

Ministry for Wounded People Interviews With Stephen Seamands

Copyright 2016 Grace Communion International

Published by Grace Communion International

Table of Contents

From “What” to “So What?”

Ministry in the Image of God

Wounds That Heal

About the Publisher

Grace Communion Seminary

Ambassador College of Christian Ministry

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Introduction

This is a transcript of interviews conducted as part of the *You're Included* series, sponsored by Grace Communion International. We have more than 120 interviews available. You may watch them or download video or audio at www.gci.org/YI.

When people speak, thoughts are not always put into well-formed sentences, and sometimes thoughts are not completed. In these transcripts, we have removed some of the words that did not seem to contribute any meaning to the sentence. In some cases we could not figure out what was intended. We apologize for any transcription errors, and if you notice any, we welcome your assistance.

Grace Communion International is in broad agreement with the theology of the people we interview, but GCI does not endorse every detail of every interview. The opinions expressed are those of the interviewees. We thank them for their time and their willingness to participate.

We incur substantial production costs for these interviews and transcripts. Donations in support of this ministry may be made at www.gci.org/participate/donate.

Our guest in the following interviews is **Stephen Seamands**, professor of Christian doctrine at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. He received his PhD from Drew University in 1983. He is the author of:

- *A Conversation With Jesus*
- *Give Them Christ: Preaching His Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Return*
- *Holiness of Heart and Life*
- *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service*
- *The Evangelical's Guide to Spiritual Warfare: Scriptural Insights and Practical Instruction on Facing the Enemy* (with Charles Kraft)
- *Wounds That Heal: Bringing Our Hurts to the Cross*

The interviews were conducted by Michael Morrison, PhD, Dean of Faculty at Grace Communion Seminary.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

[back to table of contents](#)

From “What” to “So What”

Michael Morrison: Steve, you’ve been a pastor, and you describe yourself as “a practical theologian.” To some people, that seems like a contradiction of terms. Theology doesn’t seem very practical. How do you see theology as practical for the church?

Stephen Seamands: Well, Mike, I don’t think I would be teaching this stuff if I didn’t think it was practical. Sometimes I say to my students the reason I love theology is because it *is* so practical.

That’s why theology arose in the church in the first place, not so that academicians and theoreticians could sit around discussing and fine-tuning ideas. It was out of the life of the church, protecting true doctrine from false doctrine. It was so that you could disciple people when they came to faith in Christ. You had to tell them about what they believed and what you believed as Christians. How do you evangelize without being able to talk to someone about the faith? Those are the kinds of things. It’s about nurturing. It’s about bringing people to faith. Those are the things that theology is about. So it’s really practical, and it’s supposed to undergird everything that we do in ministry.

MM: I noticed in your book, *Give Them Christ*, that you talk about how it’s not just a “what” but a “so what.” You’re trying to bring out some practical implications of doctrines instead of just trying to prove that Jesus became flesh. Yeah, he did—then you try to answer *so what*: What difference does that make for us?

SS: Right. In this particular book, Mike, I was really concerned that pastors help people understand. We teach them a lot about the *what* while they’re in school, and most of them get that. They understand it, but when they become pastors and preachers of churches, what people really want to know is, well, so what? Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us. So what? What difference does that make? So in this book I was trying to help them move from the *what* to the *so what*, and that’s where I think doctrine really gets exciting and inspiring when we begin to think about what difference does this really make?

MM: Maybe comment on the incarnation. It’s nice that Jesus became a human, but then there’s the *so what*. What difference does it make me in my job or in my marriage and day-to-day life?

SS: One of the great and foundational human questions that people have asked for centuries is: Does God really care, or is God just far removed somewhere? Did he create this and just pull away from it? But the incarnation means that he came and actually became one of us so that he could get next to us and so that he could understand what it feels like to be human, not in just a theoretical kind of sense but he walked in our shoes.

There’s a poet, William Blake, who says “now think not thou canst sigh a sigh and thy Maker is not

by. Think not thou canst shed a tear and thy Maker is not near.” Jesus has become a human. Eyeball to eyeball, heart to heart. He knows what it’s like to be human, to be lonely. He knows what it’s like to get angry sometimes about things, to feel sorrow. He wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus, and he saw what it was doing to the people.

So that fundamental human question, does God care, has been answered for us in that he became flesh and dwelt among us. As Eugene Peterson puts it in his translation of that verse, John 1:14, “he moved into our neighborhood.” He got next to us. Now I know that, and I can never be the same because of that. I know that he knows.

MM: Right. I was thinking of his struggle in Gethsemane. He’s not just faking this, going through motions, but it was something internal.

SS: He felt, at times we’ve felt, God-forsaken. We’ve felt all alone, and he cried out, “my God, why have you forsaken me?” He’s felt that as well.

MM: Right. Philip Yancey wrote a book on *Where Is God When It Hurts?* Where is he?

SS: He’s in the middle of it. He understands. Alfred North Whitehead says he is “the fellow-sufferer who understands.” He can understand, so that when I come to him, I’m not coming to somebody that’s aloof, far removed, or has no clue. That’s good news, it seems to me.

MM: So we can see his life and learn something about our own life at the same time.

SS: Yes. That’s another thing about the significance of the incarnation. First, it’s a compliment to humanity, in the sense that God says, “I want to become one of you. I choose to take on flesh and dwell among you.” What higher compliment could you give to humanity than to say, “That’s how much you mean to me. I join myself to you.”

Also, Jesus comes to reveal to us what it means to be fully human. In him we see, and we don’t just hear someone talking about, what it’s supposed to look like. Others might come and give you a discourse on the dignity of labor, but here is someone who comes and works in a carpenter shop with his hands. He embodies that for us. We see it. We get a person-to-person vision of that, which speaks to us more than any other. We need that as human beings. That’s how communication is best done. We see in him the embodiment of what it means to be human, what it means to love, what it means to be free.

We also see the revelation of God. What’s God like? That’s another great human question, isn’t it? For us Christians, it’s really not “what is God like?”— it’s more, “Is God Christ-like?” and in the face of Christ we see him.

MM: So Jesus is showing us both humanity and God. So do we expect God to look like humanity?

SS: Well, not exactly [laughing]. He actually embodies both, but he does suggest, I think, that God’s plan is that you and I might share in the life of God. That you and I might become joined to God and

raised, you might say.

MM: You're saying he's showing us true humanity, and he as a true human shared in the life of God, and that we can also, through him.

SS: Right. Through him—he's the pioneer. The writer of the book of Hebrews says he's the forerunner of what that new humanity is supposed to look like, that lives in God and dwells in God and walks with God. That didn't work out so well with Adam. We turned from that original plan that God had for us, and he's kind of reinstituting that.

MM: Romans describes him as another Adam. Humanity is started again—in this model [Jesus], rather than the old one.

SS: Right. The second Adam.

MM: And Jesus can show us what it means to live a human life in dependence on God, in a way that we couldn't see in the Old Testament from God speaking on Mount Sinai, for example. (Maybe that's where people got the idea of the aloof God, and he's just far off, and we couldn't relate.)

SS: I think God had to establish those boundaries and to show us, first of all, that "I'm not one of you." We have such a propensity to make God in our own image, and that propensity to bring God down to our level. God was teaching his people all along that no, you can't do that. There's this appropriate distance. But then in the New Testament, when Jesus comes, he comes near.

MM: On one side he says "I'm not one of you," and the next time he says, "I can *become* one of you." He blesses us with his presence. But with him as a human we see his struggles with pain, sorrow, sin, and suffering. He didn't sin himself, but he could deal with it, and he did deal with it. He stopped suffering for some people. Why didn't he just stop it for everybody?

SS: I think our basic human inclination is to think, well God ought to get rid of suffering. Truly, suffering is suffering. It's awful. God's way of dealing with suffering is a little different—at least the Christian vision of that. Simone Weil said that the extreme greatness of Christianity is not that it looks for a remedy for suffering, but a divine use for suffering. In Christ God enters into suffering himself. He chooses to become one with us in our suffering—takes it into himself, you might say. On the cross in his human nature he suffers, and he cries out, "My God, why?" Then, as a result of that, he is able to redeem suffering and now uses it for the redemption of the world.

It's a different vision of suffering. It doesn't solve all the problems related to the problem of suffering. There's still a lot of *why's* that we ask, about why certain things happen to us, why things happen in our world, why there's so much suffering. The end of the story says there's going to be a time when there's no more tears and no more pain, but God seems to be in the business of being more interested in redeeming it and using it for his purposes than just simply seeking to eliminate it and protect

us from it.

MM: There will always be these why questions. We don't always know why, but now we're having a different perspective on it, of how this can be used for some good.

SS: Right, and also just knowing that he enters into suffering.

MM: He's been there.

SS: That doesn't make the problem necessarily go away, but sometimes when you can't trace God's hand, you can trust his heart. I think it helps us to trust God's heart to know that he's one with us in our suffering. I think of Joni Eareckson Tada who (as probably many know) has been a quadriplegic since she was 17 as a result of a diving accident. She talks about how when your husband has just left you, when your son has committed suicide, when you've just become a quadriplegic, trying to figure out reasons and answers is pointless. At a point like that, she says, the only answer that satisfies is the man of sorrows. Someday we'll get a full answer, but until then, she says the man of sorrows is enough—to know that God enters into that and doesn't keep himself from suffering. That speaks to our heart even though it may not answer all of our questions about the enigma of suffering.

MM: Even the symbol of Christianity is a cross—a reminder of not just simple suffering but excruciating suffering. So there is a practical significance of what we see there. It could be a doctrine, could become sterilized, but yet there's a practical result as we understand what was going on there in the crucifixion. That that can help us be encouraged. It doesn't take our suffering away. But as Paul described, we're sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

SS: I have sometimes shared with people about Christ and his suffering and helped them to reframe their suffering in the light of his greater suffering, their afflictions in the light of his greater affliction. It seems that “reframing” helps them put their suffering in a perspective that they couldn't before. It's profoundly comforting, even though it doesn't solve the mystery.

MM: The suffering is still there—and it's not just that Jesus suffered *more* than we did. But he suffered with purpose, and somehow we can participate in that purpose.

SS: Yeah. I like to think that his scars, his nail-scarred hands, have become radiant now—radiant scars. It's interesting that he has a glorified body, but he still has the scars. Those marks of his suffering are there, and it seems like they're always going to be there. Even when John looks to see the lion, he doesn't see a lion—he seems a lamb as though it had been slain [Revelation 5:5-6].

So even in John's vision of heaven, Jesus still has those scars. But now they're radiant scars, and it seems that in our lives, God can take the suffering, our scars. If we'll give them to him, he can work to transform and redeem. Then our scars become radiant, too, and useful for the redemption of others.

MM: It reminds me of the Gospel of John. John refers to Jesus' crucifixion as his glorification. It was

part of his glory that he was willing to sacrifice, to suffer.

SS: Suffering and glory are bound up together in the Christian vision, and this is counter-intuitive and mind boggling, and not the way our culture tends to view suffering. Suffering is something to be eliminated. You've got a headache. You take a couple of Tylenol or whatever. You get rid of it. That's what we would think, so we assume that that's what a loving God would do: eliminate suffering. But God's thoughts and ways are different. He wants to work and use suffering. The cross becomes the means of redeeming the world.

MM: Right. Whereas our suffering can't redeem the world.

SS: No, it can't, but it can be used redemptively in our lives and in the lives of others. I mean in the sense that God can take a person, for example, who has been through the wrenching pain of a divorce and bring them out, and then they become someone that God uses to minister to other people who are going through a divorce. So that doesn't get wasted, as it were.

I had a woman several years ago in Canada share about how God had taken the garbage in her life, the suffering, the pain, the things that she wished had never happened. The garbage had become like a compost pile. You throw garbage in a compost pile—rotten eggs, banana peels and leaves and coffee grinds, whatever. She and her husband had just made a compost pile. She said, a year from now, when we go about fertilizing in our garden, around the shrubs and all, she said there won't be any fertilizer you can buy anywhere that'll be as near as good as that compost. She said it will be like pure gold.

I thought, that's what God seems to want to do with our garbage. He can take it, if we'll give it to him, and use it and turn it somehow into gold.

MM: We want to get rid of it, but he wants us to keep it, and he'll transform it.

SS: With his thorn in the flesh, Paul said take it away, and he prayed. He said it's a messenger of Satan. It was not a good thing, whatever it was, but God says, no I want to use that, because in your weakness my strength is made perfect. Paul says, I glory in that now. [2 Corinthians 12:7-10] That's a pretty counter-intuitive vision for the average American today, isn't it?

MM: In your book you mention that the apostles "preached the gospel backwards." It was an intriguing phrase. Maybe you could comment a little more. What's backwards about this, the way the apostles preached?

SS: We used to think of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and what I meant by that was, particularly if you look at the preaching of the apostles in the book of Acts, there's a strong emphasis on Christ's resurrection as being at the heart of everything, and fundamental. So what I meant was they, after his resurrection and after their proclamation of that, they then looked at the cross and his life, and interpreted all that he had done in the light of the resurrection.

For example, his death. I don't think they would have understood it to be redemptive and salvific if he was still in the grave. He had died, and that was the end of it. His word from the cross, it is finished, for example, takes on a different meaning. If he is still dead, we'd say, that's the end.

MM: *He* is finished.

SS: Done and he is finished, whereas now "it is finished" is the shout of a victor. It's accomplished, finished—but that makes sense only in the light of the resurrection. So that's what I meant by "they preached backwards," in the sense that they looked at his whole life ministry in the light of his resurrection, and it only then makes sense.

MM: The resurrection is good news for him, but how is that good news for us as well? That's the *so what* question.

SS: It establishes that he is Lord—the resurrection and the lordship and the divinity of Christ. It's good news because it helps us to really understand who Jesus is in that regard, and so I encourage pastors to call people on Easter Sunday, when they preach, to answer the question who is Jesus, and to submit to him as Lord, because the resurrection establishes that.

But the really good news about the resurrection is that it means that new creation has begun. In the Jewish mind, resurrection from the dead was something they associated with the very end of the age. That was when God was going to make all things new. They were a little bit confused and discombobulated not because Jesus had been raised from the dead so much, but *when* it happened: It had happened in the middle of history, not at the end. So they had to readjust.

What that means is that new creation has already begun now, and so it's the guarantee that God is going to make all things new. It means that it has begun now. It can begin in us. We are new creatures in Christ, but it's also about the whole of creation. It tells me that God is on a mission to redeem *everything* that he created. I need to join him in that mission now.

MM: Salvation is bigger than just me.

SS: Absolutely. It's about all of creation. Paul writes in Romans, chapter 8, that all of creation groans and travails. It's on tip-toe, waiting. When he returns, new creation is really going to kick into full gear, as it were, but that process has begun now. So the guarantee, that that's where we're going to go, is already now. That's good news.

MM: That can also affect how we look at the creation around us now.

SS: Right. We ought to be preparing this world, ourselves, for its eventual destiny. That applies even to things like the environment. It leads to a Christian focus on creation care, because that's what God wants for all of creation. We need to kind of get on the road to that now.

MM: After Jesus was resurrected, he ascended to heaven. He sat at the right hand of the Father.

What's he doing for us now?

SS: For a lot of people, the ascension is a meaningless doctrine. They believe it. It's in the Apostles' Creed, you know, and so forth.

First, you have to ask what it meant for him. Then you figure out what it means for us, but what it meant for him is that he's restored into the fullness of the presence of God once again, something that he laid aside in some measure when he became incarnate. He was present at one place and in one time. He was limited by space and time when he walked here.

Going back to heaven means that now he's in the fullness of the presence of God, and that means he can be everywhere and in all times at once now. He's no more limited. The good news is: that means that Jesus is always present now. He's everywhere. He said in the Great Commission, Don't forget: I'm with you always. That's bound up with the ascension, because heaven and earth overlap, as it were. Heaven is all around us, as it were. It's more of a dimension than a place. Jesus can be everywhere, and that means he's with us now, even as we're having this interview. He's with me moment by moment when I get in my car and drive home. I can begin to recognize his presence and live in his presence every moment of every day. That is good news. That's just one thing.

MM: I was thinking of his ministry of mediation, as our intercessor.

SS: Yeah. We're told that one of the main things he's doing now that he's at the right hand of God he's not just twiddling his thumbs, but Hebrews [7:25] says he ever lives to make intercession for us. He is interceding at the right hand of God. This is a posture of standing in the gap for others.

So if that's what Jesus is doing, and we are somehow connected to him and joined with him through union with Christ and through being raised up with him, then we join with him in that work of intercession for others. One thing Jesus does is he takes a little bit of that intercessory burden that he has for everything and puts it on us as particular people for particular persons, situations, countries, cities, churches and so forth. We then become these mediators, as it were. We join with him in that work of intercession.

MM: So the feelings that we have are really from him working in us.

SS: Right. It's amazing the different kinds of ministries and burdens. Out of those burdens flow all kinds of different concerns and ministries that people have for particular things.

MM: The story of Jesus—we've sketched out where it has gone, but we also see something in the future part of the story: his return. That's going to have a huge practical importance for us then, but does it have a practical importance for us now?

SS: If you read the New Testament, most of the discussion of the second coming and the return of Christ is really not about trying to figure out when it's going to happen, or even what it's going to look like when it happens, but most of the instruction and the teaching has to do with our lives now. For

example, the call to holiness. He who has this hope, John says, purifies himself as he is pure [1 John 3:3]. This hope of his return prompts us to become like him. We're going to become like him.

MM: If we like what he's like. Then it's going to have some influence on what we like and do now.

SS: Exactly. So the second coming is a call to holiness. It's also a call to faithful service. The parables that Jesus tells about the guy who goes away on a trip and the people are back home working. They don't know when he's coming. The ones that are said to be good and faithful servants are the ones who are just doing their job faithfully waiting for his return. They're not trying to figure out the day or the moment he's going to come back, but they're commended mainly because they were faithful in little. So there's a faithful service.

There's also a call to patient endurance. You're awaiting his return, but a day is like a thousand years [2 Peter 3:8] and you don't know. So you need to be patient. It's a spur to be patient.

I would also say joyful confidence, because we know Jesus is coming back. We're waiting for a *person* to come back most of all, aren't we? Sometimes we get so focused on the signs of his coming, but the thing that's most exciting is that *Jesus* is coming. That word *parousia* that they use to talk about the Second Coming was a word that had to do with someone's personal presence. It's a reason for joy to know that Jesus, our risen Lord, will come back.

MM: I think some people look forward to Christ's return because they are interested in what he can do for me. I've got these problems in my life, and I want them to be fixed. That'll be fixed by Christ's return, so I want him to return. They lose sight of the relationship with him, that he's the one we're waiting for. He is the big reason that it's going to be a joyful time.

SS: Right, and I think it's an indictment on us when many Christians don't talk much about the Second Coming. It seems like folks either over-believe in it, in the sense that that's *all* they think about, and most of the time they're trying to figure out dates and seasons and times and all that. Then in many sectors of the church, though, you just don't hear hardly anything about the Second Coming.

I think that that shows how little we really miss him, because I think we'd talk more about it if we missed Jesus. We'd want to be with him. We'd want him to come back, because we'd want to see him again. Just like we might talk about a loved one who's away. I wonder if that's an indictment on our love relationship with him.

MM: That we need to be developing that relationship now.

SS: Yeah, that we'd be eager. It's the eager expectation of his return, and it's a blessed hope. It's a blessed hope that we have.

~~~~~

[back to table of contents](#)

## Ministry in the Image of God

**Michael Morrison:** Steve, you've written a very interesting book on *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service*. There's a lot packed into each of these words. What I found particularly interesting is, as a starting point, maybe we could talk about the image of God. How are you developing that or where are you getting this from? Am I supposed to look like God does?

**Stephen Seamands:** Yeah, that's what Archie Bunker used to say. Remember on *All in the Family*, he said, "Well, I was created in the image of God. That means God looks like me." When you think about those words in Genesis, chapter 1, verse 26, God says, "Let us make man [Adam] in our own image," and then it says, "in the image of God God created us, and we were created, in the image of God he made us." Then he talks about male and female being created in the image of God as male and female. I'm suggesting in this book that we were created in a Trinitarian image of God. Let the "let us" suggest the Trinity there.

**MM:** "Us" being some plurality.

**SS:** Exactly. The plurality in God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and so then God creates us in that Trinitarian image, with a Trinitarian imprint. If we're going to understand what that image is, we've got to think not just about... Sometimes theologians have thought about the image as like just a capacity that we have that differentiates us from animals, like our ability to make choices or our ability to reason. No, that passage understands that there's a *relationship* that constitutes the image. Just as the persons of the Trinity are created in relationship or in relationship to each other, we've been created in relationship. In a sense, it seems to be saying that to have the image of God, you need more than one. You need male and female.

**MM:** For God it's three, for humans it's two.

**SS:** Right.

**MM:** In a way, humans need the third, we need God in us, too.

**SS:** Right, exactly. You think of a family: you've got a mother and a father and a child. You've got that fullness of the image that you can't quite have in just one person per se.

**MM:** As one person, can't we be persons? Does it take other persons to make us persons?

**SS:** The Trinity would seem to indicate that to be really a person actually is to be incomplete, in the sense that it does take another, an "I" and a "thou," to truly be a person. Even the names of the Trinitarian persons, Father and Son, for example, imply relationship. You can't be a father without being in relationship, or a son. To be a person, does mean, at least according to the Trinity, if we let the Trinity helps up to find what personhood is and looks like, means that I am in relationship to another. I'd make a

distinction between being an individual, which you can be, I can be, in of just myself, as opposed to being a person, which means I am myself in relationship to you. I can't just be "me, myself and I" anymore.

It's interesting the first time the word "my" shows up in the Bible. I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but it's actually when God creates Eve and he brings Eve out to Adam. Remember what he says – the old guy turns into a poet, doesn't he? He starts, "This at last is bone of my bone," there's the word *my*, the first time it shows up in the Bible. Even to be able to say *my*, he can only say *my* when he looks at her. It would seem to suggest that to be me, I need you. To be a person I need another.

**MM:** That the meaning of my life, at least in part...

**SS:** Is in relationship. We tend to think of ourselves in a very individualistic way. I can be myself. I can be me just by being me. It'd be nice to add a few other people; that makes you healthy and kind of rounds you out.

**MM:** Especially if they do what I want them to do.

**SS:** Exactly. We tend to think, "Well, those are optional, though, to being a person." Whereas, I think the Trinitarian vision would say, "No, I am myself only in relationship to you. Adam can't say *my* until he sees her – until there's a thou." It takes an I and a thou to be fully personal.

**MM:** This image that God has created me to be isn't complete until it has these relationships.

**SS:** Right.

**MM:** Maybe that leads into the concept of ministry, that there are relationships.

**SS:** Right. That has profound implications for ministry. Often, the places where people really fail in ministry are in their ability to form and to function well in relationships. Relationships are at the heart of what makes ministry work. It's interesting in the field of counseling, for example. They've discovered that often it's not what a counselor says to someone or a technique they use that fixes the problem or helps the person. Or it's not the kind of therapy approach that they bring to the table as a counselor. Is this a cognitive therapy or whatever. It's actually the forming of a relationship with this counselor. It's the relationship itself that seems to heal.

**MM:** There's something healthy about that.

**SS:** There's something healthy about that. This says to me as a Christian leader that I need to be one that's working first of all, at growing in the ability to be healthy in a relational way. Most of us tend, if you put us on a spectrum of being too attached to others, to being too separated or aloof from others, most of us because of our lives we tend to gravitate toward one extreme or the other. I tend to be not too attached. I tend to be too aloof. I tend to want to separate too much, to be alone; to be a lone wolf sort of guy. In ministry, the challenge for me, then, is to work on that and deal with that in myself, and to learn how to move toward people more.

For some people, they have the other problem. They tend to be maybe almost co-dependent on their congregation or someone. They almost become an extension of someone else, and that's not healthy. To be working toward healthy relationships in ministry, to be in relationship. For me, an important part of my ministry has been being a part of a small group of three or four other like-minded persons over the years, realizing God can't do all he wants to do in me if I'm just going to insist on "me and Jesus." Even though I have an important life of prayer, that's something I do as just an individual. I need to be in relationship, in close relationships. I need that community, a small group-type of community to really become the person I'm supposed to be.

As the last thing I would say about us ministers and people in the ministry is that we need to attend to our families and understand the importance of our family unit. We can't sacrifice our children and our spouses on the altar of our ministry. We've got to be intentional. Sometimes, maybe one of the most powerful and best things we can do, for example, as a pastor of a local church, is just to be a model of what a healthy family looks like, as a husband and wife and also as a father or a mother with children. If that's the heart of God and if relationship is at the heart of things, we've got to take it seriously.

**MM:** That also means sometimes saying *no* to what the congregation wants and saying what the congregation really needs is an example of this family involvement.

**SS:** Right. Yes, there's a price to pay for that, but if I let productivity and if I let function, for example (and usually those are the kinds of things that create a lot of congregational demands on us – we want you to do this or do that) – if I become the kind of person who measures my own self on how well I produce or what I do for others rather than who I am in relationship to others, then I'm a part of that problem. In order to make relationship at the heart of things, I think you're right, its going to mean saying no to some things in our lives.

**MM:** Your book is titled *Ministry in the Image of God* and you've talked about ministry, but it seems like what you're saying isn't exclusive to ministry at all.

**SS:** Right. Actually this is the heart of reality. When you go with the flow of the Trinity, it's like you have the whole universe behind you. That applies what I just said, what we've just been talking about relationship, that applies to a business person in their place of business. It applies to a coach working with a team. Same principles work. They're universal, I think.

**MM:** By seeing the Trinitarian interrelationships as our model, then it gives us perspective with which to view our own work and relationships, and that perspective can clarify some of the things we need to do.

**SS:** Right. If you'll think about the Trinitarian relationships, particularly based, I think we get a window into this in the Gospel of John, where Jesus talks often about his relationship with the Father and

so forth. You see full equality. The persons of the Trinity are distinct but they're equal: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You see joyful intimacy between these persons. They love each other. They delight in each other. They delight in the otherness of the other.

Then you also see this glad submission. They surrender. The Son says, for example, "I only want to do what I see the Father doing." His desire is to submit to the will of the Father. The Holy Spirit comes along and says, "I don't want to glorify me. I want to glorify Christ." Each person; there's a sort of quality of laying their self down for the sake of the other, and they get their identity as persons not through self-assertion but through self-denial, which is counterintuitive, not the way our culture would tell us. They lay themselves down and then they find ... as when Jesus says, "If you want to find your life, you need to lose it," he's talking about what's been going on through all eternity in the Trinity.

**MM:** Right. Paul writes it in Philippians 2.

**SS:** Yeah.

**MM:** "Look at Jesus."

**SS:** Exactly.

**MM:** "Model this. That he became nothing to serve us."

**SS:** Right. That's how they gain their self-identity, as it were, by laying themselves down, not by asserting themselves.

**MM:** The Father serves in this way; the Son serves in this way and there's service everywhere.

**SS:** Yeah. We tend to look at another person as somebody to fear or someone that's a threat to us.

**MM:** A rival. Yeah.

**SS:** The Trinitarian persons, there's no competition among them because they're all about giving themselves over to the other for the sake of the other. In doing that, they find their joy. You find some of these characteristics. There's also a deferring characteristic where the Father says to the Son, "Judgment, I'm probably the one that should do that but you do it." They place things, they give it the other, they defer.

**MM:** Even though there's like an equality and agreement. There's also distinction there.

**SS:** Yes, there is. That leads to a Christian understanding of differences being significant and important. The Christian vision isn't that there's going to come a day when we're all going to get absorbed into one.

**MM:** Some Eastern religion.

**SS:** Right. I think Richard Neuhaus calls it sort of a tapioca pudding of homogeneity; we're all going to get put back into that. But the Christian vision is there always be three, and so it prizes distinctives. Even around the throne in the book of Revelation, there's people there from every tongue and tribe and

nation. That's led to Christians wanting, for example, to translate the Bible into the vernacular of every culture rather than wanting just one language to be the language that everyone has to learn and you can't translate the Bible; it's got to be in that language.

**MM:** Right. It's interesting. The Koran has to be in Arabic.

**SS:** Exactly. Interesting that even in the Koine Greek here you've already got a language that the founder of the religion didn't speak. Jesus would have spoken Aramaic. You've already got that principle. I think it goes back to the Trinity, because those distinctions that matter. Differences.

**MM:** Again, that's a relationality.

**SS:** Within relationship, yeah. Yeah.

**MM:** Sometimes we have difficulty in setting some boundaries for ourselves and we put expectations on ourselves. Maybe we think that other people have these expectations of us and we're trying to match up to what we think they're thinking. That seems really destructive.

**SS:** Right. To learn to accept who we are and to be who we are, and not to try to be someone else. I think there's an old Jewish story about the rabbi that when he gets to heaven, he says God is not going to ask me why weren't you Moses when you lived on earth. He's going to say, "Why weren't you you?" For whatever his name was. There is sometimes a tendency for us to try to let other people tell us who we're supposed to be – or sometimes we do it to ourselves. Sometimes those of us in ministry spend five or ten years trying to preach like to somebody else.

**MM:** Right. Get one of these books and say, "Why am I not more like this fellow?"

**SS:** I remember years ago when I was a student in school. We had a few Billy Graham impersonators among the student body. We tried to preach like Billy Graham. "The Bible says," or whatever. What the Trinity would say is "be who you are and prize that, and lay down your attempts and quit hating yourself for the person that you are." Sometimes we're our own worst enemy. There's a right kind, a good kind of self acceptance that comes out of a Trinitarian vision where I accept the person that God has made me to be that's distinct from you or anyone else.

**MM:** Different giftings.

**SS:** Yeah. I don't try to be a 10-talent person when I'm a 3-talent or a 1-talent person. To simply be who I have been created to be, that's what the Trinity would say I ought to do. That's very liberating to me.

**MM:** Free to be who you are.

**SS:** Yeah.

**MM:** In your book, you tell a story of one of your students who wasn't making the grades that the student wanted to make.

**SS:** Right.

**MM:** It was just a fascinating reaction there. Could you tell us?

**SS:** Yeah. I'd given her a B+ on a paper. Actually she was in that very chair right there. I can remember a number of years ago when this happened. She came in and wanted to know how can I do better on this. As we began to talk, I knew she was doing a lot that semester. She was working. She was doing some counseling. She had some issues she was working through, so there was a lot going on in her life. I said to her, "I think at this point, for this semester, that a B+ is a good grade for you to get. You've got to accept your limitations." She looked back at me and she said, "Oh no. I can't do that. I'm an A student. I've got to have As." I said, "You know, it's not a sign of weakness in a person to accept limitations. Sometimes it's a sign of strength and maturity." "No, no, no."

She went back and forth, and finally I just got tired and impatient with the whole thing. I said, "What do you think Jesus thinks of your B+?" She sort of got quiet, she's a little sheepish, but she said, "I'm afraid to ask him." I was sort of surprised at that and I said, "Why are you afraid to ask him?" Her answer shocked me. She said, "It's because I'm afraid his standards for me will be lower than mine." Sometimes we have these perfectionist standards that we've set for ourselves. Or that maybe we had a parent who demanded that from us or whatever. We put those on ourselves. Sometimes I think to accept ourselves, we've got to smash that idol that we've made. It's because it becomes a false god. We bow down to it. We could feel OK about myself if I get that A. That's a part of the virtue of true self acceptance.

**MM:** It's a false image of God.

**SS:** It is. Yeah, it's a false god.

**MM:** It's interesting how we try to out-perform God.

**SS:** Right. I think maybe going right back to Adam and Eve, somebody told us we could be like God and we believed the lie, and it's gotten us into this idea that somehow we could in fact be perfect, the super person that we're not. That's a part of the delusion that we run to. It's our pride system.

**MM:** The whole book is in a way that we *are* like a god. We were created already to be like that but that's the temptation. Maybe it's the individualism and relationship difference again.

**SS:** Right. Yet I think that sin is in a sense refusing to accept our proper being like God, but that's mean, and sort of striving for a way of being like God that we were never designed for. It's not in keeping with who we are, but as a part of our fallenness and our brokenness and it's a part of the delusion and the lie.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

[back to table of contents](#)



## Wounds That Heal

**Michael Morrison:** Steve, you've written a book, *Wounds That Heal*. As you describe it, this book is written more for ordinary Christians. Everybody's been wounded in some way or another, and this book can touch them, and is written in a way for them. Maybe you could start by talking about the title *Wounds That Heal*. You're saying that my wound is eventually going to heal?

**Stephen Seamands:** Yeah, the possibility is there. It's important to emphasize the subtitle of that book, which is *Bringing our Hurts to the Cross*, because I wanted to show how the cross answers the need for human sufferers and wounds to be healed, as well as a place where human sinners can come to get their sins forgiven. Often, when we talk about the cross of Christ, we focus on how it addresses the problem of human sin, and that is, of course, the primary New Testament keynote – Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures – but we're not just sinners; we're sufferers.

**MM:** That people have sinned against us?

**SS:** Yes, we have sinned, but we also have been sinned against. The cross actually addresses both needs. What I was trying to show was how the cross profoundly speaks to us as sufferers as well as sinners. Because, even though we're both, the sufferer and the sinner have a little different need. That is what I was trying to focus on, and to suggest that there is healing power in the cross of Christ for our wounds. That's right out of Isaiah 53, "By his stripes we are healed." By his wounds we are healed.

**MM:** His wounds help heal our wounds?

**SS:** Right.

**MM:** How do we, as the subtitle says, "bring our hurts?" Our hurts aren't a thing we can pick up to bring there. As a metaphor, how do we do this?

**SS:** It's important, first of all, for us to own the hurt and the pain, and to recognize, yes, I've been hurt. I've been sinned against. Sometimes it's hard for people to do that. Sometimes they want to let someone else off the hook, you might say.

**MM:** We say, "Oh, it was nothing."

**SS:** "It was nothing," or, "They didn't really mean that," or, "Maybe I deserved that." Consequently, sometimes it takes a while for a person to admit, "I've been sinned against. I've been hurt." That's really a preliminary step. Then, I think it's important in bringing our hurts to the cross to begin to think about the cross in terms of how Jesus, himself, was hurt, how Jesus, himself, suffered on the cross. The different ways in which he suffered.

For example, maybe I've experienced a lot of shame in my life. Maybe somebody shamed me, or said

things to me that put me down, and I experienced a lot of shame. To understand that Jesus was shamed. We tend to think of the excruciating physical pain that he went through on the cross, but in the ancient world, it was the shame of crucifixion that was actually the thing that was most dreaded.

**MM:** Because this flogging wasn't private, the process wasn't private.

**SS:** Exactly, it's done publicly out there, and this person is put out, hung up there, you might say, and their family, and their village, their town, all of those would be implicated in that. It was a way to shame that person. Often they left the person up there after they died, and the wild animals would come and pick the flesh off their bones. It was awful. The writer of the book of Hebrew says, "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross despising the shame."

To know, and to think about Jesus: he was lonely. He was betrayed. He was forsaken. He even felt God-forsaken. All the ways in which he suffered, I think it helps as you think about your hurts, you know, put them in the context of his hurt.

**MM:** He's been there; he's felt that.

**SS:** He's experienced that. That helps us to reframe our suffering and our anguish in the light of his. I think that's maybe a second step, is to stand before him, and look at him, see what he suffered. Then, often there are things that to bring our hurts to the cross, Jesus on the cross forgives. He says, "Father, forgive them." I think that's a kind of a model, and I would say that probably the greatest barrier that keeps people from receiving healing from God, is un-forgiveness. We are going to probably need to say that to someone, "I forgive you for what you did to me."

**MM:** That's the hardest thing to do.

**SS:** Exactly. I like to explain it like this: in order to let Jesus touch his wounds to our wounds, we've got to be willing to forgive that person, or give Jesus permission to begin that process of forgiving. Lord Jesus, I don't think I'm willing to forgive them, I'm hurt so much, but I give you permission to begin to do that work in me.

**MM:** I like what you said, "As a process." Something we recognize the need for, it just doesn't happen right away.

**SS:** Right. Forgiveness starts with the will, primarily. You make a choice, and sometimes you only have about 20 percent of your will. You say, "Jesus, take my 20 percent and add your will to mine. There's a process where little-by-little. I think that's a key element. Sometimes we've got to ask ourselves, "Have I kind of put a wall around myself? I got hurt and I decided, 'Never again,' and so I'm using a wall to protect myself." Sometimes, in order to experience his wounds touching your wounds you've got to give Jesus permission to tear down that wall, to dismantle that wall. That's become sort of your shield.

**MM:** Then it feels risky.

**SS:** Yeah, it feels risky to let that down. Sometimes people have lived with a wound so long that it's become cozy. Their victim-hood has become their identity. It's become comfortable. They don't know what they would do without it even though it's destructive and painful.

**MM:** Part of their life.

**SS:** Yes, and so those are all questions, that as I work with people in helping them bring their hurts to the cross, I have to help them work through it. We're trying to get rid of the things that are keeping Jesus from touching his wounds to their wounds. Then, to actually invite him to do that.

**MM:** Sometimes when people sin against us and we are hurt, we still need to have some kind of boundary.

**SS:** Right, but it's distinct from a wall.

**MM:** There's still a boundary there.

**SS:** Healthy boundaries are important in relationships. Sometimes, after we've been hurt especially, we need a time when we pull away. Like a dog that's gotten hurt in a fight – retreat and lick your wounds for a while. There's a legitimate time and a place for that. Sometimes in ministry (I'm speaking of myself), I've had this "I'll just be a good soldier" mentality too often, and I fail to take the time to pull back and realize, "I've been really hurt and I need to own that and bring that to the Lord, and not just try to keep going on like nothing happened."

**MM:** Which some wounded soldiers would try to do.

**SS:** Exactly. We tend to do that. We don't like to admit that we've been hurt. We don't like to admit we're weak. So there's a legitimate time for a good kind of boundary setting. Maybe part of the reason I got hurt in the first place was because I didn't set good boundaries. I've got to learn sometimes to boundary myself from certain kinds of people, certain kinds of situations. That's a part of becoming a healthy person.

**MM:** Thank you. There are some abusive relationships, not just marriages can be abusive, but congregational settings can also be abusive, but forgiveness doesn't mean perpetuating that.

**SS:** Right, certainly not. How does a battered wife forgive? Does that mean that she allows herself, "Now I've forgiven this person who battered me, do I turn around and let them continue to do that?" No, you don't perpetuate that. You forgive for the past, but it may mean standing up to that person and being really firm for the first time in that relationship.

Forgiveness doesn't mean you become a perpetual punching bag, or that you don't sometimes demand that justice be done in a situation. If someone swindled you out of a lot of money, maybe your business partner took advantage of your trust and so forth, I don't think that taking that person to court is

incompatible with forgiveness. Some people would think, “Oh, how could you do that?” You’re not taking them to court to try to get revenge, but you do have a legitimate right to justice. You would still need to forgive them for what they did, but it might be appropriate to take them to court where if someone did something to break the law that hurt one of your children, for example, to see the state punish that person for that, that’s not incompatible with forgiveness.

**MM:** In many cases, maybe all, maybe that is the best thing for that person.

**SS:** Right.

**MM:** That they do experience some justice, right?...

**SS:** You’re holding them accountable. Sometimes I’ve seen abusive people use forgiveness as a bludgeon.

**MM:** Oh, “You’re supposed to forgive me.”

**SS:** “I did that to you. You’re supposed to forgive me now.”

**MM:** “If you were a real Christian.”

**SS:** Yes. That becomes a form of manipulation and power. That’s where you need a person who stands up and says, “No.” Sometimes a person has a hard time doing that. People who are in abusive relationships, that’s become their way ...

**MM:** Over, perhaps, years.

**SS:** Yes.

**MM:** A pattern.

**SS:** They may need some help. Someone else to come alongside them to help them walk through standing up to someone.

**MM:** They can take those hurts to the cross and realize that, “Okay, Jesus has been there. He’s been in abusive situations.”

**SS:** Right.

**MM:** Then, what?

**SS:** There is a healing light that flows from his wounded side and his hands. As we’ve forgiven, his healing presence can come into those situations, and so that dimension of healing, I think, happens as we bring our hurts to the cross. He does touch our wounds with his wounds. The grief, and the sadness, and the pain, I think, can get absorbed into his broken body.

**MM:** He helps carry some of these burdens.

**SS:** Yes, and then, I think, finally, just as his own wounds have become radiant scars (like I like to call them), I believe he can begin to take that wound and when it begins to be healed, he begins to take it and use it for his purposes. That which Satan meant to use to destroy you becomes a channel of God’s

healing grace to others so that now he's using you in an area of ministry, for example, that relates to the very pain and the suffering that you went through. He redeems it for his glory.

**MM:** Just as Jesus has been through it and can help us, if we've been through it, then we can help someone else.

**SS:** Right.

**MM:** It's not always the same specific hurt that can be generalized as the feeling of abandonment.

**SS:** Right.

**MM:** Kind of a general one.

**SS:** Yes. I think suffering, in general, does sensitize us to the hurts of others regardless of what the hurt was. I think that it makes us less judgmental of others. It gives us more compassion, in general.

**MM:** What about when we've had hurts that aren't attributable to anyone in particular? We've got cancer, for example. We've suffered in a hurricane, it came through and blew down our house, killed our son. We can't blame anybody. Is that harder to deal with?

**SS:** Sometimes it is, because to forgive someone, there has to be a someone. There needs to be a something out there. Sometimes situations like that are the hardest to deal with, partly because it's harder to focus on someone there. Although I would imagine if that had happened, I might have to talk to someone about whether they're mad at God about that, and maybe they need to ...

**MM:** There's someone involved.

**SS:** Exactly. Maybe they need, it seems strange to say this, because we don't think of God as hurting people, but do you need to forgive God? What I would mean by that is God sometimes allows things to happen to us that we think he should have not allowed to happen, so we're mad at God about that, so sometimes the person we have to forgive is God. We have to stop holding anger and bitterness toward God for that. We've got a clinched fist. You're upset with him. You need to bring that to him. Bring that to the cross as well.

**MM:** I imagine that is more difficult.

**SS:** Right. It is interesting, though, Scripture says that on the cross he endured the hostility of sinners. Jonathan Edwards preached that great sermon, "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God," but I think on the cross it was God in the hands of angry sinners. I think we were there saying, "Crucify him, Crucify him." The anger that we felt over things that happened. There is a sense in which he's carried that.

**MM:** He's been through that, too.

**SS:** He understands. Christ is a safe place where you can bring your anger at God, too.

**MM:** Our anger at him is nothing new?

**SS:** Exactly.

**MM:** He's big enough to handle it.

**SS:** Right. You think about going from Palm Sunday to Good Friday, and why they turned on him. Because he didn't act like Gods were supposed to act. He didn't do what they were wanting him to do. We have to sometimes own that, and I'm mad at you about that.

**MM:** He was not the kind of hero we were looking for in our particular circumstance.

**SS:** Absolutely.

**MM:** Even those wounds, in time, for some people they don't heal. Maybe they don't bring them to the cross.

**SS:** Right.

**MM:** When we see how the cross intersects our particular hurt, then it does become transforming and healing for us.

**SS:** Right.

**MM:** As you said, then we are able to better help others who are going through something similar. In some ways it's like the title of your book has come around full circle there, that our wounds become wounds that heal others.

**SS:** Right. Yeah, we become healed helpers. What was the name of that book by Henri Nouwen...

**MM:** It was *Wounded Healers*.

**SS:** We become wounded healers, don't we?

**MM:** Right, but we are also healed.

**SS:** Exactly, and that's the amazing thing about how God works, that he takes evil and suffering and he uses it to accomplish purposes, to bring good out of it, to bring glory out of it, so Joseph can say, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." You get stunned and awed at God's ability to work his purposes in spite of, and in the midst of. I think the challenge in our lives is to let God have our sorrows – to not waste them – to see that they can be used for his purposes. It's not that God caused them, but if we'll give them to God, he can redeem them.

**MM:** But we have to trust him.

**SS:** Right. The cross helps us trust him.

**MM:** Thanks for discussing that with us.

**SS:** Thank you.

~~~~~

[back to table of contents](#)

About the Publisher...

Grace Communion International is a Christian denomination with about 50,000 members, worshipping in about 900 congregations in almost 100 nations and territories. We began in 1934 and our main office is in southern California. In the United States, we are members of the National Association of Evangelicals and similar organizations in other nations. We welcome you to visit our website at www.gci.org.

If you want to know more about the gospel of Jesus Christ, we offer help. First, we offer weekly worship services in hundreds of congregations worldwide. Perhaps you'd like to visit us. A typical worship service includes songs of praise, a message based on the Bible, and opportunity to meet people who have found Jesus Christ to be the answer to their spiritual quest. We try to be friendly, but without putting you on the spot. We do not expect visitors to give offerings—there's no obligation. You are a guest.

To find a congregation, write to one of our offices, phone us or visit our website. If we do not have a congregation near you, we encourage you to find another Christian church that teaches the gospel of grace.

We also offer personal counsel. If you have questions about the Bible, salvation or Christian living, we are happy to talk. If you want to discuss faith, baptism or other matters, a pastor near you can discuss these on the phone or set up an appointment for a longer discussion. We are convinced that Jesus offers what people need most, and we are happy to share the good news of what he has done for all humanity. We like to help people find new life in Christ, and to grow in that life. Come and see why we believe it's the best news there could be!

Our work is funded by members of the church who donate part of their income to support the gospel. Jesus told his disciples to share the good news, and that is what we strive to do in our literature, in our worship services, and in our day-to-day lives.

If this e-book has helped you and you want to pay some expenses, all donations are gratefully welcomed, and in several nations, are tax-deductible. If you can't afford to give anything, don't worry about it. It is our gift to you. To make a donation online, go to www.gci.org/participate/donate.

Thank you for letting us share what we value most — Jesus Christ. The good news is too good to keep it to ourselves.

See our website for hundreds of articles, locations of our churches, addresses in various nations, audio and video messages, and much more.

www.gci.org
Grace Communion International
P.O. Box 5005
Glendora, CA 91740-0730
800-423-4444

You're Included...

Dr. J. Michael Fezell talks to leading Trinitarian theologians about the good news that God loves you, wants you, and includes you in Jesus Christ. Most programs are about 28 minutes long. Our guests have included:

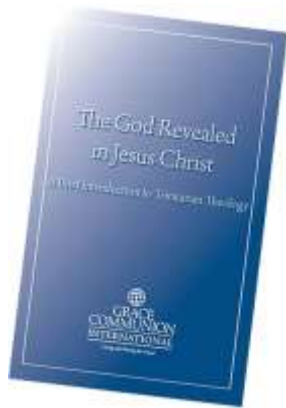
Ray Anderson, Fuller Theological Seminary
Douglas A. Campbell, Duke Divinity School
Elmer Colyer, U. of Dubuque Theological Seminary
Gordon Fee, Regent College
Trevor Hart, University of St. Andrews
George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary
C. Baxter Kruger, Perichoresis
Jeff McSwain, Reality Ministries
Paul Louis Metzger, Multnomah University
Paul Molnar, St. John's University
Cherith Fee Nordling, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary
Andrew Root, Luther Seminary
Alan Torrance, University of St. Andrews
Robert T. Walker, Edinburgh University
N.T. Wright, University of St. Andrews
William P. Young, author of *The Shack*

Programs are available free for viewing and downloading at www.youreincluded.org.

Speaking of Life...



Dr. Joseph Tkach, president of Grace Communion International, comments each week, giving a biblical perspective on how we live in the light of God's love. Most programs are about three minutes long – available in video, audio, and text. Go to www.speakingoflife.org.



Want to read more?

Readers in the United States are eligible to receive a free booklet, *The God Revealed in Jesus Christ: An Introduction to Trinitarian Theology*. This booklet explains, in simple language, how all our most important questions are answered by a simple starting point: Who is God? We can be confident that God has planned something excellent for us. To have a hard copy mailed to you, phone 1-800-423-4444. Readers in other nations may read the booklet online at www.gci.org/god/revealed.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

[back to table of contents](#)



Grace Communion Seminary

Ministry based on the life and love of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Grace Communion Seminary serves the needs of people engaged in Christian service who want to grow deeper in relationship with our Triune God and to be able to more effectively serve in the church.

Why study at Grace Communion Seminary?

- **Worship:** to love God with all your mind.
- **Service:** to help others apply truth to life.
- **Practical:** a balanced range of useful topics for ministry.
- **Trinitarian theology:** a survey of theology with the merits of a Trinitarian perspective. We begin with the question, “Who is God?” Then, “Who are we in relationship to God?” In this context, “How then do we serve?”
- **Part-time study:** designed to help people who are already serving in local congregations. There is no need to leave your current ministry. Full-time students are also welcome.
- **Flexibility:** your choice of master’s level continuing education courses or pursuit of a degree: Master of Pastoral Studies or Master of Theological Studies.
- **Affordable, accredited study:** Everything can be done online.

For more information, go to www.gcs.edu. Grace Communion Seminary is accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission, www.deac.org. The Accrediting Commission is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency.

Ambassador College of Christian Ministry

Want to better understand God's Word? Want to know the Triune God more deeply? Want to share more joyously in the life of the Father, Son and Spirit? Want to be better equipped to serve others?

Among the many resources that Grace Communion International offers are the training and learning opportunities provided by ACCM. This quality, well-structured Christian Ministry curriculum has the advantage of being very practical and flexible. Students may study at their own pace, without having to leave home to undertake full-time study.

This denominationally recognized program is available for both credit and audit study. At minimum cost, this online Diploma program will help students gain important insights and training in effective ministry service. Students will also enjoy a rich resource for personal study that will enhance their understanding and relationship with the Triune God.

Diploma of Christian Ministry classes provide an excellent introductory course for new and lay pastors. Pastor General Dr. Joseph Tkach said, "We believe we have achieved the goal of designing Christian ministry training that is practical, accessible, interesting, and doctrinally and theologically mature and sound. This program provides an ideal foundation for effective Christian ministry."

For more information, go to www.ambascol.org

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

[back to table of contents](#)