

CORE

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

GRACE CHURCH
whoisgrace.com

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ABOUT CORE

CORE IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU:

- Find and form meaningful relationships with others that will add value to your life and connect you to new friends.
- Discover your spiritual gifts and how God uniquely designed you to make a difference in your family, community, and church.
- Discover the cultural “DNA” of Grace Church.
- Become engaged in God’s work in and through Grace Church. Take a next step: join a Life Group and/or serve on a ministry team.
- If you are considering becoming a member of Grace Church, we want to give you all the material you need to make an informed decision. All new attendees are encouraged to take CORE; however, this course is required for people who want to become members.

What Commitment Are We Asking You To Make?

- Attend eight 60-70-minute long class sessions;
- Complete seven independent learning assignments, including an online SHAPE assessment;
- Experience a SERVE Tour to be held immediately before or after Session 6, and connect with a ministry leader in an area of interest;
- Serve together in the community through a ServErie invest opportunity.

At the end of CORE, those who attended at least six out of the eight sessions and completed the assignments (on the honor system) will be eligible to pursue membership at Grace Church. You will receive an electronic membership application, and will have a membership interview scheduled with a staff member or elder.

THE CORE CLASS TEAM:

CORE HOST: Your host will be a consistent and familiar face each week, helping you connect with Grace Church. If you have any questions, your host is here to help you.

TEACHING TEAM: We have assembled a team of energetic teachers, each one passionate about a different aspect of ministry at Grace.

SITE PASTOR: The site pastor wants to get to know you better and will be hosting the class during Session 8 to teach and answer your questions.

CONTACT YOUR HOST:

Name: _____

Contact Info: _____

CORE CLASS: SESSION 1

Big Idea: **Maturing Christians Participate in a Local Church.**

Key Texts: *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

Romans 12:5

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Introduction

Meet the CORE Host.

Introduce yourself to others at your table.

Brainstorm ideas about having a mission.

Prayer.

A. Saved by Grace Through Faith

Understand God's plan for people to enjoy a relationship with Him.

B. Understanding the Church Mission

Understand the mission of Grace Church to make and be fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

C. Catching the Vision

Review the Grace Church Transform 1:8 vision.

D. Embracing Core Values

Consider and discuss the five core values of Grace Church

E. Saved into Community

Consider and discuss scriptures that describe salvation in community terms.

Discover first steps toward living in community.

Prayer

Homework for Next Session

Review homework for the coming week.

Presenter Name: _____

Contact Information: _____

GOALS:

1. Understand salvation by grace through faith.
2. Understand what it means to be a “fully devoted follower” of Jesus Christ.
3. Understand the vision and core values of Grace Church.
4. Understand that believers in Christ are saved into community.

INTRODUCTION**Introduce yourself:**

- What is your name and your occupation?
- What brought you to Grace Church and why are you taking CORE?

Today’s BIG IDEA: Maturing Christians Participate in a Local Church.

A. SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH: It all starts with a relationship with Jesus.

Here’s what the Bible says about our connection with God:

1. **God’s plan is that we would enjoy a _____ with him.**

⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:4-6

2. **We broke that relationship through our drive to control our own lives. The Bible calls this _____.**

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear

Isaiah 59:2

We may attempt to bridge this gap between ourselves and God on our own – by being either more religious or more moral. But none of our attempts has a chance of being successful.

3. **God made a way to _____ the gap.**

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 14:6

4. **And Jesus tells us to put our faith in _____ and be _____.**

because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. **Romans 10:9-10**

Christians call our adoption as children of God “being saved,” because a relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ, His Son, saves us from an eternity spent apart from God. We are saved from a life on this earth that has no meaning.

If you would like to talk with someone about your relationship with God, you can:

- Email your class host or today’s presenter.
- Talk to your Site Pastor or email him at [his first name]@whoisgrace.com.

B. UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH MISSION: As a church, our *MISSION* spells out our goal...the primary purpose for what we do.

A mission statement keeps us _____ and gives us a common _____.

Read the next two Scripture passages and discuss the following questions with people at your table.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” **Matthew 28:16-20**

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. **Acts 4:31**

- Underline the action verbs in the Matthew passage. What does Jesus say the mission of the church is? Why is this mission important to the church?
- Who are the resources Jesus promises to His followers in these verses, so that we can accomplish the mission He gave for the church?

WE SAY OUR MISSION STATEMENT LIKE THIS:

Grace Church Exists to Make and Be Fully-Devoted Followers of Jesus Christ.

If our mission is to make and be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ, shouldn't we know what that means? What, exactly, *is* a fully-devoted follower of Jesus Christ?

Someone who takes next steps to:

- _____ about Jesus through _____
- _____ like Jesus through _____

L = _____ in Community
 I = _____ in Others
 V = _____ Your Time
 E = _____ Yourself

- _____ like Jesus = _____

*See the Appendix for a more complete description of a fully devoted follower.

C. CATCHING THE VISION: Our *VISION* is our plan to achieve our mission.

Grace Church has a plan for fulfilling the mission Jesus gave us, and we call that our _____.

TRANSFORM 1:8 OVERVIEW:

3 Tools of Transformation: _____

4 Circles of Influence: **JERUSALEM =** _____
 JUDEA = _____
 SAMARIA = _____
 ENDS OF THE EARTH = _____

Video Notes:

D. EMBRACING CORE VALUES: Our *CORE VALUES* are how we behave as we pursue the vision to achieve the mission.

If our mission and vision statements tell us where we are going and how we're going to get there, our core values tell us how we are going to _____ as we get there.

GRACE CORE VALUES

Accessible Biblical Truth

We value the Bible and won't pull punches or water it down. At the same time, we strive to make the Scriptures clear and applicable for real life.

Authentic Relationships

We won't just put on our "Sunday best" and pretend everything is okay. We create environments where it's safe to share stories of struggle, triumph, sadness, doubt, and hope.

Spiritual Vitality

Our gatherings are marked by spiritual energy and passion. We're fueled by our desire to continually take next steps in our relationship with Jesus.

All In

God created us with unique skills to do ministry. We strongly believe that everyone at Grace is here for a reason. The church doesn't function well unless we're all involved.

Outward Focus

The stakes are high. Our hearts will beat fast, our hands will be busy, and our wallets will be open for those who are far from God.

Discuss with your group the following questions about one of the core values:

- What would it look like for an individual person to embody this core value?

- How do you see this core value being lived out at Grace Church?

- Explore some scriptures that support these values:

Accessible Biblical Truth –	2 Timothy 3:6-17 and 2 Peter 1:20-21
Authentic Relationships –	Matthew 22:36-40 and 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12
Spiritual Vitality –	John 7:37-39
All In –	Romans 12:3-8
Outward Focus –	Matthew 28:19-20

E. SAVED INTO COMMUNITY: There's more to the story...We're told to do it together.

The following verses give some of the ways we help each other when we're together.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers...⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. **Acts 2:42, 46-47**

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart

1 Peter 1:22

Discuss as a class:

- How do these verses describe the community of the early church?
- It is true that our relationship with Jesus is personal, so why do you think God designed the church where we are to be active in our faith and lives *together*?

So, practically speaking, how do we start living in community?

- Participating in this _____ class is a great first step toward living in community!
- We can start living in community by attending Sunday morning worship _____.
- We can join a _____ – a small group of believers that meets regularly, perhaps weekly or every other week, to support and encourage one another to live every day for Christ.

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT SESSION:

Devotions:

1. The “**One Another**” verses in the New Testament give instructions on interacting with other believers. (See a list of these verses in the Appendix.) Read **Ephesians 4:32**.

What are the three ways Paul instructs the Ephesians to act towards one another?

Think about Grace Church: have you seen these happening?

Consider your own heart and attitude: are you treating other Christians this way?

Pray and ask God to help you develop a heart toward other Christians that is more like the one Paul speaks of in **Ephesians 4:32**.

2. During a quiet time with God this week, read some of the Scriptures about a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ in the Appendix. Talk to God about how you are doing as a Fully Devoted Follower of Jesus Christ.

Video:

Watch Pastor Derek’s Giving Video at www.whoisgrace.com/coreclass.

CORE CLASS: SESSION 2

Big Idea: Following Christ Includes Reading His Word and Talking with Him in Prayer.

Key Texts: *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Colossians 4:2

Introduction

Check in with the CORE Host.

Review the homework from Session 1

“One Another” Devotion.

Explore your experience with the Bible and prayer.

Prayer.

A. The Bible on the Bible

Survey what the Bible says about itself.

B. Connect to God through the Bible

Learn about several Bible study methods.

Practice a Bible study method.

C. Connect to God through Prayer

Discuss prayer.

Practice using the Lord’s Prayer to structure your prayer time.

Practice using the ACTS acronym to structure your prayer time.

Prayer.

Homework for Next Session

Review homework for the coming week.

Presenter: _____

Contact Information: _____

GOALS:

1. Practice different methods of connecting with God through the Bible.
2. Practice different methods of connecting with God through prayer.
3. Learn practical pointers on prayer.

INTRODUCTION

Session One Review:

- Can someone share an insight from-the week 1 homework?

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think it is hard for you and others to read and understand the Bible?
To pray regularly?

Today's Big Idea:

Following Christ includes two important disciplines:

1. Reading _____.
2. Talking with God in _____.

A. THE BIBLE ON THE BIBLE

The Bible is unlike reading any other book, since the Bible embodies God's self-disclosure to humanity.

1. **The Bible says it is God's** _____.

¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The word "inspired" literally means _____.

Discussion Questions:

- What does this word choice tell us about God's relationship to His Word?

2. **The Bible says it is God's power to** _____ **us.**

¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Discussion Questions:

- Paul says in this passage that the primary goals of studying the Bible are spiritual maturity and preparation for doing good works. What are some misguided reasons to read the Bible?

3. **The Bible says God's _____ will help us understand it.**

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. **John 16:12-13**

Discussion Question:

- How does this passage describe the Holy Spirit's role in our lives?

The Holy Spirit is the Key. Jesus promised his followers an incredible resource. He said that the Holy Spirit would come and not only be with us but would dwell inside us. And that He would provide the fuel and the power to live our lives for Christ. Listen to Jesus' own words:

¹⁶ I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. **John 14:16-17**

What does Jesus call the Holy Spirit?

The Bible talks about many ways in which the Spirit helps us to live lives that are pleasing to Christ.

He helps us _____ the Bible

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. **1 Corinthians 2:12**

He _____ to God when we pray

²⁶ The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. **Romans 8:26-27**

The Holy Spirit also helps us in other ways:

He _____ us.

you will receive POWER when the Holy Spirit comes on you...

Acts 1:8

He _____ us,

¹⁵*The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."*

¹⁶*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.* Romans 8:15-16

He _____ us.

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

Romans 8:14

He helps us develop _____ –

²²*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

²³*gentleness, self-control.*

Galatians 5:22-23

He gives us _____.

B. CONNECT TO GOD THROUGH THE BIBLE

1. _____ to Study the Bible.

(a) Buy and use a good _____.

- The ESV and the NIV are excellent choices.
- Youversion.com and Biblegateway.com each provide (for free) several versions of the Bible and access to commentaries, as well as reading plans.

(b) Find a time and place that will work consistently in your schedule for you to read the Bible.

At Grace we say, "Find your _____!"

(c) Make this a _____. Start by scheduling 15 minutes a day and ask God to give you a thirst for Him, for His Word. We make time for what is most important to us.

- (d) Choose a _____:
- Grace provides reading plans to accompany every sermon series (www.whoisgrace.com/read or find it on the app under the current series.)
 - Pick a specific book of the Bible to read. Luke and John (both in the New Testament) are good places to start.
 - YouVersion, She Reads Truth, He Reads Truth are great resources for reading plans.
- (e) Pray for the _____ help. This is important! Ask God to speak to you through His Word.

2. Methods for Reading Scripture

(a) Method: Basic Devotional Reading

Prayerfully read the Bible, talking with the Lord as you are reading, trusting Him to teach you His Word. One way to do this is “lectio divina.” This is an historic church practice where one reads the word, reflects on what God is speaking to the heart, then reads the word again, asking God to show him the truth of that word.

(b) Method: Three Questions Devotional Reading

Another method to approach your time with God involves asking three questions of every passage you read:

Question 1: What does this passage say about _____?

Question 2: What does this passage say about _____?

Question 3: What does this passage say about the _____ between God and people?

Read one of the following passages and apply the three questions to your study of the passage.

- Psalm 1
- Matthew 8:5-13
- Luke 19:1-10
- Ephesians 5:1-4

*Blessed is the man
 who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
 nor stands in the way of sinners,
 nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.*

*³ He is like a tree
 planted by streams of water
 that yields its fruit in its season,
 and its leaf does not wither.
 In all that he does, he prospers.*

*⁴ The wicked are not so,
 but are like chaff that the wind drives away.*

*⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;*

*⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked will perish.*

Psalm 1

⁵ When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, ⁶ "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." ⁷ And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." ⁸ But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. ¹¹ I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." ¹³ And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Matthew 8:5-13

He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." ⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Luke 19:1-10

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

Ephesians 5:1-4

Discussion Questions:

Question 1: What does this passage say about God?

Question 2: What does this passage say about people?

Question 3: What does this passage say about the relationship between God and people?

(c) **Method: 15-Minute Devotional Reading**

1. _____

Be still and quiet. Prepare your heart. Take a few deep breaths and wait on God.

2. _____ the Word

Read your passage for the day or begin where you left off the day before. Read until you feel that God has told you something. Then stop and think about it.

3. _____ on the Word

Think about what the passage means in your life. Write down your thoughts in a journal.

4. _____ the Word

Write in your journal how this passage applies to you. A good question to ask is, "If I were to take this passage seriously, what would I need to do differently this week?"

5. _____

Conclude your quiet time by talking to God about what He has shown you and by making requests to Him from your prayer list.

C. CONNECT TO GOD THROUGH PRAYER

_____ was a necessary part of Jesus' life on earth.

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷ and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." ³⁸ And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."

Mark 1:35-38

1. The Lord's Prayer

When teaching His disciples how they were to pray, Jesus said

⁹ Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name.
¹⁰Your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹Give us this day our daily bread,
¹²and forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.

Matthew 6:9-13

Apply the Three Questions Method for reading the Bible to the Lord's Prayer.

Discussion Questions:

Question 1: What does the Lord's Prayer say about God?

Question 2: What does the Lord's Prayer say about people?

Question 3: What does the Lord's Prayer say about the relationship between God and people?

2. ACTS Acronym

Many people find it helpful to use the ACTS acronym to structure their prayer time:

A – _____

C – _____

T – _____

S – _____

3. Practical Pointers on Prayer

Some of our prayer time is private, alone with God. At other times, we pray with other believers.

All through our day, we can communicate with God as His Spirit brings matters to our attention – not just at one specific time in one specific place.

Keep a list of current prayer needs, perhaps on your phone. There are some neat apps (Echo, Prayer Notes) that can help.

Consider journaling your prayers - this may help you stay focused and provides a way for you to track God's hand in your life.

God knows us so well; we don't want to minimize our weaknesses in conversation with Him. Therefore, instead of a general asking for forgiveness of sins, be specific about what the Holy Spirit is showing you: "God, be merciful to me a sinner, a sinner who knows that pride is a sin, yet gives in to it constantly."

Use Scripture to help guide your prayer time. It is good to pray God's words back to Him! For example, at the end of a Bible reading use that passage to help you pray using the ACTS method. If you're not sure how to start praying, begin by reading the Psalms. The writers are honest, their emotions are real, their commitment to the Lord is evident. We can learn so much about prayer through the prayers of the Bible.

Praying out loud, actually hearing the words in the everyday language you use, sometimes makes the experience more real. A related prayer experience is praising God out loud in songs of worship.

**Check out the "School of Prayer" sermon series from February 2016 at https://whoisgrace.com/sermon-archive/#series-sort_the-school-of-prayer or on the Grace App. Also, Grace has an online prayer wall where you can submit requests and praises. Find that on the home page or on the Grace app as well.

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT SESSION:

1. "Find Your Chair"
Try it the Grace Church Reading planet www.whoisgrace.com/read or on the app. Use one of the Bible study methods and ACTS prayer method as part of your theme with God.
2. Read the Baptism article found in the Appendix and reflect on how you have been obedient to this step of faith or how God may be calling you to take this as a next step in your faith.

CORE CLASS: SESSION 3

Big Idea: We Each Have a Faith Story to Share, Which is Part of God's Story.

Key Text: *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,*

1 Peter 3:15

Introduction

Check in with the CORE Host
 Review the homework from Session 2
 Three Questions Method and ACTS Method
 Review Grace's Mission Statement and Jesus' Great Commission

Prayer.

A. Paul's Faith Story

Read Paul's faith story in Acts 26.

B. Share Your Story and Invite Someone to Church

C. Connect Your Story To God's Story

Learn and practice using the Bridge Illustration, so you can easily present the good news of Jesus Christ to an unchurched friend.

Prayer.

Homework for Next Session

Review homework for the coming week.

Presenter Name: _____

Contact Information: _____

GOALS:

1. Understand how to use a simple pattern for sharing your faith story.
2. Become familiar with the Bridge illustration.

INTRODUCTION

Session 2 Review:

- Share a reflection from the Baptism article.
- What did you learn from reading and praying this week?

Session 3 Introduction:

Today's BIG IDEA: We Each Have a Faith Story to Share, Which is Part of God's Story.

The **mission statement** of Grace Church is based on the "great commission".

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20

Grace's mission statement is: To _____ and _____ fully-devoted
_____ of Jesus Christ.

We are the workers, but we are not on our own. The _____ empowers us to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Matthew 9:35-38

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction...⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans,⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Matthew 10:1, 5-7

A. PAUL'S FAITH STORY

Read **Acts 26** and fill in the following Faith Story Worksheet with details from Paul's story.

FAITH STORY WORKSHEET

PAUL'S FAITH STORY (Acts 26)

BEFORE

What kind of person was Paul before he met Christ?

ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST

What were the circumstances surrounding Paul's encounter with Christ?

AFTER

How did Paul's life change after he met Christ?

B. SHARE YOUR STORY AND INVITE SOMEONE TO CHURCH

Any day is a good day to share your story and to invite someone to come to church with you. Really! Grace has certain times of the year that we plan a sermon series to be an "inviter" series, but we don't have to wait until then to share our story or to invite someone! We can be afraid, we can feel awkward, but ultimately we can choose to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us and use us.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16

There are easy cues that you can listen for. When you hear these it is an opportunity to share what God is doing in your life and to invite this person to church with you.

1. Not _____

2. Not _____

3. Not _____

4. Not _____

Too often we're caught off guard and find ourselves unexpectedly in a situation where we could have courage and open our mouths, or we could give in to fear and stay silent. Remember, God's power is made perfect in our weakness - let Him use you to do His work, to be His light.

C. CONNECT YOUR STORY TO GOD'S STORY

but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect **1 Peter 3:15**

There is a very clear, nonthreatening way you can explain the plan of salvation to a friend. It's so simple, you can draw it on a napkin, and then leave the napkin with your friend.

It is called _____.

Draw the Bridge Illustration in the space below. Be sure to include the Bible verses.

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT SESSION:

1. Finish writing your own faith story patterned after Paul's testimony using the worksheet.
Before > Encounter with Christ > After
During your prayer time this week ask God to give you opportunities and courage to share your story.
2. Watch the "Power of an Invitation" video at www.whoisgrace.com/coreclass . Use the worksheet to work through the devotion. Have you made a point in your walk to reach out to those who may not know Christ? If so, how has this strengthened your relationship with God? If you haven't, what obstacles are standing in your way? What parts of Maggie and Caitlin's story encourage you?
3. Optional:
 - a. Download a copy of the Bridge Illustration from the Navigators at www.navlink.org/bridge
 - b. Watch a creative Bridge Illustration video on YouTube: search for, "Graffiti Bridge to Life."
 - c. Check out the "Share Your Faith" app which can help you share the gospel.

FAITH STORY WORKSHEET

Write two or three names of people in your life for whom you will pray and ask God to give you an opportunity to share your faith: _____

YOUR FAITH STORY

BEFORE

What kind of person were you before you met Christ?

ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST

Describe the circumstances that caused you to submit your life to Christ.

What happened that finally triggered your decision to ask Christ into your life?

What was the most significant thing about your deciding to follow Jesus?

AFTER

What is the most important difference that Christ has made in your life?

"Since believing the good news about Christ and asking Him into my life, I've become..."

CORE CLASS: SESSION 4

Big Idea: We are Ambassadors for Christ.

Key Text: *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.
We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

2 Corinthians 5:20

Introduction

Check in with the CORE Host.
Review Faith Conversations devotion.
Review Transform 1:8

Prayer.

A. Why do we need an outward focus?

B. Transform Your City.

C. Transform Your World.

D. Recognizing Opportunities to Serve Christ

Identify the areas of influence where you can represent Jesus.

Homework for Next Session

Review homework for the coming week.

Presenter Name: _____

Contact Information: _____

GOALS:

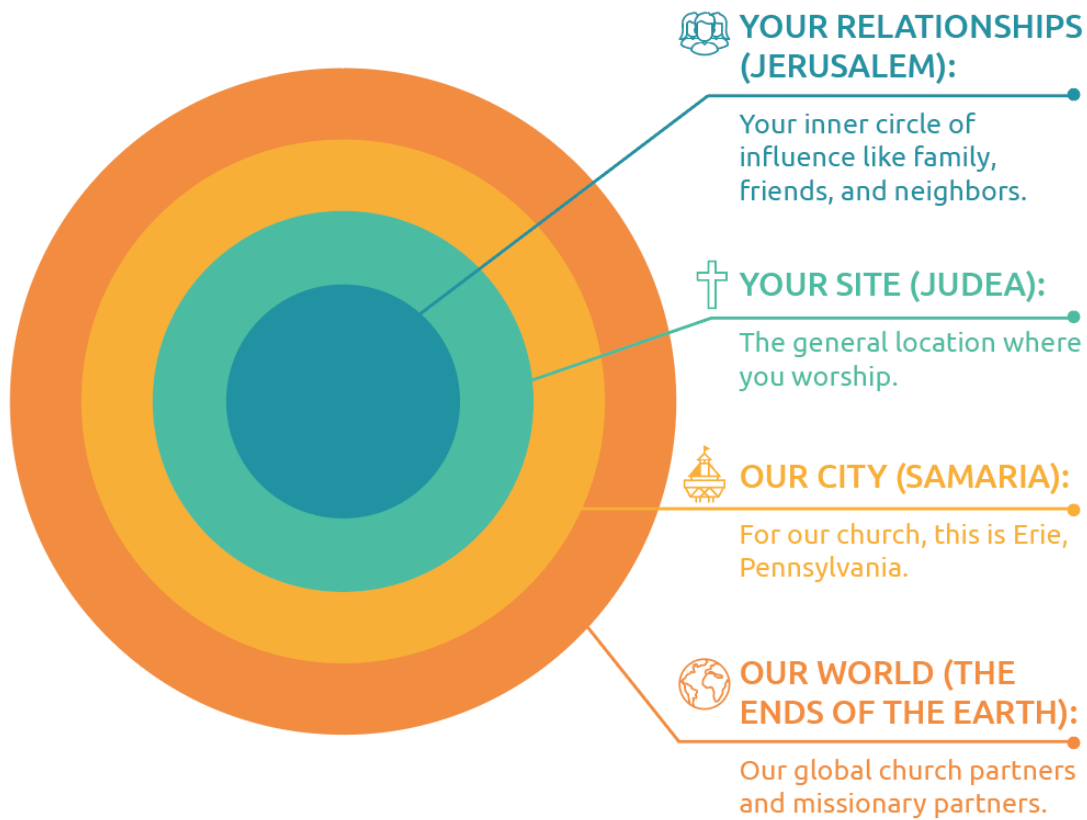
1. Understand the importance of Outward Focus, a core value of Grace Church.
2. Understand the importance of Acts 1:8 in the context of your city and the world.
3. Choose an INVEST opportunity for the CORE class to do together.

INTRODUCTION

Session 3 review:

- How did the Faith Conversations video and devotion encourage you to share your story?

Today's Big Idea: We are Ambassadors for Christ.



A. WHY DO WE NEED AN OUTWARD FOCUS?

Let's start this session by diving into the Great Commission

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:16-20

Discussion Questions:

- What is the context for this event?
- Who is present as Jesus says these things?
- To whom are the disciples commissioned to go?

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight

Acts 1:7-9

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Genesis 12:1-3

*And they sang a new song, saying,
"Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth."*

Revelation 5:9-10

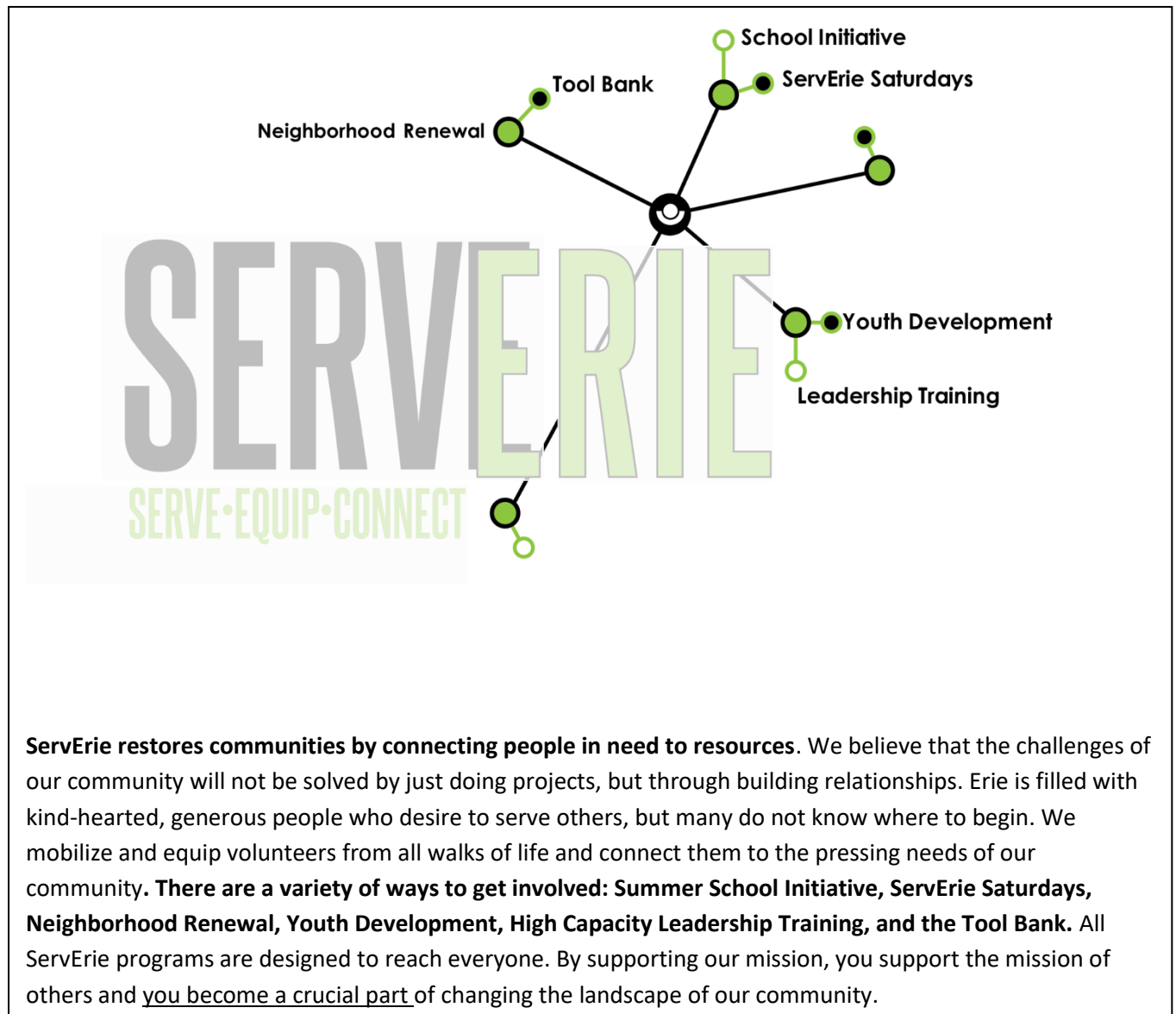
Discussion:

- At the end of Genesis 12:2 and 3, what did God promise that He would do through Abram's family?
- How was God's promise to bless all the families of the earth through Abram's family fulfilled in Jesus?

This is the WHY! Jesus commissions us to go to ALL NATIONS because it is God's plan and purpose that every tribe and people and nation would know the good news of Jesus. God promised Abram that all nations would be blessed through his family and Jesus fulfills the promise. We don't go to these outer circles out of guilt, but because this has always been God's plan and it is for His glory and the glory of His Son!

This is why Outward Focus is an important value for us at Grace Church. Because it is important to God.

B. TRANSFORM YOUR CITY



ServErie's Core Values:

1. Be the hands and feet of _____ in the community
2. Champion _____ of thought, people, and influence
3. Personify _____ character throughout all interactions
4. Treat all people fairly and equitably with _____, _____, _____ and _____
5. Prioritize _____ over projects

Discussion questions:

- In light of the Scripture we read earlier and who Jesus was and how He lived, why is it important for us to serve others?
- Why should we equip ourselves through learning and raising our awareness?
- Have you connected to any organizations working in Erie City?
- Why is it important that our actions in the community are governed by these core values?

C. TRANSFORM YOUR WORLD

When it comes to the world, we believe that everyone has a part to play. The greatest tragedy that exists today is that someone will be born, grow up, live, and die without ever having the chance to know Jesus. There are almost 7,000 different unreached people groups in the world--people with a shared culture and language that don't have adequate access to the gospel. We believe that Jesus went to the cross for each of them, and that it's worth sacrificing so that they can be reached. There is urgency there. And so Grace is committed to global missions, strengthening churches, and sending people out to fulfill the great commission to make disciples of all nations.

We want everyone at Grace to form a global relationship in some capacity.

The way you'll most commonly hear us speak about this is that everyone should:

be a _____,

a _____,

or a _____

We partner with indigenous churches in our partner countries, and we partner with cross cultural workers in places as far as the Congo and Thailand. We send short term teams each year to each one of our church to church partnerships; and we disciple and raise up people from within our community to answer the call to go and live cross culturally as a missionary. As each person at Grace builds a global relationship, through sponsoring a child, going on a short term trip, or praying for and supporting one of our missionary partners, we believe that we and the people we interact with will become more fully devoted followers of Christ. And as our church partners with churches in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Japan, we are building relational bridges so that each group of believers grows in Christ and is more effective in reaching people in their own city.

Principles and Values:

1. A focus on meeting the _____--we believe that every person's most foundational need is a connection to God. While we want to engage with and find solutions for circumstances of poverty, our greatest desire is to share the love of Christ with people so that their deepest need can be met.
2. Helping without _____--we recognize that sometimes good intentioned charitable efforts can do more damage than good when they create codependent relationships. Our goal is to come along side, rather than do things for our partner churches.
3. _____ Development--we believe that gospel movements are born and grow when a great leader brings a surrendered heart to God. We therefore develop, pray for, and work with indigenous leaders who are influential in their own communities, knowing that God wants to use those leaders to multiply the work he is doing around the world.
4. _____--we don't assume that we have all the answers, and we truly believe that every culture we work in, and every person we partner with, can teach us something. Partnerships may have different financial, socio-economic, or logistical circumstances, but they are equal in terms of learning from one another and growing in Christ together.

Cross cultural engagement grows our faith, increases our understanding of our global God and allows us to more effectively reach our neighbor. (example--Haiti's simplicity and dependence on God vs. constant distraction in the US)

D. RECOGNIZING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE CHRIST

We are Ambassadors for Christ.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we each have several areas of influence. Label the circles in your guide.

1. Our _____
2. Our _____
3. Our _____
4. Our _____

Every believer's life should engage with each of the four circles. It starts with the foundation of your own growth as a believer but then moves outward as God calls us. This process involves a whole lot of prayer, a commitment to awareness, and talking with people who will encourage you as you find your calling in these areas. And let's remember, if God calls you to the world through child sponsorship, that doesn't mean you don't have to engage your neighbors!

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT SESSION:

Spend time this week asking God to open your heart and hands to the city of Erie and to the world. Pray about what next step you can take toward awareness, toward getting involved.

- Find more information about ServErie at www.serverie.com or on their Facebook page.
- Get more information about Global Missions by emailing brian@whoisgrace.com.

For more content on the Transform 1:8 vision, check out the sermon archives for the series from March 2018. Find the sermon on the City and World here: <https://whoisgrace.com/sermon/transforming-the-world-around-us/> .

Complete the SHAPE assessment before next week if you have not already done so. Find the link at www.whoisgrace.com/coreclass.

CORE CLASS: SESSION 5

Big Idea: God Designed Each of Us for a Personal Ministry.

Key Text: *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

*Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.*

¹⁵ *My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

¹⁶ *Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.*

Psalms 139:14-16

Introduction

Check in with the CORE Host.

Participate in Puzzle activity.

Learn why every person at Grace Church needs to use their spiritual gifts.

Prayer.

A. What is Ministry?

Read and discuss key New Testament passages to understand how you can better serve God and others.

B. Your Ministry is Determined by Your SHAPE

Learn how the online Spiritual Gifts Assessment (SHAPE) will help you discover your spiritual gifts.

C. God Gave You Spiritual Gifts to Share

Explore the apostle Paul's teaching on believers in Christ receiving spiritual gifts from God.

Prayer.

Homework for Next Session

Review homework for the coming week.

Presenter Name: _____

Contact Information: _____

GOALS:

1. Understand that each believer in Christ is designed for a personal ministry.
2. Find out more about your spiritual gifts and ministry strengths by completing the online Spiritual Gifts Assessment (SHAPE).

INTRODUCTION**Session 5 Introduction:**

Puzzle Activity: To help you understand how essential your spiritual gifts are to the health of Grace Church.

Discussion Questions:

- How does just one missing piece affect the image of the animal?
- How is your incomplete puzzle similar to what happens when some of the spiritual gifts within a church are not being used?

Today's BIG IDEA: God Designed Each of Us for a Personal Ministry.

Today's key text:

¹⁴ *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

*Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.*

¹⁵ *My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

¹⁶ *Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.*

Psalm 139:14-16

The proper response to how wonderfully God made you is _____.

Knowing your _____ and _____ is an important step in understanding God's will for your life.

A. WHAT IS MINISTRY?

“Ministry” is a Latin word for _____.

At Grace Church, we define ministry as using _____ God has given us
to _____ Him and the needs of others.

New Testament passages that describe the nature of ministry.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:9-10

According to Peter, every person who is in Christ is a _____.

Discussion Questions:

- We tend to categorize people into two groups: ministers and regular people. What do the verses from Peter’s first letter say about that division?
- How does knowing that God views believers as “a royal priesthood” change how we view ourselves? How might it change how we view other Christians?
- Peter says that we are “God’s people” who “have received mercy.” How do God’s mercy and grace toward us shape our service to Him?

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10

The word we translate as “workmanship” is “_____,” from which we get our word “poem.” The Greeks used this word to describe any artistic masterpiece.

Discussion Questions:

- How does this verse in Ephesians speak to someone who might be insecure about their gifts and talents?
- What does this verse teach us about the purpose of our life?

³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness

Romans 12:3-8

Discussion Questions:

- Why does God distribute different gifts to different believers?
- Why is humility necessary in the effective use of spiritual gifts in a church?

¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13

Discussion Questions:

- According to this passage in the book of Ephesians, what is the role of pastoral staff?
- What is the role of church members?
- What do these verses say is the outcome of this division of work?

PERSONAL MINISTRY PRINCIPLES

1. A person's ministry is determined by his or her _____.

What God made you to be determines what he intends for you to do.

2. Using your spiritual gifts is _____ and _____.

If people around you benefit from your service, then you're being fruitful. When you are fulfilled while serving, you walk away knowing in your heart that you have done what God called you to do.

3. Everyone has a _____.

Every believer is created, saved, called, gifted, authorized, and commanded to use their gifts.

4. Personal ministry builds up the _____.

The Holy Spirit has provided our church with all the spiritually gifted people needed to do everything that God wants to do through us.

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

1 Corinthians 12:7

5. The Grace staff members are _____, while the people of Grace are _____.

When the church functions correctly, the staff won't be able to give away ministry fast enough to people eagerly wanting to serve!

6. "Church" is a _____.

The Holy Spirit distributes gifts in a way that promotes interdependency and deep relationships.

7. Serving _____ you.

You grow when you discover your personal ministry.

B. YOUR MINISTRY IS DETERMINED BY YOUR SHAPE

The SHAPE acronym was developed by Saddleback Church in Orange County, California, to help its church members discover how they were shaped by God for good works. We use their SHAPE model at Grace Church. Here's what SHAPE stands for:

S -- for _____.

"What exactly has God gifted me to do?"

H -- for _____.

"What do I love to do?"

A -- for _____.

"What can I do?"

P -- for _____.

"Who am I?"

E -- for _____.

"What have I been through?"

...God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Corinthians 1:3b-4

C. GOD GAVE YOU SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO SHARE

Concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.

1 Corinthians 12:1

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

1 Corinthians 12:14-20

Discussion Questions:

- What does Paul say about the value of each gift to the body?
- What does Paul imply would happen to the body of Christ if believers refuse to embrace their gifts?
- What does Paul say about God's ability to give gifts?
- What might be behind someone's displeasure over how God has gifted them?

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

1 Corinthians 12:21-26

Discussion Questions:

- What caution does Paul give to those who think their spiritual gifts have made them better than those with seemingly lesser gifts?
- At Grace Church, what spiritual gifts tend to be more visible? And what spiritual gifts seem to be less visible?

SHAPE Assessment Discussion Questions:

- What surprised you in the results of your spiritual gifts assessment?
- Is God already using one of these gifts in your life and ministry?

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT SESSION:

1. Complete The Parable of the Talents devotion.
2. Review the Description of the Spiritual Gifts in the Appendix. Consider using the scriptures found under your gifts in your devotional and prayer time.
3. Review your SHAPE assessment results and pray over them. Ask God how He wants to use your life as part of His story.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Read Matthew 25.

Here's some background information to help you understand this story told by Jesus. The three servants were given the opportunity of a lifetime. Their master entrusted them with managing his estate during a long absence. The monetary unit in the story -- a "talent" -- was worth about 15 years' wages for a slave, so the three servants were each handling more wealth than they could ever hope to accumulate on their own.

Re-read Matthew 25:14-18.

- Based on the master's behavior in these verses, what guesses can we make about his character?
- What do we learn about each servant?

Read Matthew 25:19-30.

- When the master returns to settle his accounts, how does he define success?
- How did the "one talent" servant's attitude toward the master affect his investment strategy?
- How do you think this servant's view of his master came to be so distorted?
- If you were to summarize the main point of this parable in a sentence, what would it be?
- How does this parable speak to the way we handle our gifts and talents today?
- What encouragement does this parable have for those who use their resources for God?

CORE CLASS: SESSION 6

Big Idea: God Has Made Us Uniquely to Fulfill His Purpose.

Key Texts: *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.*

Jeremiah 1:5

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

John 15:16

⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

Ephesians 1:4-5

Introduction

Check in with the CORE Host.

Share insights from Session 5 homework:

- completing The Parable of the Talents Devotion;
- reading the Description of the Spiritual Gifts;
- praying over SHAPE assessment results.

Prayer.

A. Your Ministry Is Determined by your Heart

Use a special deck of cards to begin to discover your passions.

B. Your Ministry Is Determined by your Abilities

Explore scriptures about God giving people abilities.

Consider how to use the SIGN acronym to identify your ministry strengths.

C. Your Ministry Is Determined by your Personality

Review the results of the Personality portion of your online SHAPE assessment and discuss how your personality affects your ministry.

D. Your Ministry Is Determined by your Experiences

Record four types of experiences you have encountered and reflect on how these events might prepare you for ministry.

Prayer.

Homework for Next Session

Review homework for the coming week.

Presenter Name: _____

Contact Information: _____

GOAL:

Identify the heart, abilities, personality, and experiences in your life that shape your personal ministry.

INTRODUCTION

Session 5 Review:

- Share with the class thoughts from completing The Parable of the Talents devotion.
- Share with the class what you learned from reading the Description of the Spiritual Gifts.

Session 6 Preview:

- In groups of three, share your SHAPE assessment findings for “H-A-P-E.”

BIG IDEA: God Has Made Us Uniquely to Fulfill His Purpose.

A. YOUR MINISTRY IS DETERMINED BY YOUR HEART

The “H” in the SHAPE acronym stands for _____.

When we talk about the “heart” for SHAPE purposes, we are talking about _____.

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalms 37:4

PASSION CARDS

Get into groups of four or five and use the special deck of cards to help you get in touch with your passions.

This is what I learned about myself in the Passion Card exercise:

God gave you your passions. The choice you have is whether to honor _____ or to honor _____ with your passions.

B. YOUR MINISTRY IS DETERMINED BY YOUR ABILITIES

The “A” in the SHAPE acronym stands for _____.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...

Romans 12:6

And there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

1 Corinthians 12:6

_____ abilities are God-given and able to _____ the church.

The LORD said to Moses, ² “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³ and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, ⁴ to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, ⁵ in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. ⁶ And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you: ⁷ the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, ⁸ the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, ⁹ and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, ¹⁰ and the finely worked garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests, ¹¹ and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the Holy Place. According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do.”

Exodus 31:1-11

We know Bezalel and Oholiab did not learn how to work with gold or stone in a church. They probably did not view their abilities as particularly spiritual. But that is not how God viewed them.

Discussion Questions:

- How did God describe the source of their abilities?
- How did their so-called “non-spiritual” abilities improve the quality of the entire nation’s spiritual life?
- What are some abilities that you possess that do not seem particularly “spiritual?”

Writer Marcus Buckingham uses the S I G N acronym to help people identify their strengths.

- S is for _____.
When you have engaged in a certain activity, did you have success at it?

Do other people tell you that you have a gift for it?
- I is for _____.
Does the behavior that the activity requires come naturally to you?

Do you do it frequently and is it almost a gut instinct?
- G is for _____.
Did you pick this activity up quickly?

Are you naturally looking for ways to grow in it?
- N is for _____.
Do you have a need to exercise this ability?

Do you think about it often?

Are you unhappy if you aren't able to exercise the ability?

MY ABILITIES:

C. YOUR MINISTRY IS DETERMINED BY YOUR PERSONALITY

The "P" in the SHAPE acronym stands for _____.

What were the SHAPE assessment findings regarding your personality?

D. YOUR MINISTRY IS DETERMINED BY YOUR EXPERIENCES

The “E” in the SHAPE acronym stands for _____.

Four types of experience God uses:

1. _____

Sometimes God uses “mountain-top” experiences to draw us closer to Him. We hear from God in a meaningful spiritual experience, and then we re-engage with our world in rich, creative ministry.

Thought question: When have you felt closest to God? (Write, and then share this experience with a partner.)

2. _____

Whatever school you went to, whatever diploma or degree you may have earned; your education has shaped your skills, interests, and outlook on the world.

Thought question: What were your favorite educational experiences? (Write, and then share with a partner.)

3. _____

Any past ministry experiences you may have had can help you understand the ministry God has for you.

Thought question: What past ministry experiences have you had – or what church volunteer opportunities look interesting to you? (Write, and then share with a partner.)

4. _____

The problems, hurts, and trials you’ve endured have taught you very valuable lessons. God can use those lessons! God wants you to be willing to minister to people who are going through what you have already gone through.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Thought question: What painful experience have you endured that God could use to help someone else? (Write down just a word or a symbol. Your privacy is respected.)

God uses all four categories of our life experiences to mold us to be effective in serving Him and others. As we pay close attention to what’s happening in our lives, we become better able to set the course of our future in ministry.

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT SESSION:

Devotions:

1. Nine Truths About Spiritual Gifts
 - Read “Nine Truths about Spiritual Gifts” on the following page.
 - Write your impressions of each Scripture passage in the space provided.
2. Reflect on the following questions and write down your responses in your Participant Guide.
 - How do you picture the use of the spiritual gifts God has given you?
 - Why is it important for people who are part of a church to actively use their spiritual gifts?
3. Pray. Talk with God about your use of your spiritual gifts. Journal your thoughts in your Participant Guide.

NINE TRUTHS ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Look up the following verses in your Bible. Write in the space following each passage a phrase or a thought that seems especially meaningful to you.

1. Gifts are meant for the benefit of other believers. **1 Peter 4:10 and 1 Corinthians 12:7**
2. Gifts are given to provide unity and maturity in the body. **Ephesians 4:11 and 13-14**
3. Every Christian has at least one gift and no one receives all the gifts. **1 Corinthians 12:7; 27-30**
4. No single gift is given to everyone. **1 Corinthians 12:29-30**
5. Spiritual gifts are given by grace. They are not earned. **Ephesians 4:7**
6. The Holy Spirit decides what gifts I get. **1 Corinthians 12:11**
7. I am to develop the gifts God gives me. **1 Timothy 4:14**
8. It's a sin to waste the gifts God gave me. **Matthew 25:14-30**
9. Using my gifts glorifies God and grows me. **John 15:8**

PASSION CARD QUESTIONS

What makes you smile?

What would you do for free?

What do you find easy?

What sparks your creativity?

What do you like to talk about?

What would you regret having not tried?

What makes you unafraid of failure?

CORE CLASS: SESSION 7

Big Idea: We Grow in Our Faith by Taking Next Steps.

Key Text: *¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* **Philippians 3:13-14**

Introduction

Check in with the CORE Host.

Review Session 6 homework:

Nine Truths About Spiritual Gifts

Prayer.

A. A Look at Our Pathway

Receive an overview of the Next Steps Pathway.

B. Live in Community

Discuss scriptures that provide this direction for believers.

Understand the importance of Life Groups at Grace Church:

Their structure, how to join one, and how L.I.V.E. activities are organized within Life Groups.

C. While We're on the Next Steps Pathway

Prayer.

Homework for Next Session

Review homework for the coming week.

Presenter Name: _____

Contact Information: _____

GOALS:

1. Understand the Next Steps Pathway.
2. Learn the importance of Life Groups.
3. Be encouraged to join a Life Group.
4. Understand the role of pastors and staff in the Grace Church community.
5. Know how to access assistance for Care and Support, Next Steps activities, and Site Pastors.

INTRODUCTION

Session 6 Review:

Discussion: Share how the scriptures and truths of last week's homework impacted your thinking about your spiritual gifts.

Session 7 Big Idea: We Grow in Our Faith by Taking _____.

A. A LOOK AT OUR PATHWAY

Becoming a fully devoted follower of Christ is a life-long process.

The church word for that process is _____.

At Grace Church we have charted a course for that process called: _____.

Let's walk through each step of the pathway

1. Invite Others

If you've been invited, you know the power of an invitation!

2. Come Experience

While the services are designed primarily to be an environment that inspires believers to worship God, they are also intended to be understandable for people exploring faith, as well as people at the beginning of their walk with the Lord.

3. Connect

Attend a Connection Point event, fill out a Connections Card, or attend CORE to start getting connected.

4. Attend CORE

Get to know the basics of the Christian faith and the basics about Grace Church, begin experiencing the Grace Church community, and connect with other people.

5. Join a Life Group

We believe the best way to become fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ is to grow together with other Christians in a Life Group. (Becoming part of a Life Group is the natural next step after CORE!)

6. Serve

Everyone has gifts that God has given them and being part of the body at Grace means finding your place to Serve on a ministry team within the church.

7. Learn to Lead

Experts tell us that leadership is simply bringing about change by the effect of our own influence on others. If leadership is influence, then all Christians are leaders, because we are all called to influence someone – from our kids, to a neighbor, to a co-worker.

8. Invite Others

On our Next Steps journey we continue to invite others to church and into relationship with Jesus. We remain outward focused.

9. Make and Be

The outward arrow from the Next Steps Pathway represents our individual and combined impact on the world outside of Grace Church, as we demonstrate the love of Jesus by the way we live in our homes, workplaces, and communities. God calls us to make and be fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

B. LIFE GROUPS

The Bible describes how early Christians lived life, and it affirms believers' continuing need for one another.

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. **Acts 2:42-47**

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. **Hebrews 10:24-25**

Discussion Questions:

- In Acts, what were the believers devoted to? Why was that critical to the growth of the church?
- How does living in community and becoming more fully devoted to Christ change our church? Change our community? Change the world?

C. WHILE WE'RE ON THE NEXT STEPS PATHWAY

There are four ways Grace Church offers help to people as they are taking their Next Steps:

1. _____ and _____ in the Grace Church community to equip you along the way.

Discussion questions on "Next Steps" video:

- Based on this video, what are the responsibilities of the leaders at Grace?
- In what ways are people at Grace Church responsible for their own spiritual growth?

2. Grace Church can help people take their Next Step by offering _____ and _____ to hurting individuals.

Pastor Mike Watson leads a group of people at Grace Church who provide help to hurting individuals in numerous ways. See what Pastor Mike has to say about the Care and Support ministry and find a list of the support groups that meet at Grace by going to our website: <http://whoisgrace.com/resources/gethelp/>

3. Information about Grace Church Next Steps activities:

- Download the Grace App (search "whoisgrace")
- Fill out a blue Connections Card on Sunday morning and turn it in at the Next Steps center to be added to the E-News. The folks at the Next Steps Center can also help you.
- Visit www.whoisgrace.com/next-steps/your-pathway
- Check the bulletin you receive when you enter the Worship Center
- "Like" Grace Church on Facebook.

4. Site Pastor _____ at every Grace Church location.

They are people with shepherding hearts whose ministry is to love you. Any one of them would gladly talk with you one-on-one about what you need and how to find help. Please don't hesitate to contact your site pastor if you'd like to talk to someone.

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT SESSION:

1. Review on the website:
 - a. Read the story of Grace Church at <https://whoisgrace.com/about-us/our-story/>
 - b. Go to <https://whoisgrace.com/lifegroups/> to find more information about Life Groups and to check out the Group Finder.
 - c. Go to <http://whoisgrace.com> and click on “Events” to explore the featured events and access the full calendar of activities happening at Grace.
 - d. Review What We Believe at Grace Church at <https://whoisgrace.com/about-us/what-we-believe/>. (The by-laws are located on the “organizational info” tab.)

2. Read the Statement of Faith, found in the Appendix, and watch the Statement of Faith video from Pastor Derek Sanford at www.whoisgrace.com/coreclass.
 - What are some questions you have after hearing the Statement of Faith?
 - Which faith statement are you most passionate about and hold tightly to?
 - How would you summarize the Statement of Faith?
 - Think on the faith statements. If we believe them to be non-negotiable, how should they affect our actions?

Pray about your Next Step. Is it time to join a Life Group or to start serving on a ministry team? Perhaps baptism or membership are your next step forward. If you haven't already done so, please complete the Next Steps survey you received last week from your Site Pastor. This is a really effective tool for helping us help you get connected!

CORE CLASS: SESSION 8

Big Idea: Following Christ Means Allowing Him to Change Us.

Key Text: *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 3:18

Introduction

Check in with the CORE Host.

Review homework from Session 7:

- read about Grace Church on website;
- watch the Statement of Faith video;
- pray about being in a Life Group.

Prayer.

A. Seven Life-Changing Statements

Review the seven big ideas covered in CORE sessions so far.

Reflect on how these ideas impact your life.

B. Significance and Expectations of Membership

Learn why membership at Grace Church is an important step.

Participate in discussions of giving, life groups, serve opportunities, baptism, care and support, accountability, and statement of faith.

Membership process introduced

Questions for Site Pastor

Site Pastor/Presenter: _____

Contact Information: _____

GOALS:

1. Understand the benefits of pursuing spiritual growth in the context of community.
2. Become familiar with the Grace Church Statement of Faith and the multi-site leadership structure.
3. Understand the commitment embodied in Grace Church membership.
4. Have an opportunity to have questions about Grace Church answered.

INTRODUCTION

Session Seven Review

Life Groups

- During your prayer time this past week, have you felt God pulling your heart toward Life Groups in any way?

Statement of Faith

- How would you describe the Grace Church Statement of Faith, after watching the video by Pastor Derek?

A. SEVEN LIFE-CHANGING STATEMENTS

The seven Big Ideas covered so far in the CORE class:

1. Maturing Christians Participate in a Local Church.
2. Following Christ Includes Reading His Word and Talking to Him in Prayer.
3. We Each Have a Faith Story to Share, Which is Part of God's Story.
4. We are Ambassadors for Christ.
5. God Designed Each of Us for a Personal Ministry.
6. God has Made Us Uniquely to Fulfill His Purpose.
7. We Grow in Our Faith by Taking Next Steps.

Thought questions:

- Which of the seven big ideas have you incorporated into your life the most so far?
- Which big idea presents the greatest opportunity for your own personal growth?

Today's Big Idea: Following Christ Means Allowing Him _____

The very first CORE session focused on why we join a local church: to change and to become more like _____.

Christ-followers continually take _____ in their faith, and they experience recognizable change in their lives.

B. SIGNIFICANCE AND EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Romans 12:4-5

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” Ephesians 4:15-16

What do these passages teach us about God’s design for the church?

An Invitation into Life Groups

If you are already in a Life Group, how has it helped you grow in your faith?

Do you have any questions about Life Groups?

An Invitation into SERVE

Are already serving on a ministry team? What do you love about it?

Do you have any questions about serving?

An Invitation into Baptism

Why do you think Jesus commanded his followers to be baptized?

Do you have any questions about baptism?

An Invitation into Tithing and Generosity

Why do you think God commands us to give to Him through the local church?

Do you have any questions about tithing & generosity?

An Invitation into Care & Support

Reaching out for help is very easy and confidential. Simply email gethelp@whoisgrace.com and briefly describe your situation. You will be contacted promptly with a next step.

Care & Support Resources:

- Pastoral Care: guidance and prayer
- Hospital Visitation
- Celebrate Recovery
- Night of Hope classes and support groups (Financial Peace University, Authentic Manhood, etc)
- Marriage Mentoring
- CCA (Christian Counseling Associates)
- Benevolent assistance

Do you have any questions about Care & Support?

An Invitation into Accountability Process for Members

Part of being a member at Grace means giving and receiving accountability. Accountability happens best through personal relationships in Life Groups. When a member of Grace is unwilling to turn from a serious sin, we follow the steps of accountability Jesus teaches in **Matthew 18:15-20** to hold members accountable.

¹⁵ "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

Do you have any questions about the accountability process for members at Grace?

Q & A

An Invitation into STATEMENT OF FAITH

Every church is accountable to God to clearly present the truth of God's Word. Grace Church has a Statement of Faith document that describes the _____ on which we cannot compromise.

There are doctrinal positions that Christians *can* disagree with. In fact, several of those differences show up among the Grace Church staff, yet we function together very well.

Grace Church is a _____ to explore Christian faith -- and even to have significant doubts. You will not be judged for disagreements or uncertainty. However, at Grace Church we do believe that truth matters. Membership matters. Members serve and lead the congregation, so how those members view God and His truth matters. If you cannot accept the Statement of Faith of Grace Church as true, you are welcome to continue to attend, but you cannot become a member.

People who want to become members of Grace Church will be asked during their membership interview if they agree with the Statement of Faith without reservation. If you have questions, doubts, or disagreements with any part of the Statement of Faith, please let us know, so that we can talk with you about those issues.

An Invitation into MEMBERSHIP PROCESS

If you indicated on the Next Steps survey that you are interested in Membership you will be receiving a follow-up email that will provide you with your membership application. If you did not yet complete that survey, or you have changed your mind, just email membership@whoisgrace.com.

These are the simple steps of the membership process:

1. Complete the membership application when the link is emailed to you.
2. A Grace staff member or elder will contact you to schedule an interview.
3. Complete the interview - you will either be asked to take a step or two before becoming a member or you will be recommended to the Elders.
4. Grace Elders will vote to approve your membership at their monthly meeting.
5. You will receive notification of the Elders' vote.
6. Attend the next annual celebration and join many others who took a step into membership through the ministry year!

HOMEWORK:

- Next Steps: Get in a Life Group! Serve!
- Prayerfully consider membership. You will receive an email with instructions on completing a membership application if you so desire. Also, be sure to watch the Statement of Faith video if you have not done so. Find it at www.whoisgrace.com/coreclass.
- Complete the CORE class participant evaluation at www.whoisgrace.com/coreclass.
- Pray over the Big Idea that you circled on page 59. What is your next step toward growth in that area?

APPENDIX

SESSION 1: MATURING CHRISTIANS PARTICIPATE IN A LOCAL CHURCH

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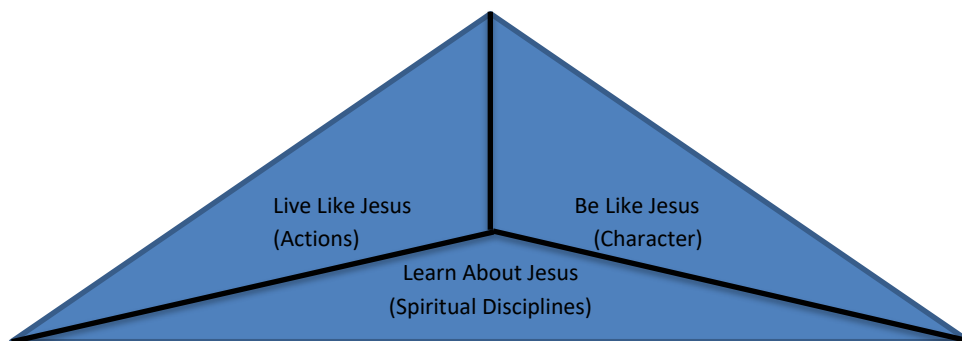
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CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS: SEE WEBSITE <https://whoisgrace.com/article/grace-church-bylaws/>

WHAT IS A FULLY DEVOTED FOLLOWER OF CHRIST?

After we accept God's gift of salvation through Christ, and we've committed our lives to Him, our love for God manifests itself in an ongoing lifestyle in which we continue to learn more about God, we strive to have His character, and we serve Him by the way we live.



Here are some examples (not an exhaustive list):

Learn and Know God More –The personal actions we do to stay close to God.

- Prayer and fasting (Luke 6:12; 1 Corinthians 14:14-15; James 5:13-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Jude 1:20; Matthew 26:41)
- Bible Reading, meditation, memorization (Hebrews 5:12-14; John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 1 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 1:5)

Live the Way Jesus Lived --The actions that show our love and obedience to God.

- “L” Live in community
 - Share life with other Christians (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:10; Titus 2:3)
 - Be a positive spiritual influence in your family (Ephesians 6:1-4; Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Matthew 7:9)
- “I” Invest in others
 - Share your faith (Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 6:19-20)
 - Serve the poor, widows and orphans (Galatians 2:10; James 2:14-26; Luke 18:22; Zechariah 7:9)
- “V” Volunteer my time and gifts
 - Exercise spiritual gifts inside and outside the church community (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:6; James 1:22-25)
 - Doing constructive, good works daily (Ephesians 2:8-10)
- “E” Equip myself
 - Engage in life-long learning, and apply Bible teaching to your life (Ephesians 6:10-18; Jude 1:20; 2 Tim 2:15)

Be Like Jesus—The character traits we want to develop as we imitate Christ

- “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39).
- “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” (Galatians 5:6)
- “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23)
- “Show justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before your God.” (Micah 6:8)

Being a fully devoted follower doesn't mean that we're perfect! But it does mean that we genuinely pursue Christ and His ways as a response to His love for us, and our growing love for Him. If you'd like to learn more, feel free to contact us at NextSteps@whoisgrace.com.

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“One Another”

The “One Another” verses in the New Testament give instruction on how to live in community and have relationships with other believers.

Below is a list of some of the “one another” verses that are found in the New Testament.

- Mark 9:50 Be at peace with one another [also 1 Thessalonians 5:13]
- John 13:34 Love one another [occurs 20 times in New Testament]
- Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another
- Romans 12:10 Give preference to one another
- Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another [also Romans 15:5]
- Romans 14:19 Build up one another [also 1 Thessalonians 5:11]
- Romans 15:7 Accept one another as Christ does
- Romans 15:14 Admonish one another [also Colossians 3:16]
- Romans 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss [occurs 4 times in New Testament]
- 1 Corinthians 11:33 Wait for one another
- 1 Corinthians 12:25 Care for one another
- Galatians 5:13 Serve one another
- Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens
- Ephesians 4:2 Forbear one another in love
- Ephesians 4:25 Speak the truth to one another
- Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another
- Ephesians 4:32 Be tender hearted to one another
- Ephesians 4:32 Forgive one another [also Colossians 3:13]
- Ephesians 5:19 Speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs
- Ephesians 5:21 Be subject to one another
- Philippians 2:3 Regard one another as more important
- Colossians 3:13 Bear with one another
- Colossians 3:16 Teach one another
- 1 Thessalonians 4:18 Comfort one another
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 Encourage one another [also Hebrews 3:13 and 10:25]
- 1 Thessalonians 5:13 Seek for what is best for one another
- Hebrews 10:24 Stimulate one another to good deeds
- James 5:16 Pray for one another
- James 5:16 Confess your sins to one another
- 1 Peter 4:9 Be hospitable to one another
- 1 Peter 4:10 Use your gift to serve one another
- 1 Peter 5:5 Be humble towards one another
- 1 John 1:7 Fellowship with one another

GENEROSITY AND TITHING

Every corporate worship experience at Grace Church includes a time for people to give their tithes and offerings back to the Lord. Scripture teaches that Jesus' followers are generous people who invest in the kingdom of God on earth. The tithe -- giving 10% of one's income to the local church -- is a baseline for generous giving that has biblical support. (Genesis 28:20-22, Luke 11:42)

Throughout Scripture tithing is always shown as a means for those who follow God to worship Him and remember that all we have comes from Him and belongs to Him. The tithe is a way of contributing to the work of God on earth through the local church. A tithe multiplies opportunities for kids, youth and people of all ages all over our region to experience Jesus. A tithe to God through Grace Church helps with the care of widows, single moms, missionaries, and pastors. A tithe helps Grace Church invest in blighted neighborhoods and share the gospel with those who do not yet know Jesus.

Tithing 10% of one's gross income is not a requirement at the time of membership. However, in accepting membership at Grace Church, you are agreeing to work toward that goal as part of your overall generous giving.

Read the following passage written by the apostle Paul to the church at Corinth:

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written,

*"He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever."*

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

GENEROSITY and TITHING: DISCUSS WITH YOUR GROUP

- Why is generosity and tithing pleasing to God?
- Who is impacted when we are generous toward God? In what ways?
- How does seeing yourself as a steward of God's money change your perspective?
- How does generous giving change how God is viewed?

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

“Observation Questions” help you notice the details of the text.

- When and where does this take place?
- Who are the main characters?
- What key words are repeated?
- What major themes are repeated?
- What stands out?
- What comes before and after this passage?
- What do I find difficult to understand?
- Are there specific instructions or warnings?

“Interpretation Questions” help you understand what the author intended the passage to mean.

- What does that word/phrase mean?
- What is confusing about this passage?
- What could I know that would help this to make more sense?
- What would the original hearers have heard?
- What would the original readers have read?
- What is the context – what comes before and after this passage that will help to clarify?

“Application Questions” ask “What does the passage mean for me?”

SPACEPETS - "Is there any . . ."

Sin to confess? Do I need to make any restitution?

Promise to claim? Is it a universal promise? Have I met the conditions?

Attitude to change? Am I willing to work on a negative attitude and begin building toward a positive one?

Command to obey? Am I willing to do it, no matter how I feel?

Example to follow? Is it a positive example for me to copy, or a negative one to avoid?

Prayer to pray? Is there anything I need to pray back to God?

Error to avoid? Is there any problem that I should be alert to, or beware of?

Truth to believe? What new things can I learn about God or other biblical teachings?

Something to praise God for? Is there something here I can be thankful for?

BAPTISM

If any of you have been at a Grace Church service when someone was baptized, then you have witnessed the joy that comes with baptism. There is an obvious joy on the part of the person being baptized, and there also is visible joy in the entire congregation. As a part of the body of Christ at Grace Church, we rejoice when another part of the body takes this step of obedience.

Many people come to Grace Church having been baptized as infants. They wonder then why one of the membership requirements at Grace Church is baptism as a believer. We definitely do not want to devalue someone's baptism as an infant. At the same time, we hold to believer's baptism as included by Jesus in the Great Commission:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Matthew 28:19**

In the New Testament, all of the people recorded as having been baptized were people who had made a conscious decision to follow Christ. Baptism does not save you. But Jesus commanded believer's baptism, making it an act of obedience and a powerful picture of how our lives are connected to Jesus.

Read the following passage written by the apostle Paul to the Christians at Rome.

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:1-4

Being physically baptized in water as a believer is an action that reminds you and every person who is there that a spiritual reality has already occurred in you. Through the cross of Jesus, your life has been forever connected to the life of Jesus. That, of course, changes everything.

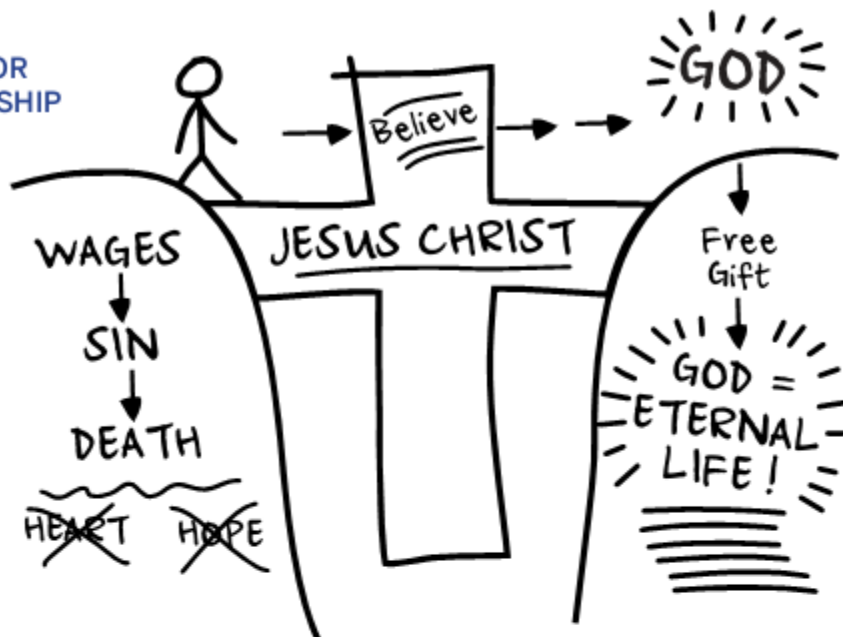
Reflect:

- What similarities does the apostle Paul see between Jesus' death and resurrection and baptism?
- What does Paul mean when he writes that we (believers) participate in Jesus' death and resurrection?
- How does being connected to Jesus affect how we relate to sin?
- If you have not taken this next step of faith, are you ready?

For more information about Baptism check out <https://whoisgrace.com/salvation-and-baptism/> and <https://whoisgrace.com/blog/3-reasons-you-should-be-baptized/>.



NAVIGATOR
DISCIPLESHIP
TOOL



THE BRIDGE to LIFE

Some of the oldest questions humankind has been asking are, "How can I know God?" What is He like? What can we do to please Him? How can we get to Heaven? If we work hard enough to be a good enough person will He accept us then? If we do enough religious activities to get His attention, will that do it?

Fortunately for us, the answer is surprisingly simple. The "Gospel" that the Bible talks about literally means, "the Good News," and the news is good in deed!

We have to start at the beginning. In Genesis 1:26, when God created the first humans, He said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness", then God blessed them and spent the days walking and talking with the people He had created. In short, *life was good.*

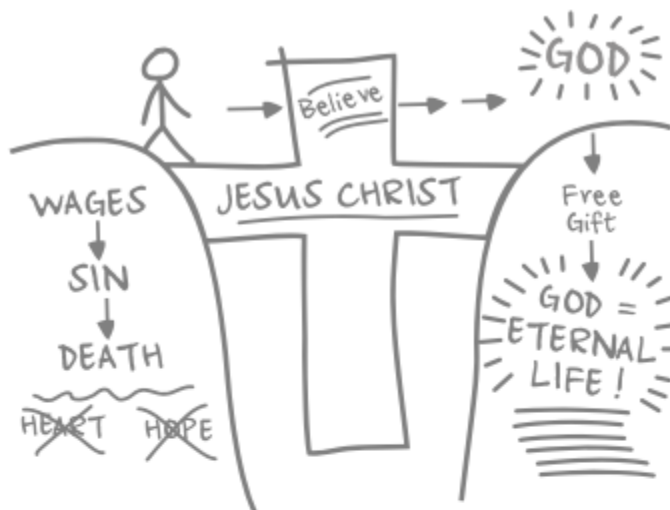
But why isn't life like that anymore? What happened to mess everything up? This brings us to the second point: when we (humankind) chose to do the opposite of what God told us, sin poisoned the world.

Sin separated us from God, and everything changed. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and in Isaiah 59:2 we're told, "your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear."

This is especially bad news because there is no way for us to get across that gap on our own. We (humankind) have tried to find our way back to God and a perfect world on our own ever since then, and without any luck. We try to get there by being good people, or through religion, money, morality, philosophy, education, or any number of other ways, but eventually we find out that none of it works. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Proverbs 14:12).

There is only one way to find peace with God, and the Bible says it is through Jesus Christ. We were stranded without any way of getting back to our Creator, and we needed a way to pay for our sins and be clean again so that





we could be welcomed back to be with Him. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." So this is the Good News—that even though we were still enemies of God (as one translation says), Jesus came to die on the cross and pay the price for our sins so that we could have a relationship with Him again. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

This brings us to the last and most important part. John 5:24 says, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." Jesus Christ himself even says, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10), and Romans 5:1 says, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

So how can I have peace with God, life to the full, and be confident of eternal life like these verses say? First, through an honest prayer to God, I have to admit that I'm not perfect—that I can't escape my sins, and I can't save myself. I follow this admission by believing that Jesus Christ died for me on the cross and rose from the grave, conquering death and sin. Then I invite Jesus Christ to live in me and be the Lord of my life, accepting His free gift of eternal life with Him.

The prayer can go something like this: "Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and that I need You to forgive me. I know that You died a painful death so that my sins could be washed clean. Thank you. I want to make You the Lord of my life, and I will trust and follow You. Everything I have is Yours now. In Your name, Lord. Amen."

There is nothing magical about these words. It's not the words themselves that make things right between you and God—it's whether or not your heart really means it. We know this because in 1 Samuel 16:7, the Bible says, "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

The best part of this whole process is that it doesn't matter how badly we've messed up. Jesus is powerful enough to save anyone from their sins—even the worst of us. Romans 10:13 says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." That's fantastic news—no matter how badly we've messed up, we can place our complete trust in Jesus, and He will wipe all of our sins off the face of the earth. *Jesus is the bridge to life.*

THIS TOOL IS MEANT TO BE SHARED.

To download the Bridge to Life illustration visit navlink.org/bridge

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SERVIE: AN INTERVIEW WITH PASTOR MARCUS

From an Interview with Pastor Marcus Atkinson, Director of ServErie and Pastor of Community Engagement at Grace Church:

Why is downtown Erie important to everyone who lives in the region?

The health and vitality of downtown Erie is the heartbeat of the entire county. From its assets to its people, downtown Erie is the touch-point where humanity intersects in the most organic and diverse ways.

How does Erie fit into Acts 1:8?

Because of its wonderful diversity, we actually get to witness to our own "Samaria" and the world simultaneously. No area in the region gives us the opportunity to reach as many different types of people for Christ as downtown Erie does. That's a challenge and a privilege that we need to meet head on as ambassadors of Christ.

What are the spiritual and tangible needs we are grappling with in the context of the city?

There's a large population of people from various countries where Christianity is not the primary faith. That's a tangible need that stands out. The other is the basic need of human kindness, understanding and acts of kindness. Many in the city are like sheep without a Shepard. There is very little love and trust among residents in Erie because these elements are lacking.

Can you define the terms ServErie, Center City, and partner organizations?

ServErie is an organization rooted in its love for Christ and its love of neighbor. Our mission: Restoring communities by connecting people in need to resources. Our vision: An identified resource for every need. Our goal is to be the hands and feet of Jesus through acts of service, advocating for people in need and connecting resources to those needs.

Center City is an area on the lower east side of Erie that ServErie has dedicated itself to serving 365 days of the year. The boundaries are from east 6th to east 12th street / Wayne Street to Holland Street. Why did we choose that location? Very few locations in the city have a higher concentration of crime, blight and poverty than Center City. While other neighborhoods have advocacy groups to help improve the quality of life for its residents, Center City has been left out and largely ignored by these efforts. The redeeming love of Christ reminds us that there is value in ALL humanity and that His love, and ours, knows no boundaries. It prayerfully felt like a logical place to dedicate ourselves to in the city. We have multiple partner organizations within the boundaries of Center City that are doing wonderful work as well. We have connected many of these groups as we partner with select organizations on various projects. As ServErie, we don't look to re-invent the wheel of service agencies and existing non-profit, but rather we seek to build the capacity of our partner organizations that have already spent many years and resources towards their unique visions.

How can we get involved?

It is as simple as going to www.serverie.com and filling out the electronic contact form. Someone will reach out to you after receiving your inquiry. ServErie began as a network of churches that engaged their congregations in service projects for non-profits across Erie County. ServErie has since become a non-profit and grown into annual School Initiatives, Youth Development, Leadership Trainings, and Neighborhood Renewal projects within our footprint (East 6th to East 12th and Holland to Wayne).

DESCRIPTION OF THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The Bible does not lock us into tight restrictions as to the number of spiritual gifts, or even their definitions. The four major lists of gifts are found in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 and 27-31, Ephesians 4:11-12, and 1 Peter 4:8-11. There also are other passages that mention or illustrate gifts that are not included in these four lists.

As you read through the gifts described below, make a check mark by each gift that, upon initial impression, seems to apply to you. Remember you can have many gifts.

GIFTS THAT COMMUNICATE GOD'S WORD (to both unbelievers and believers):

PROPHECY ("Preaching") *1 Corinthians 14:3; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 13:2; 2 Peter 1:19-21*

The ability to publicly communicate God's word in an inspired way that convinces unbeliever and both challenges and comforts believers. The ability to persuasively declare God's will.

EVANGELISM *Acts 8:26-40; Ephesians 4:11; Luke 19:1-10*

The ability to communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ to unbelievers in a positive, non-threatening way. The ability to sense opportunities to share Christ and lead people to respond with faith.

APOSTLESHIP *Romans 15:20; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:11-12*

The ability to start new churches and oversee their development.

GIFTS THAT EDUCATE GOD'S PEOPLE:

TEACHING *Ephesians 4:12-13; Acts 18:21-24; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29*

The ability to educate God's people by clearly explaining and applying the Bible in a way that causes them to learn. The ability to equip and train other believers for ministry.

ENCOURAGEMENT ("Exhortation") *Acts 14:22; Acts 11:22-24; Acts 15:30-32; Romans 12:8*

The ability to motivate God's people to apply and **act on** Biblical principles, especially when they are discouraged or wavering in their faith. The ability to bring out the best in others and challenge them to develop their potential.

WISDOM *1 Corinthians 2:1, 6-16; James 3:13-18; Jeremiah 9:23-24*

The ability to understand God's perspective on life situations and share those insights in a simple, understandable way. The ability to explain what to do and how to do it.

DISCERNMENT *1 John 4:1-6; Acts 5:1-4; Matthew 16:21-23*

The ability to distinguish right from wrong, truth from error, and to give an immediate evaluation based on God's Word. The ability to discern whether the source of an experience is Satan, self, or God's Spirit.

KNOWLEDGE *Daniel 1:17; 1 Corinthians 12:8; Mark 2:6-8; John 1:45-50*

The ability to discover, collect, analyze, and organize information that is vital to individual believers or the entire church family. The ability to comprehend a large amount of information and provide it when needed for effective decision-making.

GIFTS THAT DEMONSTRATE GOD'S LOVE

SERVICE/ HELPS *Acts 6:1-7; Romans 16:1-2; Romans 12:7*

The ability to recognize unmet needs in the church family, and take the initiative to provide practical assistance quickly, cheerfully, and without a need for recognition

MERCY *Luke 10:30-37; Mark 10:46-52; Romans 12:8*

The ability to detect hurt and empathize with those who are suffering in the church family. The ability to provide compassionate and cheerful support to those experiencing distress, crisis, or pain.

HOSPITALITY *1 Peter 4:9-10; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:1-2*

The ability to make others, especially strangers, feel warmly welcomed, accepted, and comfortable in the church family. The ability to coordinate factors that promote fellowship

SHEPHERDING ("Pastoring") *1 Peter 5:2-4; John 10:1-18; Ephesians 4:11-12*

The ability to care for the spiritual needs of a group of believers and equip them for ministry. The ability to nurture a small group in spiritual growth and assume responsibility for their welfare.

GIVING *2 Corinthians 8:1-7; 2 Corinthians 6:8; Luke 21:1-4*

The ability to generously contribute material resources and/or money beyond the 10% tithe so that the Body may grow and be strengthened. The ability to earn and manage money so it may be given to support the ministry of others.

GIFTS THAT CELEBRATE GOD'S PRESENCE (worship or prayer-related gifts):

CREATIVE COMMUNICATION *Psalms 150:3-5; 2 Samuel 6:14-15; Mark 4:2, 33*

The ability to celebrate God's presence by using the arts (writing, art, drama, music) to communicate God's truth. The ability to use variety and to captivate people and cause them to consider God's message.

CRAFTSMANSHIP *Exodus 31:3-11; 35:31-35; 2 Kings 22:5-6; Acts 9:36-39*

The ability to build, maintain, or beautify the place of worship for God's glory. The ability to express worship through a variety of art forms.

PRAYER-RELATED GIFTS:

INTERCESSION *Colossians 1:9-12; Romans 8:26-27; John 17:9-26*

The ability to pray for the needs of others in the church family over extended periods of time on a regular basis. The ability to persist in prayer and not be discouraged until the answer arrives.

****HEALING** *James 5:14-16; Mark 2:1-12; Acts 3:1-16*

The ability to pray in faith specifically for people who need physical, emotional, or spiritual healing and see God answer. The ability to sense when God is prompting you to pray this kind of prayer.

****MIRACLES** *Mark 11:23-24; Luke 5:1-11; John 2:1-11*

The ability to pray in faith specifically for God's supernatural intervention into an impossible situation and see God answer. The ability to sense when God is prompting you to pray this kind of prayer.

****Tongues/ Interpretation** *1 Corinthians 14:13-15; 1 Corinthians 12:28-30; 1 Corinthians 14:1-33; Acts 2:1-11*

The ability to pray in a language understood only by God or one who is given the gift of interpretation at that time.

****Not in the spiritual gift assessment because those who have these gifts do not need an assessment tool to discover it.**

GIFTS THAT SUPPORT THE WHOLE CHURCH:

LEADERSHIP *Romans 12:8; Hebrews 13:17; Luke 22:25-26*

The ability to clarify and communicate the purpose, direction, and vision of a ministry in a way that attracts others to get involved. The ability to motivate others by example to work together in accomplishing a ministry goal.

ADMINISTRATION *1 Corinthians 12:28; Acts 6:1-7; Exodus 18:13-26*

Also called the gift of organization, it is the ability to recognize the gifts of others and recruit them to ministry. The ability to organize and manage people, resources, and time for effective ministry. The ability to coordinate many details and execute the plans of leadership.

FAITH *1 Corinthians 12:9, 13; Hebrews 11:1; Romans 4:18-21*

The gift of faith is the ability to trust God for what cannot be seen and to act on God's promise, regardless of what the circumstances indicate. The willingness to risk failure in pursuit of a God-given vision, expecting God to handle the obstacles.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

A. THE TRIUNE GOD

There is one God who exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each person being fully God. God the Father, along with Jesus the Son, is the Creator and Lord of the universe who both governs all things according to His will and is accomplishing His purpose in the world and in the church. Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly human, the only mediator between God and humanity. The Holy Spirit is necessary for the individual's new birth and growth to maturity. The Holy Spirit empowers and indwells the church as well as each individual believer.

Gen. 1:1, 26; Isaiah 45:21-22; Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 4:4-6; Luke 10:21-22; John 1:1-4; Revelation 4:11; I Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 2:9; Colossians 1:16-17; John 3:16; Titus 3:5,6; Jude 20-21; John 14:16-17, 26

B. THE BIBLE

The Holy Scripture in its entirety is inspired by God's Spirit through human authors and constitutes the revelation of God's truth to humanity. It is trustworthy and without error in its original manuscripts in all that it affirms. Whatever the Bible, rightly interpreted, teaches followers of Christ are bound to believe and obey. It is the supreme authority in every matter of belief and conduct, and it establishes moral absolutes for the human race.

2 Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21; Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; John 17:17; I John 2:5

C. THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

All human beings are created in God's own likeness and therefore have inherent value and equality before God. All human life is in the image of God and is sacred.

Genesis 1:27; Ephesians 1:4-13; Psalm 139; Jeremiah 1:4-5; Acts 17:28

D. THE HUMAN CONDITION

Humanity is hopelessly lost by imputation of sin as a result of Adam's sin as well as by personal sinful acts. This sin and guilt have rendered mankind subject to God's wrath and condemnation and have resulted in humanity's alienation from God's life, suppression of God's truth, and hostility to God's law. God's love desires all to come to repentance and to be reconciled rather than condemned.

Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Jeremiah 17:9; Acts 3:19; Acts 16:31

E. SALVATION

Salvation from the guilt and penalty of sin has been achieved solely through the work of Jesus Christ – his perfect obedience, substitutionary death, bodily resurrection and exaltation to heaven as Lord. Apart from Christ, there is salvation through no person, church, creed, process, or power. Each sinner is justified before God and reconciled to God only by divine grace appropriated by faith alone, apart from human merit or good works. Authentic salvation is evidenced by a transformed life.

Romans 5:12-19; Romans 10:9-10; John 3:16; John 14:6; John 1:12-13; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:3-9; 2 Corinthians 13:5-6; James 2:14-26

F. THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

There is one, holy and universal church, which is the Body of Christ, and to which all true believers belong. As the Father sent the Son into the world, so the Lord Jesus Christ sends his church to participate in God's mission by words and works. In this mission the church is called to proclaim the gospel of God's grace, to baptize and make disciples among all nations, to exhibit God's character through compassionate care for the needy; to push back the forces of evil, and to demonstrate to humanity the reality of God's kingdom.

Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 16:16-18; Matthew 22:37-40; Isaiah 61:1-3; Acts 1:8; Matthew 25:34-45

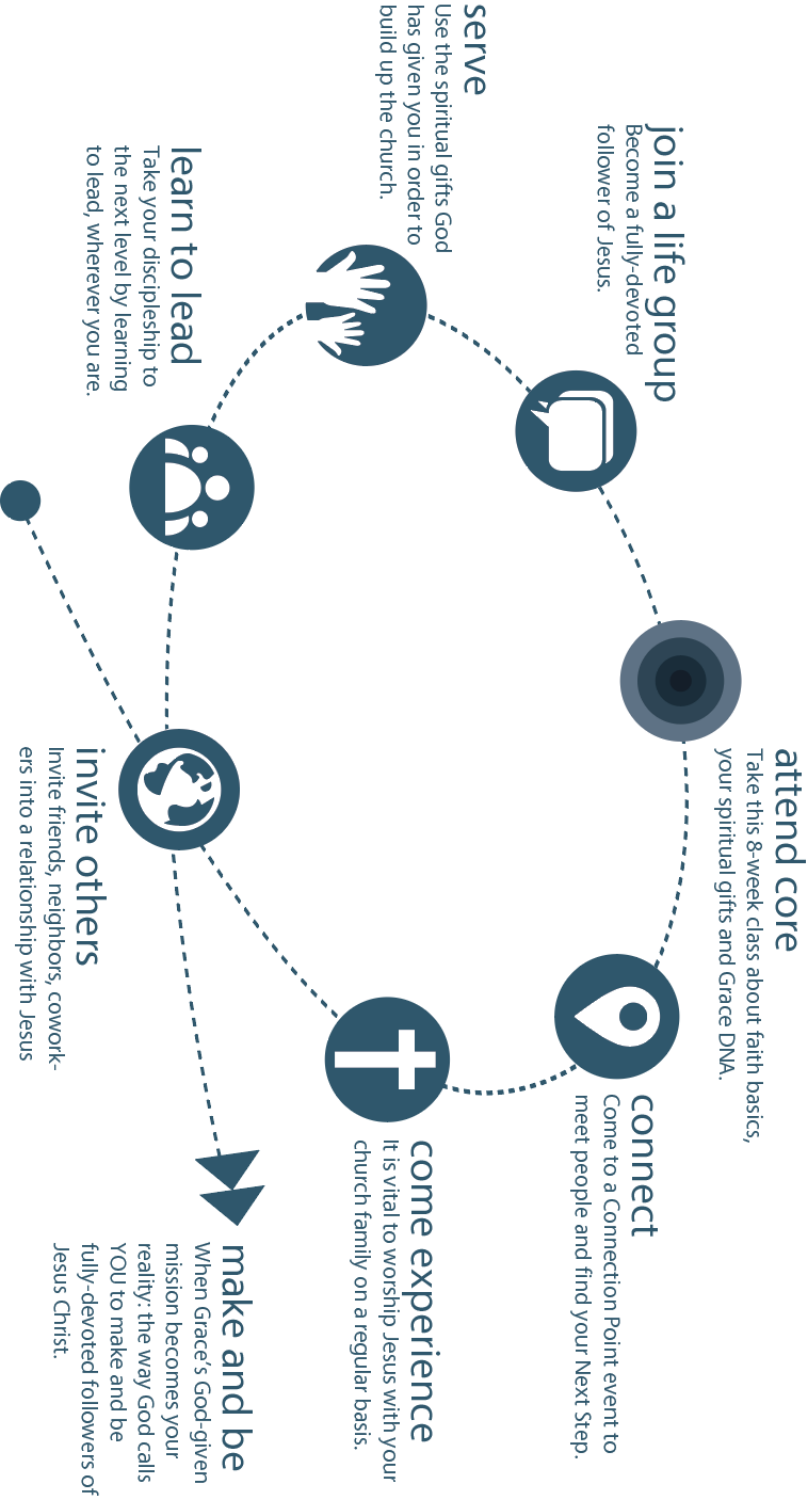
G. LAST THINGS

As the Lord Jesus ascended to his Father, so He will return literally, physically, and in glory. He will raise the dead and bring salvation and judgment to final completion. All humanity will be resurrected for judgment and entrance into either eternal life or eternal hell. There is no second opportunity for salvation after death and all who did not trust Christ will stand condemned. God will then fully establish his Kingdom and finish the new creation - a new heaven and a new earth from which all evil and evildoers, all suffering and death, will be excluded and in which God will be glorified forever.

Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 11:15; Revelation 20:4-6; I Corinthians 15:42-44; 51-52; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15; Matthew 25:46



PATHWAY



ACCOUNTABILITY

The church is intended to be a loving community in which people experience grace, acceptance, encouragement, accountability, and correction. The body of believers at Grace Church values authentic relationships in which people can be honest about who they really are and what they are going through. We strive to accept one another as we are, while simultaneously challenging each other to grow in our obedience to God and His Word. This combination of encouragement and accountability is essential to our growth as followers of Jesus.

Accountability means accepting support from others who can help us become the person Jesus wants us to be. It works best, and most effectively, when mutual purpose, openness, trust, and love flourish. This is why Life Groups are so vital at Grace Church. They allow us to experience accountability in the context of authentic, caring relationships. Life Groups are most effective when people talk openly about the specific ways God is growing their faith and when they invite their group to support what God is doing in their lives.

Read the following passage written by the apostle Paul to the church at Ephesus:

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:15-16

Jesus talks about Christian accountability in the following passage:

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Matthew 18:15-17

Most accountability comes in the form of friends challenging each other to set sin aside in order to become all that Christ asks us to be. Only when this one-to-one process breaks down does the Grace Church staff or elders get involved. On very rare occasions, when the sin is serious and the sinning person refuses to part from it, the matter comes before the members of Grace Church.

No matter what form of accountability someone receives, it should always be based on God's Word, motivated by love – for the good of the person receiving it -- and aimed at restoration in their relationship to God and others.

ACCOUNTABILITY: REFLECT

- Think about a time when a friend or spouse told you a hard truth about yourself. How did you feel at that moment? How did you think about that conversation a week later?
- When someone sins, who does Jesus say needs to be involved in the correcting process?
- Why do you think Jesus described a process with "steps?"
- What is the most important characteristic of accountability?

MEMBERSHIP AT GRACE CHURCH

At Grace, we consider membership to be an important step in the journey of becoming a fully devoted follower of Christ. Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 12:12**, *“For the body does not consist of one member but of many.”* Membership reflects what the church is, one body with many members.

By becoming a member of Grace, you are drawing a line in the sand, making a commitment to be part of a Christian community. This is not just for Grace’s benefit, but more importantly, for yours as well. You are agreeing to live by a set of Christian values and to be accountable to grow spiritually, as you pursue being fully devoted to Christ.

In addition, by making this commitment, you are opening the door to help others in their journey. As a member, you are setting an example by living out what the Bible teaches about covenant community. Also, membership allows you to serve in key positions within the church.

We hope that you sense God’s calling to membership in the local church and that Grace can be that church.

[Membership at Grace requires participation in the CORE class (minimum 6 out of 8 weeks fully attended), completion of the membership application, and an interview with two members of staff and/or elders.]



Ways to Give:

1. **Electronic:**

a. **On-Line Giving:** Make a one-time gift or set up automatic, recurring gifts.

b. **By Smart Phone Text:** Text any \$AMOUNT and GRACE to 45888 using a debit/credit card.

2. **Weekend Service:** Give by cash or check during any weekend service.

3. **On-Line Banking:** Set up a one-time or recurring gift through on-line bill pay. Use memo line for any special giving instructions.

4. **Mail:** Send gift by mail to Grace's central office: Grace Church, 7300 Grubb Rd., McKean, PA 16426, Attn: Giving.

5. **Legacy:** Make a gift through your Will or Estate Plan, designate Grace as a beneficiary of an insurance policy, IRA or 401k, or utilize a Charitable Gift Annuity or Charitable Trust.

What Can I Give To?

Ministries & Operations: We encourage you to direct most of your giving to this fund, because this is the fuel that drives everything we do in ministry at Grace.

Missions

The Forward Project

Debt Reduction Fund

Benevolent Fund

Haiti and DR partnerships

For more information go to www.whoisgrace.com/giving or contact Stewardship Lead Meghan Waskiewicz by phone 814-790-4973 x229 or email meghan@whoisgrace.com.