



GRACE COMMUNION
SEMINARY

GCS NEWS

A Newsletter for Students and Alumni of Grace Communion Seminary

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President's Letter



Discipleship with all our heart, mind, soul and strength

In the Great Commission, Jesus tells his disciples, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." The commission is to teach people to follow Jesus, to put into practice the things that he taught.

But when we look in the book of Acts, we don't see the disciples going around saying, "Obey Jesus." Not in those exact words, anyway. But it is implied in the message they preached, and it is implied in the early Christian creed, "Jesus is Lord."

In the New Testament, the disciples preached about who Jesus is, much more than giving a list of things that he commanded. They had to tell people who Jesus is and why it matters. Then they could tell them what Jesus commanded.

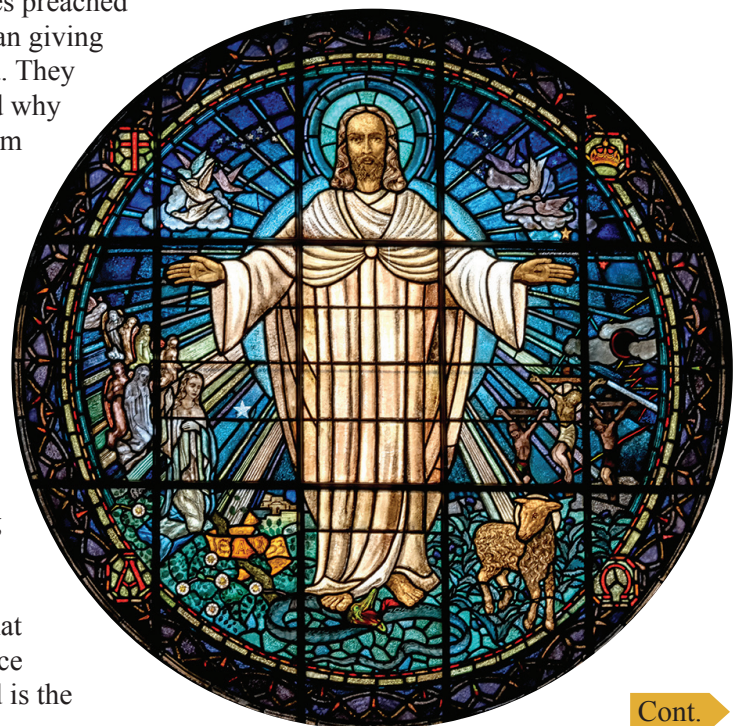
Being a disciple of Jesus is not just a matter of listing facts and commands and focusing on those details – it is a whole new way of thinking, a new way of being human, a way that Paul describes as putting on Christ, of being clothed with Christ, of being in Christ, of the Spirit living in us and leading us.

When we teach people to obey what Jesus commanded, one logical place to begin is what Jesus himself said is the

greatest commandment: "Love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength." I think we can paraphrase that by saying we should love God in all our emotions, in all our mental ability, and in all our actions. It covers everything we do.

This provides a working framework for what it means to be a disciple of Jesus: it includes knowledge, application, and emotions. So the Great Commandment is a skeleton outline of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. It gives more content to what the Great Commission is.

How does this work for GCS? Typically, a seminary focuses on knowledge: we teach people about Jesus, who he is and what he did and why it matters. We are concerned about the foundation of knowledge. There are some facts that we should believe.



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But that is a foundation, and something is built on that foundation. A seminary also includes teaching students about the application of that knowledge. How does this make a difference in my life? What does it say about what I do in ministry, and the way in which we lead others in the church? It's not just about what we are thinking – it's also about what we are doing.

The Great Commandment says that our love for God should go beyond knowing facts about Jesus, and it's more than obeying what he said. It involves the heart. Jesus said that we are to love God with all our heart. Paul said that even if we have all the facts right, and even if we do great things for God, if we don't have love, then we are just making noise. We are play-actors putting on a show.

This is implied in the biblical word faith, as well. The Greek word for faith is *pistis*, and in the ancient world it was used in several ways. It could be used for knowing facts. James talks about demons who believe that there is only one God, but that kind of faith falls short of what God wants.

In the ancient world, *pistis* was used for the relationship between wealthy people and those who looked to them for help. It referred to loyalty, to allegiance, to obedience, and gratitude. That's why Paul could talk about the obedience of faith. He wanted people to be loyal to Jesus. In that culture, the word *pistis* implied something about the way we live.

And faith implies trust, as well – that is an emotional side of it. We are to be loyal to Jesus willingly, joyfully, and gratefully. Paul spells this out in some of his letters. The word faith includes all our heart, mind, soul and strength. It's a pattern for being disciples of Jesus, for doing what he

says we should do, for being the kind of people he wants us to be.

It is difficult for us to teach emotions. We can teach people that we ought to be grateful for Christ's sacrifice, for example, but we cannot cause them to actually do it. That's done only by the Holy Spirit. We can teach people that they should love God, but we can't make them do so – only the Spirit can do that.

However, we can do a couple of things regarding emotion. First, we can teach people – this applies to students in a seminary, to members of a church, or to people in general – that we should love God, that we should be grateful, that we should rejoice.

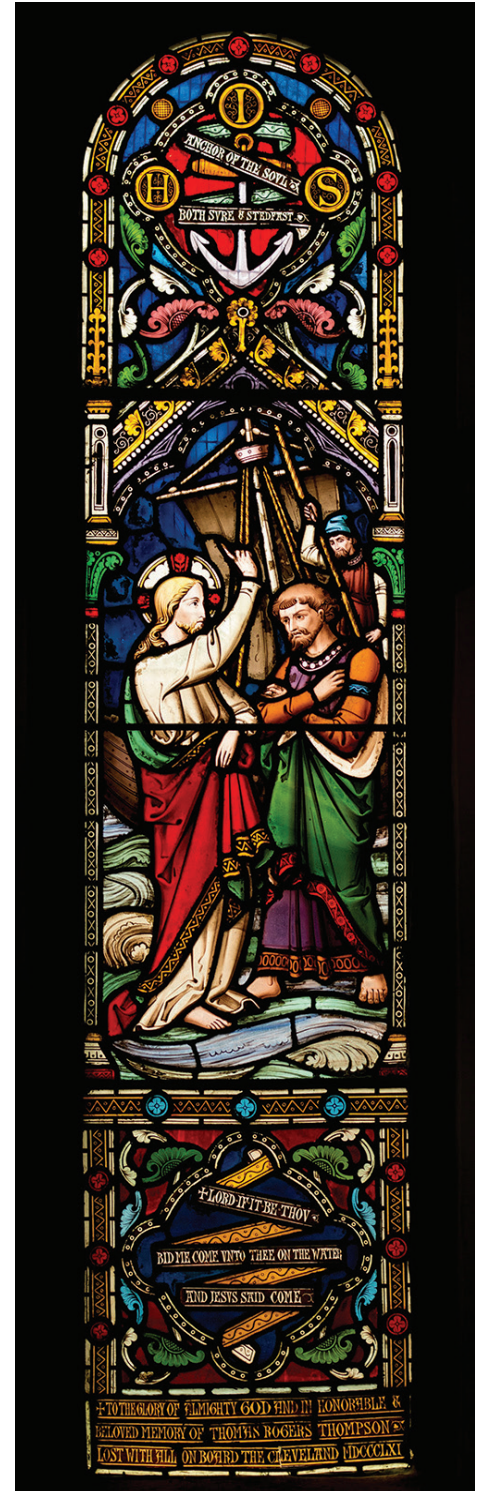
The New Testament tells us these things to help motivate us to do them. It's inviting us to examine ourselves, to see where we fall short – and we all probably fall short in all our responses to Jesus. Discipleship invites us to continue responding to the gospel in all three areas.

Second, we can model these things; this is one of the student learning outcomes that we have for our programs: we want students to model a Christian life in their areas of influence, and this is something that faculty should do as well – but we don't want it to be play-acting. We want it to be genuine, but there is no procedure that can guarantee that people will be genuine. That's up to the Spirit, to transform who we are on the inside.

Now, knowing the fact that we are forgiven is certainly a welcome encouragement, that we continue going forward in life despite not being at the desired destination as quickly as we might like. Our knowledge of what Jesus has done for us helps us to not fall into despair, as well as helping us be thankful and joyful and enamored with Jesus.

Beliefs and behavior and emotions work together as part of who we are. Discipleship involves all three, and that is true for when we are being disciplined as well as for when we are disciplining other people. It's the whole person following Jesus.

Michael Morrison, PhD
President



A Time to Gather for Devotion and Prayer



Join us for our next convocation where we meet by Zoom to share in a short devotional, and prayers for the work we are doing together. The meeting is open to current students, alumni, faculty members and board members from around the globe. We hope to see you there.

The convocation for the Spring semester will be held on January 21, 2025 at 8:00pm Eastern Standard Time. Invitations with Zoom links will be sent to all students who register for spring semester courses. If you aren't taking a class this semester but still want to attend the assembly, send an email to Georgia McKinnon at registrar@gcs.edu.

In a world with more than 24 time zones, we know that everyone may not be able to attend our gathering. If you have a schedule conflict at this time slot, let us know for our future planning considerations.

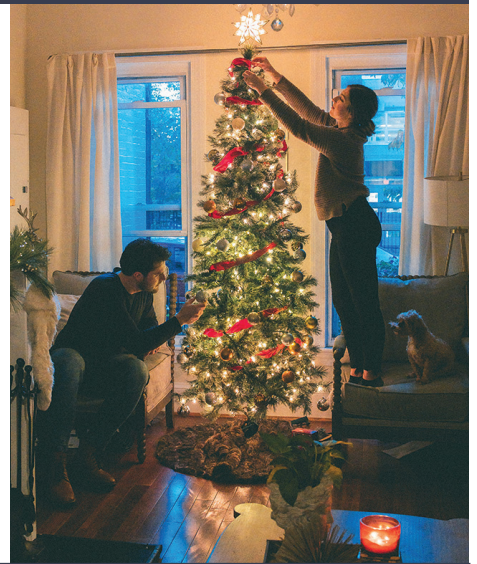
Spring Semester Online Convocation January 21, 2025



Back to Busyness

For some of us, this is a busy time of year and it is difficult to feel much joy in the many activities in the weeks before Christmas. We long for the return of Christ because then we won't have to put up decorations, wear different clothing, send special cards, make special shopping trips, get all our work done with fewer work days, and prepare for extra activities at church.

On the other hand, many people love those activities – even non-Christians can love special days and activities. We should not let the festive decorations and songs distract us from our greatest joy — Jesus. We can be thankful that he came the first time as a humble human being, as a teacher, example and Savior of the world. He gives us hope, peace, joy and love. May those blessings abound to you this year as we worship him.



MERRY
CHRISTMAS



Re-accreditation in process

We are accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission, which is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a recognized institutional accrediting agency for distance education. Like all accredited schools, our accreditation must be periodically renewed by giving our accreditation agency evidence that we continue to operate according to the standards they require. We are now in the midst of this process. It's a lot of paperwork, but for the most part it is done behind the scenes.

However, the Accrediting Commission will ask our students to fill out a survey regarding their experiences at GCS. Please cooperate with this survey and give them the feedback that will help them see whether we are in compliance. The process will include an on-site visit early next year and will not be complete until mid year. Please pray that all will go well.

Schedule of Courses

All schedules are tentative

Spring 2025: Registration begins January 3. The first lecture will be posted on Monday, January 13. Other lectures will be posted on Mondays, January 20 through March 17. All work is to be completed by April 6.

BI510	Old Testament Survey	Jeannine Graham
BI520	New Testament Survey	Michael Morrison
CM503	Christian Counseling	Ted Johnston
CM506	Trinitarian Youth Ministry	Jeff Broadnax
TH507	Theology of C.S. Lewis	Gary Deddo

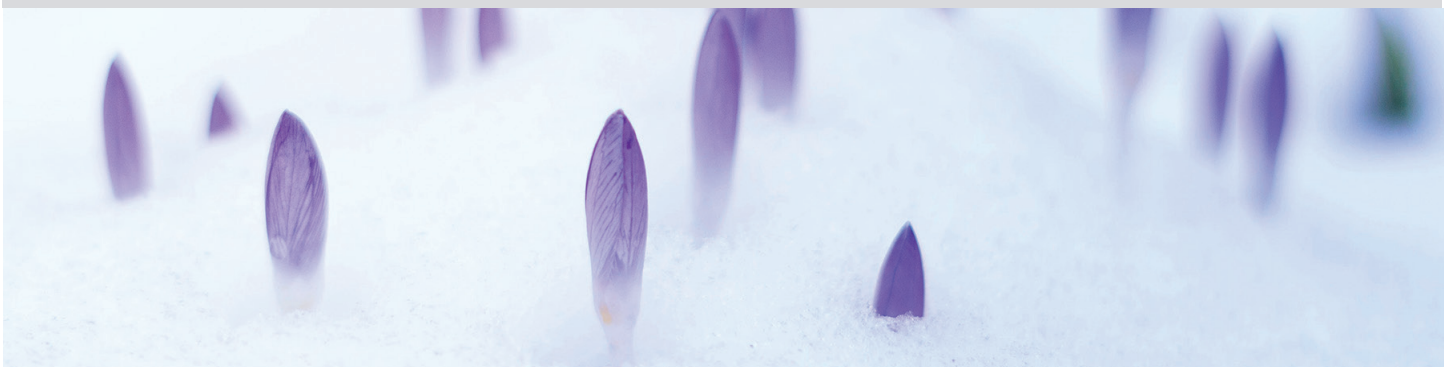
Summer 2025: Registration begins April 21. The first lecture will be posted on Monday, May 5. Other lectures will be posted on Mondays, May 12 through July 14. All work is to be completed by August 3.

BI523	Acts of the Apostles	Dan Rogers
BI524	Epistles of Paul	Michael Morrison
CH502	Church History: The Second Millennium	Stephen Dolson-Andrew
CM501	Foundations of Christian Ministry	Lance McKinnon
CM514	Missional Living	Charles Fleming
FE501-3	Field Education	Randy Bloom
TH501	The Triune God Revealed in Jesus Christ	Gary Deddo

Fall 2025: Registration begins August 18. The first lecture will be posted on Monday, September 1. Other lectures will be posted on Mondays, September 8 through November 3. All work is to be completed by December 7.

BI501	Biblical Interpretation	Michael Morrison
BI512	Prophets	Tim Finlay
CH501	Church History: The First Millennium	Stephen Dolson-Andrew
CM504	Practice of Ministry	Ted Johnston
CM507	Experiencing the Trinity	Larry Hinkle
TH503	The Holy Spirit, the Church and Last Things	Gary Deddo
TH505	Doctrine of the Trinity	Gary Deddo

All schedules are tentative. If fewer than five students register for a course, it may be cancelled, at the discretion of the instructor. **Thesis and Capstone courses for the master's degrees are offered in all semesters.**



CONGRATULATIONS To Our Recent 2024 Graduates

Master of Theological Studies (MTS)

**Martin Connelly • Johannes Maree
Takalani Musekwa**

CTS & DCM

Certificate of Theological Studies (CTS):

**Praveen Chintha
Sachin Nirale
Jose Lopez**

**Carmen Galvez
Carlos Pizarro**

Diploma of Christian Ministry (DCM):

**Jon Arnold
Brenda Asare-Akoto**

**Julie Frantz
Selena Venegas**



THANK YOU FOR PARTNERING WITH GCS

As the year draws to an end, we look back with grateful hearts for those whose passion and enthusiasm for GCS have moved them to partner with us through financial support and prayer. Your sharing with us is a blessing for the seminary to be a blessing to those we serve. We pray God's grace and blessing for you in the new year.

WE HOPE YOU WILL CONSIDER GCS IN YOUR YEAR-END GIVING

Financial support from alumni and friends like you has a profound impact on the seminary's mission of *"Equipping Men and Women for Church-based Ministry."*

Every gift is God's provision for his work in Grace Communion Seminary.



Donations to Grace Communion Seminary can be mailed to
3120 Whitehall Park Drive, Charlotte, NC 28273
or donate online at gcs.edu/donate.