

VISION

AND

VALUES

grace
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

OUR VISION:

“A FAMILY ON A MISSION”

“WHO JESUS IS & WHO WE ARE”

One of the most astounding things about becoming a Christian is seeing and understanding who Jesus is. We realize that He can't just be a man, he can't just be a good teacher, and neither can he be just a prophet. Instead, we see for the first time that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel, the Risen Lord of all of Creation, the Savior of the world, the author of all living things, and the pre-existent Son of God.

The side effect of seeing Jesus though is that we can no longer look at ourselves the same way. In His light, we begin to see how fractured we have become by sin. We realize how we have lived lives severed from his friendship, as broken image-bearers, a good creation deformed by sin, with hearts hardened to the truth of the gospel, and maybe most importantly, an existence hopelessly isolated from God's eternal purposes for creation.

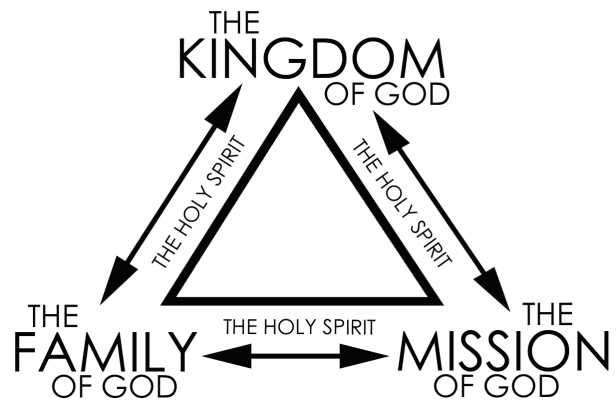
“THE TRANSFORMATION”

But miraculously through Jesus in an incredible and unprecedented exchange of grace at the cross, we have become instantly transformed and reborn on the inside! All of our sin is wiped away, and we are completely forgiven and lavished with love, called into God's purpose and empowered by the Spirit. Unable to comprehend the height and depth of love expressed in the aftermath of this beautiful exchange, we now understand we are living for a new purpose in this life. We are now a part of a new story! One that stretches from the beginning of time and in God's will is being worked out to the end of it. Furthermore, this new purpose and call now takes precedence over our old lives. We now submit our stories to the author of all life.

“GOD'S GREAT STORY”

Therefore, understanding God's plan for his creation becomes paramount for God's new people. Now that we're redeemed from sin's curse, our greatest failure would be to misunderstand what God has been doing from the begin

ning. Fortunately, Matthew 6:33 lays out the simplest goal for us as God's new people: “To seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything else will be added to you”. It asks us to seek first that Jesus the King would have dominion in every place that we live, work and enjoy. Simple, isn't it? Seek out and serve God's vision for creation first and everything you need as you follow him will be added to you.



“KINGDOM, FAMILY & MISSION”

With that in mind, it's our goal in the next few pages to express what the Kingdom of God is and how we plan to be faithful to God's story here at Grace. To explain that, we'll unpack three main ideas: God's Kingdom, God's Family, and God' Mission. All three ideas function as interdependent parts that are joined together through the work of the Spirit and help explain and define each other. For instance, working from the top down (see diagram), we believe that the Kingdom of God is only evident when God's Family and God's Mission are joined together. Hence our mission statement is to be “A Family on a Mission” because we are seeking the Kingdom of God! The more that Family and Mission are intertwined, the truer the representation of God's Kingdom you have. Accordingly, the less these two work together, the less ideal the representation of God's Kingdom work will be.

1. THE KINGDOM OF GOD:

IS WHAT WE ARE CALLED TO SEEK

“ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM”

With Jesus perfectly depicting this grand picture of God’s salvation, we realize how with his sovereign and gracious hand, God rules over creation. As it declares in Psalms 103:19, “Yahweh has established his throne in the heavens and His kingdom rules over all”! The great mystery in all of this remains that though Jesus conquered death itself at the cross, and rose in triumph over it as the first born from the dead, he did not immediately take over and establish an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem from which to rule. The disciples certainly anticipate this, as their hopes were tied up in the promises God had made to their forefathers about entering into a land of promise, where a time of jubilee and favour would be theirs, where oppression would cease and they would reign as God’s people. Instead, Jesus ascends to the Father to rule from heaven at his right hand!

“SAVED FROM SIN”

The answer to this mystery lies in the fact that in coming to the world, Jesus wasn’t after authority or power, because he had them all along. He wasn’t interested in simply exterminating the disease of sin, as He could have wiped out everyone including Noah and family in the flood but he chose not to. And He wasn’t after a robotic obedience that would have produced systematic righteousness, because he created his people in his image with a free will. Simply put, he was out to finally destroy the taproot of sin in the heart of humanity. He came to deal with our deep brokenness at the cross, in order to restore what he had originally created in the garden. In fact, he actually delayed his great judgment of the earth in order that his great victory might be grasped and welcomed by the whole world in generations to come. What a story!

“NOW & NOT YET”

So we have a King, in Jesus, who’s rules over the earth, however he has delegated rule and authority to those who are his representa-

tives on the earth. And he has charged them with the task of bringing the reality of His Kingdom into their lives and those around them. These people, the church, are called to be witnesses and instruments of the Kingdom. For this reason, Jesus has taught us to pray, “Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”.¹ However, while we are witnesses that God’s Kingdom is in effect now (in our hearts and through our lives by faith), we do not yet see evidence of this new Kingdom in it’s fullness in our culture (death and sin and their consequences remain). Thus, this Kingdom is now (everything we ask in his name we receive), and it is not yet (in that there is a final deliverance that only comes when all things are finally judged).

“THE AGE OF GRACE”

Therefore it is proper to say that we live in the age of God’s great grace. We live in the time where God is delaying judgment of the nations in order that He may save many. We live now to demonstrate, witness and seek this Kingdom above all other things. It is the amazing part that we play in this great story of God. We are the ambassadors of a new hope and the witnesses of a new life.

2. THE FAMILY OF GOD:

IS WHO WE ARE CALLED TO BE

From this understanding of God's Kingdom, we see the two central ideas of Family and Mission emerging to help express and define the values of this Kingdom. To begin with Family, we must first point out that we could easily have use the word Church, however we chose family because it expresses a deeper truth and reality of what we believe the church is.

"GOD'S HEART FOR FAMILY"

In this great story then, we realize that while Jesus is God, he is also absolutely and fully human. As it says in John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God... [and] the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us".² Moreover, it goes on to say that the express purpose of his coming was so that those, "who believed in his name, [would have the right] to become CHILDREN OF GOD!"³ It's the heartbeat of God to reclaim and restore the world from sin and create a new family not born, "of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God".⁴ From the garden to Abraham to Israel, God has been looking to create a family for himself and he has marked out this new community in two ways: By The Spirit that leads them and the Covenant that binds them.

"FIGHTING INDIVIDUALISM & CONSUMERISM"

Knowing this is vitally important to us as we gather as a church. We can be tempted by our culture to organize in so many different ways contrary to God's Kingdom design because it's always easier to organize around our cultures demands, instead of God's. Our culture celebrates individualism and consumerism, which both completely undermine the heart of both markers of the Family of God. Individualism directly opposes a lifestyle that is to be led and submitted to the Holy Spirit and consumerism like it, selfishly chafes under the bond of our call to self-sacrificial Covenant.

"THE SPIRIT OF SONSHIP"

With that said, we believe that it is the

work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that gives us assurance that we are children of God. And if we are children of God, we belong to the family of God. This is an amazing work of restoration, because sin has not only alienated us from God but it has alienated us in our relationship with our brothers and sisters (think Cain and Abel).⁵ As it explains in Ephesians, by the working of the Spirit, "You are no longer strangers and aliens [to each other], but you are [now] fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God!"⁶ Don't you see, the center point of God's Family is the Holy Spirit working to reunite us together in friendship and love? This is why the church is so important. It's not just a means of organizing a group meeting to pass on information. It is because of the burden of restoration that flows from the heart of God, that we finally reap the rewards that come from a community firmly built upon his grace and love.

"COVENANT FRIENDSHIP"

So while it's by work of the Holy Spirit we learn that we are God's children, it's by Jesus' work on the cross that we learn how to live as God's children. We call this, covenant friendship. Jesus commanded his disciples to commit to loving one another even if it meant giving up their very lives. He defined this commitment of love as the willingness to sacrifice anything for the highest good of the other. And then to demonstrate his love, he did just that for them. He executed his sacrificial death with premeditation and planning. He chose to die, to suffer and be rejected on their behalf, for their freedom. He aimed his life at their deepest needs and then expressed the full extent of his love by pouring himself out in death. That kind of love is what we mean by covenant. It is the unbreakable agreement, sealed by sacrifice, to so value another person's life, that you willingly sacrifice your own comfort, your own needs, and your own time.

"FREE TO GIVE"

This is what marks the family of God; they are a people who have been given everything they need through the covenant love of Jesus. In fact, this love has created such freedom and peace in their hearts they now willingly give up their lives for others. They are

empowered to freely give without concern of cost, because Jesus has set them free. This is our goal as the family of God, to be established in our new identity by the Holy Spirit, and to covenant with each other in friendship by sacrificial love.

3. THE MISSION OF GOD:

IS WHAT WE ARE CALLED TO DO

“THE PURPOSE THAT DEFINES US”

The second central idea that emerges from the Kingdom of God is the Mission of God. God is pursuing to restore his creation. He sent Jesus on a mission to save the world from sin and while that quest has been initiated, its final goal has not yet been achieved. There is yet a purpose for us, and this purpose now defines us. We have become ambassadors of this Kingdom that is present now, but not fully here. In us, it is always advancing, always growing, and always bearing fruit.

“ANOINTED TO...”

What that means is that God has chosen to fill his people with his mighty Spirit and empowered them to demonstrate that Kingdom now on the earth. Just as Jesus did, so are we to do! As it says, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me, to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God”.⁷ The goal is that, in the demonstration of that Kingdoms authority, power, beauty and glory, the whole world would see through us, who Jesus is, be convicted that sin has ruined their lives and in turn repent and believe.

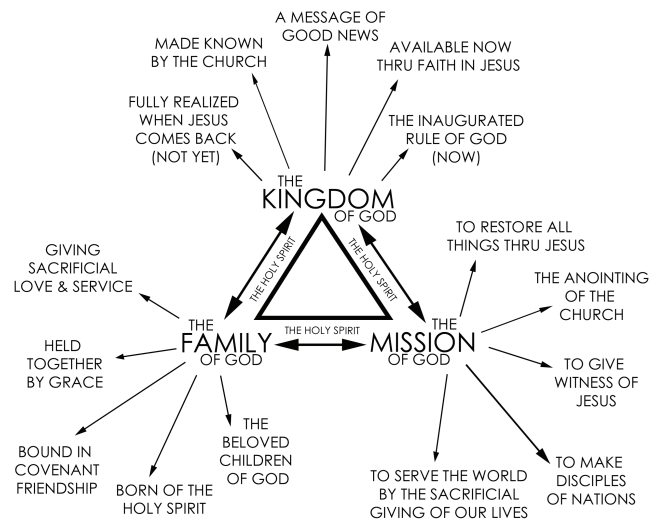
“COVENENTING THE WORLD”

This of course can create problems, if we mix up the objectives of the great mission of God with the objectives of the family of God. The primary objective of the family is to gather people into community, in order to teach, disciple and challenge. In contrast, the primary objective of the mission is to send people out into the world, to preach, and demonstrate the Kingdom. There are then two primary objectives that flow from a Kingdom perspective: to pull God’s family in together through covenant and to send God’s family out through covenant. This means, that the same action of covenant that creates deep family relationships in the church,

is the catalyst for creating new growing friendship outside the church. The world was purchased through the covenant love of Jesus, and now we can take hold of it, through the same means. We must fiercely love this world though it cost us our lives.

“FAMILY ON A MISSION”

With all of that said, it is paramount that the family of God engage the mission of God in their communities, in their workplaces and their families. We must see ourselves as a Family on a Mission, working tirelessly together to bear witness of who Jesus is to the world wherever we are. Further to that, we are led by the Spirit to serve and love wherever he sends us, be that across the world or in another city. We are called to pioneer in social action, to weave ourselves into our community fabric and especially to plant churches in order to spread the good news of grace!

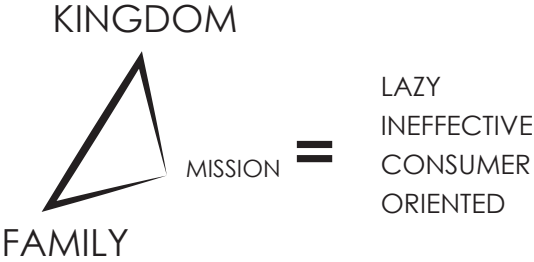


HOW THEY WORK TOGETHER:

THE CULTURE WE ARE CALLED TO CREATE.

“TWO OUT OF THREE”

Now it is important at this point to notice that if these three central ideas are not dependent on one another there will be dysfunction. If a church is focused on being a family and seeking God but does not equally value God’s missionary heart for the world, the result can be a lazy, ineffective, consumer-oriented church.



If a church is burdened for the mission of God and is seeking after God’s Kingdom purposes for their lives but does not value covenant and family, the result can be a selfish, individualistic, performance oriented church.



If a family oriented church is burdened for mission to the world, but does not understand the present in breaking Kingdom through the work of the Spirit, the result can be a small minded, administratively led, spiritually dull church.

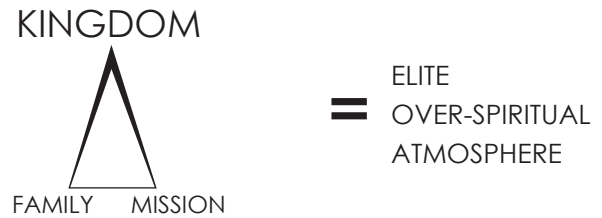


“DIAGNOSING IMBALANCE”

Furthermore, it is important to note that if one, instead of two, of these points becomes individually superior you might really have trouble. For instance a church that values family above everything else is susceptible to inappropriate and even cult-like control over its peoples lives.



A church that values the Kingdom above everything else is susceptible to creating an elite, over-spiritualized atmosphere, not creating the freedom necessary for real heart transformation.



Lastly, a church that values the Mission above everything else is susceptible to becoming consumed by a disconnected and frustrated social activism apart from its true hope.



“THE HEART OF THE MATTER”

Now, while these examples are broadly stated and most churches do not exist in such extremes, they do provide a warning for us. In fact, we must guard our community from ever letting go of the balance-in-tension between these three central points or overvaluing one at the expense of another. Even more so, we must watch our own attitude because it is easier in the secret of our own hearts to fall out of balance in these areas. Maturity is when each point becomes equally rooted in our hearts in conviction and value.

12 DISTINCTIVES:

1. FAMILY & FRIENDSHIP
2. THE BIBLE
3. WORD & SPIRIT
4. GRACE
5. THE KINGDOM
6. THE GOSPEL
7. WORSHIP & PRAYER
8. CHURCH PLANTING
9. ELDERSHIP
10. APOSTOLIC
11. DISCIPLESHIP
12. SOCIAL JUSTICE

OUR VALUES: 12 DISTINCTIVES

WHAT MAKES US WHO WE ARE

Now that we've explained the bigger story, we want to clarify what distinctive values we have at Grace. Our values are the areas that we specifically value as vital to our expression in our community as God's Family. Each church must explain how they more fully express their flavour of Kingdom life as it pertains to their church community, their weekly gatherings, and their mission. However, with that stated, we love the great diversity in body of Christ and don't see our distinctives as points of separation from which we judge other church traditions. In fact, we believe it's our diversity as his body that qualifies us to be unified. We believe working together as partners with other community churches and churches around the world is vital to our witness and joy.

1. FAMILY & FRIENDSHIP

A church committed to building covenant relationships that esteem and respect each individual member as friends / family on a mission. Striving to become genuine friends with each person, we long to see each member understanding and acting in the reality that they are gifted for a purpose, celebrated for their strength, challenged to reach their maturity and enjoyed regardless of performance.

2. THE BIBLE

A church that believes the Bible is the divinely inspired word of God. We believe it is infallible, entirely trustworthy, and constitutes the only supreme authority in all matters of our faith and conduct. Furthermore, we believe we are called to be students of the scriptures and encourage our family to be committed to reading, praying through, studying and meditating on the written word. We choose to form all of our convictions around the truth found in this inspired book, in order that we may live lives of truth, wisdom and integrity.

3. WORD & SPIRIT

A church that faithfully expresses their lives and worship through a dependence upon the truth of the inspired word of God and the

Holy Spirit, the divine Presence of God. Together they work with the Spirit animating the written word. We believe it is only by the Spirit that the truth of the word is revealed to us. It is only by the Spirit that the new life promised in the word is imparted to us. We preach the truth of Jesus' message and we speak prophetically. We form convictions by the word of God and express our convictions by the power of the Spirit of God.

4. GRACE

A church cleansed from a works based righteousness, an evil conscience and orphan mindedness, to a new covenant life founded solely upon the undeserved mercy, abundant grace and unmerited favour purchased for us at the cross. We are fully adopted, dearly beloved, completely accepted and empowered without measure.

5. THE KINGDOM

A church that pursues the priority and reality of God's eternal Kingdom that is breaking in upon the earth through the authority of the finished work of Jesus at the cross. We seek the priority of the Kingdom, because it's truth dictates that anything else that demands precedence to God's plans for creation, sets itself up as an impotent idol that leads to inevitable death. We pray this Kingdom to come now, because it is the express desire of God's heart that the entire world would be saved from the destruction of sin through Jesus' restoration. This happens when the family of God takes hold of all of the benefits and rights of their Kingdom inheritance through faith.

6. THE GOSPEL

A church committed to confronting the present culture's brokenness through the explanation of the good news of Jesus. A worldview that understands how sin separates us personally (from ourselves), relationally (from each other), and naturally (from creation) and that as Jesus has broken sin's dividing wall at the cross, and we can now be reconciled with our own hearts, our family and community, and naturally with the creation as it undergoes reformation at his second coming. This leads to radical self sacrifice, the giving up of all things natural, the

complete submission to the call of God for us and our families, and the reorientation of our lives to serve and express the good news at any cost, to every nation, in whatever way, by any means, for as long as we literally have breath.

7. WORSHIP & PRAYER

A church that understands the preeminence of leading lifestyles of extravagant personal and corporate worship. We believe that worship is what separates our relationship with God from all others. We adore him alone, above all others because he is God. Consequently, worship becomes a catalyst for our hearts to be renewed in his image, for as we see him we are like him. As well, it is only as we gaze upon the triune God in meditation, prayer, and song that we gain revelation of identity as friends and Sons and Daughters of God. Therefore, we believe our lives are to be lived out as expressions of unhindered praise, intimate worship, and faith-filled prayer.

8. CHURCH PLANTING

A church that bears an apostolic commission to break up new ground, plant new communities of faith as we go to the ends of the earth as the Spirit leads us. We seek to establish teams of elders and families who are seeking God for new places to plant, and establish Kingdom centered communities.

9. ELDERSHIP

A church that is led by a team of elders, employing a lead elder responsible for overseeing the team itself. As they are all charged with overseeing, shepherding and leading the flock, they function as a team unit, working together by contributing through their areas of strength. They oversee and lead all aspects of the local church. Within such a team, it is important that the five-fold gifts be manifested for the health of the church.

10. APOSTOLIC

A church that is submitted to an apostolic team, that is responsible for the planting and establishing of the foundation of the church and future church plants. We believe that Apostles appoint elders in the local church and

that they come to serve the eldership teams that exist in local churches, while they respect each teams individual autonomy. The apostolic team is comprised of trans-local elders called out and gifted apostolically who work together to oversee an area of churches linked relationally and possibly geographically.

11. DISCIPLESHIP

A church burdened by the call to make disciples. We are committed to raising up a new generation of laborers for the harvest. We want to be a family where men and women are commissioned, challenged, empowered and sent out. Commissioned to follow the call of God upon their lives, challenged by the gospel to be conformed in their heart in every way to Jesus, empowered through the giving of practical responsibilities and encouragement and lastly, sent out into the world as insiders in their culture.

12. SOCIAL JUSTICE

A church that establishes God's justice in our community through acts of love and service. We seek to be a people who weave themselves into the social fabric of our community by seeking out to serve and love even in its weakest and most broken places. Whether that is expressed through serving our poor, fighting against unjust social systems, caring for our orphans and elderly, creating wealth through benefaction, or investing into anything that enriches our community, we seek to impart the blessing, grace and abundance of God upon us to others.

END NOTES:

- 1 Matthew 6:10
- 2 John 1:1 & John 1:14
- 3 John 1:12
- 4 John 1:13
- 5 Genesis 4
- 6 Ephesians 2:19
- 7 Isaiah 61:1-2

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