

“We train disciplemakers...”



Our faith journey  
— p. 2



Obey ... or else?  
— p. 3

# Update from Kansas Communities Ministry

*Making Disciples Naturally* Podcast  
&  
Richard Spann's  
blogs are found at  
[KansasNavs.org](http://KansasNavs.org)

**The Hebrews**  
“warning passages”  
— page 2

**Deliver me?**  
**Goads and Nails** excerpt  
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**Law vs. grace**  
*See the article*  
*on pages 3 - 4*

**Update on Kansas State Fair:**  
*After 15 years of successful outreach, we have decided to focus more on individual discipleship opportunities. We will not have a Kansas Navigators presence this year at the Fair. Thanks to all who have helped over the years!*

## Behind the scenes ... God is at work

by David Dennis

Recently we have been going through the book of Acts, both in church and in a small group Bible study I am in. We see in Acts 24 that Paul had been arrested and stood before Felix, a former slave, now governor of Judea and Samaria. After testifying before Felix, then Festus, he almost was sent back to Jerusalem. Had that happened, the Jews were planning to ambush and kill Paul.

Ultimately, even though the Jews wanted to kill Paul on his way back to Jerusalem, and even though Festus offered that option (to go to Jerusalem — Acts 25:9), Paul appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:10-12) and was sent to Rome.

There are many moving parts to this story. At several points, Paul could have been killed. Yet God was at work behind the scenes. Had Paul not been sent to Rome, we may not have the “prison epistles” — Philippians, Philemon, Ephesians and Colossians — letters Paul wrote during his detention in Rome.

In thinking about this, I am reminded of the numerous times in my life when I saw the hand of God at work in retrospect only, even when things seemed dark: my mother's ovarian cancer diagnosis with a grim outlook at the time (1960's) yet she was healed, my being able to attend college, even though my parents had little money, my contact with Richard Spann and the Navigators in Wichita when I could have stayed in Kansas City, God's provision of believing spouses for our children, his rescuing me from a potentially-fatal car crash in high school, etc, etc.

The list could go on and on. How has God worked in your life? It is encouraging to look back and see how His hand was at work behind the scenes, even when we didn't see it! Let's give thanks for the way He has worked, even when it didn't seem like He was there, and remember this truth when we go through hard times.

**SAVE THE DATE: Fall Conference, Saturday, October 4 at Eastminster Presbyterian in Wichita.**  
**Speakers: Mike Jordahl and Mark Scaffidi**

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“This saying is trustworthy: If we died with him, we will also live with him. If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, since he cannot deny himself.”

— 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NET Bible)

# *The Journey of Faith*

by Zane Hodges © 2011, 2016

This little book is a compilation of a series of sermons given by Zane Hodges in the early 1980's on a teaching trip to southern California. In these eight sermons, Professor Hodges (from Dallas Seminary at the time) gives the believer great encouragement from the book of Hebrews.

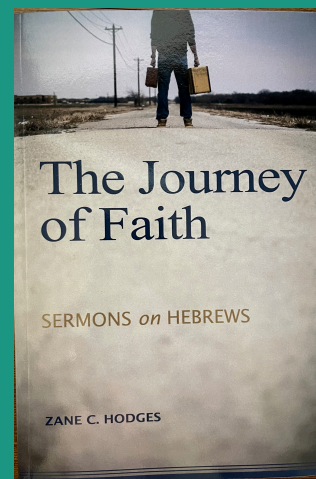
The first chapter is entitled "Never Give Up," taken from Hebrews 1:1-4, 13. He tells the story of a woman who had been found wandering around the streets of Philadelphia in 1921 weeping and in fear. She was uttering garbled sounds. She was first taken to a mental hospital and ultimately was committed there. After 47 years, they discovered that those unintelligible words were actually the Ukrainian language. Her husband and child had died and this led to her "nervous breakdown." She had given up, thinking she was hopeless and without any possibility of improvement.

Professor Hodges helps us understand that we must not give up our faith, even when things seem

"hopeless" from our perspective, or when life doesn't work out like we think it should. The result of giving up our faith is not loss of salvation, but rather loss of sharing in rulership and intimacy with Christ in the coming Kingdom.  
(2 Timothy 2:11-13)

Other chapters: Partners of the King, Suffering for the World to Come, The Peril of Not Growing, The Secret of Success and The Journey of Faith.

This is definitely a different approach to Hebrews. The typical interpretation of the five warning passages in Hebrews is that if we do not measure up in some way, we may not truly be Christians and run the risk of missing heaven. However, Hodges believes the book of Hebrews was written to true believers to encourage us to remain faithful. The book is a fascinating compilation of stories and principles from Hebrews. It's one of the most encouraging books I've read.



## Goads and Nails

(excerpt)

By Richard Spann

*Deliver me? Or glorify yourself! — Ray Hoo*

(Excerpt from Vol. 3 pages 117-120)

One morning I was sitting across from Ray in a local restaurant... We came to the subject of the trials that are common to all of us. Ray then asked the questions, "What is our response to trials? Is it 'Deliver me'? Or is it 'Glorify Yourself'?" He then related the passage of scripture in John 12:27-28. "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"

There are many situations in life where our hearts are troubled. It may be in facing the reality of a trial in the future or in the trial itself. It may be due to the failure or impending failure of a relationship, lack of employment, or job uncertainty. It may arise from severe health issues, financial burdens and even the seemingly overwhelming demands on our time. What is our first response to these trials? Is it, "Deliver me"? Or is it, "Glorify Yourself"?

Jesus recognized that the trial He was facing was from the Father, and that all aspects of the trial were under the Father's control. He knew, furthermore, that the trial had a purpose. That purpose was for the Father's Glory. He says in John 17:4, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." In Isaiah 43:7, we read that we were created for the Father's glory. All His work in and through us, including our trials and troubles, are for this purpose...

We will all come to situations in our lives that are distressful, painful, trying, or troubling to us. It is not wrong to pray that God would deliver us... But is that all we pray for? Are we able to look beyond the temporal to that which is unseen where God is working in our lives and the lives of others to Glorify Himself? By His Grace, may He help us to also pray "Glorify Yourself!" as we face the trials and troubles of this life.

In Christ, Richard Spann

## A Journey Through Grace: Lessons from a Viking River Cruise (part 3 of 3)

by David Dennis

This spring, Karla and I had the incredible privilege of embarking on a Viking River Cruise in eastern Europe on the Danube, an experience we'll never forget. We were joined by three other couples we've known for years, including Sam and Barbara Claassen, who work with the Navigators' Kansas Communities Ministry.

Each day, I wrote a blog to share our experiences with family and friends. Beyond recounting the places we visited and the history we learned, I sought to reflect on how we could see God's hand at work. We continually saw evidence of God's grace and creativity. The previous two articles discussed the observations that people (not buildings) make the difference in life and that we should look at ourselves as "sent" ones as we share the love of Jesus in even small ways. Today's final article looks at grace versus law-keeping.

As part of our tour, we had the privilege of visiting some of the most stunning churches and cathedrals in Eastern Europe. These massive Gothic structures, many of which took centuries to complete, were adorned with intricate carvings, statues, and magnificent paintings. One cathedral we visited began construction in 1200 AD and wasn't completed until the 1500s. It's a testament to the creativity and dedication of the people who built these holy places.



Yet, despite the beauty and grandeur of these sacred buildings, we learned something quite sobering. Our guide shared that approximately 78% of Czechs today identify as atheists. While many still regret the Communist regime, there's a curious sense of gratitude that the Communists "got rid of religion." It's a sobering reflection of how faith, once central to the culture, has dwindled in the face of history and societal shifts.

As we pondered this reality, one question surfaced: What went wrong? How could a region that once thrived with Christian belief, teaching, art, architecture, and music now be so spiritually barren? What happened between the church's glorious past and the present spiritual decline?

One insight comes from a conversation with ChatGPT, which highlighted that during the 1500s, the Church taught that faith plus works were necessary for salvation, and that law-keeping was crucial for remaining in a state of grace. Could this emphasis on law-keeping have contributed to the spiritual death we see today? (Continued on next page)

"To be in Christ - that makes you fit for heaven; but for Christ to be in you - that makes you fit for earth! To be in Christ changes your destination; but for Christ to be in you - that changes your destiny! The one makes heaven your home - the other makes this world His workshop." ~ Major W. Ian Thomas, evangelist, writer, teacher.  
Quote found at [https://www.azquotes.com/author/45938-W\\_Ian\\_Thomas](https://www.azquotes.com/author/45938-W_Ian_Thomas)



## Journey Through Grace (continued)

### The Danger of Law-Keeping: A Path to Spiritual Death

As much as it's easy to point fingers at historical events, the truth is that we all have a tendency to depend on our own efforts and "rule-keeping." However, when we rely on our ability to follow laws and regulations, we short-circuit the life-transforming power of God's grace.

The Apostle Paul makes this contrast clear in Romans 8:5-6 (NKJV):

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Paul contrasts two ways of living: "living according to the flesh" (relying on our own ability to keep the law) and "living according to the Spirit" (which means relying on God's grace). To live by the flesh leads to *death*, but to live by the Spirit leads to true *life and peace*.



While the cause of the church's decline is likely complex and multifactorial, could it be that the churches we visited were unknowingly emphasizing law-keeping to such an extent that they became centers of spiritual death rather than life? Perhaps the people of that time were taught that they had to earn (and/or keep) God's approval through works and moral effort, which, paradoxically, led to a lack of life and transformation.

### Walking in Grace: True Transformation

This journey through Eastern Europe has led me to a deeper understanding of what it means to walk by the Spirit. When we focus on our own ability to "keep the rules," we lose sight of the transforming power of grace. The path to true spiritual life isn't through our own efforts — it's through walking in grace, relying on Jesus's shed blood. It means keeping our eyes on Him, not on our own efforts. (Hebrews 12:2)

Grace, not law-keeping, brings true transformation. It's only when we focus on Jesus, instead of our own ability (or inability) to follow the rules, that we experience the life and peace that Paul talks about. Walking in grace isn't just about salvation; it's about living out a continual transformation, one that shapes our thoughts, actions, and relationships.

### Grace Gives Life; Law-Keeping Leads to Death

Let's remember this essential truth: *Grace gives life*, while focusing on *law-keeping leads to death*. In a world that often tries to make us believe that our worth comes from following rules and meeting expectations, let's remember that our transformation doesn't come from striving to earn God's favor—it comes from receiving His grace. When we focus on the law — living up to a standard — this often leads to comparison, judging others and ultimately keeps our eyes on ourselves and not on our Savior.

As we reflect on our travels, the beautiful churches, and the stories of faith that have shaped the history of this region, we are reminded that grace alone is the source of true spiritual life. May we all remember to walk by the Spirit, keeping our eyes on Jesus, and allowing Him to transform us from the inside out. (Romans 12:1-2)

"There are three of you. There is the person you think you are. There is the person others think you are. There is the person God knows you are and can be through Christ." ~ Billy Graham, Evangelist, Author. Quote found at [https://www.azquotes.com/author/5776-Billy\\_Graham](https://www.azquotes.com/author/5776-Billy_Graham)