Eternity is forever. The time we spend on earth, as compared to all eternity, is but a brief moment. Make use of the time you have. Learn Bible doctrine so you can live your life as unto the Lord. Instead of living and learning, learn and live.

I know that I will be reunited in heaven with all of you. However, if I have any sadness in my soul, it is for the person who ignores this appeal to make Bible study Priority One in his life. I cannot intrude upon the privacy of his soul or seek to manipulate his volition. That is not God's plan. I can only attempt to encourage. My Lord, the Planner of my journey, graciously allows all people to make their own decisions. But, I can say with absolute confidence there is only one successful way to ride the trail to Santa Fé. It is revealed in God's Word and is designed to culminate in a glorious and fantastic eternal life for those who choose its guidance and direction. I want you to have the same fullness of life, the same inner happiness, and the same phenomenal experience I have had the privilege, blessing, and honor to enjoy.

There is a time for every event under heaven—a time to give birth and a time to die. (Ecclesiastes 3:1*b*-2).

“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:21*b*).

“Who Loves You?”

God does! In fact, God loved you so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

God’s love also provided a system so that those who believe in Christ can grow spiritually. First of all, He supplied us with a Textbook that contains those things we need to learn:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

God has commissioned a classroom for Christianity in the institution of the local church where believers can assemble with the Textbook and receive instruction from men who are prepared to communicate its doctrines. Paul speaks of the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher in Ephesians 4:11. The prepared pastor-teacher is one who studies the Bible from the original languages of Hebrew and Greek so that the full meaning of

each passage can be accurately communicated to his congregation with clarity and precision.

God our Savior desires all men to be saved and
to come to the knowledge of the truth.
(1 Timothy 2:3b-4)

We live in a time when communication of information can be transmitted worldwide in a matter of seconds. In the midst of this whirlwind of data, the issue that confronts us all is how to tell the difference between the truth and the lie.

You may be attending a church where you think you are getting the information you need. But ask yourself these questions: “Am I really being taught *truth*? Am I hearing the information that really contributes to my spiritual growth? Am I being provided with problem-solving devices, doctrines, and principles that apply to my life and the circumstances I face? Or am I constantly performing rituals and mantras that I repeat by rote but not learning very much about what the Bible requires?”

There are no shortcuts to Christian maturity. It must be done through the consistent and accurate teaching of the Word of God. Twenty years ago I discovered this kind of biblical instruction from a pastor whose system of communicating the Bible has enabled me to make the advance toward spiritual maturity and has prepared me to travel my *Jornada del Muerto* with great joy and tranquility of soul. Because I do love you, I want you to know about this man and his church. You can start your biblically guided trail to your spiritual Santa Fé by listening to the MP3 disk attached to the back inside cover of this book. It is my pastor’s presentation of the basic doc-

trines of the Christian faith. I believe it will start you on a journey that will change your life not only for the better on this earth but more importantly for all eternity. Listen objectively and see if you do not agree.

Happy trails!

Joe Hunt

Suggested Bible Study Resources

Rev. Joe Griffin:

For over thirty years doctrinal Bible classes taught by Pastor Griffin have provided daily spiritual food for his congregation at Grace Doctrine Church, and for the past ten years to an ever-growing invisible congregation through the live broadcast of these classes over the Internet. The church was founded in 1975 and is currently located at 1821 South River Road in St. Charles, Missouri.

If you would like to continue your study of the Word of God, consult the Web site, www.joegriffin.org, to access over 3,800 of Pastor Griffin's Bible classes. Live Internet telecasts of every Bible class follow the church schedule. In addition, several apps are available: (1) Roku app for streaming live and archived Bible class videos on Roku devices. To install, type "Grace Doctrine Church" in the "streaming channels" search. (2) Mobile apps for viewing recent lesson notes and listening to or viewing recent live and archived Bible classes are available for Android and Apple iPhones. Check with your phone's mobile App Store for installation. Search for "JGMM." (3) The Web site provides the best study experience by utilizing class notes, visuals, audio and video for live and archived Bible classes, and search capabilities. Audio and video streaming supports multiple platforms to include PCs, Macs, iPads, Android, and Windows tablets as well as mobile phone support. (4) In addition, a number of books on biblical subjects are available for download. For more information, write to the address below.

Attached to the inside back cover of this book is an MP3 disk of Pastor Griffin's series on the Basic Doctrines of the Christian Faith which he taught at Grace Doctrine Church in 1989.



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About the Author

Joseph Anthony Hunt was born in 1954 in the St. Louis suburb of St. Ann, Missouri. He attended Ritenour High School and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management from Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau. After graduation, he returned to St. Louis and accepted a position at Color-Art, Inc., in the sales department of its Integrated Interiors division where he was top salesman for twenty-four of his twenty-seven years on the job. Joe was a partner in the company and held the position of Senior Account Manager.

An avid sportsman, Joe was a member of the local United States Tennis Association and won several tournaments. He has also run in a number of marathons completing the twenty-six-mile course three times: once in St. Louis and twice in Chicago.

Joe is survived by his wife, Dee, daughters Kelly Hunt and Nicole Jacobsmeyer (Ryan), and two grandsons, Andrew and Caleb.

Bible Verses - Who Loves You?

For as through the one man's disobedience [Adam's original sin], the many [the human race] were made sinners. (Ro-mans 5:19a)

Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and [spiritual] death through sin, and so [spiritual] death spread to all men, because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. (James 2:10)

God made Jesus, Who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:22-23)

He who believes in Jesus is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29b)

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that [salvation is] not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

“It is finished [in the past with results that go on forever]!” (John 19:30b)

“Whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” (John 3:15)

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son, will not see [eternal] life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

Jesus said, “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.” (John 6:40).

Jesus said to her [Martha], “I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26).

Jesus said to him [Thomas], “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6).

These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have [eternal] life in His name. (John 20:31)

“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.” (Acts 16:31a)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” (Romans 1:16)

For we maintain that that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Romans 3:28)

Now to the one who works [for salvation], his wages are not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to one who does not work [for salvation], but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly [spiritually dead], his faith is credited as righteousness. (Romans 4:4-5)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died [as a substitute] for us. (Romans 5:8)

“... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.” (Galatians 2:16)

For you are the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:26)

We love, because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36)

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

“Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9)

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13 KJV)

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set out before Him endured the cross, despising its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Since the children [believers] share in flesh and blood, He [Christ] likewise shared in their humanity, so that through death He could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14-15 NET)

Faith and knowledge resting on the hope [confidence] of eternal life, which God, Who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time [eternity past]. (Titus 1:2 NIV)

“Sanctify them in the truth. Your Word is truth.” (John 17:17)

The testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:11-13)

“Do not let your heart be troubled [Do not fear]. You believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” (Matthew 14:1-3)

“If you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” (John 8:31-32)

I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead; I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18a)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the

foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

“To him who overcomes [*tōi nikōnti*], I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.” (Revelation 2:7b)

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.” (Revelation 2:10c; 2:11b)

“To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.” (Revelation 2:17)

“He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.” (Revelation 2:26-28)

“He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” (Revelation 3:5)

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will

write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.” (Revelation 3:12)

“He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Revelation 3:21)

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.” (Revelation 22:12)

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21)

There is a time for every event under heaven—a time to give birth and a time to die. (Ecclesiastes 3:1b-2).

“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:21b).

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

God our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:3b-4)

The Eulogy of
Joseph Anthony Hunt
(August 4, 1954 – February 8, 2007)

Presented by
Joe Griffin, Pastor
Grace Doctrine Church
at

St. John's Lutheran Church
15808 Manchester Road
Ellisville, Missouri 36011

Tuesday, February 13, 2007

Joe Hunt can surely draw a crowd. I should have had him preaching midweek Bible classes for me.

I'm glad you all could make it for this celebration. I say "celebration" because this is exactly what Joe Hunt is doing right now so why should we be left out.

Joe Hunt had such a winning personality, always smiling, always greeting people with such phrases as "Who loves ya, baby?" and "It's another day in paradise." Joe's family is so solid spiritually they don't need a lot of comforting words from me nor if Joe were here would he want this to be a lachrymose occasion. So what say we dispense with sad faces and remember Joe for who he was: A fun-loving guy.

Right after Joe and his family joined our church I was invited to one of the ubiquitous Hunt family gatherings with all five brothers in attendance. It was around the summer of 1986. You've heard of Type *A* personalities? These guys are Type Double *A*'s.

My wife and I show up and we're instantly welcomed into the tribe. It wasn't long before the ladies and the men have separated and I got my first close-up of Joe Hunt in action. The brothers decided to tell stories. But the stories they tell are told in a really strange way.

You may have heard the joke about the guy who lands in prison and on the first night he hears a voice ring out, "Number 17," and everybody just dies laughing. Then another voice chimes in and shouts, "Number 41," and again all the inmates roar with laughter. This goes on for awhile and he just can't figure out what's so funny and decides to ask his cellmate to explain.

He answered, “Well, we’ve all told the same jokes so many times we finally decided just to give each one a number.”

That’s close to how the Hunt’s tell a story. They all know the details so all Joe had to do was start talking. He only got out half a sentence and everyone is suddenly howling. Once the laughter dies down Joe continues with another sentence fragment. He’d say about five words and dies laughing and the other brothers, knowing the rest of the sentence, would howl back. This went on for five minutes. I was laughing, too, but not at what Joe was telling because that was incomprehensible. I was laughing at the bunch of brothers going down memory lane on sentence fragments. I later learned they don’t number their stories, they just tell them in code. When Joe hit the punch line everyone, red-faced and drooling, started back-slapping, and bending double with laughter. By this time, I’m in convulsions, too. And I’m thinking, “Wow! I’m sure glad I didn’t understand what he said or I might have busted a rib laughing.”

I later learned the story he was trying to tell. Back in the days of BNK: “Before Nicki and Kelly,” Joe and Dee were rednecks. At least Joe was, and poor Dee was drawn (I’m sure unwittingly) into the environment. They lived at the Tee-Kay Mobile Manor off Highway 40 in St. Charles. Their trailer has been described to me as a “half wide”: kitchen and living room at one end and on the other a single bedroom separated by a narrow hallway.

One afternoon when Dee and Rosie were off grocery shopping, Joe mentioned to a neighbor who was over visiting, appropriately named Big Bob, that the hallway was too dark and needed more light. Big Bob tells Joe he’d install a win-

dow for him, went home, and returned with a circular saw and a plan to remove about a 4-by-8 foot section of the trailer's front wall. Big Bob tipped the scales at about 320 while Joe-Moe, soaking wet, weighed in at less than 150 and felt he didn't have the reach to challenge Big Bob armed with a circular saw.

Big Bob fired up the saw and began to grind away at the wall. Shards of metal and shredded insulation were flying everywhere as he worked his way around his estimate of what a 4-by-8 hole might look like. After making the circuit he kicked the dismembered section out onto the front lawn.

It was then they made the decision to head off to Central Hardware and shop for windows. In those days, off-the-shelf windows were standard sizes and Joe's hole in the wall was let's say "odd-sized." He and Big Bob picked one out that "looked about the right size," brought it back, and of course it didn't fit. Not to be dismayed, Big Bob anchored the new window with a healthy amount of caulking compound.

Not long later, Danny talked Joe and Dee into selling the trailer and buying a house. The rationale was that they only paid two grand for the trailer but were spending over 300 dollars a month to heat and cool it. Danny told them they'd save money if they bought a house. So Joe made the decision to move and planned to put up a 'For Sale' sign the next day.

That night it's pouring rain, and a guy knocks on the door. Joe opens up and a man is standing there in a downpour asking directions to a trailer he's heard is for sale in Mobil Manor. That house was down the street but Joe-Moe invites him in and keeps him well supplied in Busch Light while showing him around the trailer emphasizing the fact that no other unit in Mobile Manor has a 4 by 8 picture window. The

man was so impressed he gave Joe a deposit and the next day signed a contract for five- thousand dollars. Big Bob's window made the Happy Hunts three grand and Joe's career as a salesman was off and running.

The coded sentence-fragment version of this story is what introduced me to Joe-Moe. Later I heard tales about his exploits while allegedly attending school down at SEMO but the translated versions are not appropriate for this occasion.

So it's been a hoot knowing Joe Hunt. And I think the timing of his death is a testimony not only to God's grace but also His sense of humor. I've often told my congregation that from the human viewpoint the perfect time to die is in February after the Super Bowl is over but before Spring Training begins. That way you don't miss anything. And Joe got a bonus: before checking out he was able to enjoy the Cardinals win their tenth World Championship.

So just as if it were scripted, Joe goes home to be with the Lord on February 8th and we are here to celebrate his transfer.

When I do a funeral or a memorial I often begin by comforting the family. But I don't need to do that for Joe's family. They rightly grieve his absence. It is appropriate that they are in sorrow. This is the result of a sudden realization that there can never again be a time for earthly fellowship, companionship, or rapport.

Yet, although sorrow and grief are normal and legitimate emotions, they do not overwhelm those who have placed their trust in Christ. Stronger than these emotions is the clear testimony of biblical truth that applies to Joe's death and these doctrines provide for his family and friends a source of great joy and thanksgiving.

Joe's wonderful wife, Dee, his daughters, Kelly and Nicole, his son-in-law, Ryan, and his mother-in-law, Rosie, have done their due diligence. They have followed Joe's lead and pursued the objective of acquiring maximum knowledge of the Word of God.

For over twenty years they have attended every Bible class they could and when missed they caught up on the Internet or through tapes. As a result, this family is prepared for this moment because they understand that we are here at the courtesy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "It is He that has made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." (Psalms 1:3)

God determines the timing of both life and death. When we are born physically He chooses to select us for human life by imputing a soul to our physical body. Without a soul there is no life. Further, no one dies unless and until God signs off on it, at which time, for the believer in Christ, his soul is removed from the body and transferred to heaven.

Some people die right after birth; some live to be over a hundred. The timing of a person's death is God's business. Joe Hunt was in excellent physical health until the day he died. But he was susceptible to cancer and he got the worst kind, a Grade IV astrocytoma. One day he's living a normal life and the next day he's riding down the Death-Shadowed Valley. The good thing about Joe Hunt is that he had prepared himself for the moment and he responded like a good soldier for Christ.

He's left behind three heroines of grace. His wife, Dee, has been magnificent during the time of Joe's illness. She has supported him, cared for him, protected him, and loved him. Dee and Joe were married for almost 29 years. Because of

their decision to follow the divine guidance of the Word of God they structured their marriage on biblical standards. This brought them both great happiness, and they established a home life defined by tranquility spiced by hilarity.

Dee, you are familiar with the doctrine of blessing by association. Joe advanced in the plan of God to enjoy the sophisticated spiritual life. Because he reached spiritual maturity, his legacy to you is the “grace overflow” of blessing by association. Even though he is gone, God will continue to provide for you in every possible way.

As David said in Psalm 37:25, “I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread.”

You have done your duty as a faithful and loyal wife. The biblical principles of marriage have been upheld by you and Joe. This is therefore a testimony to the divine standard of marriage which must be upheld if a client nation is to remain functional and free. You have been tireless in your efforts to support Joe through his illness. When his illness affected his clarity of thought, you reminded him of a doctrine that restored his confidence. Now you may spend time enjoying reveries of a life well-lived full of love and laughter. I know you are grateful to God for the way Joe lived his life. And we observed how you rode the Valley with him when he needed you most: you never complained, you were always there, you were the model wife. We salute you for a job well-done.

Nicki and Kelly. You are a pair of cultured pearls! Joe Hunt loved you two and he took good care of his ladies. What you have become as adults is a testimony to Joe’s leadership as a father.

I liked Nicki the first time I saw her. She was but a munchkin at the time but she had fire in her eyes and it's never been quenched. She is a sweetheart but she can spot a phony a mile away, so that speaks well of Ryan. Joe, like most fathers, dreaded to see the day some young paramour might show up wanting to take one of his ladies away. When Ryan was the first to try this, Joe did his best to talk him out of it. He is rumored to have said, "Ryan, are you sure you want to do this? She's just like me and has her mother's health problems."

It didn't work. Ryan remained relentless, as a right man will, won the hand of the nubile Nicole, and in due time they spawned providing Joe and Dee with Andrew Joseph, whose first birthday was February 2. Joe got to enjoy his grandson for a whole year.

Kelly. There is a piece of work for you. This young lady inherited her daddy's perpetual smile. Kind, sweet, pretty, and wise. She has studied doctrine all her life and knows how to think—another demonstration of Joe's leadership. During Joe's illness she was always at church, both Sunday and midweek classes. Always there with a smile, always carrying herself with the deportment of a spiritual aristocrat.

I submit that both Nicki and Kelly exhibit sprezzatura, an Italian word that refers to the ability to do the right thing without apparent effort. They both exhibited this in the face of the tension and the trauma of seeing their dad suffer from his debilitating illness. Only the power of the Word of God resident in the soul can enable children to endure the pressure of losing a parent while maintaining poise and grace.

The Bible says that "In all the land no women were as fair as Joe's daughters."

I know the verse reads “Job’s daughters” but work with me here. I think it aptly applies to Joe’s daughters as well.

Then there are his siblings. Judy, I honestly don’t know how you survived in a house full of five brothers. And not just ordinary brothers either. Hunt brothers! But you did so magnificently. I’m sure you will miss Joe but you know stories that the brothers won’t tell that could keep us here all afternoon. You know the doctrines that will sustain you during this time of sadness and you have the memories that will enable you to smile in the midst of sorrow.

The Brothers Four now remain. Along with Joe, the five of you had a camaraderie that was developed over a lifetime and was manifest by pure enjoyment of being with each other. I was able to observe your fraternal fellowship for over twenty years and was amazed at how bonded you all were and still remain. Oftentimes families drift apart after they all reach adulthood, but you have not. You are as close-knit now as you were in childhood. This companionship enabled you all to come together and provide Joe and his family all the love and support a person could ever ask for in time of need.

Joe also has another family: The people of Color-Art. He won the hearts of everyone in the organization from its CEO Joe Steiner on down throughout the company. There is none of you who has not been touched by this man and the way he lived his life.

So many of you have written remembrances about Joe on the Caring Bridge Web site demonstrating the powerful impact he made on so many of you. It is apparent you now miss Joe to almost as great a degree as does his genetic family. Many of you have indicated that you are believers in Christ and thus members of the royal family of God.

Joe has been Color-Art's top salesman for most of the 27 years he was with the company. A man like that is hard to replace, but God will provide for a company when so many of its employees are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Their productivity is enhanced by spiritual growth. This is why Joe Hunt sold more than anyone else for so long. And he didn't need a Zig Ziglar type to inspire him to do his best. There is no reason why a Christian would ever need a motivational speaker to improve his work habits. That kind of thing is for the unbeliever whose emotions get in the way of doing his job. The believer doesn't need this kind of shallow incentive boosting. The believer is required by Scripture to give his employer an honest day's work. And the proper motivation for doing so is found in this passage:

Whatever you do, do your work [imperative mood] from the source of your soul, as to the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Colossians 3:23-24)

The reason that Joe Hunt was so successful is because in his mind the organizational chart at Color-Art didn't begin at the top with Joe Steiner. It was the Lord Christ Whom he served and as a result Joe Steiner never had to worry about Joe Hunt doing his job.

Grace Doctrine Church is Joe's third family. I speak for the entire congregation when I say that Joe Hunt fulfilled the mission of our church. Our emphasis is Bible study. If you don't know what God wants you to do, then you can't get it done. The Lord stated His wishes clearly when He said:

“If you love Me, keep my commandments.”
(John 14:15)

Many people assume the Lord refers here to the Ten Commandments. Well, there are a lot more than ten. In fact, the ones that are pertinent to the church are to be found in the New Testament where there are 1,357 that are a direct command or a prohibition, that mean: “Do this,” or “Don’t do that.”

However, the Imperative is the mood of volition. It is the appeal of one person’s will to that of another. This mood expresses neither probability nor possibility, but only intention, and is therefore the farthest removed from reality. In Colossians 3:23 the phrase, “do your work,” is in the imperative mood, but it is the employee’s volition that must decide whether or not to keep the commandment. Joe Hunt made a steady practice of keeping it.

Therefore, if you love Christ, keep his commandments—all 1,357 of them. However, only the believer, filled with the Holy Spirit, is even qualified to attempt this prodigious undertaking, but one is certainly better at accomplishing the objective if he knows what these mandates are and that requires diligent Bible study.

Consequently we are instructed to:

“Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)

Paul challenges us to:

... be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so

that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:9–10)

This is an arduous process, yet this is what we as believers are required to do during the time we have left on this earth following salvation. Paul illustrates how this is accomplished in:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renovation of your thought, so that you investigate what the will of God is ... (Romans 12:2)

Joe Hunt responded to these commandments and their challenges. He made Bible study priority one in his life. And it paid dividends exceedingly abundantly beyond all he could ever ask or think.

The doctrine he learned was available in the treasure chest of his soul when the news came of his diagnosis. He opened that chest and found all the strength and confidence; courage and wisdom he needed to ride through the Death-Shadowed Valley absent fear.

Joe is a testimonial to the power of the Word of God and he fulfilled the spiritual mandates, some of which we have just noted. In so doing he illustrates the type of spiritual life that we strive to achieve at Grace Doctrine Church and he is our current best example.

I know that all three groups—his Hunt family, his Color-Art family, and his church family—miss Joe desperately. Some may entertain the idea that God made a mistake by taking such a powerful witness home at the prime of his life. But

we are told in the book of Job that there is a right time for everyone to die, and when a person dies no, one can do it for him.

You have all given Joe every possible ounce of love and devotion during the dying phase of his life. However, there is someone who accompanies the believer throughout this process, and such was the case for Joe. He was comforted by his Savior, Jesus Christ, and is presently in heaven face-to-face with the Lord.

The timing of Joe's death was perfect because he was in God's perfect plan. This means that *when* a person dies is God's call, and the length of one's life is *not* a factor. We are God's people and the sheep of His pasture. We are here at His pleasure and for His purpose. Christians must humbly submit to the plan of God which is designed to glorify God. We serve Him in life and prepare ourselves in the process to be called home at any time so that we may serve Him throughout eternity. The biblical principle of being granted one day at a time is how the believer must structure his life. He must live his life before men as if he would live to be a hundred, but live it before God as if he might die the next day. Jeremiah points out in Lamentations 3:23 that our grace contract with God is renewed every morning—that is, our contract is renewed one day at a time.

Job has a passage that emphasizes that one's physical age is not a factor:

“You will come to your grave in a full age
[כֶּלֶךְ *kelach*], like a shock of wheat comes in
its season.” (Job 5:26)

The Hebrew word *kelach* does not refer to a “full age” in the sense of longevity but rather “full age” with reference to the plan of God. This is brought out by the simile “... like a shock of wheat comes in its season.”

Only the expert knows when to harvest wheat. It should not be done too early or too late but at the right time. This means that God is the one who is the Expert. He knows when to harvest His children, and although those left behind experience grief and sorrow, they are comforted knowing that the decision was made by God and therefore they rejoice in the blessings of dying grace. The passage continues thusly:

“Consider this: we have researched this, therefore it is true. Hear it and retain it in long-term memory for your own benefit.” (Job 5:27)

One of the greatest testimonies a believer can have is in how he dies. God commands us to study, know, understand, retain, and apply His will as it is revealed in His Word. When certain believers arrive at a point in their spiritual life where their death will have greater positive impact on the plan of God than if they kept on living, then God will call them home regardless of their physical age. Remember, heaven is an improvement over life on this earth, yet we remain here until He calls us home.

Now think of the positive impact that Joe has had on the life of each and every one of you gathered here today. Now think of the exceptional impact Joe has had on the life of each of you over the last 16 months.

The legacy of Joe Hunt is recorded in his book. In November 2005, Joe asked his brother Tim and me to come over to his house. When we arrived Joe was his typically jovial

self but his excitement was riveted on an idea. Joe had just learned of his temporal fate. He was not down about it but rather animated by an idea. And, this idea found its genesis in the realization he was going to die, but that he had no problem with it. It had dawned on Joe that all the time he had spent studying the Bible was now paying major dividends.

What Joe had spent time learning had been used previously to apply to this life, resolving its problems, and managing the day-to-day challenges of everyday living, whether at home, work, or play. No matter the circumstance, Joe had advanced in his spiritual life to the point that he shared the happiness of God. This level of soul tranquility enables the believer to be invincible to any exigency that life has to offer. Joe had been taught this and was applying it.

But the true test of one's faith often occurs when life offers a sudden alteration of his affairs. What was not on Joe's Day-Timer was that he was about to die. But within a couple of days he had oriented and adjusted. And the result was the realization that he possessed a treasure trove of knowledge that was ready and waiting to light his path through the Death-Shadowed Valley.

He had already tapped that part of it that enabled him to lead a victorious life but he had no idea the breadth and length and height and depth that emerge when one realizes he is going home to be with the Lord. He was at the point where doctrine was no longer a *way* of life, doctrine *was* his life! Joe then isolated his physical circumstance from his duty to God. His attention turned to each and every one of you here in this audience. He wanted to inform you of his discovery of the treasure. How to do this was the question, and the decision was made to tell Joe's story in a book.

At Grace Doctrine Church, we had just formed Joe Griffin Media Ministries for the purpose of more efficiently distributing recordings of Bible classes and to also begin publishing books. I suggested that Joe's story would be the perfect opportunity for us to christen the organization's publishing division. Joe and Tim immediately agreed and I am extremely pleased that *Who Loves You?* was Media Ministries' first title to be released. And by the way, it was printed by Plus Communications, a Color-Art subsidiary. As you know it has been a great success.

What the book contains are those doctrines that Joe discovered in his treasure trove. They are ones he'd learned through twenty years of study, but once he realized he was going to die he had gained an advanced level of insight about them. They were not just things he had learned; they were now things he was literally *living*.

David spoke in Psalm 23 of the "valley of the shadow of death." This is the believer's last stage of life here on earth. It can last only a second or it can go for years. But the thing that lights the way is what the believer has in his soul. If he has learned nothing about the grace and love of God, nothing about God's plan and his place in it, then the darkness of fear, dread, and panic accompanied by doubt, anger, and bitterness prevent him from enjoying the grace of dying.

The believer who is prepared, who knows all about the circumstances that are involved in death, has a soul armored with confidence and courage. Confidence that he has eternal life and will go to heaven when he dies gives him the courage to live the remainder of his life without fear so that he can continue to serve the Lord.

The major doctrine that sustained Joe was his absolute confidence in his eternal future. Our Lord spoke of this in John 3, where He had a conversation with Nicodemus, a man who was not even saved at the time and therefore had no hope. He was speaking with the Savior of the world Who gave him all the information he needed to acquire eternal life:

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life [ζῶην αἰώνιον, *zōēn aiōnion*].” (John 3:16)

The Lord’s message to John was that if Nicodemus believed in Him he would have eternal life: ζῶην αἰώνιον.

During the course of Joe’s trip through the Valley I had a number of conversations with him. This doctrine was the one that I determined comforted him most and, clearly understood, would comfort anyone who might be in a similar circumstance.

In the summer of 2006 I did a special study on not only the principle of eternal life but also how this doctrine is an integral part of the Gospel of salvation.

What I am about to say is the part of this eulogy that Joe Hunt personally requested that I relate to you. Joe was friends with a large number of people in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Joe’s discovery of the treasure he possessed and its application to his life once he learned of his fate motivated him to carry two messages to each of you.

First was the Gospel of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone. No one possesses the treasure unless he is saved. No one is saved unless he believes in Christ.

Second, Joe wanted to inspire every person he reached to re-focus their attention away from the details of this life over to the divine guidance provided by the Word of God. In other words, Joe wants each and every one of you to make the study of the Bible priority one in your life.

He hoped to accomplish this in two phases. First through his book, *Who Loves You?* and second, through his eulogy.

At the last conversation I had with Joe his parting comment to me was, "I've done my duty, now you do yours!" In order to do my duty, I will take the next few minutes to present to you a clear, biblical presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ which carries with it both a purpose for believing in Christ and the result of having done so.

The New Testament speaks of placing one's faith in Christ. Faith is a transitive verb that demands an object and, in the gospel, that object is Christ.

But Christ is a title, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah. The Messiah-Christ defines an individual that is both undiminished deity and true humanity in one person. He possesses absolute sinless perfection in both His deity and His humanity.

Every member of the human race, however, is imperfect and therefore cannot offer any reason to a perfect God why he would qualify to live for all eternity in His presence. Helpless to do anything about the problem, God provided a solution through His uniquely-born Son. Jesus' perfection qualified Him to be our substitute on the cross where He received the imputation of the sins of the entire human race and was judged for them in our place. We know that His sacrifice was

successful because after three days He was resurrected from the dead.

The question is, “Do you believe this?” You may believe that all of this is a historical fact alright but do you believe that faith in Christ saves you? Do you understand that by believing Jesus of Nazareth is the God/Man Savior you receive eternal life and go to heaven when you die?

To be delivered from the lake of fire and to receive eternal life, you must place your faith in the reality of the claim that Jesus’ work on the cross delivers you from your sins and places you in the family of God. There is nothing more to do: no works, no penance, no feeling sorry for what a cad you are, no getting baptized, no joining a church, no nothing.

When Paul and Silas crossed the Dardanelles bringing the doctrines of New Testament theology into the West, their first stop was the Roman colony of Philippi where their preaching in the public square landed them in jail. Undaunted, these two men began evangelizing their fellow inmates when an earthquake hit the area causing the prison’s doors to open wide. But no one tried to escape because they were riveted to the men’s message. Having overheard the testimonies of Paul and Silas, the jailer asked them what he must do to be saved.

Now get this: it was Paul and Silas’s responsibility to tell this man the correct answer, to not leave anything out, yet be brief. Here’s what they told him:

Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved ... (Acts 16:31)

That’s all they said to him regarding what he needed to do, because all that is required is faith alone in Christ alone.

When the Lord spoke to Nicodemus in John 3 he presented him with a choice that, if made, would have a purpose and a result. There is an important word in John 3:16, a small, simple word pronounced *hē'-nä*. It is generally translated into the English by the word “that,” but in the Greek it introduces both purpose and result. Let’s take a look at the verse:

“God so loved the world, that He gave his uniquely-born Son, so that [*hina*: introduces both purpose and result] whoever believes in Him [this is the necessary condition to achieve the purpose and the result] shall not perish [purpose of believing: Nicodemus would be delivered from the lake of fire after he dies] but have eternal life [result of believing: Nicodemus would be imputed eternal life and would go to heaven when he dies]. (John 3:16)

We know that Nicodemus came to believe in Christ because John 19:39 informs us that he assisted Joseph of Arimathea in preparing the body of Christ for burial after Pilate had released it to them.

Therefore, Joe Hunt immediately began to pull his knowledge of the Bible together so that he could form a rationale and draw a doctrinal conclusion. Here’s how he did it. First of all, Joe knew he was saved. That’s the *purpose* of believing in Christ. Salvation is deliverance from the lake of fire. This is a doctrine he had been *living* since the day he was saved.

Secondly, Joe knew the doctrine of eternal life. This is the *result* of believing in Christ. Eternal life is imputed at the

moment one believes in Christ but doesn't become operational until physical death. When Joe learned he was about to die, the possession of eternal life was no longer something he knew he had, it was something he could now apply and he began *living* under its power.

Absolute confidence in the fact he knew he had eternal life, and that he would be transferred out of this life into the presence of God and Christ when he died, gave Joe the courage to do his duty for the Lord right up until the afternoon of February 8th.

In case any of you didn't clearly understand Joe's efforts to get this good news across to you it is my duty, as per his request, to tell you myself:

Here then is a statement of the gospel of salvation:

"Jesus of Nazareth, Who is both perfect God and sinless Man, was sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the human race after which He died, was buried, and three days later was resurrected from the dead. The purpose of these things is so that anyone who believes them will be delivered from retribution in the lake of fire after he dies. The result of these things is that anyone who believes them has eternal life and will go to heaven when he dies.

Do you believe this? If you do, then you have all the assets necessary to grow in grace and achieve the level of spiritual maturity that Joe enjoyed. This introduces the second thing he wanted me to make crystal clear to you here today. You will never be happy in this world until you understand this world cannot make you happy.

Only God can do this and he does it through His Word which you must appropriate into your souls.

I've read about 200 of the messages so many have sent to the Joe's family through the Caring Bridge Web site. Many expressed appreciation to Joe for helping them resolve problems in their lives, giving them good advice, or just being there in time of need.

Now remember the last thing Joe said to me, "I've done my duty, now you do yours." The duty Joe assigned me is this: To tell you that he is no longer available to give advice and counseling and for you to ask yourselves this question, "To whom do I *now* go to for advice?"

The answer is no one. If you choose another counselor when will be the day he dies? Then what?

The thing to do is to take up the gauntlet that Joe has tossed. He challenges you to become spiritually self-sustaining by making the Word of God priority one in your life. Joe stuck with it for over twenty years and you all have gathered here today to salute him as one of the finest gentlemen you have ever known.

Joe lived his faith. A person can't live his faith unless he knows what that faith demands of him. What you observed in Joe was a mature believer's application of what he knew and what he knew took two decades to acquire.

Here's my challenge: Start to work on feeding your soul the manna of the Word of God so when the day arrives that your soul makes its transfer, people will gather and say these same things about you that you are saying about Joe.

Now I can say to you what Joe Hunt said to me: "I have done my duty; now you do yours!" With that, I leave you

with this Latin proverb: *Qui non proficit deficit*. He who does not advance falls behind.

To Dee and all the members of the Hunt family: you are in a brief period of sorrow but because of your confidence in the veracity of God's immutable Word, this grief will soon be replaced by the joyous expectation of the promised future reunion. May the grace of God and the power of His doctrine in your souls sustain you in the interim. For the believer, death is the Lord's victory. For you who are left behind your motto remains: *Vincit omnia veritas*: Doctrine conquers all.

And in memoriam to my friend, colleague, and fellow member of the royal family of God, I proclaim this as his legacy: *Triumpho morte tam vita*: I triumph in death, as in life.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we come to your throne of grace today, saddened by the death of a husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, and friend. Yet we have learned from Your Word that such sorrow is only experienced by those who are left behind. And so we are encouraged by the knowledge that You rejoice in the death of Your saints and that Joe is happily in Your presence.

Thus, it is our prayer that Your grace will comfort those who now find themselves missing him. Shower upon them your gracious mercies which will bring tranquility to their souls. Such tranquility springs from biblical principles which sustain, give strength, and provide the ability to endure.

May the Holy Spirit empower each one to draw from this reservoir of confidence, enabling each to keep

his eyes focused on the Source of all good and perfect gifts, our Lord Jesus Christ. Joe was indeed a good gift, now made perfect in Him.

There is no substitute for victory. There can be no victory without Christ, a victory that was won through His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross and made available to all through faith alone in Him.

Joe, Your child, is victorious. At sunset on February 8, 2007, You ushered him into the realm of Your eternal glory about which we are confident and for which we are grateful.

And we lift our prayer in the name of Your uniquely-born Son, namely, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, through Jesus Christ our Lord, both now and forevermore! Amen. (Jude 24–25)

Epilogue

Basic Doctrines of the Christian Faith

In 1989, my pastor did a series of studies on the basic doctrines of the Christian faith; the core beliefs that enable a Christian to achieve meaning and purpose in his temporal and spiritual lives. These studies were the foundation of my spiritual growth that enabled me to meet life's challenges from a biblical worldview.

From my own personal experience, I believe it is important for every person who has placed his faith in Christ to become familiar with the Bible's basic doctrines. To make sure you have an opportunity to profit from these studies, I have requested that an MP3 CD be attached to the inside back cover of my book and I encourage you to listen objectively to them. The title of each of the series' 52 lessons is listed on the following pages.

Titles of MP3 Files: 1989 Basics**The Basic Doctrines of the Christian Faith**

<u>Series ID</u>	<u>Lesson Date</u>	<u>Lesson Title</u>
BAS-01	01-12-1989	Six Logical Propositions
BAS-02	01-19-1989	Plan of God; the Trinity; Essence of God: 1-2
BAS-03	01-26-1989	Essence of God: 3-6
BAS-04	02-02-1989	Essence of God: 7-10
BAS-05	02-09-1989	Personalities of the Trinity: Father, Son
BAS-06	02-23-1989	Nine False Gospels; the True Gospel; True Salvation
BAS-07	02-26-1989	Personalities: The Holy Spirit; Fall of Man
BAS-08	03-02-1989	Spirituality
BAS-09	03-09-1989	Human Good & Evil; Rebound: Luke 15:11
BAS-10	03-16-1989	Rebound: Luke 15:12-14, Spiritual Assets
BAS-11	03-23-1989	Rebound: Luke 15:15-18, Man's Sin; God's Grace
BAS-12	03-30-1989	Rebound: Luke 15:18-23, Man's Guilt; God's Forgiveness
BAS-13	04-06-1989	Rebound: Bottom Circle; Luke 15:24, Death
BAS-14	04-13-1989	Rebound: Luke 15:24, Death; Luke 15:25-27
BAS-15	04-20-1989	Rebound: Elder Brother & Pharisees; Luke 15:28
BAS-16	04-27-1989	Rebound: Trends of the Sinful Nature
BAS-17	05-04-1989	Rebound: Lust Patterns of the Sinful Nature
BAS-18	05-11-1989	Rebound: Summary of the Sinful Nature
BAS-19	05-18-1989	Rebound: Dangers of Self-Righteousness
BAS-20	06-01-1989	Rebound: Luke 15:29-30, Relative Righteousness
BAS-21	06-08-1989	Rebound: Luke 15:31-32, Eternal Security
BAS-22	06-15-1989	Review: Lessons 1-21
BAS-23	06-22-1989	The Importance of Doctrine
BAS-24	06-29-1989	Grace Apparatus for Perception: 1 Corinthians 2:4a
BAS-25	07-06-1989	GAP: 1 Corinthians 2:4b-5
BAS-26	07-13-1989	GAP: 1 Corinthians 2:6-7; Dispensations: Intro
BAS-27	07-27-1989	Dispensations: Gentiles, Israel, Incarnation
BAS-28	08-03-1989	Dispensations: Incarnation; Prototype System
BAS-29	08-10-1989	Dispensations: Prototype System Continued
BAS-30	08-17-1989	Dispensations: Jesus' Change of Plans
BAS-31	08-24-1989	Dispensations: Church, Tribulation
BAS-32	08-31-1989	Dispensations: Millennium; Mystery Doctrines
BAS-33	09-07-1989	Mystery Doctrines; 1 Corinthians 2:4-13

<u>Series ID</u>	<u>Lesson Date</u>	<u>Lesson Title</u>
BAS-34	09-14-1989	GAP: 1 Corinthians 2:14; Faith-Rest: Intro
BAS-35	09-21-1989	Faith-Rest: Exodus 17:1-7, No-Water Test
BAS-36	10-05-1989	Faith-Rest: Numbers 20:2-11; Hebrews 3:7-12
BAS-37	10-12-1989	Faith-Rest: Hebrews 3:13-4:3, 9-16
BAS-38	10-19-1989	Faith-Rest: Stage 1: Promises
BAS-39	10-26-1989	Faith-Rest: Stage 1: More Promises
BAS-40	11-02-1989	Faith-Rest: Stage 2: Doctrinal Rationales
BAS-41	11-09-1989	Faith-Rest; Stage 2: More Doctrinal Rationales
BAS-42	11-16-1989	Faith-Rest: Stage 3: Doctrinal Conclusions
BAS-43	11-30-1989	Faith-Rest: Discipline & Suffering
BAS-44	12-07-1989	Prayer: Biblical Vocabulary
BAS-45	12-21-1989	Prayer: Paragraphs 1-3
BAS-46	01-04-1990	Prayer: Paragraph 4; Content; Special: Meals
BAS-47	01-18-1990	Prayer: Special: Authority, Unbeliever, Jews
BAS-48	01-25-1990	Prayer: Special: Enemy, Believer, Teacher
BAS-49	02-01-1990	Prayer: Why Prayers Are Not Answered
BAS-50	02-08-1990	Prayer: Marital Discord; Review: 1989 Basics Series
BAS-51	02-15-1990	40 Proclamations: The Theology of Grace Doctrine Church: 1-25
BAS-52	02-22-1990	40 Proclamations: 26-40; the Importance of Doctrine

An MP3 disk containing the audio files of Bible classes corresponding to these titles is attached to the inside back cover. If this disk is missing you may write for a replacement to: Joe Griffin Media Ministries, 1821 South River Road, St. Charles, MO 63303-4124 USA.

What can one say about Joe Hunt? Not only is he a good partner in business, maybe one of the best salespeople I have known, and a great personal friend, Joe is one of the finest human beings I have ever met. He and I have always talked in terms of faith, family, friends and fun. Joe has a tremendous Christian faith and one of the best families, both immediate and extended, I have ever had the pleasure to know. He values his friendships and relationships with people at every level—from family to co-workers to customers. Joe loves to have fun and he is just plain fun to be around.

Through the whole unfortunate health-related challenge that Joe and his family have experienced, not only has he faced it with dignity and a tremendous attitude but he has also touched many people's lives, not only in a personal way, but most importantly, in a spiritual way. Joe believes in God's Great Plan and through his strong and unwavering Christian witness, even in the face of adversity, he is helping save souls for the Lord.

His book asks the question, "Who loves you?" His answers provide rare insight into how man's ability to love others is dependent upon whether he first loves God. Joe is a testimony to this principal and it explains why so many love him back. I know that I have been blessed to know him and to call him my friend.

Joe Steiner
CEO Color-Art, Inc.

