

Testimonies from Living Grace (Working Title)

The two books – “Surprised by the Holy Spirit” and “Surprised by Miracles” – tell the story of Living Grace and how God led us into faith renewal. The new book is to be a **companion book of the first two** and consist of testimonies of Living Grace members. The individual testimonies (a chapter for each person/couple/family) flesh out **how different persons have experienced the changes and growth** that God has been working at Living Grace.

The aim of the book is to **encourage others** and help them to trust God and his plans for them. If the readers can see that the people at Living Grace are “normal” people with their own struggles, confusion, fears, breakthroughs, joy, etc., then the prospect of faith renewal for themselves looks more attainable. If they can see that God was able to work with us, despite our flaws, then it is easier to believe that God can work with them and anyone. I think that our story is also an encouragement to persevere when conflict comes and growing pains.

Books are effective and it is worth the effort to put your testimony in writing – even for yourself.

Some **general guide-lines** for your testimony:

- Be brief. Keep up the pace.
- Do not judge others. You can mention disagreements but do not judge.
- Share your struggles as well as your breakthroughs.
- Make reference to key events at Living Grace (see below) so that the readers can place your development in the context of the congregation.
- In your own development, trace how you would have answered the questions below at different times:
 - What does Jesus mean to me?
 - What does my church mean to me?
 - How do I live my faith?

Here are some key paradigm-shifts (change of thinking) which we have experienced over the years. Identify where your own thinking had to change and how this happened over time:

1. We used to remain separate from other Christians that were not Lutheran but God brought renewal to us through them and impressed on us the mandate for Christian unity across all denominations.
2. We used to associate mainly with other Lutherans in our national Lutheran denomination but God impressed on us that we belong (in the first place) to the one citywide body of Christians in Toowoomba and our region.
3. We used to believe in “cheap grace” which takes forgiveness for granted despite lukewarm discipleship but God impressed on us that obedience was not optional.
4. We used to trust the preaching of “wise and persuasive words” (1 Corinthians 2:4) but God impressed on us that faith would come through “demonstrations of the Spirit’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:4) which confirm the preaching.
5. We used to know only the baptism in water for the forgiveness of sins but God impressed on us also the baptism in the Spirit for power which grants us faith assurance, victory over sin and much fruit in mission work.
6. We used to pray and accept any outcome as ordained by him but God impressed on us to exercise faith and have concrete expectations for what he promised (e.g.: healings, conversions).
7. We used to assume the best of God in any sound worship setting but God impressed on us that we begin worship in the “Outer Court” and then his presence intensifies until we receive his glory in the “Holy of Holies”.
8. We used to think of ourselves as “poor miserable sinners” but God impressed on us that sin was not our master. We are under grace (Romans 6:14).
9. We used to think that every minister’s work consisted of preaching and visiting but God impressed on us the five-fold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors (or shepherds) and teachers.

There are other paradigm-shifts (e.g.: leadership by hearing the voice and will of God) but these ones help you to get started.

Some **process guide-lines** for getting your testimony together:

- Begin with prayer.
- Brainstorm the high-lights and low-lights of your history with God at Living Grace. Do not filter anything but whatever comes to your mind write it down. You can sort it later.
- Pray over what you have written down and wait on God for more to come. Then, ask God to help you and structure the material into a coherent story and testimony.
- After you have done the first draft of the structure or outline of your chapter, debrief with Edgar and together do some fine-tuning.
- Write your testimony.