



# Spirit of Grace Herald

The Ministry of Dennis  
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## Spirit of Grace Ministries

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## Isolated & Insulated

When my wife, Benedicta, came over to America from Nigeria, one of her great surprises about the U. S. was just how little social interaction Americans experience. All over Africa there is human interaction. Often you can see little groups of men sitting around in chairs under a shade tree drinking soda and excitedly discussing the latest local news. Sometimes they argue forcefully in loud voices, and often within a few minutes they are laughing loudly together, like the best of friends.

There was a day when much of this was true in the U. S. also. But times have changed, and technological advancement seems almost to have worked directly and uniformly to make us a nation of isolated and insulated people. One of the first major inventions which brought this about was the automobile. A second was television. In the morning we drive to work with our windows up, and at night we stay inside our comfortable homes, turn on our large-screen televisions, and watch TV until we can no longer stay awake. If television weren't enough to glue us in our homes, the dawning of the Internet cemented us there even further.

One great tradition of American socialization is expiring right under our noses. Shopping malls are dying at an alarming rate. I can remember a huge mall, called the North-

west Plaza (in St. Louis) which opened in 1965. I was just entering adolescence at that time, and this mall became a favorite habitat for me and my good buddy, Tom Decaro. We were around twelve or thirteen at the time, so we couldn't yet drive anywhere, but we could walk to the mall. It had a *Sears* store that was always full of customers. Next to *Sears* was a huge *Woolworth's* "dime store" which specialized in cheaper items. There were all kinds of fascinating smaller stores, such as the *Spencer Gifts* store, which featured weird and cheap items. I rarely bought much or spent much money on anything, but it was fun to look, and when I did find something within my meager budget, I carried it home proudly. I had bought something "at the mall."

After growing up and moving to Texas, I found another mall which we visited with our children frequently. Like the other mall, it was filled with life: people everywhere, lots of noise, good smells coming from the food court, and an endless array of big and small stores, all beckoning to us to come in and enjoy their atmosphere and be tempted by their many products.

Today the malls are dying. In fact, the two malls I have just described to you are both dead. The mall of my youth died about ten years ago, and the Texas mall died just last year. I visited it while it was in its death throes, and it was a sad spectacle. This familiar friend, which had once been filled with happy shoppers and boisterous teens was now as quiet as a tomb. Only a handful of shoppers were there, and most of the stores were closed. I ate at the food court and sat alone in a sea of empty chairs and tables. But it's not just malls that are closing; retail stores of all kinds are dying. *Sears* is dead, *K-Mart* is gone, *Macy's* is closing stores, along with *Dillard's*. Many other retail giants are either struggling to survive or have died.



# Isolated & Insulated

These days, rather than putting the whole family in the car and driving to the mall or a department store, we walk over to our computer and go straight to amazon's website. We do a quick search, check out ten or twenty different models and brands of the item we want, read a few reviews, and then click and purchase. Within one or two days, that item is at our doorstep. It is ultra-convenient to be sure, but it involves no socialization at all. We do it quietly, saying nothing to anyone, having zero human interaction. Click, click – done! Here is yet one more force holding us like a powerful magnet in our homes, keeping us from socializing with or even talking to living, breathing human beings.

Christianity is all about relationships. First and foremost, it is about a restored relationship with God through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But God also cares deeply about restored relationships with each other. Over and over we are admonished to relate to one another: "Love one another," "serve one another," "be of the same mind toward one another," "accept one another," and numerous other "one another's."

Jesus Christ commands us to reject this trend of isolation and relate to people. Sadly, even some Christians have given up attending church and home fellowships, and content themselves with watching online church services or TV preachers. The Scriptures tell us, "... not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some..." (Hebrews 10:24-25).

In Jesus' days there was no television or Internet, of course. But Jesus could have stayed home, read books, meditated on deep subjects, thought deep thoughts, and wrote beautiful essays. Instead He got out among the multitudes of Israel. He made disciples, debated with the Pharisees, healed the sick, befriended the sinners, and preached to thousands. Jesus lived publicly for us; let us live publicly for Him.



## In March: MINISTRY IN NIGERIA

**Nigerian Ministry Scheduled for March** — Dennis and Benedicta will be preaching Christ in evangelistic meetings, teaching in conferences for believers, providing a free medical clinic, and providing help for the local orphans. Your prayers and support are vitally needed!



**"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." — Jesus**

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