



December 2024

A Message of Life Ministries Newsletter

### Christmas Greetings

2,000 years ago Jesus came to earth, so believers would have the gift of life eternal. That is the reason for this season. As we reflect upon what He has done for us, let us dedicate ourselves to spreading His message of life to a lost and dying world.

### Is Abiding Believing?

A Chamber of Commerce representative once urged those who **live** in California, “Use *CA*, not *Calif.*, as the abbreviation, because the latter stands for: ‘Come and **live** in Florida.” The two uses of **live** in that sentence have distinct meanings.

The first use of live equals abide. Contrary to J. Carl Laney, *abide* means reside, not believe. His article, “Abiding Is Believing.” (*BSac* 1989): 55-66), wrongly views it as a synonym for believing. Abiding (*menō*) speaks of residing somewhere. See Acts 28:30: “Paul abode (*menō*) in his own rented house.” *Menō* is not about being alive, but where one’s “abode” (home) is. By contrast, *zaō* (to live) means *being alive*.

Residency is only a matter for those who are alive. Being alive raises the issue of where one resides (abides). Life is primary; residence is secondary (an effect of living).

So, what is the cause of life? John 5:24 presents faith as the instrumental cause for eternal life. Now, if abiding were to mean believing, then one would acquire eternal life via abiding (residing). In other words, a word meaning to *reside* in Jesus would now become the instrumental cause of one

acquiring eternal life. Laney and others have contorted an effect into a cause. Their view of John 15 is upside down.

Jesus urged believers (who **already** have life) to abide in Him. See John 8:31: “If you [new believers] abide in My word, you are truly My students (John 8:31).” Jesus does not care whether we live in California, Florida, or elsewhere. Believers need to CALL: Come and live [abide] in Jesus.

### Did John 3:16 Come from Jesus’ Mouth?

Most NT scholars say, “No.” They view 3:16-21 as originating from the apostle.

They often say that the replacement of *I*, *Me*, or *My* in 3:16-21 with *His Son*, *His*, etc. leads them to doubt. However, Jesus does speak this way. He refers to Himself with third-person forms in 39 verses of John. Some note that 3:17 largely replicates 3:16.

François Roustang, “L’entretien avec Nicodème,” *NRTh* (1956): 338, responds. My translation of his outline follows:

1. Born again of the Spirit (3:3-8)
2. Mediation of the Son (3:9-15)
3. Saving plan of the Father (3:16-18)

Nicodemus’ first words are, “We know You are a teacher **come from God**.” Jesus affirms much (not all) of this by 3:15. He claimed to have come from heaven, but not until 3:16-17 does He affirm that **God sent** Him. He asks (3:12) if they would believe, if He proclaimed heavenly things (not just earthly things). The Trinity is heavenly teaching. Verses 16-17 complete His Trinitarian content. Jesus spoke 3:16-21.

### Guest Speaking

Northgate Terrace, Knoxville: monthly  
Fellowship North, Knoxville: 4/14, 21, 28  
Vista Ridge Fellowship, Lewisville: TX: 5/19  
GES National Conf., Denton, TX: 5/22-23  
Promise Fellowship (broadcast): 9/4, 11  
Grace Life Church, Anoka, MN: 9/22  
Meetings on John, Lead, SD: 9/23-26

### The Commentary

Work continues. Solomon put it well, "Of making many books *there is no end*, and much study *is wearisome to the flesh*." (Eccl 12:12). A balance exists between aiming at completeness and aiming at bringing it to completion. Some commentary content will appear first as journal articles. Trimming the schedule will enhance writing.



Vista Ridge Bible Fellowship (Texas)

### Praise and Plans

We have some praises. Diane has recovered nicely from her second knee-replacement surgery in early 2024 and from her cataract surgeries. The Lord is good.

### Water of Life Bible Class

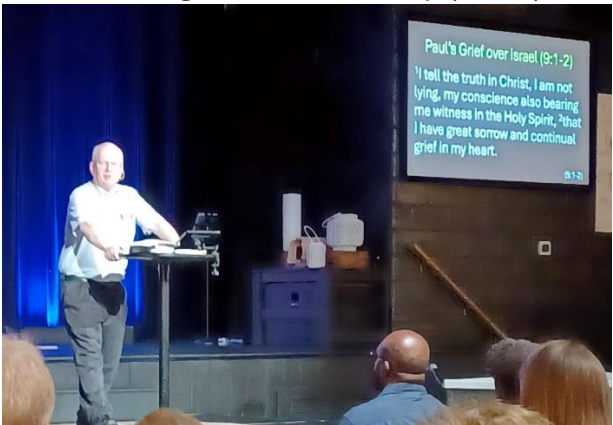
In February 2013, we began a home Bible study in Lakewood, CO. It continues, now as a Zoom class. John teaches the first and third Thursdays each month at 8:00 p.m. (Eastern). If you would like to join us, email [mrslangprof@gmail.com](mailto:mrslangprof@gmail.com) a few days earlier.

### Prayer

Good health and ministry opportunities.  
Continued progress on the commentary.  
Expanded distribution of *Living Waters*.  
Continued financial support.



Grace Life Church (Minnesota)



Preaching Romans 9 at Fellowship North



46<sup>th</sup> anniversary river cruise

### Lifeline

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