

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG176 – Year-End Podcast 2023

I appreciate you joining me today for this podcast. This is a very special podcast, it is our final podcast for the year 2023. What I would like to do is talk a little bit about this year; and even more than what we have received and done this year, I want to talk about our faith, and what we are looking forward to in the upcoming year of 2024. It has been quite a year, really, there has been a lot going on. I especially know that we have had a focus on rebuilding our website this year. It has been quite a project; it has taken the better part of the year to really get in motion and get it done. There were many major issues with the previous website, and I believe we are right at the end of that process; and now, we have a website which is functioning really well. I appreciate all the labor and the work that has gone into it by all those that have been involved. You can go to that website at www.hargraveministries.org. Please check it out; there are several new things that I think will be exciting for you. But I am just glad we are at the end of that project, and I am hoping that it is something that is going to be a platform to launch us into this coming year.

When we think about this upcoming year, as always, probably the most important focus for me, personally, and I believe for everyone who is a part of the ministry, is the Word itself – the Scriptures, the teaching that we are reaching in for. I know many times I am asked, “What is the focus of the teaching?” I would say that it follows along with the name of the podcast, which is our ability to grow in God and to mature in the things of God; that is really the focus. The specific messages or podcast teachings that come out are derived from my own personal reaching in to grow in God. It is this process of growing in God that really is where the messages come from, and where the biblical teaching comes from, because it is simply reaching in to have that process working in my own life; and because it is working in my own life, and as it is working in my own life, then I try to share what God is making real to me as He is growing me up with everyone who is listening to the podcast. So, that is where the podcasts themselves come from.

I would say the same about the blogs and the study guides. We, as Hargrave Ministries, the teams that work on it, look together for messages that we feel follow in this same line of reality – our walk with God, our growing in God, our receiving more from God and maturing in God. It is these messages that we use to create the blogs, the study guides, and the other aspects of what we are doing in the Word.

I want to read some Scriptures about this idea of growing in God, just so that you have this sense of drive that we have coming out of the Scriptures themselves, and coming from the Word of God to our hearts. I will begin in Second Peter chapter 3, verse 18. It says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” So here we see that we are encouraged by Peter to grow. We are to grow in grace; we are to grow in the knowledge of Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus; we are to grow up in these things.

In First Peter 2:2, it says, “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.” I think this is an important verse, because it is talking about our life from the time that we come into our salvation experience. We know that when we are born into this

salvation experience, we really are babes; and Peter is telling us that we should long for the milk of the Word, long for the Scriptures and the teachings that are really pure, and they will help us to grow in respect to salvation. I think this is very true of us and for us as newborn babies; but I think it also carries on as we mature in God, that we know that there is not just the milk of the Word, there is the meat of the Word that God has. There are different levels of teaching, different levels upon which the Scriptures come alive to us; and we should also really be longing for those levels in our lives, in order that we can grow in all respects of our salvation and our walk with the Lord.

This, again, is what drives us at Hargrave Ministries, to say that there is a maturing in our level of understanding of the Scriptures. There is a hunger we are to have in order that we continue to grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord, and that we grow up in respect to all areas of our salvation. It is this that really drives us; and I think this follows the pattern, that Yeshua is our pattern by which we walk in the things of God. In Luke the second chapter, verse 39, it says, "When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee." This is when Yeshua was taken to the Temple, that the sacrifices might be made that were required for newborn sons. He was taken to the Temple, and the sacrifices were made by Mary and Joseph in the Temple; this is what Luke is recounting in these verses. But it goes on to say, in verse 40, "The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." So this is the pattern that Christ Yeshua walked in Himself. Being a young man, being a child, He grew in His relationship with the Father. He grew up into a mature man in His walk with God. And so, this idea of growing in God is very scriptural, and it is something that we in Hargrave Ministries want to pursue in our own lives, using Yeshua as the pattern.

Luke, in chapter 2, verse 52, talks about the same concept. You remember that when they were returning from Jerusalem after the Feast, they lost Yeshua; it took them a few days to realize that He was not with them, so they went back to find Him. They finally found Him on the steps, talking with the sages and the different ones; and they were asking Him, "Where were You? What happened?" He said, "Well, I am in My Father's house." So they treasured this, especially Mary treasured these words in her heart, realizing that He was about His Father's business. But in verse 52, it says, "And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." I believe that this is part of the pattern for us. We should keep increasing, we should keep growing up in wisdom, in stature, certainly in favor with God and with man. So, these are Scriptures we find that frame and drive us in this ministry.

I will give you another few verses, in Ephesians 4:11-16. We are usually very familiar with these verses. They talk about the five-fold ministry and what they are given for. Verses 12-13 say that they are given "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." We are to grow, and we are to mature, until we become like Him. We are to come to a unity of faith and a knowledge of the Son of God. These are wonderful verses that we follow here in Hargrave Ministries, that drive us in our seeking after the Lord – in our reading of the Scriptures, in our prayer life, in our waiting upon the Lord. These are the drive behind us that we might grow to the maturity, to the measure of the stature, of Yeshua, as He grew into and became Himself that thoroughness, completeness of sonship before the Father.

Verse 14 goes on to say, "As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves." Even though we are born in salvation as children, we are not to remain as children; we are to grow. We are to constantly be growing and changing and becoming. Verse 15 says, "Speaking the truth in love,

we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.” We are to grow up in all aspects of our life and being into Him who is the head, even Christ.

Verse 16, “From whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” So we see this drive is not just that we are growing in God in our personal lives; but we also know that as we are growing in God personally, then we are also participating in this idea that the body of Christ is also growing up and maturing itself in love, together. That also is a very important part of what we have as a purpose in our lives here at Hargrave Ministries.

As we are growing, we know that in Colossians 3:16 it says, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” And we always want to be doing this, letting the Word focus us into dwelling in Him and worshiping the Father.

Just two more verses on this focus about the Word. Acts 12:24, “But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.” Acts 19:20, “So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.” I think this is another emphasis we have, that the Word of the Lord Itself grow and multiply in this earth, in this age in which we live; that the Word of the Lord grow mightily and that it prevail. We live at a time when the Word of God needs to be prevailing within the society that we live in, within the nations, the countries that we live in. We want to see the Word of God grow and strengthen and prevail as it goes forth from our mouths.

So this is our focus for the coming year. It has always been our focus, where the Word of God is concerned, where the teachings and the podcasts are concerned. The blogs and the study guides all have this emphasis in our mind to them. And we are thankful, once again, that the website has been rebuilt. As I said, there are many new features; but the greatest thing for me about the website is that it is the platform upon which we can put the Word so that it goes out, and make it available to anybody who is desirous of it. So please, go visit the website at www.hargraveministries.org. See what is there, see the messages that are there, and realize that it is with this drive and emphasis that those messages exist there.

One other thing I would say is, due to the fact that we have had so much energy being put into the rebuilding of this website, we have not really been able, during this year, to aggressively try to raise funds for the ministry. Those who had been giving before continued giving, some by mail, some through the Internet; but we have not been able to really promote giving and fundraising during this time because of what was going on with the rebuilding of the website. Hopefully, we are going to be able to engage in fundraising during this coming year. But I do want to remind you now that we are at the end of the year; this is the last week of the year, and this is a special time of giving. This is the last opportunity to get your donations in and get them for your tax returns in 2023. You can now go to the website and there are donation buttons that will allow you to do just a one-time donation; or you can also go to the partnership area, sign up for a partnership, and donate through the partnership giving. If you get them in before the end of the year, all of those donations will go onto your 2023 taxes. I do want to confirm to you that Hargrave Ministries is a 501c3 organization that is recognized by the IRS, the federal government; and so, any donations or giving that you engage in with Hargrave Ministries is tax deductible. If you are looking for that last donation and tax credit for 2023, please consider Hargrave Ministries. Feel free to go to the website and give through any of the donate buttons that are there, either through the partnership, or just a one-time donation.

If you are not familiar with the partnership, I would just take a minute to explain it, because it is part of the new aspect of our website. We do have levels of partnership; the first level of partnership does not require any donation at all. We do have a couple of other levels of partnership which allow you to participate and receive other benefits. Whether it is at the store, which is a new part of the website, or if you become a fellow worker with a minimum donation of \$25 a month (feel free to donate more than that a month), you also have other benefits; one of which is the fact that we have started doing a Zoom call with those who are fellow workers and part of that aspect of the ministry. It has been exciting to finally get that launched; again, waiting for the website to be in a place where we could do this. We will have had three calls by the time we end this year, but we will continue with these Zoom calls. It is a way of just communicating and working together with those who are really supporting Hargrave Ministries. So, I ask you to go and check out the partnerships that are there on the website.

We also have been continuing to post things on Facebook, and somewhat on Instagram. Generally, these are announcements about what we are doing and what is happening with Hargrave Ministries. There are announcements, there is information, and there are also inspirational Scriptures that are done once or twice a week that you can use on your computer as some type of a picture that you post, or you can share them with friends. They are really done very well, and I appreciate that those are there. So please, check us out on Facebook and Instagram; and if you would, follow us, share it with others that you know, and give us a "like." That really helps us out to get attention from new individuals that are not familiar with the ministry yet. It gives them an opportunity to find us, to find the website, and to see what is available to them through Hargrave Ministries.

So, these are some of the things that are going to continue on and hopefully grow into this next year. Like I say, we have been a little bit slow in increasing these. I would like us to get into more video than what we have been able to do. We have just begun that in the last several weeks, but we are going to be doing more video; hopefully more video interviews with individuals. One of the areas that we are looking to do video interviews is with the partners that we share with, the projects that we have in Israel. This is probably the last thing I will try to cover on this podcast. But, as you know if you have followed us and been part of Hargrave Ministries, a drive that we have is to bless Israel, the people of Israel, and the Jewish people generally; to move against anti-Semitism, but also to support the people of Israel and the projects there. This, again, comes to us as a drive out of the Word of God. An example would be Isaiah 40, verse 1, "'Comfort, O comfort My people,' says your God." I think this is a directive that we have. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" is another Scripture that we are very, very familiar with.

I want to look at some other Scriptures that maybe we are not as familiar with, where our support and blessing of Israel is concerned. One is in Zechariah the first chapter, starting at verse 12. "Then the angel of the Lord said, 'O Lord of hosts, how long will You have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been indignant these seventy years?'" We see that the history of Israel is that God has been indignant; He has been disciplining them. But we also know that we are in the time when I believe the change is happening, and the time of Scriptural blessing is ready to be released upon Israel and upon the Jewish nation. Verses 13-17 go on to say,

The Lord answered the angel who was speaking with me with gracious words, comforting words. So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "Proclaim" [so the angel speaks to the prophet, and he says], "Proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion. But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster.'""

We have seen this down through history. God was disciplining His children, but the nations have gone overboard in their anger; and they have created a disaster for the Jewish people and for Jerusalem, and for Israel as a nation. We are seeing this begin to change, and we want to be on the right side of history with this. We want to be part of those who are blessing Israel along with God Himself.

“Therefore thus says the Lord, “I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it,” declares the Lord of Hosts, “and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem.””
Again, proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.””’

So when the Lord speaks to us and says, “Comfort, O comfort My people,” He is encouraging us to join with Him in this process of comforting Zion and Jerusalem. He goes on in Zechariah 2:10-12 to say,

“Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” declares the Lord. “Many nations will join themselves to the Lord in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. The Lord will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.”

This is showing the blessing that is coming upon Jerusalem. He says in here that “many nations will join themselves.” I believe that one of the nations is the body of Christ among the nations, that will be joining with the Lord in blessing Israel.

One last Scripture about this is Isaiah 51, verses 1-3. I believe this is very much an encouragement to the body of Christ, to us as believers in Yeshua individually, and to how we should walk in these days. He says,

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness [I think that is the body of Christ, isn’t it?], who seek the Lord [isn’t that us? we are those who seek the Lord]: Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug [this could also be translated to say, “and to the pit from which you were dug”]. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when he was but one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him.”

Indeed, the Lord will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and sound of a melody.

For all of us who are seeking and pursuing the Lord, we are to give attention to this reality, and we are to look to the rock. We know that as believers, we are born into this relationship through the faith of Abraham; and according to Paul, that is our connection. We also know that Yeshua came and included us as the Gentiles to be reconciled unto God. So, this is a huge drive that we have at Hargrave Ministries, to see our connection with Israel and the Jewish people.

I want to take a few more minutes here and just talk about the eight projects, the eight entities. These are all 501c3 entities in Israeli law. They do not use that terminology, but I think the audience understands what I am talking about – they are nonprofit organizations that function within Israel. We give monthly to each of these eight. Some people say, “Well, what do you do, you give to one of these each month?” No, we give to all of these each month a set amount of offering; whether we receive anything from others outside of the ministry, if any donations come in, or not, we give what we have committed in our hearts to give. It is a set amount that we give each month to each of these

organizations. We give the same amount to each of them; and unless we do some special fundraiser for one or the other of them, then it is all the same financial benefit and assistance that they get from Hargrave Ministries on a monthly basis.

We also keep in touch with these organizations. We are very much in relationship with the leadership of these organizations. We just had a visit during 2023; Bruce Larson and I went around and visited each one personally at their offices, sat and talked with them, interviewed them and asked them questions, so that we had a greater understanding of how they function and how they distribute the funds that they receive. We always are making sure that these are really valid organizations that are correctly handling the donations that they are receiving, from wherever they are receiving them.

We are honored to be a part of these organizations; we are honored to be considered friends by those who are leading these organizations. Just know that when you are donating and participating with Hargrave Ministries, you are also being a part of each of these organizations. And every time you donate, your donations are being dispersed to these organizations, as well as the support that it gives to Hargrave Ministries.

I will quickly name these organizations. The first is the AMI Jerusalem Center for Biblical Studies. This is the organization started by Shlomo Hizak years ago, with a focus to make a bridge between Christians and Jews, and to teach Christians how to relate to the Jewish people and to Judaism. It is a wonderful organization, and we are proud to be a part of it and to be involved with it; so please, feel connected with it. I know many of you who are donors to Hargrave Ministries and participate with us are very familiar with it; you may have even visited the AMI Center before on some of our tours to Israel. This is one that is always in our hearts.

Another that we donate to is Shiloh Israel Children's Fund. This is the school that was begun to help children that are traumatized by the terrorist activities that happen in Judea and Samaria, especially. We visited the school. It is very professionally run by well-trained individuals who can help the children on every level. During this last visit, I was really pleased to see they have expanded that to not only be working with the children, but also to be working with the families as families, and the parents of families, that are in need of this great assistance, where they have been traumatized by the terrorism. As you know, if you are following the news, this has grown exponentially over the last several months of 2023, and the need here is doing nothing but expanding.

Another organization is the Israel Defense Forces, the IDF, Widows and Orphans Organization. This organization works with the widows and orphans of those from the military and the security forces of Israel that have given their lives in the process of their service to Israel. When that happens, it leaves a large hole in the family; and you are aware that in Israel, not only are the men drafted and serve, but also all of the women serve in the armed forces. Therefore, when we talk about those losses in the family, it is not just fathers; it is many times mothers; it is daughters; it is sisters; it is the women of Israel that are lost in these same battles, in the same way. And so, the support that goes to these orphans may be the fact that they have not lost a father, they have lost their mother. But whatever the situation is, this organization does an amazing job at surrounding these families with a drive that they will know that they are never forgotten, and that the service that was provided by their family member is never forgotten. And so, it is an honor, again, to be part of this organization, and to be supporting it in helping these ones in need who have lost so much, in many, many ways which I cannot go into here. It would be a podcast all on its own, as it would for each of these individual organizations.

Next, I will go to Yad Eliezer. Yad Eliezer is an organization that takes care of the needy in Israel, needy children, needy wives. There are a lot of single mothers who cannot work. You say, "Why so many single mothers?" Well, right now, one of the things you face is families that are coming from Ukraine, where the husband is staying to fight for the country; and so, it is just the mother and the children that are making Aliyah to Israel for safety. Therefore, the mother, many times, is not able to work. But Yad Eliezer gives food, gives coats, gives blankets, gives out to many, many areas of need. They pay electric bills at times. They will help with rent at times. Whatever the need is for those who are seriously in need, Yad Eliezer is there for them; and they do an amazing job. It is an overwhelming job. They showed us the stacks of requests that they have, and they have to compare those stacks of requests with the budget that they have. Consequently, many are not able to be helped. All the more reason we need to do as much as we can to help and strengthen the ministry of Yad Eliezer.

Another organization that we work with is the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. We work with the International Christian Embassy in two ways. One is by supporting the Aliyah program that they have. Aliyah, as you know, is the program where you are bringing Jewish people back to the land of Israel from the Diaspora; and the ICEJ is one of the organizations that is very involved with this. It is a tremendous program, very, very much needed. These people need to get back to Israel. They need help with the paperwork to get back. They need help with the paperwork after they get to Israel that allows them to stay in the country. They need airplanes to be leased to fly them into the country; this is done many times. Right now, there are many from Ethiopia that are coming. Again, there are many from Ukraine that are being brought in. This is a tremendous program of Aliyah, and it is one of the prophecies, where the prophet said that they would be carried back to the land. That is what we are being a part of doing, is bringing them back on our shoulders to the land of Israel.

ICEJ also works with the Haifa Home for the Holocaust Survivors. This is a really blessed ministry that they have, and it works with helping the needy. As you know, many of these people, survivors of the Holocaust, are elderly now, and many of them do not have families. The families were lost in the Holocaust, many times, or they have subsequently passed away themselves. And they do an amazing job. I think one of the greatest things, when Bruce and I were in Israel, was just touring the facilities of the home in Haifa for the Holocaust survivors. These guys have done a great job of just buying up apartments around each other in Haifa, and fixing them all up and creating apartments for these people to live in. And there are rooms; there is a dining hall where everybody is fed; there are activity areas; there is exercise; there are amazing things available. I think one of the great tragedies in Israel today is the fact that there are many Holocaust survivors that are living in tremendous poverty, without food many times, and no one to care for them. This is a drive that we have, to help see that that does not happen with those who have suffered so much.

Another area is the City of David Foundation. The City of David is an archeological dig to unearth the original City of David. So, so many things are being found in the City of David. I encourage you to keep studying. One of the things that we want to do with this – and really, with all of these, and the reason I am going so quickly through them – is because we will be posting about each of them. If you go to the website at www.hargraveministries.org, and go to the Israel projects area, under projects each one of these is lined out separately in the website. If you click on them, it will take you to a page for each of these individually. Normally, there will be a *Read More* button, and in that *Read More* we will have videos, we will have newsletters, we will have other information about what is going on, so that you can stay in touch with these organizations yourself and see all that is happening and all that they are doing. But obviously, the City of David is absolutely fun. It is encouraging to see the Scriptures come to life in a

way that is beyond where you see in many, many other places. It really is phenomenal, and hopefully soon we will have a video that we can post from the time that Bruce and I spent getting a private tour of some of the areas of the City of David that are not quite yet open to the public. But this is a very blessed project.

The last, but not least, is the Jewish National fund, and this is Keren Kayemeth Le Israel. This is a trust fund in Israel within the Jewish National Fund, and its purpose is to plant trees and to reforest the land of Israel. They have done an amazing job. Millions and millions of trees have been planted in Israel since the Jewish people returned to their Homeland, and it is continuing. What we specifically give to in Hargrave Ministries is what is called The Gospel Trail. The Gospel Trail goes from Nazareth, and will go all the way to the Sea of Galilee. It will be a trail that people can hike, and camp, and bike, and walk from where Yeshua had His home, out to the Sea of Galilee where He ministered so much. We have a great video from when we were honored when we were in Israel with a tremendous plaque and ceremony from the Jewish National Fund. They were such a blessing to us, and we will have this video up where people can see it. It may be on *YouTube*, but you will be able to participate and see all that was done for us in honor of Hargrave Ministries' donations to the planting of the trees and this Gospel Trail.

So that gives just a short overview of our heart and what we are doing and what we are looking for in this coming year. But beyond that, I want to bless you. I want to bless your new year – bless your family, bless your walk with God, your personal growing in God that you are doing. Hopefully, what we are doing will be a help and a blessing to you and to your family, as you seek to mature and grow in your personal relationship with the Lord.

Amen.