

*Exploring
King of Grace
Church*



*The Good News
of Jesus Christ
for All of Life*

INTRODUCTION	1
I. What is the purpose of this course?	1
II. How will the series work?	2
III. Introducing King of Grace Church	3
IV. Our Primary Desire	5
LESSON 1: GOD'S GLORY IN AND THROUGH THE CHURCH	7
I. Why Is the Church Important?	7
II. Why should I join a local church?	8
III. Why should I join <i>this</i> church?	10
IV. The Church: Dear to God and Dear to Us.....	14
LESSON 2: THE GOSPEL	15
I. Man's Dilemma Before God	15
V. God's Answer to Man's Dilemma: The Gospel	18
LESSON 3: OUR RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL	23
I. Our Response to the Gospel.....	23
II. What Makes Our Response Possible?.....	25
III. "Essentially Reformed"	27
LESSON 4: EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT	29
I. The Holy Spirit: God's Active Presence	29
II. The Holy Spirit: God's Saving Presence	30
III. The Holy Spirit: God's Purifying Presence	30
IV. The Holy Spirit: God's Empowering Presence	30
V. Pursuing God's Empowering Presence	33
VI. God's Active Presence: Our Privilege and Need.....	34
LESSON 5: GOD'S AMAZING WORD – PART 1	35
I. The Word is Reliable	35
II. The Life-Giving Function of the Word	39
LESSON 6: GOD'S AMAZING WORD – PART 2	43
I. Sound Doctrine	43
II. Why Do We Need Doctrine?	45
III. How Is a Commitment to Sound Doctrine Expressed at KGC?.....	47
IV. "Impassioned Orthodoxy"	48
LESSON 7: SANCTIFICATION - GROWING IN CHRISTLIKENESS	57
I. The Goal of Our Salvation: Holiness	57
II. The Battle for Holiness	60
III. The Process of Holiness: Sanctification	61
IV. The Practice of Sanctification	63
V. The Heart of Sanctification.....	65
LESSON 8: RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH, PART 1	67
I. The Foundation of our Fellowship: God's Community.....	67
II. The Nature of Our Fellowship	68
III. The Fruit of Our Fellowship	69
IV. The Substance of Our Fellowship	70
V. A Means of Our Fellowship at King of Grace: CARE Groups.....	71
LESSON 9: RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH, PART 2	73
I. Servanthood	73
II. Giving Expression to Servanthood at King of Grace Church	75
III. Stewardship.....	76
IV. The Privilege of Participation	79
V. The Christian Life: A Life to be Shared	80
LESSON 10: LEADERSHIP: PASTORS AND DEACONS	87
I. The Biblical Basis for Pastoral Ministry.....	87
VI. The Characteristics of a Pastor/Elder.....	87
VII. The Role of a Pastor/Elder	89
II. The Biblical Basis for Deacons	91
VIII. The Characteristics of a Deacon.....	91
IX. The Role of a Deacon	92
X. The Biblical Response to Leadership in the Church	92
XI. The Blessings of Leadership	94
LESSON 11: LEADERSHIP: POLITY	95
I. Elder Led.....	95
II. Plurality Among Elders	96
III. The Lead Pastor	96
IV. Deacons	96
V. Congregational Participation	97
VI. EXTRA-LOCAL Oversight.....	98
LESSON 12: EVANGELISM AND MISSION	101
I. Church With a Mission	101
II. People with a Message: Evangelism	102
III. Our Broader Mission: Church Planting	104
IV. Our Specific Mission and You.....	105
V. Finding Your Path for the Journey	106
CHURCH COVENANT	107
OUR COMMITMENTS TO ONE ANOTHER IN THE SIGHT OF GOD	107
MEMBERSHIP PROFILE	109
LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION	113

INTRODUCTION

I. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS COURSE?

- Introducing you to King of Grace Church

This course is designed to introduce you to King of Grace Church. we begin a “journey” today: over these coming weeks, we invite you to join us for what we hope will be a clear and informative overview of this church in order to answer such important questions as “What does it look like to follow Christ at King of Grace?” “What can I hope to experience by being a member of King of Grace?”

- Informing you about the journey

Discovering what church God would have us in is a very important matter. There is certain, necessary information that a person should know prior to making the decision to join a particular church. Along this journey, we hope to serve you by providing such information which will span the following areas:

A. Our Doctrine:

“What do we believe?” “What Biblical values inform our practices as a church?” Nothing is more important in the Christian life than what one believes, and so this course will inform you as to our core beliefs and commitments as a church.

B. Our Church Life:

“What does participation in King of Grace look like?” “What avenues exist for worship, growth, service and outreach?” Simply professing certain beliefs is not enough. Our beliefs must find expression in Biblical practice. This course seeks to acquaint you with what life in this church looks like, and what your participation here would involve.

C. Our Organization:

“How is King of Grace structured?” “Who are the leaders of King of Grace?” “How does membership function in this church?” Scripture is clear that God Himself joins people together in the body of Christ, and that God establishes leadership for the care and equipping of His people. Important issues concerning organization, pastoral ministry, and membership will also be covered in this course.

For those who desire to be part of this church, we hope that you will not only be informed, but also inspired as to the role that God would have you play. Participation in a local church is not merely an obligation of Christians, but is a joyful privilege in which we glorify God through fruitful service in the context of meaningful relationships with other believers.

In short, we want to provide you with all the information necessary for you to make an intelligent decision about membership here at King of Grace. It is our desire and privilege to help you determine if God is leading you to become a part of this local church. Ultimately, we desire to do all we can to encourage you in your relationship with Jesus Christ, and critical to that relationship is finding your place of participation and service within His body, the church. We are excited to see what God will teach you and how He will lead you through this “journey.”

The Purpose of the Journey,
Exploring Membership at King of Grace Church
II. HOW WILL THE SERIES WORK?

A. Format of the course

Classes will be conducted on Sundays, 9-10 am, before our corporate worship.

B. Participation in the course

1) Attendance:

Those seeking membership should attend at least six of the 8 sessions outlined in the notebook to be eligible for membership. Please let us know if this will be a difficulty.

2) Reading:

We will not be able to cover all of the addenda and other printed materials during the class. We strongly encourage you to read everything included in the notebook or distributed in class.

3) Information:

To help us guide you through the membership process, we will need you to fill out the appropriate forms as the class progresses. These include:

(a) Registration form

(b) Membership profile

(c) Pastoral recommendation form

4) What about missed classes?

You may miss classes and still complete the course by speaking with the course leader.

C. Children

Children of church members may become members themselves when, after reaching the age of 18, they follow the procedures outlined in this session under the heading "How to become a member of King of Grace Church."

We hope to make the coming weeks as informative and enjoyable as possible. Our prayer is that this journey will bring you a deeper love for the Savior and greater clarity as to His will for your life.

In the coming weeks, we will be examining many different facets of the church's beliefs and practices. At this point, we'd like to provide an overview of the overall structure and leadership of the church.

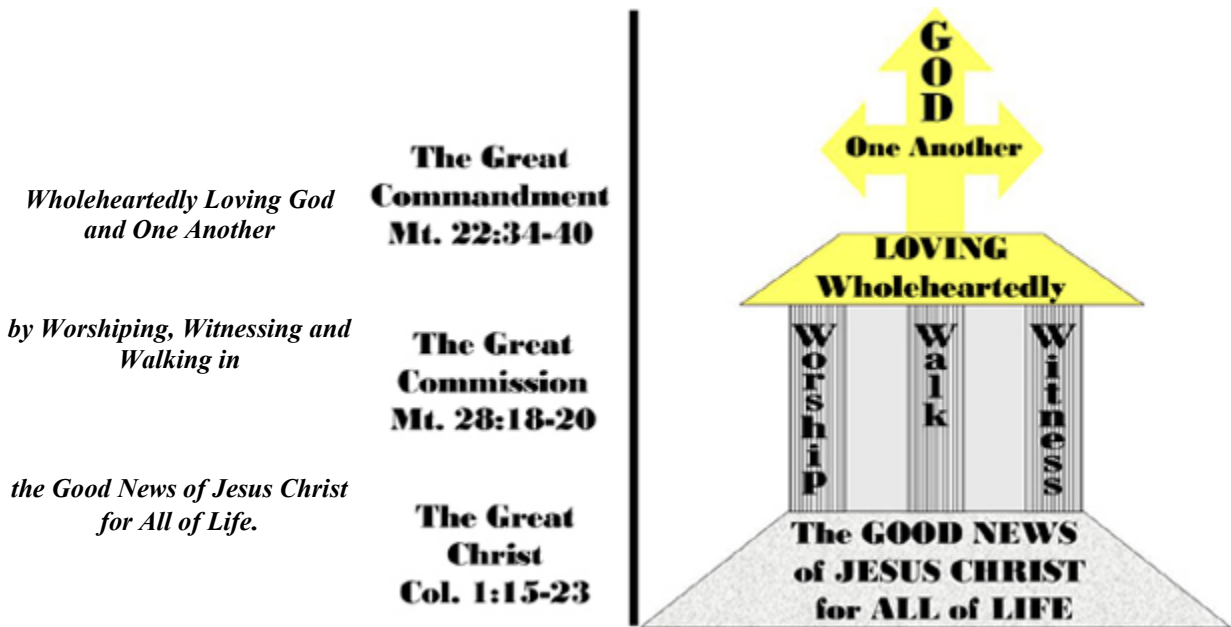
The Purpose of the Journey,
Exploring Membership at King of Grace Church
III. INTRODUCING KING OF GRACE CHURCH

A. Mission of King of Grace Church:

*Wholeheartedly Loving God and One Another
 by Worshiping, Witnessing and Walking in
 the Good News of Jesus Christ for All of Life.*

B. Our Mission in a Picture:

Our mission can be illustrated as a temple or church building for God composed of three levels, the foundation - the good news of Jesus Christ for all of life, the main building - living as Christ's disciples, worshiping by, walking in and witnessing to the good news of Christ, and the pinnacle, wholeheartedly loving God and one another.



C. Our Vision

- *A church built on Christ where folks are most excited about one thing - the good news of Jesus Christ - Him crucified, risen, reigning and returning.*
- *A worshiping community where the heartfelt worship and enjoyment of God pervades every aspect of who we are and what we do.*
- *A church family where members from diverse backgrounds feel welcome, included, loved and connected to each other and to a vital, growing relationship with Christ.*
- *A church body that reflects Christ in all contexts of life, in marriages, families, at work, school, in the community and in the culture.*
- *A church for the future where our children are growing up with a genuine passion for God, his church and his kingdom purposes.*
- *A church on a mission that is reaching thousands in the Merrimack Valley and significantly interacting with our culture for Christ and His kingdom.*
- *A church for the great commission that is joyfully sending out and supporting numerous church plants throughout New England and beyond.*

The Purpose of the Journey,
Exploring Membership at King of Grace Church
D. Ministry of King of Grace Church

There are a variety of ministries that make up King of Grace. These settings and ministries provide numerous contexts that express our beliefs and help us to fulfill our mission.

1) Sunday morning worship

This is our one opportunity each week to gather as an entire community and to be built together through corporate worship, the teaching of God's word, and fellowship.

2) CARE Groups

Small groups that regularly meet in homes are a primary context for members of King of Grace to apply God's word, build relationships, and serve each other.

3) Areas of ministry

(a) Lifestyle Ministry

We believe the chief ministry of any church is through its various members. Our understanding of Ephesians 4 is that our leaders are to prepare the church to be the actual ministers. Therefore, our chief ministry as a church is through your everyday life – to the people around you, your family, your friends, your workmates and your neighbors. We are primarily geared to serve and support your everyday ministry of living by the gospel for the glory of God and the good of those around you.

(b) Outreach

In conjunction with living focused on loving others by living by the gospel, we participate in periodic outreach events such as, community service projects and fun & friendship outings.

(c) Alpha

We run the Alpha program throughout the year. This is a low key evangelistic program that introduces the claims of Christ and the teachings of the bible in a relaxed atmosphere. This program serves to supplement and support our ongoing efforts as individuals, families and small groups to love our neighbors by introducing them to the Jesus Christ.

(d) Ministry Teams

We have numerous opportunities to serve the mission of the church through various ministry teams.

- (1) Children's Ministry
- (2) Ushers & Greeters
- (3) Sunday Set-up
- (4) Tech Team
- (5) Worship Team
- (6) Evangelism Team

E. Leadership of King of Grace Church

Leadership and direction for the church is provided by a team of leaders led by the Lead Pastor under the oversight of other Sovereign Grace Ministries pastors.

1) Lead Pastor: Dr. Paul F. Buckley

2) Leadership Advisory Team.: Jeff Haavisto, Phil Lowther, David Ross

The Purpose of the Journey,
Exploring Membership at King of Grace Church

- 3) Overseeing Pastors: Bauer Evans, Aron Osborne & Dr. Dave Harvey
- 4) Deacons and Assistants.

Paul & Peggy Buckley
Chris & Karen Darke
Jeff & Micki Haavisto
Mitch & Barbara Jacoby
Phil & Pam Lowther
David & Lisa Ross

F. How would I become a member of King of Grace Church?

While it does require a process, becoming a member of King of Grace involves just a few straightforward requirements:

- 1) A clear testimony of personal faith in Jesus Christ.
- 2) A demonstrated desire to serve as an active member of this body shown by the following:
 - (a) *Successful completion of the class “Exploring King of Grace.”*
 - (b) *Affirmation of the church’s statement of faith.*
 - (c) *Support of the values and leadership of King of Grace Church.*
 - (d) *Regular attendance in Sunday Corporate Worship.*
 - (e) *Active involvement in a CARE Group.*
 - (f) *A meeting with a pastor to discuss church membership.*

Upon completion of these requirements, you will be welcomed into membership with other new members during the Sunday morning meeting. These quarterly “welcomes” are joyous opportunities to introduce new members to the church, and the church to new members, and are always highlights for us as a church!

IV. OUR PRIMARY DESIRE

Again, thank you for your interest in exploring King of Grace Church. We are truly honored that you would take the time to learn more about us as a church. Although we do hope that you will find in King of Grace a church home where you can thrive, our primary concern is not that you become a part of *this* church, but that you become a part of *some* church. It is our desire that you develop a Biblical, enthusiastic conviction about the importance of active involvement in the local church, and with this conviction find a church home where you can worship God, grow in your relationship with Him, and serve in ways that glorify Him. If that church home proves to be King of Grace, then it will be our joy to serve with you. In any event, we count your presence here a privilege, and look forward to serving you as you embark upon this journey.

The Purpose of the Journey,
Exploring Membership at King of Grace Church

LESSON 1: GOD'S GLORY IN AND THROUGH THE CHURCH

I. WHY IS THE CHURCH IMPORTANT?

As we begin this *journey* of exploring King of Grace Church, it seems best (as with any journey) to orient ourselves first to the purpose and destination of our journey—where we are going and why we are going there. When it comes to the Christian life, the question of the church's importance is perhaps one that is too often overlooked. The idea of "church" is often just assumed: churches persist, church members regularly (or not so regularly) attend, and things proceed on course. But how often do we stop and think, "Why is the church so important? What is the purpose of the church?" The answer to such questions will provide us both direction for how churches should build and encouragement to be faithful as we play our part in the body of Christ.

In this session, we will explore the "big picture" of God's purpose in the church *at large*, the critical role that the *local* church plays in God's purposes, as well as the overall vision of *this particular* local church. In so doing, we will hopefully see more clearly the glorious purposes God has for His church and the wonderful privilege our participation in this journey truly is.

A. *The ultimate purpose of the church.*

The ultimate purpose of the people of God is the glory of God.

- 1) The Bible is clear that mankind stands in rebellion against God. However, throughout history God has made Himself known to people, called them to Himself, and gathered them together to worship Him and bring glory to His name.

Exodus 19:4-6: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."¹

Ezekiel 36:22-28: "Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. . . . You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God."

- 2) Believers living after Christ have the even greater privilege of joining together to enjoy and proclaim the pinnacle of God's saving acts: the death of Christ on the cross for our sins.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good New Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The Purpose of the Journey
God's Glory In and Through the Church, Lesson 1

*Ephesians 1:3-8: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **to the praise of his glorious grace**, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us . . ."*

*1 Peter 2:9-10: "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**. 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."*

B. *The exclusive role of the church.*

The church is God's chosen means for carrying out His purposes until He returns. He has ordained no other organization or structure for this purpose.

Matthew 16:18: ". . . I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

1 Timothy 3:15: ". . . if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." (NIV)

II. WHY SHOULD I JOIN A LOCAL CHURCH?

Why go to all this trouble to learn about this church? Does it really matter if I actually join a church? Am I not already a member of "the church"? Isn't my personal relationship with Jesus what really matters? Such questions are common, and not altogether surprising given our individualistic culture and natural tendency towards independence. However, such questions also reveal a misunderstanding about the church and God's purposes in and through the church. The Scriptures make it clear:

- God's specific purposes for His people are accomplished as individuals join themselves to and participate in local churches

A. While all genuine believers are members of the universal body of Christ, they are to express this tangibly through membership in a specific local church.

1) Church membership is Biblical

- This was the clear practice of the early church

Acts 2:47: "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

(Converts were "added" to a specific group of fellow believers)

Acts 5:13: "None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem."

(Believers were a discernable group of people to which other believers "joined" themselves)

The Purpose of the Journey
God's Glory In and Through the Church, Lesson 1

- This is the necessary condition for pastoral care

Acts 20:28: "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."

(Pastors are responsible to care for an identifiable group of people, and they will give an account for those committed to their care)

- This is the assumed context for church discipline

Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Cor. 5 both describe situations in which believers are to confront other believers who are persisting in a sinful way of life. This can only refer to a situation in which Christians are joined together in an identifiable membership that is committed to live a godly lifestyle distinct from the world.

- This is the clear implication of Biblical metaphors describing the church

The primary NT metaphors for the church—body (1 Cor. 12:27), temple (Eph. 2:21), household (1 Tim. 3:15), and flock (Acts 20:28)—have as a key characteristic the idea of separate individuals joined together into a single entity.

"God has given us four pictures of the church, not one. This is not just to emphasize and prove the point by repetition, but also to say four different things about what it means to be a member of a church. To be a stone in his temple means to belong to a worshipping community. To be a part of a body means to belong to a living, functioning, serving, witnessing community. To be a sheep in the flock means belonging to a community dependent on him for food, protection, and direction. To be a member of a family is to belong to a community bound by a common fatherhood. Put together you have the main functions of an individual Christian. Evidently we are meant to fulfill these not on our own but together in the church. Now can you see the answer to the question why you should join a church?" Eric Lane

- 2) Church membership is vital to our spiritual health and growth

Ephesians 4:15-16: "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."

(Without being joined together with other believers, we will lack the strength and nourishment that each member—including ourselves—is to supply)

- 3) Church membership identifies us with Christ and His people

Mark 8:38: "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

1 John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us."

- 4) Church membership enables us to glorify God

The Purpose of the Journey

God's Glory In and Through the Church, Lesson 1

1 Peter 4:10-11: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies- in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

B. All Christians have the privilege and responsibility to be a vital member of a specific local church.

1 Cor. 12:18: "But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be."

"I know there are some who say, "Well, I have given myself to the Lord, but I do not intend to give myself to any church." Now, why not? "Because I can be a Christian without it." Are you quite clear about that? You can be as good a Christian by disobedience to your Lord's commands as by being obedient? There is a brick. What is it made for? To help build a house. It is of no use for that brick to tell you that it is just as good a brick while it is kicking about on the ground as it would be in the house. It is a good-for-nothing brick. So you rolling-stone Christians, I do not believe that you are answering your purpose. You are living contrary to the life which Christ would have you live, and you are much to blame for the injury you do."

Charles Spurgeon

III. WHY SHOULD I JOIN *THIS* CHURCH?

We don't automatically assume that you *should!* However, we're grateful to God that you are interested in exploring this, and want to do all we can to help you make an informed decision as to whether God would have you join us at King of Grace.

While we'll be spending the coming weeks surveying specific beliefs and practices of King of Grace, this week we simply want to sketch a general portrait of these distinctive. This will give you a broad perspective of the church and prepare you for what you can expect in coming weeks.

A. What kind of church are we?

This is a common and natural question. Although labels can at times be misleading, there are certain general characteristics of our church that are helpful to know.

- We are *evangelical*: this basically means two things: (1) we believe that the Bible is God's word and is therefore our final authority in all matters of life and doctrine, and (2) we believe people need to be saved by responding to the good news of Jesus Christ.
- We are essentially *Reformed* in our theology: this means that we embrace the general tenets of Reformed theology, a view of the teaching of Scripture that places God at the center of all things, and places emphasis on the activity of God and the glory of God in saving sinners.
- We are *Continuationist*: this means that we believe in the present day work of the Holy Spirit in the many ways that the Spirit is described and manifested in Scripture.
- We are part of a family of churches under the name of Sovereign Grace Ministries. The churches within Sovereign Grace are linked together by relationship and common doctrine, and we work together in our common passion to proclaim the gospel through the planting of churches.

The Purpose of the Journey
God's Glory In and Through the Church, Lesson 1

B. The Defining Values of King of Grace Church

The labels above suggest some broad characteristics of King of Grace. However, if you were to hang around the church for a while, you would probably get to know us better by observing certain key values that are shared by our members and inform the actual practices of the church. Our standard for all that we do is the Bible, the word of God, and certain components of the Bible's teaching have come to be particularly precious to us. These are reflected in the following core commitments of this church:

- 1) Supremacy of God in all things
 - (a) *We believe all things are from Him, through Him, to Him. He is our joy and life is for His glory.*
 - (b) *We believe He is infinitely worthy and good and greater and more satisfying than any and all things that exist.*
 - (c) *We believe God is relevant to all things.*
 - (d) *We affirm God and His glory is the chief end to all other means. He is our ultimate and total goal.*
- 2) Gospel Centered Living
 - (a) *We understand Jesus Christ, his person and work of fulfilling all righteousness, his substitutionary death, his victorious resurrection and his current and future reign as the central point of the bible and of all history.*
 - (b) *We believe the gospel is to function for our justification, our sanctification our life and mission together.*
 - (c) *We pursue Christ and His good news as our paradigm and power for all things.*
 - (d) *We affirm Christ and His work as the greatest and most complete revelation of the person and worth of God.*
 - (e) *We affirm that it is in and through and because of the Gospel that God is most glorified and we are most satisfied in Him.*
- 3) The Ministry of The Holy Spirit
 - (a) *We assert God the Holy Spirit is our life giver, the illuminator of scripture, the one who empowers us for all of the Christian life.*
 - (b) *We fellowship with Him, pursue His ministry and rely on Him as a person in all areas of life.*
 - (c) *We affirm and pursue the broad work of the Holy Spirit as depicted in the whole of the Old & New Testament.*
 - (d) *We affirm a continuationist view of the gifts of the Spirit, understanding that the New Testament speaks of the cessation of the gifts at the time of Christ's return and not beforehand.*
 - (e) *We believe that all the gifts are from God for the edification of the church, the fulfillment of the mission of God and the glorification of our triune God and as such should be eagerly pursued.*
- 4) The Sufficiency, Authority & Functional Prominence of Scripture.
 - (a) *We declare the bible as the infallible, inerrant, very words of God.*
 - (b) *We affirm the absolute necessity of a biblical view of God, a biblical view of man, a biblical view of grace, a biblical view of the gospel and, therefore, a biblical view of life.*
 - (c) *We understand it to be sufficient for all of life and godliness and authoritative and normative for the Christian life.*
 - (d) *We affirm it as a means of salvation, justification, sanctification, life, leadership and all areas of life.*

The Purpose of the Journey

God's Glory In and Through the Church, Lesson 1

- (e) We pursue its use for all areas of our lives and desire to so employ it as to see God's word function prominently in all aspects of personal and church life.*
- 5) Local Church Life
 - (a) We affirm that relationships in the context of the truth are essential to the Christian life.*
 - (b) We affirm mutual interconnectedness and interdependence of the diverse members of a local body of believers under the authority of qualified biblical leadership as normative for a Christian and a Christian church.*
 - (c) We deny that the life of the church is found in meetings, programs and performances but in vital relationships under the authority of biblical truth.*
 - (d) We believe this is the context in which and through which God puts His glory on display.*
 - (e) We believe that the leadership team equips & leads, ministers minister - that every member is a minister.*
 - (f) We believe genuine relationships are to be enjoyed while pursuing gospel centered living and fulfilling the broad cultural mandate within the whole of creation.*
 - (g) We deny an isolated or narrow view of life and relationships that limits godliness to a narrow set of behaviors, relationships or contexts.*
- 6) Sovereign Grace
 - (a) We believe in the Joy of Sovereign Grace. God's plan to accomplish all His desires in and through His Son is perfect, unstoppable, flawless and awe inspiring.*
 - (b) We rejoice with Him and the hosts of heaven in His undeserved sovereign grace displayed in redeeming unworthy lost sinners like us.*
 - (c) We rest in God's unfathomable wisdom and infinite glory in ordaining every aspect of history for his sovereign and worthy purposes. We trust him for what we don't understand knowing the wisdom of his choices will be shown in time.*
 - (d) We celebrate the historic sola's of the reformation: Sola Scriptura, Sola Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Soli Deo Gloria (Scripture Alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone for God's Glory Alone.)*
 - (e) We agree that humbly believing and pursuing these truths will produce a vibrant New Testament church by God's grace.*
- 7) Mission Focused Living
 - (a) We pursue a lifestyle of living to demonstrate and declare the glory of God in Christ to all people because this is a fundamental aspect of God's nature, plan and purpose.*
 - (b) We affirm that a right approach to mission springs from a gospel-motivated grace-empowered joy-filled engagement with our neighbors and the culture.*
 - (c) We believe the preeminent goal in our outreach is for people to encounter the life-giving truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, his substitutional atonement and life-giving resurrection for the purpose of reconciliation with God, the forgiveness of sins and life under His Kingly rule.*
 - (d) We pursue a multi-faceted, relationship based, church-wide ministry of outreach to the spiritual and physical needs of our communities.*
 - (e) We pursue a church-wide culture of mission with the equippers equipping, the ministers ministering.*
 - (f) We believe in a deep and broad cultural engagement.*
 - (g) We pursue a love for and involvement with our communities, not isolation from nor abandonment of the culture.*
 - (h) We exist to be a church-planting church.*
- 8) Part of a Family of Churches (Sovereign Grace Ministries)
 - (a) We affirm the self-regulating responsibilities of the local church under the Headship of Christ and the authority of scripture while recognizing our inseparable relationship with the broader body of Christ, and in particular, Sovereign Grace Ministries.*
 - (b) We recognize our need for apostolic oversight, counsel and care.*

The Purpose of the Journey

God's Glory In and Through the Church, Lesson 1

- (c) *We pursue significant voluntary relationship with this family of churches and their leaders, tied together by doctrine and genuine relationships under the care and oversight of its apostolic leaders.*
- (d) *We embrace the privilege of participating in the extra-local mission of Sovereign Grace Ministries and the mutual benefit that comes from vibrant membership in this family of churches.*

C. The Mission and Vision of King of Grace Church

Mission statements are inevitably broad, but they can have a clarifying force that summarizes well what a church is about. Our attempt at capturing our defining values is found in the following statements.

1. Our Mission:

“Wholeheartedly loving God and one another by Worshiping, Witnessing and Walking in the good news of Jesus Christ for all of life.”

We love because God has first loved us in Christ. As we focus on the glorious news of Christ in his life, death and resurrection we will find power to truly know and love God and love people. We love him and others as we worship, walk together and witness to others in light of the good news of Christ. This good news has life changing relevance to every area of life.

2. Our Vision:

- *A church built on Christ where folks are most excited about one thing - the good news of Jesus Christ - Him crucified, risen, reigning and returning.*
- *A worshipping community where the heartfelt worship and enjoyment of God pervades every aspect of who we are and what we do.*
- *A church family where members from diverse backgrounds feel welcome, included, loved and connected to each other and to a vital, growing relationship with Christ.*
- *A church body that reflects Christ in all contexts of life, in marriages, families, at work, school, in the community and in the culture.*
- *A church for the future where our children are growing up with a genuine passion for God, his church and his kingdom purposes.*
- *A church on a mission that is reaching thousands in the Merrimack Valley and significantly interacting with our culture for Christ and His kingdom.*
- *A church for the great commission that is joyfully sending out and supporting numerous church plants throughout New England and beyond.*

We believe that as we keep the gospel central for all of life God will build his church and King of Grace Church will grow to maturity, reaching the lost and our culture for Christ and reproducing what God has done in our midst by church planting.

We believe God has called us to pursue this mission in order that we might realize this vision for God's glory. We are a church being transformed by the good news of the gospel and its implications for our lives here on earth and for eternity. We invite you to consider being a part of what God is doing at King of Grace!

The Purpose of the Journey

God's Glory In and Through the Church, Lesson 1

IV. THE CHURCH: DEAR TO GOD AND DEAR TO US

As we have said before, our main concern is not whether you become part of King of Grace Church, but that you become a part of *a* church. Ultimately, this is not an issue of our personal preference or convenience, but of the glory of God. We exist for His glory, and Scripture is clear that God desires to make His glory known through the church. This is why the church—the gathering of God's redeemed—is so dear to Him. We trust it will become dear to you as well.

“If I had never joined a church till I had found one that was perfect, I should never have joined one at all. And the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect church after I had become a member of it. Still, imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth to us.”

Charles Spurgeon

LESSON 2: THE GOSPEL

It comes as a surprise to many to learn how very different Christianity is from other religions; at its core, it isn't about morality, or philosophy, or self-fulfillment. Rather, it's about news—good news - the greatest news that the world has ever heard. In fact, the word “gospel” literally means “good news,” and it is this news that stands at the center of the Christian faith, and should be the informing core of the Christian life. It is what the apostle Paul called a matter “of first importance” (1 Cor. 15:3). We like to refer to this as “Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing.”

The gospel, the “main thing,” stands at the beginning of our journey, for it is truly the beginning of any Christian's journey. Not only is it the beginning of our journey but it stands as central in our whole journey from which all other aspects of the Christians life is derived. In this lesson, we will seek both to understand and better appreciate the wonderful news of the gospel.

“We never, therefore, move on from the cross of Christ—only into a more profound understanding of the cross.”

David Pryor

I. MAN'S DILEMMA BEFORE GOD

No one can gain an understanding of the gospel without first recognizing his own rebellion against a perfect, holy God, and the severe consequences justly deserved as a result. In short, we must understand some very serious “bad news” before we can adequately appreciate the “good news.” There are two key elements to the dilemma we all face: our sinfulness and God's holiness.

A. Man's Sinfulness

“A person must confront his own sinfulness in all its ravaging depths before he can enjoy the comforts of salvation.”

Martin Luther

1. What is sin?

Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.²

(a) *Not just actions, but attitudes*

Matt. 5:27-28: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

(b) *Not just acting wrongly, but also failing to act*

James 4:17: “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.”

(c) *Not just actions and attitudes, but our nature—who we are at the core of our being*

² This definition is taken from Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 490.

The Pinnacle of the Journey
The Gospel, Lesson 2

Genesis 6:5: "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

"A sin consists in doing, saying, thinking, or imagining anything that is not in perfect conformity with the mind and law of God."

J.C. Ryle

(d) Sin's True Nature.

Defining sin in relationship to God reveals its true nature: sin is essentially rebellion against God.

(i) Sin is the willful and selfish rejection of God's rule while choosing to live independently of Him.

(ii) Sin is always fundamentally and primarily against God

Psalm 51:4: "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment."

(e) Sin's Universality.

All people are sinners and stand guilty before God.

(i) Adam's sin brought sin and death to all men. All people sin because all are by nature sinners.

Rom. 5:12: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned"

(ii) All people confirm this through their actions: all are sinners

Rom. 3:22-23: "For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

(f) Sin's Pervasiveness.

Man's sinfulness extends to every part of his being; nothing in him has been unaffected by sin.

(i) Theologians call this "pervasive depravity." This does not mean that man is as bad as he could possibly be. It simply means that sin's corrupting effects have touched every part of his being: mind, will, emotions, and body.

Rom. 3:10-12: ". . . as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

(ii) This means that man in his sinful state apart from God is incapable of pleasing or obeying God. Even seemingly "good" works are tainted by sin.

The Pinnacle of the Journey
The Gospel, Lesson 2

Rom. 8:7-8: "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

(iii) Not only are we therefore enslaved to sin, but we are completely responsible before God for our sin.

Rom. 14:12: "So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."

B. God's Holiness and Wrath

The other facet of mankind's grave dilemma is the character of God. Indeed, man's sinful plight can't be fully grasped until it is viewed through the lens of God's infinite purity and holiness.

The Bible portrays God as holy. This idea has two main components:

God is transcendent: He is infinitely higher than man—separate, different—He is wholly *other than* us.

Isaiah 46:9: "... for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me"

God is morally perfect and infinitely pure—untainted by evil desire, motive, thought, word, or deed.

Deuteronomy 32:3-4: "... ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he."

Isaiah 6:1-5: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Because God is holy, He must respond with fierce opposition to sin. This is the meaning of God's *wrath*.

Wrath is God's holy response to sin: His personal, active antagonism to sin that derives from His settled opposition to every evil thing. It is therefore *right* and *necessary* for God to hate sin and all who practice it.

Habakkuk 1:13: "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong."

"The wrath of God is his steady, unrelenting, unremitting, uncompromising antagonism to evil in all its forms and manifestations."

John Stott

The Pinnacle of the Journey
The Gospel, Lesson 2

Some think that the idea of wrath is unjust or unbecoming to a God of love. This is largely because we underestimate both the extent and seriousness of sin and the holiness of God. Not only is God perfectly justified in His wrath, but without it His very character would be compromised.

In light of God's holiness, sin has grave and inevitable consequences:

A broken relationship with God

Isaiah 59:2: "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."

Enslavement to sin and Satan. Sin places us under the dominion of sin and Satan, unable to break free from their control.

Colossians 1:13: "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves."

Consequences in life. All the sorrow, pain, suffering, sweat, tears, strife, sickness, and death we experience were not part of God's original good creation. They resulted from the entrance of sin into the world.

Eternal punishment. The ultimate, final, and irrevocable punishment for all who die in sinful rebellion against God is separation in hell from God's beneficent presence.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-10: "He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed."

V. GOD'S ANSWER TO MAN'S DILEMMA: THE GOSPEL

How can we be saved from our sins and the righteous wrath of God? The answer is the gospel: *the "good news" of God's saving work on our behalf through the person and work of Jesus Christ.*

"The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history"

Jerry Bridges

A. The motive for the gospel: God's love and mercy

- 1) As we have seen, the holiness of God demanded that sin be punished. If God failed to punish sin, He would cease to be just. If He ceased to be just, He would cease to be God.
- 2) But the Bible teaches that, not only is God holy, He is also loving—love is essential to His very nature.

1 John 4:7-8: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

The Pinnacle of the Journey
The Gospel, Lesson 2

- 3) Even though we were deserving of eternal punishment, God, motivated by His infinite love, chose to take upon Himself in the person of His Son the full measure of divine wrath.

1 John 4:9-10: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

- 4) This is the glory of the cross: God saved us in such a way that, *in one and the same act*, He preserved His uncompromising holiness and expressed His fathomless love and mercy.

Rom. 3:25-26: "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (NIV)

"How then could God express simultaneously his holiness in judgment and his love in pardon? Only by providing a divine substitute for the sinner, so that the substitute would receive the judgment and the sinner the pardon."

John Stott

B. The nature of the gospel: Grace

It is often said that "we are saved by grace;" and so we are. Perhaps the best one-word summary we could use for what God has done for us through Christ's work on the cross is "grace."

- 1) Grace refers to "God's free and unmerited favor." It is God freely bestowing His goodness to people who deserve only punishment. Notice the components of this idea:
- (a) *God is in no way obligated to show kindness and mercy to anyone—least of all those who have rebelled against His rule.*
 - (b) *We are completely unable to earn any merit from God; we stand condemned in the courtroom of God's justice.*
 - (c) *Yet God resolves to extend mercy and favor to us in spite of our guilt.*
- 2) It is this grace—this "merciful resolve"—that is the source of our salvation and characterizes what Christ has done for us.

Rom. 3:23-24: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus . . ."

- 3) Because we are saved "by grace" alone, we can never earn our salvation or contribute anything to it. For all eternity, God alone will receive the glory and credit for graciously giving to us what we could never merit on our own.

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast."

The Pinnacle of the Journey
The Gospel, Lesson 2

C. The substance of the gospel: the person and work of Jesus Christ

As stated earlier, the gospel is the “good news” of God’s saving work on our behalf through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ *is* the gospel; it is His holy history, the news of who He is and what He has done for us. The gospel includes Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming return.

1) Jesus’ birth

Jesus is fully God, yet He was born into this world as a man, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin named Mary. Jesus is therefore both fully God and fully man.

John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh, and made His dwelling among us . . .”

Matt. 1:20-21: “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

See also Heb. 2:17; Phil. 2:5-8

2) Jesus’ perfect, sinless life.

Even though Jesus was subject to all the temptations to which we are all subject, He never once sinned in any way.

Hebrews 4:15: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.”

3) Jesus’ death on the cross.

At the heart of Christ’s life and ministry stands the cross. All His life had been preparatory for and led to that moment. At the cross, Christ provided the ground of our salvation—the basis upon which God saves us.

(a) Jesus’ death was substitutionary in nature. He died on our behalf, receiving the legal penalty for our sins and satisfying God’s wrath towards us.

Isaiah 53:4-6: “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

2 Cor. 5:21: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

The Pinnacle of the Journey
The Gospel, Lesson 2

(b) *Because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, God no longer holds us responsible to pay for our sin. All of our sins are forgiven: past, present, and future.*

Colossians 2:13-14: "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross."

(c) *Not only are our sins forgiven, but we are also "justified"—that is, we are declared righteous by God.*

- *Righteousness* is a legal term: it speaks of a "right standing" before God
- God considers the righteousness that Christ achieved as belonging to us
- This declaration is a once-for-all, permanent event in our lives that nothing can change.

4) Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

The resurrection demonstrates that Jesus' death was an acceptable and effective sacrifice on our behalf. Death is the penalty for sin, and Jesus' conquest over death in the resurrection shows that sin has also been overcome.

Rom. 4:25: "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

1 Cor. 15:17: "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

5) Jesus' ascension and return.

The ascension marks the beginning of Jesus' reign. He now has all rule and authority and He reigns in heaven with the Father, building His church, defeating its enemies, and interceding for His people. At the time that God has determined He will return to consummate His work and initiate a new heaven and a new earth. Then we will reign with Him for eternity, worshipping God and experiencing the full fruits of His saving work.

Matthew 24:30-31: "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

Revelation 21:3-4: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

D. The centrality of the gospel: "The Main Thing"

The Pinnacle of the Journey
The Gospel, Lesson 2

It is no mistake that this journey begins with an exploration of the gospel. It does not simply mark the beginning of the Christian life; the gospel is to remain at the *center* of the Christian life. It is therefore to remain central to the life, ministry, and proclamation of the church.

“We never, therefore, move on from the cross of Christ—only into a more profound understanding of the cross.”

David Pryor

At King of Grace Church, our goal is to keep the gospel at the heart of all that we do. It will be the substance of our proclamation, the fuel for our adoration, and the source of our motivation. We will do all we can to ensure that our zeal for the gospel is never eclipsed by any other doctrine, teaching, or practice. Our commitment to you is that, with all our might, we will endeavor to “keep the main thing, the main thing.”

“The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history. Yet we allow thousands of professing Christians to live their entire lives without clearly understanding it and experiencing the joy of living by it.”

Jerry Bridges

LESSON 3: OUR RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

The gospel tells us that God has acted through the person and work of Christ to save us from our sins and remove the barrier that exists between God and ourselves. The gospel is therefore *objective*; it is a matter of history. It is what Christ did *for* us; no matter how we feel, the ground of our salvation never changes. We are therefore not to look inward for the reason why God saves us, but upward and outward—to the Savior who died for us.

However, salvation is not somehow “automatic.” The gospel comes to us as news, and it is news to which we must respond. After Christ died, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to a group of believers in Jerusalem, thus giving birth to the church. On that day, in response to the preaching of the gospel by Peter, the hearers were pierced to the heart and asked the perceptive question, “What shall we *do*?” All who come to Christ must face this same question. And our answer to that question will determine whether we truly embark upon the journey of faith in Christ.

I. OUR RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

The appropriate response to the gospel has two components, which are often summarized under the term “conversion.”

“Conversion is our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.”

Wayne Grudem

Although repentance and faith are spoken of separately, they always work together in conversion. There is no true repentance without faith, and no genuine faith without repentance.

A. Repentance

The Biblical words for repentance have at their core the idea of turning around or changing direction. To sin is to rebel against God and His rule over our life. To repent is to turn back to God and to embrace Him and His rule and authority over our life.

1) Repentance is a command of God. All people are commanded to repent and believe the gospel.

Acts 17:30: “God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent”

This repentance has three primary aspects:

- (a) *Mind: an awareness of the holiness and majesty of God, of our sin and guilt, and of God’s mercy and readiness to forgive.*
- (b) *Emotions: a heartfelt sorrow for sin and joy at the prospect of forgiveness.*
- (c) *Will: a willingness and steadfast purposing to turn away from all sin and to turn to God in obedience.*

The Start of the Journey
Our Response to the Gospel, Lesson 3

“The New Testament word for repentance means changing one’s mind so that one’s views, values, goals, and ways are changed and one’s whole life is lived differently. The change is radical, both inwardly and outwardly. . . . Repentance means starting to live a new life.”

J.I. Packer

2) Repentance is a gift from God. It is the grace of God that enables us to repent.

2 Timothy 2:25: “Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth...”

B. Faith

Faith is the instrument through which the saving benefits of the cross come to us. Salvation is “by grace”—grace is its ground—but it is “through faith”—faith must be exercised before salvation is received (Eph. 2:8). It is both a gift of God and an act of our will. God gives us faith, but we are responsible for exercising it.

Rom. 1:17: “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous shall live by faith.”

1) What is faith?

The New Testament word for faith, when used in the context of salvation, means a true commitment of oneself to God, an unwavering trust in His promises, and a persistent loyalty and obedience.

Saving faith has three elements:

(a) *Knowledge: We must have certain information—the gospel—revealed to us.*

Rom. 10:14, 17: “How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? . . . Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”

(b) *Assent: We must believe that what is revealed is true.*

Heb. 4:2: “For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.”

(c) *Trust: We must place trust in what is revealed, gladly willing to stake our life on it. This is expressed through our obedience and commitment.*

James 2:17, 22: “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. . . . You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.”

The Start of the Journey

Our Response to the Gospel, Lesson 3

- 2) *We are saved through faith alone, but true saving faith will be validated by a lifestyle that testifies to the reality of faith. True saving faith will always lead to obedience.*

James 2:17: "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

- 3) *Faith is a gift from God, not a work that earns us favor with God.*

Acts 16:14: "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."

C. Water Baptism

- 1) We respond to the gospel with repentance and faith in the finished work of Christ. Having been converted, believers are also to respond by obeying the command to be baptized.

Acts 2:38: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

- 2) Baptism is an obedient response of someone saved by grace. In baptism, we identify with the Lord who has saved us. Baptism cannot contribute to or bring about salvation. Baptism doesn't save us—Jesus saves us through faith.

Acts 8:12: "when they believed . . . they were baptized, both men and women"

- 3) Baptism is an outward sign of an inward work which has already taken place. Therefore, only those who have believed the gospel and repented from their sins should be baptized. For this reason, we do not baptize infants.

- 4) Water baptism is a sign and symbol of the believer's union with the Lord in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Rom. 6:4: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so too we may live a new life."

We practice baptism by immersion, which vividly illustrates the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

- 5) Baptism is a landmark moment in a believer's life, clearly marking one's identification with Christ and entrance into His body, the church. It is therefore our wonderful privilege as a church to celebrate these times together. We set aside specific times for the baptism of new believers (or those who haven't yet been baptized), enabling us to rejoice together and to welcome new believers into the life of the church.

II. WHAT MAKES OUR RESPONSE POSSIBLE?

In the previous lesson, we spoke about the pervasive, corrupting effects of sin. Sin is not only what we do, but who we are: apart from God, we are sinners *by nature*. So if we're truly "dead" in our sins (Eph. 2:1) and powerless to change, how is it that we are able to respond to the gospel at all? It is here that the gracious nature of salvation becomes even more amazing: **God acts, so that we can act.**

The Start of the Journey
Our Response to the Gospel, Lesson 3

A. Chosen in eternity past

God's actions begin in eternity past when He chose us and determined that He would save us. This is often referred to as "election."

Eph. 1:4-6: "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."

B. Effectively called

God's choosing of us eventually results in His calling us and drawing us to Himself.

God's drawing us to Himself is often called "effective calling": God's work of inviting and drawing sinners to Himself by His Spirit through the proclamation of the gospel.

While God is the one who draws, this does not mean that a person is somehow saved apart from their own willing response to the gospel. Through the grace of God, the "divine summons" of God brings about the response it requires.

Rom. 8:30: "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

John 6:44: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."

C. Regenerated ("born again") by the Spirit

When God calls us, He then changes our heart so that we can freely respond. This change is called "regeneration."

In regeneration, God acts to change our inner nature and impart spiritual life to us. As a result, we become spiritually alive and are then able to believe the gospel and repent of our sin.

Col. 2:13: "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ."

D. The supernatural nature of conversion

Given what Scripture teaches about sin, it is not surprising that God must do a supernatural work in our hearts before we can be truly converted. Such an understanding of our conversion is important for our spiritual health.

"Scripture is clear in teaching that we are not all journeying toward God—some having found Him, others still seeking. Instead, Scripture presents us as needing to have our hearts replaced, our minds transformed, our spirits given life. We can do none of this for ourselves. The change each human needs, regardless of how we may outwardly appear, is so radical, so near our roots, that only God can bring it about. We need God to convert us."

Mark Dever

The Start of the Journey
Our Response to the Gospel, Lesson 3

“I believe in the doctrine of election, because I am quite certain that, if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards; and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love.”

Charles Spurgeon

E. We must act, but God gets the glory

Recognizing God’s grace does not eliminate our responsibility to repent and believe. All people everywhere are commanded to do this (Acts 17:30). However, when we reflect back on our salvation and recognize that it was God’s prior actions that drew us to Himself, we are humbled and exult all the more over God’s amazing, undeserved, and glorious grace. We realize that, in the end, the difference between ourselves and someone who is unsaved is not our own superior goodness, intelligence, spiritual aptitude, or anything within ourselves at all. The only difference between us and them is the mercy and grace of God.

III. “ESSENTIALLY REFORMED”

These Biblical teachings are often put under the heading of “Reformed theology.”

The Reformed view of salvation places emphasis on the activity of God and the glory of God in saving sinners.

At King of Grace, we refer to ourselves as “essentially Reformed.” This means that we embrace the general, informing components of Reformed theology that we see as eminently Biblical. Our loyalties are not to a man-made system of theology, but to the Scriptures. Our goal is to think Biblically in order to know God truthfully, respond to Him appropriately, and glorify Him most fully.

In calling ourselves “essentially Reformed,” we imply that we do not necessarily hold to all of the doctrines that some Reformed churches do (for example, our view of water baptism, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, etc., differ from many who would call themselves Reformed).

We never want to focus on more narrow aspects of Reformed theology at the expense of Biblical truths that are central, and that we share with many other Christians. The gospel itself is what unites all true believers, and it is the gospel that matters most.

The Start of the Journey
Our Response to the Gospel, Lesson 3

LESSON 4: EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT

In previous lessons, we've seen over and over our dependence upon the grace of God in the Christian life. The very plan of salvation is the story of God's gracious initiative to send His Son to die on the cross for sinners who were as yet in rebellion against God. Having responded to the gospel, Christians then learn that their response was actually rooted in God's gracious choosing and calling of them before the foundation of the earth. In the fight for holiness, we find that all our efforts have their start in the sanctifying work of God, who "works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The Christian life is truly "all of grace, from first to last."

Because of this, God never intended believers merely to "trudge on" in their own strength. Indeed, one of the great promises of Scripture comes at the very end of the book of Matthew, just after the giving of the Great Commission: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). In this lesson, we will explore more fully the source of strength for the Christian journey: the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT: GOD'S ACTIVE PRESENCE

A. While God is omnipresent (present at all places at all times with all of His being), He makes His presence known in different ways for different purposes.

- He can be present to bless, to sustain, to punish, or to empower.

B. God manifested His presence in various ways throughout history, but these reached a climax in the person of Jesus Christ.

John 1:1, 14: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

C. In the church age, God's presence is primarily manifested in the world, and especially in the church, in the person of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16-18: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to with you forever, 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. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

"The work of the Holy Spirit is to manifest the active presence of God in the world, and especially in the church."
Wayne Grudem

D. Christians have the great privilege, not only of trusting in God's omnipresence, but of personally experiencing His nearness.

Rom. 8:15-16: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. . . ."

The Power for the Journey
Empowered by the Spirit, Lesson 4

James 4:8: "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

- E. God's active presence among His people accomplishes many things. It is not uncommon to focus narrowly on more dramatic aspects of this, such as miracles, healings, or prophecy. Scripture, however, portrays the Spirit's work as pervasive and multifaceted—what might be called "the broad work of the Spirit." To fully appreciate God's active presence, we need to recognize the countless ways in which the Spirit is at work in and among us.

"Believers in Christ, who for Paul are 'Spirit people' first and foremost, are variously described as living by the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, and sowing to the Spirit.... The Spirit conforms the believer into the likeness of Christ to the glory of God. The Spirit is therefore the empowering presence of God for living the life of God in the present."

Gordon Fee

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT: GOD'S SAVING PRESENCE

- The New Birth. The greatest miracle one can ever experience is the miracle of regeneration, in which the Holy Spirit changes our nature and imparts spiritual life to us. Nothing can ever compare with this mighty work of the Spirit in our lives.

Titus 3:4-7: "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT: GOD'S PURIFYING PRESENCE

- A. The *Holy Spirit*. One of the Spirit's primary activities is to remove sin from our lives and to make us more and more holy, just as God Himself is holy.

2 Cor. 3:18: "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."

- B. The Fruit of the Spirit. As the believer cooperates with the work of the Spirit in his life, the Spirit produces "fruit" in his life, consisting of godly attitudes and behavior. This supernatural work is the opposite of our natural tendencies, and is the reproduction of the life of Christ in the believer.

Galatians 5:16, 22-23: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. . . . But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT: GOD'S EMPOWERING PRESENCE

- A. In addition to effecting regeneration and sanctification, the Holy Spirit also empowers believers for Christian witness and service.

The Power for the Journey
Empowered by the Spirit, Lesson 4

Acts 1:4-5, 8: "And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." . . . 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."

B. The fullness of the promised Holy Spirit is received at conversion. At this point we receive not only the power to repent and believe the gospel through regeneration but also the power to fulfill our mission of proclaiming Christ through the promised baptism of the Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:4-13.. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

C. The New Testament envisions not simply one initial experience of being baptized in the Spirit at conversion, but rather a process of repeated, continual *fillings* of God's Spirit. A Christian may have been *indwelt and baptized* by the Spirit at conversion, but yet not be presently *filled* with the Spirit.

Acts 4:8, 31: "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness."

1) *The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power for Christian life and witness. Our responsibility and privilege is to live a life of dependence upon God, asking for His Spirit to continually fill us, to empower us, and to strengthen us to live lives for His glory.*

Eph. 5:18: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit."

"Being continually filled with the Spirit is, in fact, the challenge of a lifetime and the challenge of each new day."

Anthony Hoekema

2) *How are we filled with the Spirit, or know if we have been filled?*

(a) *We receive by asking God in faith, knowing that He loves to give good gifts to His children.*

Luke 11:13: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

(b) *It would appear from the book of Acts that speaking in tongues is a common evidence of experiencing the Spirit, but it is not a necessary evidence, and it's not the only evidence. Although speaking in tongues is a biblical experience that Christians should pursue (1 Cor. 14:1, 5), being filled with the Spirit is not primarily about speaking in tongues or personal*

The Power for the Journey
Empowered by the Spirit, Lesson 4

experience, but about receiving power from God that we might be more effective in accomplishing His purposes.

(c) A powerful effect of the filling of the Spirit is the experience of the active presence of God. More than mere belief, the Spirit graciously gives us an overwhelming experience of the majesty and truth of God as revealed in Christ.

D. While King of Grace identifies with and teaches that we are *baptized* in the Spirit at conversion and then receive subsequent *fillings*, we recognize that some Christians hold to the doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit as an experience distinct from conversion. We desire, and have found it to be possible, to accommodate believers who have a differing view on this issue but who nonetheless share with us many beliefs and values concerning the Spirit’s ministry. Those common values that we feel would be most important would include:

- A recognition of the need for ongoing empowerment by the Spirit in the Christian life.
- A belief that Christians are to seek to be continually filled by the Spirit.
- A belief in the continuity of the spiritual gifts listed in Scripture, and an earnest desire for whatever gifts the Spirit would graciously give.
- A love for, and pursuit of, the active presence of God.
- A commitment to an attitude of love and humility towards those with differing gifts and experiences of the Holy Spirit.

It has been our experience that, if these values are held in common, a person can comfortably and fruitfully be a part of King of Grace, even though they might refer to an experience with the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion as the “baptism in the Holy Spirit.”

E. Spiritual Gifts

In addition to giving us increased boldness and effectiveness in witness (Acts 4:31), prompting worship and thanksgiving in our hearts (Eph. 5:18-20; Acts 10:46), increasing our growth in godliness (2 Cor. 3:18), and strengthening our relationship with other believers (Eph. 5:18, 21), the Holy Spirit also imparts supernatural gifts for the edification of the church and for works of ministry in the world.

- 1) All believers have and receive spiritual gifts.

1 Cor. 12:7: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

- 2) All of the gifts are supernatural. In Scripture, all of the gifts, from seemingly “natural” ones like mercy and serving to “supernatural” ones like healing, are all viewed as being from God and empowered by the Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:7: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

- 3) All of the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the church of the first-century are available today. Scripture suggests that the gifts are given to the church until Christ’s return, and there is no indication anywhere in Scripture that any of the gifts were intended to pass away with the early church.

The Power for the Journey
Empowered by the Spirit, Lesson 4

1 Cor. 1:7-8: “ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- 4) The gifts of the Holy Spirit are vital for the mission of the church and are to be earnestly desired and practiced.

1 Cor. 14:1: “Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.”

- 5) The purpose of spiritual gifts is the glory of God and the edification of other believers.

1 Cor. 10:31: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

1 Cor. 12:7: ““To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

V. PURSUING GOD’S EMPOWERING PRESENCE

Because God invites us to draw near to Him (Heb. 4:16; Jas. 4:8) and commands us to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), we can have confidence that He will respond to our pursuit of Him.

A. Diligently practice the spiritual disciplines, especially the study of God’s word, prayer, and worship.

- 1) Amazingly, God desires an intimate relationship with us, and the spiritual disciplines are means God has given us to commune with Him, receive His grace, and grow in godliness.

“The Spiritual Disciplines then are also like channels of God’s transforming grace. As we place ourselves in them to seek communion with Christ, His grace flows to us and we are changed. That’s why the disciplines must become priority for us if we will be Godly.” Donald Whitney

- 2) The Bible is God’s self-revelation to man. In it we learn what God is like and how we are to respond to Him. There is no more important activity for the Christian than reading and meditating upon the word of God.
- 3) Prayer is communication with God. It is the lifting up of our hearts, thoughts, and desires to God. When we pray, we communicate with God, and He communicates with us. For our part, we communicate our gratitude, confess our sins, submit our wills, present our requests, and pour out our worship. We also listen, allowing God to give us divine perspective on our lives, search our hearts for sin, illumine our minds with His truth, encourage our souls with His promises, and assure us of His love through Christ.

B. Recognize the value of the corporate gathering of the church for experiencing a fresh infilling of the Spirit.

While private devotions are crucial for the Christian life, God is pleased to reveal His active presence in corporate meetings in ways we don’t normally experience when we’re alone.

The Power for the Journey
Empowered by the Spirit, Lesson 4

“Conversely, it’s true that God will manifest His presence to you in congregational worship in ways you can never know even in the most glorious secret worship. That’s because you are not only a temple of God as an individual, but the Bible ways (and far more often) that Christians collectively are God’s temple. . . . God manifests His presence in different ways to the “living stones” of His temple when they are gathered than He does to them when they are apart.”

Donald Whitney

C. The Sunday Celebration

In the life of this church, nothing exceeds the importance of our Sunday morning corporate meetings. These times provide a context where we can worship God together, hear the word of God proclaimed and taught, and be built together in our mission as a church.

Each Sunday has three primary goals:

- 1) *To worship and glorify God.* There is no higher calling for the people of God than to worship and glorify Him together. Our Sunday meetings provide the opportunity to glorify God, to declare His perfections, to praise His name, and to adore Him together
- 2) *To receive from God.* Although the main purpose of corporate worship is the exaltation of God, worship is nonetheless a means by which we encounter God together and are refreshed by His presence, strengthened by His grace, encouraged by His promises, and transformed by His truth. These things occur both through our times of worshipping God through song and through the preaching of God’s word.
- 3) *To minister to one another.* Believers are given the privilege of caring for, encouraging, and building up each other. Each Sunday is an opportunity for us to minister to others through prayer, words of encouragement, prophesy, greeting, sharing of Scriptures, and a multitude of other ways.

D. Other Corporate Contexts

In King of Grace, there are a variety of other gatherings that take place. Specials seminars, meetings and CARE Groups play a critical role in our life together as a church. Each of these contexts provides opportunities for us to experience God’s active presence together as we seek Him through worship, the teaching and application of God’s word, and fellowship with each other.

VI. GOD’S ACTIVE PRESENCE: OUR PRIVILEGE AND NEED

As believers, we should never be satisfied with anything less than the nearness of God—His active presence. He has promised to draw near to us, and He empowers us by the Holy Spirit to glorify Him and serve Him more effectively as He accomplishes His purposes through the church. To be a Christian is to be marked by the presence of God, and how gracious He is to give us the Holy Spirit to empower us for our lives, our service to Him, and our life together as a church. How desperately we need this. And how wondrous it is that we can pursue this in faith, and do so together.

LESSON 5: GOD'S AMAZING WORD – PART 1

In this lesson we will discuss the amazing word of God. We have the indescribable blessing of having the very words of the infinitely glorious and good God of the universe. His word is living and active and under the power of the Holy Spirit imparts true life to us. Our God is a speaking God and he has given us his amazing word. His word is fully reliable and fully able to lead us into true life and true understanding. We have at our disposal an indispensable guide for our journey.

I. THE WORD IS RELIABLE

A. God Inspired

The basis for the reliability of the word of God is that it is just that, the word of God. And God as the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-wise and all-sufficient God has determined to record for us his perfect word that we might know Him and have true life. The scriptures are inspired by God. They are “breathed out” by God himself as men wrote scripture.

*"For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."
(2 Peter 1:21, ESV)*

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

As the inspired word of God the scriptures are self-attesting. That is, they stand as the ultimate authority on themselves and in the power of the Holy Spirit testify to us that they are the very words of God. There can be no authority higher than the word of God.

*"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."
(Hebrews 4:12, ESV)*

"and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," (Ephesians 6:17, ESV)

*"...if an appeal to some higher authority (say, historical accuracy or logical consistency) were used to prove that the Bible is God's Word, then the Bible itself would not be our highest or absolute authority: it would be subordinate in authority to the thing to which we appealed to prove it to be God's Word."
Wayne Grudem³*

³Grudem, W. A. 1994. *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (78). Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House: Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word, Part 1, Lesson 5

Our Heavenly Father, revealing his majesty [in Scripture], lifts reverence for Scripture beyond the realm of controversy"

John Calvin⁴

B. Infallible

Because scripture is God breathed it is fully capable of accomplishing the purpose God intends – it is fully able or “infallible”, it will not fail to accomplish its purpose.

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11, ESV)

"Applied to Scripture this word implies the quality of not misleading. This claim means that all the Bible's assertions are truthful and worthy of entire confidence, implying a contrast with human 'fallible' words and statements. It asserts that Scripture does not mislead because it is God's own self-testimony."

Bruce Milne⁵

When historic Christianity receives the Bible as an absolute authority for creed and conduct, it does so on the basis that since God is a God of truth and righteousness, the instruction that He lays before us in writing must have the same qualities.

J.I. Packer⁶

C. Inerrant

Similarly, since the bible is God's very word it is without error as originally received. God is all wise and all-knowing and therefore does not communicate falsely. Many claims of errancy arise from a misunderstanding of the manner of speaking or the genre of literature used in the bible. Closer study and a deeper understanding usually are sufficient to dispel any misperceptions.

"The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times." (Psalm 12:6, ESV)

"This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him." (Psalm 18:30, ESV)

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;" (Psalm 19:7, ESV)

⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, VIII, 13, John Knox Press, 1960, p. 92

⁵ Bruce Milne, *Know The Truth*, IVP, p. 41

⁶ J.I. Packer, *Truth and Power*, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1996, p. 12.

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word, Part 1, Lesson 5

"If the autographa of Scripture are marred by flecks of mistake, God simply has not told us the truth concerning His Word. To assume that He could breathe forth a Word that contained mistakes is to say, in effect, that God Himself can make mistakes. We must maintain that the original of Scripture is infallible for the simple reason that it came to us directly from God Himself."

Edward J. Young⁷

"And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand it."

Augustine⁸

The importance of recognizing biblical inerrancy as a fact of faith is that, on the one hand, it reminds us that all Scripture is instruction in one way or another from the God of truth. On the other hand, it commits us to consistency in believing, receiving and obeying everything that it proves to say. The more completely heart and mind are controlled by Scripture, the fuller our freedom and the greater our joy.

J.I. Packer⁹

D. Sufficient

God has given us His word that we might have all we need to know Him and obey Him. His word, as illuminated by the Holy Spirit, is able to instruct us in all the essentials of life in Him.

*"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."
(2 Timothy 3:14-15, ESV)*

*"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word."
(Psalm 119:9, ESV)*

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
(Psalm 119:105, ESV)*

*"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."
(2 Peter 1:3-4, ESV)*

⁷ Edward J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 86-87.

⁸ Schaff, P. 1997. *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Vol. I*. The confessions and letters of St. Augustin with a sketch of his life and work. (350). Logos Research Systems: Oak Harbor

⁹ J.I. Packer, *Truth and Power*, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1996, p. 43

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word, Part 1, Lesson 5

"Calvin had no weapon but the Word of God. From the very first his emphasis had been on Bible teaching... He preached from the Word every day, and under the power of that preaching the city began to change. As the Genevan people acquired knowledge of God's Word and allowed it to influence their behavior, their city became almost a New Jerusalem from which the gospel spread to the rest of Europe, Great Britain and the New World. There has probably never been a clearer example of extensive moral and social reform than the transformation of Geneva under John Calvin, and it was accomplished almost entirely by the preaching of God's Word."

James Montgomery Boice¹⁰

E. Authoritative

Given that the word of God has all the preceding qualities and it is from God for us, it is therefore authoritative for our lives. It has the final say on God, on man, on truth, on reality, it has the final say on church life, the life of the soul (psychology), marriage and family, community and essential history. It stands as the ultimate authority – God's clear and definitive declaration.

The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.

Wayne Grudem¹¹

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

(Joshua 1:8, ESV)

"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long."

(Deuteronomy 6:1-2, ESV)

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

(John 15:9-10, ESV)

"So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.""

(John 8:31-32, ESV)

¹⁰ Dr. James Montgomery Boice, *The Sufficiency of the Word of God*, The 25th Anniversary Sermon, May 23, 1993.

¹¹ Grudem, W. A. 1994. *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (73). Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House: Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.

"The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture"

*Westminster Confession*¹²

II. THE LIFE-GIVING FUNCTION OF THE WORD

There are a lot of different ways to approach the bible. Among those who believe the bible is God's very word, his revelation of all we need for life with him and obedience to him there can be many nuances in how we handle the scriptures. I think we can all take these approaches at one time or another in our Christian lives.

The first approach treats the bible as a great book of theology, which it is, but nothing more. It is a book that tells us about God and about his ways. It contains deep treasures of truth and things that will blow your mind. It is seen as worthy of great study and intellectual endeavor. Yet, this approach can fail to see that it is much more than a book on theology.

Another approach sees the bible as a inspired guide book, full of principles and truths for successful living, which it is. It is studied and applied vigorously as the answer for any and all of our problems. Yet, it isn't seen as anything more than a self-help book of sorts.

Another approach is to see the bible as a great holy book, The Holy Bible, that contains the very word of God. Every word is revered as inspired and worthy of our deepest piety. It seasons our conversation and we must show some proof text for any and every action. It stands as the height of our piety. Yet, it can take on a status only worthy of one of the members of the trinity. If someone were around us when we take this approach they may think we follow the Father, the Son and the Holy Bible.

Jesus teaches us something very profound in Matthew chapter about the nature of the word of God that is vital to understanding and applying the bible appropriately.

⁴ But he answered, "It is written, " 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 4:4

Jesus teaches us that feeding a hungry stomach is not the essence of our existence. Satisfying our need for food isn't the basis of life. Having clothes on our back or a roof over our head or being surrounded by family and friends, as good as all these things are, is not what life is about. Man does not live by bread alone – mankind's life is not ultimately determined and fulfilled in any of these things. Jesus is saying, the only thing that brings true life are the words of God. The things that come out of the mouth of God are what impart life to mankind, to you and to me.

The intake and understanding, the reading and hearing and memorizing and discussing and applying of God's word is not an option for the Christian –for without the word there is no Christian and without continuation in the word there is no continuation of the Christian life. We live by his word and we need it more than we need our daily bread, more than we need clothing and shelter and family and friends – we need his word – we need his life that comes to us through his word.

¹² Westminster Confession I.X

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word, Part 1, Lesson 5

"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."
John 17:3

Life involves knowing God and God the Son, Jesus Christ. Anything short of this is not true life. Apart from the word of God there is no knowing God. He has inextricably bound knowing him to his word, apart from his word there is no knowing him and there is no life. The word is even called the word of life.

"For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess."
Deuteronomy 32:47

"Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life"
John 6:68

"holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain."
Philippians 2:16

The word of God is an essential means for creating spiritual life in us and sustaining spiritual life. Wayne Grudem says the following in his systematic theology:

"Even before people become Christians, the Word of God as preached and taught brings God's grace to them in that it is the instrument God uses to impart spiritual life to them and bring them to salvation. Paul says that the gospel is the "power of God for salvation" (Rom. 1:16) and that the preaching of Christ is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). God caused us to be born again or "brought...forth by the word of truth" (James 1:18) and Peter says, "You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). It is the written Word of God, the Bible, that is "able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15)."¹³

Also, Grudem teaches us that the word sustains our life:

"Moreover, once we have become Christians, Paul reminds us that it is the Word of God that is "able to build you up" (Acts 20:32). ... It is the Word of God that convicts us of sin and turns us to righteousness, for it is profitable "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). It gives direction and guidance as a "lamp" to our feet and a "light" to our path (Ps. 119:105). In the midst of an ungodly culture Scripture gives wisdom and guidance like "a lamp shining in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19). Moreover, it is active in giving wisdom to all, even "making wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7). It gives hope to those who are in despair, because Paul says that it was written "that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4)..... And Peter encourages the Christians to whom he writes, "Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation" (1 Peter 2:2)."¹⁴

¹³ Grudem, W. A. 1994. *Systematic theology : An introduction to biblical doctrine* (118). Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House: Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.

¹⁴ *ibid*

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word, Part 1, Lesson 5

The role of the word is that we might have true life, that is an enduring and real relationship with the living God. It isn't merely about abstract theology, it isn't merely about principles, it isn't merely about biblicalistic pietism but it is ultimately about God himself and our wonderful privilege of knowing God, abiding in a relationship with him and obeying him. It is about God and any study, and reading, any hearing, any sharing, any memorizing, any thinking about the word must be about God. Listen to these startling words Jesus gave to some of the best bible scholars the world has ever known.

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." John 5:39-40

Isn't that so startling! You can diligently study and search the scriptures, you can memorize the entire bible, as the Pharisees pretty much did, and yet miss the very purpose of the bible – to know God and walk with him.

We are to pursue life with God by pursuing the scriptures. Let us saturate ourselves with the bible and take every opportunity we have to take in the word of life. Let us listen to the word preached with ears eager to hear the voice of God through the preaching of his word. Let us read the bible voraciously with hearts ready to encounter the living God. Let us study his word to understand it as a whole and its parts and their interconnectedness. Let us take advantage of the many excellent resources we have for studying the bible. One to start with is a good solid study bible, like the Reformation Study Bible put out by Ligonier ministries. Add to that Matthew Henry's commentaries, available free online and you are well on your way to knowing God's word very well. Let us memorize God's word and meditate on it that it might sink into the deep recesses of our brains and our hearts and affect all of who we are.

Let us rather, when the Spirit of truth opens up biblical material in such a way as to convict us of sin, freely respond to the Lord in confession and repentance. When we grasp something more clearly of His nature and works, let us come back to him with praise and thanksgiving. When some response of faith toward Christ is indicated as central to our walk with him, let's us make that response in prayer. When we become aware of a promise of God in the word that clearly applies to our situation, let us come to him with a claim of faith built on that promise. .. Form the habit of approaching the Bible or sermons built on the bible or any other vehicle by which biblical truth is brought to you.. with the expectation that the living God will confront you personally and teach you the appropriate responses of faith to make to him on the base of those truths. In this way your fellowship with him will be continually enlarged and made more intelligent and effective as you give attention to His message. Do not imagine that you can make continuing progress in your experience of fellowship with God without this function of the Word of God in your life

Donald Mostrom.¹⁵

¹⁵ Donald G. Mostrom, *Intimacy with God*, Tyndale House, Wheaton, IL, 1984, p. 34

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word, Part 1, Lesson 5

LESSON 6: GOD'S AMAZING WORD – PART 2

I. SOUND DOCTRINE

The aim of the word of God is that we might experience true and everlasting life under the guidance and authority of scripture. The Christian life is not meant to be an aimless wandering. God intends for us to understand who He is, how we are to relate to Him, and how we are to understand our lives and the world in which we live. In short, we need God's take on reality.

You might hear talk of people's love for "doctrine" and the benefits of doctrine; you'll also hear of various books people are reading that are helping them in the Christian life—books about various aspects of doctrine. Before we look at the importance of doctrine, perhaps it will be helpful to understand what we mean by "doctrine." We will address this question in two ways.

A. The Storyline of the Bible

The Bible is not simply a mixed bag of books and ideas that bear no particular relationship to each other. The Bible tells a *story*: the story of God and His relationship to His creation in general, and to humanity in particular. We must understand this story in order to truly understand God, ourselves, history, and the future.

Some of the main facets of the Bible's "plotline" provide for us a general overview of God and His purposes in the world:

1) Creation.

The Bible tells us that "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). This opening statement of the Bible implies some significant truths.

The world, and history itself, is purposeful. It came about by God's will, and it proceeds in accordance with His will.

Psalm 33:11 "The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations."

Hebrews 1:3 "[Christ] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power."

As Creator, God has prerogatives over His creation. He rules it according to His purposes, and all creation, including humanity, owes its existence and allegiance to Him.

2) The Fall.

Though created to live in communion with and dependence upon God, mankind rejected God's loving and benevolent rule and sought to live independent from God, doubting His word and spurning His commands (Gen. 3).

This rebellion introduced sin into the world, and with it death (spiritual and physical), a break in fellowship with God, physical hardship and suffering, and turmoil in human relationships.

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word – Part 2, Lesson 6

Rom. 5:12 "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—"

The fall brought with it judgment. Because God is holy, He must distance Himself from and punish all sin.

3) The Plan of Redemption.

God is not only holy, but loving and merciful. Despite mankind's alienation from Him and the necessity to punish evil, God sets out to redeem man from sin and to restore man to fellowship with Himself. The rest of the Bible, from Gen. 3 on, unfolds this history of God's redemptive purposes. Here are some of the "highlights" of this wonderful story:

- God chooses Abraham, reveals Himself to him, and tells him that He will have a special relationship with Abraham and his descendants. In addition, *all* the nations of the earth would receive God's blessing through him (Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18)

The story of Israel traces the outworking of this plan, as God gathers from Abraham's descendants a people for Himself, who would know Him and who would make Him known in the world.

Israel's history reaches a climax when, from this chosen people comes a Savior—Jesus Christ—in whom all of God's promises of forgiveness, redemption, and restored communion with God are realized.

The New Testament tells the story of the accomplishment of God's saving purposes through Jesus' life and death, the realization through the church of God's plan to have a people for Himself, and the extension of God's saving plan throughout the earth through the preaching of the gospel. It also foretells the consummation of all things when Christ will return to gather His people, to judge the nations, and to restore all things back under the rule of God.

Far from being a confusing batch of data, the Bible's storyline illuminates for us the very nature of God—sovereign, holy, and loving—and the nature of mankind as well—isolated from God, corrupted by sin, and subject to His righteous wrath. It also reveals the grace of God—acting to restore all things back to Himself through His Son—and how we can find forgiveness and be restored to a relationship with God—through repentance and faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Without this understanding, we can know neither God nor ourselves rightly.

B. Biblical Doctrine

In addition to the flow of Scripture's story, the Bible contains all that we need to know about God in order to know Him and live a life pleasing to Him. We refer to what the Bible teaches about various things as "doctrine."

"A doctrine is what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic."-Wayne Grudem

Doctrine is simply what the Bible teaches about various topics. The study of doctrine is not opposed to the study of the Bible; it *is* the study of the Bible. To understand sound doctrine is simply to understand what the Bible teaches about various things. While some react to the idea of "sound doctrine," the only alternative is "*unsound* doctrine"!

II. WHY DO WE NEED DOCTRINE?

Hopefully it is clear what we mean when we speak of “doctrine”: what the Bible teaches. But this doesn't answer the question of whether we need to *know* doctrine—“Isn't loving God enough?” “Isn't having Jesus enough?” Why do we as Christians need to give ourselves to the study of God's word?

A. The Necessity of Doctrine

“The conviction that Christian doctrine matters for Christian living is one of the most important growth points of the Christian life.”
Sinclair Ferguson

- 1) We cannot truly love God without loving Biblical doctrine.

Mark 12:28-30 “And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’”

True love for God involves the whole person. There is an unmistakable inclusion—if not emphasis—on loving God with our minds—with what we think, our values, our opinions, our reasoning, with our view of God and ourselves and the world. We simply cannot love what we do not know.

“The antecedent of love is knowledge. The Spirit shines upon the understanding and discovers the beauties of wisdom, holiness, and mercy in God. These are the magnet to entice and draw out love for God. . . . If the sun be set in the understanding, there must be night in the affections”

Thomas Watson

- 2) What we believe determines the way we live.

“However paradoxical it seems to our natural minds, it is one of the facts of spiritual reality that practical Christian living is based on understanding and knowledge.” Sinclair Ferguson

- 3) Every Christian is a theologian.

The real question is not, “Do we *need* sound doctrine?”, but rather, “Is the doctrine I have *sound*?”

“No Christian can avoid theology. Every Christian has a theology. The issue, then, is not, do we want to have a theology? That's a given. The real issue is, do we have a sound theology? Do we embrace true or false doctrine?”
R.C. Sproul

B. The Purpose of Sound Doctrine

- 1) Sound doctrine provides a right understanding of God's person and character. Man in his fallenness will never generate true thoughts of God on his own.

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word – Part 2, Lesson 6

Rom. 1:18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

The only way for us to know God is for Him to reveal Himself to us. The only place He does this in such a way that we can have a relationship with Him is in His word. Sound doctrine enables us to respond appropriately to God. Wrong ideas about God produce unacceptable worship of God: idolatry

Acts 17:23, 30 "What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. . . . Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

- 2) Sound doctrine produces true and vigorous affections for God. God's word is calculated to produced godly affections in our souls

Psalm 1:2 "His delight is in the law of the Lord."

Psalm 19:8 "The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart."

Psalm 119:16: "I will delight in Thy statutes; I shall not forget Thy word."

Psalm 119:50: "This is my comfort in my affliction, that Thy word has revived me."

Jeremiah 15:16 "Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart;"

John 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you and your joy may be made full."

Rom. 15:4 "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

"True spiritual and gracious affections . . . come from the enlightening of the mind in order to understand the things that are taught of God and Christ False affections arise from ignorance rather than instruction But the Scriptures are able to give to the saints spiritual and supernatural understanding of divine things."

Jonathan Edwards

- 3) Sound doctrine produces stability in the Christian life.

Ephesians 4:13-14 ". . . until 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, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves . . ."

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word – Part 2, Lesson 6

- 4) Sound doctrine protects us against false doctrine.

Ephesians 4:13-14 ". . .until 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, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."

- 5) Sound doctrine generates true love for God and others.

Philippians 1:9 "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge . . ."

- 6) Sound doctrine produces in us true discernment.

Philippians 1:9-10 "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent . . ."

- 7) Sound doctrine strengthens the church.

Ephesians 4:15-16 "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."

III. HOW IS A COMMITMENT TO SOUND DOCTRINE EXPRESSED AT KGC?

Since sound doctrine is a high value of this church, we seek to express this in a variety of ways.

A. A commitment to the authority of God's word.

We accept the Bible, including the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, as the written word of God; that they are an infallible record of God's self-disclosure to mankind; that Scripture in the original manuscripts is fully inspired by God and free from error in all it teaches.

Because we believe the Scriptures are the word of God, they are the final authority for all that we do as individuals and as a church.

B. A commitment to the preaching of God's word.

Preaching is the unique means by which God's word is brought effectively to the assembled congregation.

2 Timothy 4:1-2 "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word – Part 2, Lesson 6

“We see how God, who could in a moment perfect his own, nevertheless desires them to grow up into manhood solely under the education of the Church. We see the way set for it: the preaching of the heavenly doctrine has been enjoined upon the pastors. . . . Many are led either by pride, dislike or rivalry to the conviction that they can profit enough from private reading and meditation; hence they despise public assemblies and deem preaching superfluous. This is like blotting out the face of God which shines upon us in teaching. . . . For neither the light and heat of the sun, nor food and drink, are so necessary to nourish and sustain the present life, as the apostolic and pastoral office is necessary to preserve the Church on earth.”

John Calvin

C. A commitment to the singing of God's word

Ephesians 5:18-20. . . *be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .*”

D. A commitment to the teaching of God's word to address every area of our lives.

- Marriage/Parenting seminars
- Bible/Theology courses
- Children's/Youth/Singles ministry
- Biblical Counseling seminars
- Discipleship training courses.
- Children's/Youth/Singles ministry

E. A commitment to apply God's word to every area of our lives

This is a primary function of our caregroups. Every member of KGC belongs to a Caregroup, and this provides a context in which believers together seek to apply God's word to their lives.

F. A commitment to provide Biblical resources.

- Resource Table
- Tape Ministry

IV. “IMPASSIONED ORTHODOXY”

At King of Grace, we are committed to holding together two things that are often viewed as being separate: a commitment to sound doctrine, and a passionate pursuit of the presence of God. A friend of Sovereign Grace Ministries once described this commitment as “impassioned orthodoxy.”

From our perspective, these are two things that go naturally together and should never be separated. The more we know of God and His manifold perfections, the more we appreciate His redemptive work through Christ's death on the cross, the more our love for God should be enflamed. Truth, pursued for the love of God and set aflame by the Holy Spirit, nurtures, deepens, and enriches our affections for God. Without understanding God's truth, our understanding of the journey of the Christian life will be hindered, and our fruitfulness in it limited. Let us pursue God's truth together, and thus fulfill in an ever-increasing way Jesus' command”You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

APPENDIX 3.1 OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH

A. The Scriptures

We accept the Bible, including the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, as the written Word of God. The Bible is the only essential and infallible record of God's self-disclosure. It leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Being given by God the Scriptures are both fully and verbally inspired by God. Therefore, as originally given, the Bible is free of error in all it teaches. Each book is to be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord who speaks through it in living power. All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide of all Christian life, practice, and doctrine. They are totally sufficient and must not be added to, superseded, or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation, or worldly wisdom. Every doctrinal formulation, whether of creed, confession, or theology must be put to the test of the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture.

B. God Is Triune

There is one God: infinite, eternal, almighty, and perfect in holiness, truth, and love. In the unity of the godhead there are three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-existent, co-equal, co-eternal. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Holy Spirit, yet each is truly Deity. One God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - is the foundation of Christian faith and life.

C. God the Father

God the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth. By his word and for his glory, he freely and supernaturally created the world of nothing. Through the same Word he daily sustains all his creatures. He rules over all and is the only Sovereign. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He is faithful to every promise, works all things together for good to those who love him, and in his unfathomable grace gave his Son Jesus Christ for mankind's redemption. He made man for fellowship with himself, and intended that all creation should live to the praise of his glory.

D. Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was the eternal Word made flesh, supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He was perfect in nature, teaching and obedience. He is fully God and fully man. He was always with God and is God. Through him all things came into being and were created. He was before all things and in him all things hold together by the word of his power. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation and in him dwells the fullness of the godhead bodily. He is the only Savior for the sins of the world, having shed his blood and died a vicarious death on Calvary's cross. By his death in our place, he revealed the divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God. Having redeemed us from sin, the third day he rose bodily from the grave, victorious over death and the powers of darkness and for a period of forty days appeared to over five hundred witnesses, performing many convincing proofs of his resurrection. He ascended into heaven where, at God's right hand, he intercedes for his people and rules as Lord over all. He is the Head of his body, the Church, and should be adored, loved, served, and obeyed by all.

E. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. Through the proclamation of the gospel he persuades men to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word – Part 2, Lesson 6

Lord. By the same Spirit a person is led to trust in divine mercy. The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth, and dwells within the regenerate. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son who in turn came to glorify the Father. He will lead the Church into a right understanding and rich application of the truth of God's Word. He is to be respected, honored, and worshipped as God the Third Person of the Trinity.

F. Man

God made man - male and female - in his own image, as the crown of creation, that man might have fellowship with him. Tempted by Satan, man rebelled against God. Being estranged from his Maker, yet responsible to him, he became subject to divine wrath, inwardly depraved and, apart from a special work of grace, utterly incapable of returning to God. This depravity is radical and pervasive. It extends to his mind, will and affections. Unregenerate man lives under the dominion of sin and Satan. He is at enmity with God, hostile toward God, and hateful of God. Fallen, sinful people, whatever their character or attainments, are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ.

G. The Gospel

Jesus Christ is the gospel. The good news is revealed in his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the gospel, his resurrection is the power of the gospel, and his ascension is the glory of the gospel. Christ's death is a substitutionary and propitiatory sacrifice to God for our sins. It satisfies the demands of God's holy justice and appeases his holy wrath. It also demonstrates his mysterious love and reveals his amazing grace. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which men must be saved. At the heart of all sound doctrine is the cross of Jesus Christ and the infinite privilege that redeemed sinners have of glorifying God because of what he has accomplished. Therefore, we want all that takes place in our hearts, churches and ministries to proceed from and be related to the cross.

H. Man's Response to the Gospel

Man's response to the gospel is rooted and grounded in the free and unconditional election of God for his own pleasure and glory. It is also true that the message of the gospel is only effectual to those who genuinely repent of their sins and, by God's grace, put saving faith in Christ. This gospel of grace is to be sincerely preached to all men in all nations. Biblical repentance is characterized by a changed life, and saving faith is evidenced by kingdom service or works. While neither repentance nor works save, unless a person is willing to deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow Christ, he cannot become his disciple.

I. Man's Inheritance Through the Gospel

Salvation, the free gift of God, is provided by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. Anyone turning from sin in repentance and looking to Christ and his substitutionary death receives the gift of eternal life and is declared righteous by God as a free gift. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. He is justified and fully accepted by God. Through Christ's atonement for sin an individual is reconciled to God as Father and becomes his child. The believer is forgiven the debt of his sin and, via the miracle of regeneration, liberated from the law of sin and death into the freedom of God's Spirit.

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word – Part 2, Lesson 6

J. Sanctification

The Holy Spirit is the active agent in our sanctification and seeks to produce his fruit in us as our minds are renewed and we are conformed to the image of Christ. Though indwelling sin remains a reality, as we are led by the Spirit, we grow in the knowledge of the Lord, freely keeping his commandments and endeavoring to so live in the world that all people may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. All believers are exhorted to persevere in the faith knowing they will have to give an account to God for their every thought, word and deed. The spiritual disciplines, especially Bible study, prayer, worship and confession, are a vital means of grace in this regard. Nevertheless, the believer's ultimate confidence to persevere is based in the sure promise of God to preserve his people until the end which is most certain.

K. Empowered by the Spirit

In addition to effecting regeneration and sanctification, the Holy Spirit also empowers believers for Christian witness and service. While all genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion, the New Testament indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion as well. Being indwelt by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit are theologically distinct experiences. The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power for Christian life and witness, and imparts his supernatural gifts for the edification of the Body and for various works of ministry in the world. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the church of the first-century are available today, are vital for the mission of the church, and are to be earnestly desired and practiced.

L. The Church

God by his Word and Spirit creates the Church, calling sinful men out of the whole human race into the fellowship of Christ's Body. By the same Word and Spirit, he guides and preserves that new redeemed humanity. The Church is not a religious institution or denomination. Rather, the Church universal is made up of those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ and have personally appropriated the gospel. The Church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It also exists to serve him by faithfully doing his will in the earth. This involves a commitment to see the gospel preached and churches planted in all the world for a testimony. The ultimate mission of the Church is the making of disciples through the preaching of the gospel. When God transforms human nature, this then becomes the chief means of society's transformation. Upon conversion, newly redeemed men and women are added to a local church in which they devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper and prayer.

All members of the Church universal are to be a vital and committed part of a local church. In this context they are called to walk out the New Covenant as the people of God and demonstrate the reality of the kingdom of God. The ascended Christ has given gift ministries to the church (including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) for the equipping of Christ's body that it might mature and grow. Through the gift ministries all members of the Church are to be nurtured and equipped for the work of ministry. Women play a vital role in the life of the church but in keeping with God's created design, they are not permitted "to teach or to have authority over a man" (1 Tim. 2:12). Leadership in the church is male. In the context of the local church, God's people receive pastoral care and leadership and the opportunity to employ their God-given gifts in his service in relation to one another and to the world.

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word – Part 2, Lesson 6

M. Sacraments of the Church

Water baptism is only intended for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become his disciple. Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, oneself and the world, a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of his death and resurrection. It signifies that his former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts a person's release from the mastery of sin.

As with water baptism, the Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. This ordinance symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf, and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we partake of the Lord's Supper with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls, and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body.

N. The Consummation

The Consummation of all things includes the visible, personal and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the Consummation, Satan with his hosts and all those outside Christ are finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment, but the righteous, in glorious bodies, shall live and reign with him forever. Married to Christ as his Bride, the Church will be in the presence of God forever, serving him and giving him unending praise and glory. Then shall the eager expectation of creation be fulfilled and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God who makes all things new.

APPENDIX 3.2 OUR BIBLICAL VALUES

The following items are key biblical values that influence who we are and what we do as a local church.

- 1) Supremacy of God in all things
 - (a) *We believe all things are from Him, through Him, to Him. He is our joy and life is for His glory.*
 - (b) *We believe He is infinitely worthy and good and greater and more satisfying than any and all things that exist.*
 - (c) *We believe God is relevant to all things.*
 - (d) *We affirm God and His glory is the chief end to all other means. He is our ultimate and total goal.*
- 2) Gospel Centered Living
 - (a) *We understand Jesus Christ, his person and work of fulfilling all righteousness, his substitutionary death, his victorious resurrection and his current and future reign as the central point of the bible and of all history.*
 - (b) *We believe the gospel is to function for our justification, our sanctification our life and mission together.*
 - (c) *We pursue Christ and His good news as our paradigm and power for all things.*
 - (d) *We affirm Christ and His work as the greatest and most complete revelation of the person and worth of God.*
 - (e) *We affirm that it is in and through and because of the Gospel that God is most glorified and we are most satisfied in Him.*
- 3) The Ministry of The Holy Spirit
 - (a) *We assert God the Holy Spirit is our life giver, the illuminator of scripture, the one who empowers us for all of the Christian life.*
 - (b) *We fellowship with Him, pursue His ministry and rely on Him as a person in all areas of life.*
 - (c) *We affirm and pursue the broad work of the Holy Spirit as depicted in the whole of the Old & New Testament.*
 - (d) *We affirm a continuationist view of the gifts of the Spirit, understanding that the New Testament speaks of the cessation of the gifts at the time of Christ's return and not beforehand.*
 - (e) *We believe that all the gifts are from God for the edification of the church, the fulfillment of the mission of God and the glorification of our triune God and as such should be eagerly pursued.*
- 4) The Sufficiency, Authority & Functional Prominence of Scripture.
 - (a) *We declare the bible as the infallible, inerrant, very words of God.*
 - (b) *We affirm the absolute necessity of a biblical view of God, a biblical view of man, a biblical view of grace, a biblical view of the gospel and, therefore, a biblical view of life.*
 - (c) *We understand it to be sufficient for all of life and godliness and authoritative and normative for the Christian life.*
 - (d) *We affirm it as a means of salvation, justification, sanctification, life, leadership and all areas of life.*
 - (e) *We pursue its use for all areas of our lives and desire to so employ it as to see God's word function prominently in all aspects of personal and church life.*
- 5) Local Church Life
 - (a) *We affirm that relationships in the context of the truth are essential to the Christian life.*

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word – Part 2, Lesson 6

- (b) *We affirm mutual interconnectedness and interdependence of the diverse members of a local body of believers under the authority of qualified biblical leadership as normative for a Christian and a Christian church.*
 - (c) *We deny that the life of the church is found in meetings, programs and performances but in vital relationships under the authority of biblical truth.*
 - (d) *We believe this is the context in which and through which God puts His glory on display.*
 - (e) *We believe that the leadership team equips & leads, ministers minister - that every member is a minister.*
 - (f) *We believe genuine relationships are to be enjoyed while pursuing gospel centered living and fulfilling the broad cultural mandate within the whole of creation.*
 - (g) *We deny an isolated or narrow view of life and relationships that limits godliness to a narrow set of behaviors, relationships or contexts.*
- 6) Sovereign Grace
- (a) *We believe in the Joy of Sovereign Grace. God's plan to accomplish all His desires in and through His Son is perfect, unstoppable, flawless and awe inspiring.*
 - (b) *We rejoice with Him and the hosts of heaven in His undeserved sovereign grace displayed in redeeming unworthy lost sinners like us.*
 - (c) *We rest in God's unfathomable wisdom and infinite glory in ordaining every aspect of history for his sovereign and worthy purposes. We trust him for what we don't understand knowing the wisdom of his choices will be shown in time.*
 - (d) *We celebrate the historic sola's of the reformation: Sola Scriptura, Sola Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Soli Deo Gloria (Scripture Alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone for God's Glory Alone.)*
 - (e) *We agree that humbly believing and pursuing these truths will produce a vibrant New Testament church by God's grace.*
- 7) Mission Focused Living
- (a) *We pursue a lifestyle of living to demonstrate and declare the glory of God in Christ to all people because this is a fundamental aspect of God's nature, plan and purpose.*
 - (b) *We affirm that a right approach to mission springs from a gospel-motivated grace-empowered joy-filled engagement with our neighbors and the culture.*
 - (c) *We believe the preeminent goal in our outreach is for people to encounter the life-giving truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, his substitutional atonement and life-giving resurrection for the purpose of reconciliation with God, the forgiveness of sins and life under His Kingly rule.*
 - (d) *We pursue a multi-faceted, relationship based, church-wide ministry of outreach to the spiritual and physical needs of our communities.*
 - (e) *We pursue a church-wide culture of mission with the equippers equipping, the ministers ministering.*
 - (f) *We believe in a deep and broad cultural engagement.*
 - (g) *We pursue a love for and involvement with our communities, not isolation from nor abandonment of the culture.*
 - (h) *We exist to be a church-planting church.*
- 8) Part of a Family of Churches (Sovereign Grace Ministries)
- (a) *We affirm the self-regulating responsibilities of the local church under the Headship of Christ and the authority of scripture while recognizing our inseparable relationship with the broader body of Christ, and in particular, Sovereign Grace Ministries.*
 - (b) *We recognize our need for apostolic oversight, counsel and care.*
 - (c) *We pursue significant voluntary relationship with this family of churches and their leaders, tied together by doctrine and genuine relationships under the care and oversight of its apostolic leaders.*

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word – Part 2, Lesson 6

- (d) *We embrace the privilege of participating in the extra-local mission of Sovereign Grace Ministries and the mutual benefit that comes from vibrant membership in this family of churches.*

The Guide for the Journey
God's Amazing Word – Part 2, Lesson 6

LESSON 7: SANCTIFICATION - GROWING IN CHRISTLIKENESS

As we noted last week, we embark upon the Christian journey when we respond to God's offer of salvation in Christ. No change could be more momentous—we are “born again” (John 3:3), we are “made alive” (Eph. 2:5), we are transferred from the “domain of darkness” into “the kingdom of God's son” (Col. 1:15), we are forgiven our sins (Eph. 1:7), we are delivered from wrath (Rom. 5:9), we are reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18)—as Jesus put it, we pass “from death into life” (John 5:24). This is the essential and most significant aspect of a life changed by the power of the gospel.

As dramatic as this change is, this is only the beginning. God's purposes for us don't end when we become Christians. Rather, conversion sets us on a glorious path in which God will continue to work out His gracious purposes in our lives, we will continue to experience change for our good according to God's purposes.. What are those purposes? How are they worked out? In this lesson, we will explore what God has for us as we “continue the journey” of the Christian life.

I. THE GOAL OF OUR SALVATION: HOLINESS

Salvation is much more than simply deliverance from the penalty of sin. When God saves us, He makes us His own, and begins a renovation program: the process of making us more and more like our Lord Jesus—the process of making us holy.

“In reality, holiness is the goal of our redemption. As Christ died in order that we may be justified, so we are justified in order that we may be sanctified and made holy”

J.I. Packer

A. The barrier to holiness: sin

Sin not only deserves God's punishment; it mars God's good creation and obscures the display of His glory. He therefore desires to eradicate sin and its corrupting effects from His creation. For the believer, salvation is the beginning of the process of removing sin and its effects from our lives.

- At **regeneration**, the *power* of sin is broken and we are *made alive in Christ*.
- In **justification**, the *penalty* of sin is removed as we are *declared righteous in Christ*.
- In **sanctification**, the *pollution* of sin is progressively removed as we are *made holy in Christ*.

To be holy means to be set apart to God. This includes being set apart from all that is sinful and opposed to God. Holiness is God's goal for His people, and the Christian life involves the process of reaching this goal. The New Testament is full of words that describe this process: *transforming*, *renewing*, *conforming*, *maturing*, and *growing*. Although we will never reach perfection in this life, we are called to make every effort to live a holy life for the glory of God.

1 Peter 1:15-16: “But just he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.””

1 Thess. 4:7: “For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.”

The Process of the Journey
Sanctification. Lesson 7

B. The provision for holiness: Jesus Christ

- 1) Our holiness in Christ has already been accomplished through our union with him. We are already sanctified in him via the gospel even though we now struggle with sin that remains in us. This is a reality for every believer – we must believe it.

Rom. 6:6-11 “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus..”

It is important we understand what Paul is saying here because he is not telling us to do something but to believe something. We are to believe that we are dead through Christ to both sin's penalty and its dominion. But this is not something we make come true by believing it. We simply are dead to sin, whether we believe it or not. But the practical effects of our death to sin can be realized only as we believe it to be true. –

Jerry Bridges,

- 2) Scripture speaks of our lives as being determined by the reality of our union with Christ in his death and resurrection. Therefore, how can we continue to live in sin and rebellion against God in light of this reality? All of our sin has already been paid for and now we live in new life in the power of His Spirit. Because we already are holy in him we can walk out this reality.

Rom. 8:11 “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

- 3) The penalty and power of sin is decisively and irrevocably broken for the believer. We are free in Christ and though the presence of sin abides in our flesh, we have all we need in Christ and His gospel for life and godliness.

2 Peter 1:3-4 (ESV): “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”

Rom. 7:14-20 (ESV): “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

- 4) The presence of sin still remains and though our definitive sanctification is already accomplished in Christ, we must walk out its truth in putting indwelling sin to death by the power of the Spirit through the various means of grace God provides (see below) – this is our progressive sanctification.

The Process of the Journey
Sanctification. Lesson 7

Rom. 8:8-14 (ESV): "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. ¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

What we have learned from Rom. 6 and 7 is that when we trusted in Christ as our Savior and Lord (as our Treasure!), we were united to Christ (Rom. 6:5; 7:4). In this union with Christ we died (Rom. 6:8; Colossians 2:20; 3:3) and rose again (Rom. 6:4; Colossians 2:12; Ephesians 2:6). Therefore a decisive and irrevocable new creation came into being (2 Cor. 5:17), and a decisive and irrevocable liberation happened (Rom. 6:14, 18). We passed from death to (eternal!) life. Our decisive judgment is behind us - at Golgotha (John 5:24). We have moved from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son (Colossians 1:13).

But we also learned that our liberation from sin is not yet final and perfect. Decisive and irrevocable, Yes! But final and perfect, No! Sin still dwells within us (Rom. 7:17, 20). Evil is present in us (Rom. 7:21). The "flesh" is a daily troubler of our souls (Rom. 7:25). We are not yet perfect nor have we already obtained our crown and prize (Philippians 3:12). We are liars if we say we have no sin (1 John 1:8, 10).

How then does the apostle Paul teach us to live? Will he say: "You are decisively and irrevocably new, so you can coast through life with no fight to become new"? Or will he say: "You are not decisively and irrevocably new and must fight to get to that place in Christ"? No, neither of these. He will say: "By faith, embrace all that God is for your good in Christ and all you are for his glory in Christ. Believe that. And now, with that confidence, fight to take possession of the territory that Christ has conquered for you. Fight to become in practice what you are in Christ."

John Piper

- 5) This will be a real, lifelong struggle but take heart, the final victory is won and we have a God who is faithful to forgive and provide all things for our good – conformity with the image of Christ (Rom. 8:28-29)!

C. The model for holiness: Jesus Christ

- 1) Jesus is our Lord, Savior, and example. We are to follow Him in attitude and action. Paul called this being "imitators of God." John used the phrase "we ought to walk as Jesus walked." Jesus said simply, "Follow me."
- 2) More remarkably, God Himself has committed to *making* us like Jesus. The ultimate goal in sanctification is conformity to the image of Christ.

Rom. 8:29: "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

D. The motive for holiness: Love for God & His People

The Process of the Journey **Sanctification. Lesson 7**

As we grow to know His love and appreciate what He has done for us, we will also grow in our desire to live a life that is pleasing to Him—as Paul says, “a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Eph. 4:1).

1 John 5:3: “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.”

Additionally, our love for God must go hand in hand with our love for our brothers. As we know His great love it must result in love for our brothers.

1 John 4:19-21 (ESV)

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

The result is love for God and love for our brothers, the summation of the law and the prophets and the essence of holiness.

Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV)

³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

II. THE BATTLE FOR HOLINESS

While holiness is God’s will for us, this does not mean that the process of sanctification is easy. Given our own sinfulness and the sinful world in which we live, this process involves a battle—one that will require our energies for the rest of our lives.

A. The power of sin is broken

As believers we were slaves to sin—we were unwilling and unable to resist sin. When we were regenerated, we were freed from the power of sin—its ruling force in our lives was broken. We became willing and able to resist sin.

Rom. 6:2,6,11: “We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? . . . For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. . . . Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Why then do we still sin?

B. The presence of sin remains

Although sin has been deposed as the *ruler* of our lives, it has not been removed as a *factor* in our lives. We are free from its dominion, but not its presence and influence—our quest for holiness is not unopposed. The remaining influence of sin is called different things: “the flesh,” “the sinful nature,” “indwelling sin.” The sinful world we live in and the devil who opposes us take advantage of this situation to tempt us into all manner of sin. Here is how Paul describes this battle:

The Process of the Journey
Sanctification. Lesson 7

Galatians 5:16-17: “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

C. The heart is the battlefield

“Regeneration makes man’s heart a battlefield where ‘the flesh’ tirelessly disputes the supremacy of ‘the Spirit’.”
John Owen

- 1) *Growth in holiness always comes through the pathway of the heart. The Holy Spirit doesn’t just change us outwardly by “dressing us up” with new behaviors; He transforms us from within.*
- 2) *The remaining sin in our hearts is deceptive, wicked, and in active rebellion against God.*

Rom. 7:8, 21: “But sin . . . produced in me every kind of covetous desire. . . . When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.”

Jer. 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things . . . who can understand it?”

- 3) *The Bible teaches that our sinful behavior is not caused by other people or our circumstances, but by our own desires, cravings, longings, or lusts. Whatever rules our hearts determines what we do and say in response to people and situations.*

James 1:14: “But each person is tempted when he lured and enticed by his own desire.”

James 4:1: “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”

- 4) *We do not sin because our hearts are empty, wounded, broken, or in need of love, self-esteem, or significance. We sin because of sinful desires that have not been recognized and put to death.*

Rom. 8:5, 8: “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires . . . those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”

- 5) *Indwelling sin inclines our hearts to forget the gospel and to seek happiness, joy, peace, rest, security, and satisfaction outside of Christ. The heart’s idolatrous pursuit of “life” outside of Christ leads to sinful behavior.*

III. THE PROCESS OF HOLINESS: SANCTIFICATION

A. Sanctification defined

Sanctification is the continuing work of God in the life of a believer. It is a progressive work in which we become more and more free from sin and like Christ. In short, our actual lives become increasingly conformed with our legal status before God, both a result of our union with Christ.

The Process of the Journey
Sanctification. Lesson 7

It is a process. We don't become instantly perfect. Rather, we become progressively more holy as we cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

There is discernable progress. We actually do become more and more holy, overcoming various manifestations of sin (lying, pride, selfishness, etc.) and becoming more like Jesus in our attitudes and actions.

It is a work of grace. Many make the mistake of thinking that we are saved by grace but that we then become holy by our own efforts. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are justified by grace and we are sanctified by grace as well. Grace is necessary in both cases, and it is unmerited in both cases. The key difference is that in justification we are *passive* but in sanctification we *actively* cooperate with the Holy Spirit in receiving and responding to God's grace.

This cooperative activity is vividly portrayed by the Apostle Paul:

Phil. 2:12-13: "Therefore, my dear friends . . . continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

B. The Holy Spirit Works

The activity of the Holy Spirit precedes any action towards holiness on our part and makes our actions possible. Although we aren't always aware of His activity, if we are becoming more holy it is because He is at work.

2 Cor. 3:18: "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his like with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

"The only good we do is what He does in us; it is not that we do nothing ourselves, but that we act only when we have been acted upon, in other words under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit."

John Calvin

C. We Work

Because the Holy Spirit is at work in us, we can therefore work; He makes it possible for us to live holy lives. However, we must never be passive in this process. We are responsible before God to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

Col. 1:29: "To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me."

Heb. 12:14: "Make every effort . . . to be holy."

"Sanctification . . . is a thing for which every believer is responsible . . . Whose fault is it if they are not holy, but their own? On whom can they throw the blame if they are not sanctified, but themselves? God, who has given them grace and a new heart, and a new nature, has deprived them of all excuse if they do not live for His praise."

J.C. Ryle

IV. THE PRACTICE OF SANCTIFICATION

Any battle needs a strategy. Practically, our battle against sin involves fighting on two fronts: putting to death sin, and cultivating righteousness.

Ephesians 4:22-24: "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

A. Putting sin to death ("mortification")

"Mortification" is a Biblical term. It is the progressive killing of sin as it manifests itself in each rebellious and self-indulging habit.

"Be killing sin or it will be killing you"

John Owen

Sinclair Ferguson defines it as "the deliberate rejection of any sinful thought, suggestion, aspiration, deed, circumstance or provocation at the moment we become conscious of its existence. It is the consistent endeavor to do all in our powers to weaken the grip which sin in general, and its manifestations in our lives in particular, has."

Rom. 8:13: "For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death (KJV: "mortify") the misdeeds of the body, you will live."

Col. 3:5: "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."

Mortification requires us to:

- 1) *Be aware of sin in all of its manifestations, workings and schemes. This is especially important since sin, by its very nature, is deceitful, causing believers to underestimate its extent and seriousness in their own lives.*
- 2) *Deal with temptation. Temptation comes to all of us, but giving in to any single temptation is never inevitable. We must deal with temptation first by avoiding it, second by fleeing from it when possible, and third by resisting it when flight is impossible.*

Prov. 4:14-15: "Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go your own way."

2 Timothy 2:22: "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

1 Cor. 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

The Process of the Journey
Sanctification. Lesson 7

- 3) *Repent when we have fallen. When we do sin we must immediately ask God for forgiveness and purpose to mortify that particular sin in the future. Failure to faithfully deal with sin will make mortification all the more difficult in the future.*

1 John 1:9 - 2:2: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."

B. Cultivating righteousness

Putting sin to death is only part of the battle. Of equal importance is the positive pursuit of godliness through the cultivating and strengthening in us of all Christ-like habits and deeds. This involves finding out what is pleasing to God and then doing these things through the power of the Spirit. Although we are not under the law as a means of achieving a righteous standing before God, God's moral law reveals His will and provides a standard for what holy living truly is.

Ephesians 4:20-24: "But that is not the way you learned Christ!- assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Col. 3:12: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience."

"We grow in grace by the deliberate stirring up and exercise of the new powers and inclinations which regeneration implanted within us. . . . The Christian, therefore, must use the means of grace assiduously, hearing, reading, meditating, watching, praying, worshipping; he must animate himself to 'universal obedience' in all-around, all-day conformity to God's revealed will; and he must persevere in it with resolution and resilience. Yet he must remember that the power is from God, not himself, and do it all in the spirit of prayerful dependence, or else he will fail"- J.I. Packer

C. Weapons for the battle

God has equipped us with numerous aids for our battle with sin, and at King of Grace we seek to equip every member to maximize the use and effectiveness of these aids.

- 1) The Bible exposes and judges the motives, intents, and desires of the heart. It provides truth—God's perspective on reality. It communicates the life changing message of the gospel of grace that frees us from sins dominion.

Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

The Process of the Journey
Sanctification. Lesson 7

- 2) Prayer deepens our fellowship with God, and therefore brings a greater sensitivity to and conviction of sin. In prayer we can confess our sins, cultivate a hatred for sin and a love for godliness, and receive strength for our battle with sin.

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

- 3) The Holy Spirit dwells in us so that we can say “no” to the passions and desires of our sinful nature. God has made us new creatures in Christ, and He is actively at work to transform our hearts.

Galatians 5:16: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

- 4) Other Christians are a crucial part of this battle. We all battle sin and suffer from some degree of spiritual blindness due to the deceptive nature of sin. Therefore, each Christian should be committed to receiving help from others in this battle. This includes confessing our sin to each other and receiving observations from each other.

Hebrews 10:24: “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works . . .”

At King of Grace, the practice of sanctification is woven throughout all the facets of our church life. Each member is encouraged to practice **the spiritual disciplines**—especially Bible reading and prayer—and through them to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). An essential part of our **CARE Groups** is the specific and personal application of God’s word to our lives. Our emphasis on **relationships** provide countless contexts in which join arms and help each other grow in godliness. The weekly **preaching of God’s word** is a key means to our growth in godliness as a body. Through these avenues and more, we desire to live lives that increasingly reflect God’s character to a lost world.

V. THE HEART OF SANCTIFICATION

The intentional pursuit of godliness is a priority at King of Grace because the Scriptures command it. In taking sanctification seriously, we are taking God’s holiness seriously and the reality of our own sin seriously. It is not uncommon to find some Christians who downplay the role of sin in their lives—such talk seems negative or counter-productive. However, few endeavors could be more exciting than the glorious pursuit of becoming more like Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Far from making us self-centered or morbidly introspective, our pursuit of holiness intensifies our joy as we become more amazed at God’s forgiveness, more free from the sin in our lives, and more intimately acquainted with our God. Ultimately, our holiness brings God glory as His character is increasingly displayed in our lives. Such mercy and grace provides powerful motivation to cooperate with God’s sanctifying work in our lives and so to “continue the journey” of the Christian life in the context of the local church.

The Process of the Journey
Sanctification. Lesson 7

LESSON 8: RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH, PART 1

Up to this point we have reviewed many aspects of the Christian life that we typically think of as involving our personal relationship with God: our response to the gospel, our growth in godliness, our love for doctrine, and our empowerment by God's Spirit. While all of these things are critical for our personal lives, it is possible to understand them, incorrectly, as involving *only* our personal lives. In this lesson, we examine a key assumption of New Testament teaching: all of these things—indeed, all of the Christian life—takes place in the context of our relationships with other believers in the context of local churches.

Although we enter into a relationship with God as individuals, we nevertheless enter into something greater than our own individuality: the church—the community of God's people. We will find that, besides being woven into the very fabric of the Christian life, our relationships with other believers are a tremendous means of blessing, both for ourselves and others. God never meant for us to live the Christian life alone. Instead, He gives us the marvelous privilege of traveling on this journey *together*.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FELLOWSHIP: GOD'S COMMUNITY

To fully appreciate our identity as God's people, we have to recognize where in the unfolding drama of God's redemptive purposes we stand.

A. Throughout the history of redemption, God has been acting to create "a people for His own possession" (1 Peter 2:9).

- 1) *God promised Abraham that He would make him "a great nation" and through him "all the families on the earth" would be blessed (Gen. 12:2-3).*
- 2) *Carrying forth God's purposes, Abraham's descendants were formed into a nation. Their faithfulness to the covenant would result in their peculiar identity as the people of God.*

Exodus 19:5-6: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

- 3) *Christ's finished work not only provided forgiveness of sins, but it advanced God's work of creating a people for Himself by bringing into existence the church.*

Titus 2:13-14: ". . . waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

1 Peter 2:9-10: "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. 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." (cf. Ex. 19:5-6)

B. Our true nature as the church, and as Christians, is *corporate*. God is saving a *people*, not an unconnected group of isolated individuals.

The People on the Journey

Relationships in the Church, Part 1, Lesson 8

- C. This is not merely theoretical. Our lives are to give expression to the reality of our existence as the people of God. To deny this by pursuing individualism or independence is to isolate ourselves from the express purpose of God. The local church is God’s appointed context for this to take place.
- D. What does this mean practically? What is God’s intention for our lives together? Is it simply attending the same gathering on a Sunday? Is it merely acknowledging the same body of doctrines?

Far from so many of our modern misconceptions, the Biblical picture of the church (Acts 2:42-27) can best be described as *community*: a group of people, joined by a common life, united by common values and a common purpose, devoted to living out this life together within the larger society. This is the type of church life God calls us to—a life that shines as a testimony to His work in our lives.

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

This picture of the early church may seem too good to be true. But in reality, it is this kind of community that God desires to create in His church, “a people for His own possession.”

II. THE NATURE OF OUR FELLOWSHIP

Because the Holy Spirit has joined us together as a community, our relationships are to be marked by this reality. We don’t simply attend the same service, or enjoy the same interests—we have been united at the deepest level by the Spirit of God. The New Testament characterizes our relationships with each other by the word *fellowship*.

“We should not think of our fellowship with other Christians as a spiritual luxury, an optional addition to the exercises of private devotions. Fellowship is one of the great words of the New Testament: it denotes something that is vital to a Christian’s spiritual health, and central to the Church’s true life. . . . The church will flourish and Christians will be strong only when there is fellowship.”

J. I. Packer

A. What is fellowship?

The word often translated *fellowship* in the New Testament (*koinonia*—cf. Acts 2:42) is also rendered *participation*, *partnership*, and *communion*. The word expresses the idea of sharing something in common, or joining a mutual endeavor (often with sacrifice involved).

- 1) *Biblical writers took up this word to describe the relationship believers have with God through Christ.*

1 Cor. 1:9: “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

- 2) *It was also extended to describe the relationship believers have with each other.*

The People on the Journey
Relationships in the Church, Part 1, Lesson 8

1 John 1:3: “. . . that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

- 3) *The significance, then, for believers is profound: our fellowship is nothing less than our participation together in very life of God, made possible by Christ’s work on the cross and brought about by the Holy Spirit. Such fellowship is exceedingly profound and precious:*
- This is human relationship at the deepest level possible.
 - This is a type of relationship that only Christians can hope to experience.
 - This is relationship that transcends all other human considerations.

B. This glorious nature of Christian fellowship must be the informing reality behind our relationships with other Christians in the local church.

III. THE FRUIT OF OUR FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship that is truly Biblical has both profound purposes and rich benefits in our relationships together in the church.

A. *Growth in godliness.* Sanctification is a group project. God never intended it to be accomplished in isolation from other Christians in the local church. All genuine Christians should have a desire to grow in godliness, and we simply can never progress on our own like we can in close relationships with other believers.

- 1) We need the consistent encouragement of others.

1 Thess. 5:11: “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

- 2) We need others to help us resist sin and to strengthen our resolve for godliness.

Heb. 3:13: “But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

- 3) We need the input of others to help us see our sin and repent from it.

Galatians 6:1: “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

- 4) We need to confess our sins to others so as to weaken sin’s power and invite accountability.

James 5:16: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

B. *Providing mutual care.* We live in a fallen world, and the effects of sin—our own and others’—are all around us: pain, sorrow, sickness, death. God has promised to care for us, and much of His care comes to us through other believers. Indeed, Christians are to be distinguished by their sacrificial love for one another.

The People on the Journey
Relationships in the Church, Part 1, Lesson 8

1 Cor. 12:24-26: "But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."

C. *Benefiting from the diversity of gifts.* The Holy Spirit distributes gifts to build the church. But God has also made us dependent upon one another—no one person has all the gifts necessary. We need one another and the unique gifts each one brings to mature as a body.

Eph. 4:16: "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

1 Cor. 12:7: "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

D. *Presenting a compelling witness.* Ultimately, our lives together are intended to present to the world a compelling witness of the grace of God. Our unity and love for one another is one of the most powerful testimonies we can give to unbelievers who are lost, isolated, fragmented, and ultimately without hope.

John 13:35: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

IV. THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR FELLOWSHIP

These benefits and more are to be the fruit of genuine Biblical fellowship. However, to enjoy these benefits we must recognize our responsibilities as members of the body and position ourselves to serve others. In short, we must give ourselves to *purposeful involvement* in each others' lives.

"Those first Christians of Acts 2 were not devoting themselves to social activities but to a relationship They understood that they had entered this relationship by faith in Jesus Christ, not by joining an organization. And they realized that their fellowship with God logically brought them into fellowship with one another. Through their union with Christ they were formed into a spiritually organic community. . . . We must grasp the idea that fellowship means belonging to one another in the Body of Christ, with all the privileges and responsibilities that such a relationship entails."

Jerry Bridges

The Bible is filled with things we are to do "to," "with," or "for one another." Here is just a sampling of how we are to position ourselves to experience true fellowship.

- A. *Worship God together (Eph. 5:18-20).* Our fellowship with and worship of God is both the foundation and catalyst for fellowship with others.
- B. *Pray for one another (Eph. 6:18).* Few things draw us closer together than entering God's presence together.
- C. *Love one another (John 13:34-35)* A distinguishing mark of the fellowship as Christians is loving one another. This is expressed in how we regard one another (Eph. 4:1-3), how we care for one another (1 John 3:16-18), how we speak to one another (Eph. 4:29-32.)
- D. *Carry one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2).* This requires that we *know* others, and *share* with others—don't expect people to perceive your burdens through divine revelation!

The People on the Journey
Relationships in the Church, Part 1, Lesson 8

- E. *Encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11)*. Consistent, intentional, and specific encouragement is to be a mark of those who serve “the God of encouragement” (Rom. 15:5).
- F. *Confess our sins to one another (Jas. 5:16)*. Few things are more effective in cultivating humility, weakening sin, and promoting fellowship than confessing our sins and pursuing others’ evaluation and perspective. Thankfully, God doesn’t leave us on our own in our fight against sin!
- G. *Correct one another (Gal. 6:1; Mt. 18:15)*. When we fail to recognize and take responsibility for our sin, we desperately need the correction of others. This requires humility and examined motives but, done in a godly way, is a true expression of Biblical love and one of the most effective ways we can help each other grow.
- H. *Serve one another (Gal. 5:13)*. Effective serving requires knowing the needs of others. Fellowship will both reveal these needs and provide opportunities to meet them.
- I. *Invite others into our walk with God. (1 John 1:3,7)*. This, perhaps, sums up what Biblical fellowship is all about. C.J. Mahaney defines fellowship as “The communication of our current relationship with and experience of God Himself.” Biblical fellowship is not merely “socializing”—it is sharing our common life in Christ: life that is rich, enduring, and eternal.

V. A MEANS OF OUR FELLOWSHIP AT KING OF GRACE: CARE GROUPS

One of the primary means of building relationships and cultivating fellowship with each other at King of Grace is through our network of small groups—what we call CARE Groups. While we are joined to all believers in the local church, CARE Groups allow us to relate more deeply with a smaller number of people. CARE Groups are not a passing fad at King of Grace; they have been a part of our group of churches since its inception, and they provide an important context for accomplishing a number of essential Biblical priorities.

“The value of the small group is that it can become a community of related persons and in it the benefit of relatedness cannot be missed nor its challenge evaded. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say, therefore, that small groups . . . are indispensable for our growth into spiritual maturity.”

John Stott

A. The purpose of CARE groups

- 1) *Care for one another*. God has made us dependent on each other, and CARE Groups provide a context where we can minister to each other with the gifts that God has given us. Meetings often include times of prayer for one another and opportunities for individuals to exercise spiritual gifts for the edification of others.
- 2) *Application of God’s word to our lives*. Merely hearing God’s word is insufficient; we must apply it to our lives for there to be fruit. CARE Groups enable us to do this together. We seek to apply the Bible’s teaching, review Sunday messages, discuss Christian books, and use a variety of other resources with the intention of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3) *Reaching Out to Others Together* – We are a church on a mission yet we can not accomplish this alone. We need the encouragement and assistance biblical fellowship provides to continue to shine the light of Christ through our good deeds and to tell others the good news of Jesus Christ.

The People on the Journey

Relationships in the Church, Part 1, Lesson 8

4) *Encouragement through Biblical Fellowship.* Genuine fellowship isn't practical in a large crowd. CARE Groups provide a place where we can build intimate relationships, care for one another, and help each other grow in our relationship with God.

B. Our responsibilities within CARE Groups

Each member is important to the group, and should seek to contribute to the group's health and success. We each have the responsibility in our group to:

- 1) *Faithfully attend meetings and functions.* We're much more likely to benefit if we are actually present!
- 2) *Willingly participate.* Come ready to contribute, to serve, to share, and to open yourself to others. When the group has an assignment, diligently complete it. Both you and others will benefit from your participation.
- 3) *Build relationships with other members outside the meeting.* Don't confine your investment to the CARE Group meeting—let this be the springboard to rich, enduring relationships.
- 4) *Reach out to new people.* The CARE Group can be a wonderful setting in which to introduce others to the gospel, the church, and other believers.

LESSON 9: RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH, PART 2

I. SERVANTHOOD

One of the realities of Christian existence is that we now belong to Another: “*You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body*” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). All that we are and all that we have now belong to God. Of course, everything that we are and have—our personality, intellect, gifts, abilities, opportunities, possessions—has been given to us by God anyway (1 Cor. 4:7)! Conversion simply gives the believer the opportunity to offer all of this back to God for His glory and for our eternal good.

A common metaphor in Jesus’ parables is that of the servant—we are not called to be great as our culture defines greatness, but to serve faithfully. The words we long to hear on that final day are “Well done, good and *faithful servant*.” Such is the nature of the Christian life: serving is not something we do on occasion—it is a way of life. The Christian journey is not one of observation, but *participation*. In this lesson we will explore two of the primary ways we are called to participate in this journey: through servanthood and stewardship (the faithful use of our resources) within the context of the local church.

“Fellowship involves sharing what we have with others. One of the most valuable things we can share is ourselves: our time, our talents, and our energies in serving one another in the Body of Christ.”

Jerry Bridges

A. The Christian’s Call to Serve

There are to be no passive participants in the church. Indeed, one of the express purposes of our salvation is to rescue us from an existence leading to death and to set us free to serve God:

“... *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*” (Heb. 9:14)

Serving is therefore a God-given expectation of every Christian; as we sometimes like to say, “We are saved to serve.” But it is much more than merely a duty; what higher privilege is there than to give one’s life in glad service to our gracious, sovereign God who saved us?

Since our service for God is closely connected to our salvation by God, we begin our exploration of servanthood with the greatest servant of all: Jesus Christ.

1) *Servanthood is modeled by Jesus’ example.*

Although Jesus was worthy of the worship and service of all creatures, he humbled himself as a servant, and modeled a lifestyle of servanthood for all who would follow him.

Philippians 2:5-8: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

The People on the Journey
Relationships in the Church, Part 2, Lesson 9

Mark 10:43-45: "But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

2) *Servanthood is mandated by Jesus' call.*

While we can do nothing to earn our salvation, our salvation nevertheless ushers us into a life of following our Master, relinquishing our prerogatives and rights. A critical aspect of following Christ is following his example of servanthood.

John 13:14-17: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

3) *Servanthood is motivated by Jesus' sacrifice.*

At the heart of all of our service to God stands the cross. Because we stand forgiven, we are set free to find joy in knowing and serving God. Because the Spirit indwells us, we find we have fresh affections for God and a new desire to glorify God. We do not serve God in order to be forgiven or to gain God's favor, but because we have *been* forgiven and have received God's favor as a gift. Gratitude and joy provide the fuel for the believer's service to God and others.

2 Cor. 5:14-15: "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."

"We should serve God not just because it is a duty, because serving Him is much more than that. We should serve God because it glorifies God. He is worthy of everything we can do for Him and His church. Wouldn't you agree?"

Donald Whitney

B. The Requirements of Christian Service

The grace of God expressed through the cross of Christ provides the primary basis for our service to God. When this is the case, our servanthood will be characterized by certain qualities that both provide godly motivation for service and assure that our service is glorifying and pleasing to God.

1) Christian service is God-centered.

When we serve other people, whether they be fellow Christians in the local church or non-believers in our lives, we are actually rendering service to God Himself. This reality helps to purify our motives for serving, helping us to put to death the isolation that comes from selfishness and the craving for others' approval that comes from pride.

Colossians 3:23-24: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."

4) *Christian service is others-focused.*

The People on the Journey
Relationships in the Church, Part 2, Lesson 9

When serving is motivated by grace, it will not be self-serving, but rather characterized by an authentic desire to glorify God and to meet the needs of others. Few things so distort our service than selfishness, but grace-motivated service actively places the desires of God and the needs of others above one's own.

Galatians 5:13: "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

5) *Christian service is characterized by humility.*

True servanthood adopts a posture that others are more important than self. A servant doesn't demand recognition or dictate how he is to serve, but rather takes simple delight in being used by God to meet the needs of others.

Philippians 2:3-4 "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

6) *Christian service is empowered by the Spirit of God.*

The believer not only labors for God, but by the power God provides. Dependence upon God for motivation, strength, and effectiveness in serving assures that God receives the glory for our service. God gives each believer spiritual gifts that motivate and empower our service for His glory and others' good.

1 Peter 4:10-11 "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies- in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

II. GIVING EXPRESSION TO SERVANTHOOD AT KING OF GRACE CHURCH

- A.** An important aspect of membership at King of Grace is finding a place to use one's gifts to glorify God and serve others. Involvement in service typically takes one of two forms:
- Spontaneous ministry opportunities: We all have numerous opportunities provided to us by God to serve Him and others. These spontaneous occasions encourage us in our dependence upon God and our cultivation of a servant's heart. It is essential that we respond to these unique opportunities as the Lord provides them.
 - Structured ministries of the church: These include ongoing commitments made in various aspects of church life, such as CARE Groups, ministry teams, and children's ministry. These ministries provide concrete service opportunities and meet specific needs, as well as providing a source of relationship building and ongoing accountability.
- B.** Ministry Teams provide wonderful opportunities to serve alongside others to accomplish specific objectives, meet identified needs in the church, and use your gifts for the glory of God.

The People on the Journey
Relationships in the Church, Part 2, Lesson 9

C. Suggestions for getting started:

1) *Consider which ministry(s) would be best suited to whom God has made you:*

- What do I have a passion for?
- What spiritual gifts and talents has God given me?
- Where do others see God’s grace in my life?
- How much time do I have available to serve?
- Where in my schedule can I make room for opportunities to serve?

2) *Begin as soon as possible!*

Opportunities abound for you to serve. Your CARE Group is a good place to start; feel free to surprise your CARE Group leader by asking to be “put to work.” There are other (and numerous) immediate needs, such as children’s ministry, ushering, the resource table, and the greeting team. It is usually wise to get involved soon and start small. And don’t worry too much about your function: adopt the heart of a servant and seek to serve a ministry in a way which best serves it. We are all in the process of learning how we can best serve God and His church, so we might bear fruit for His glory.

III. STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship involves the faithful use of resources that belong to another. An important part of following Christ is the use of our material resources for God’s purposes and to meet the needs of others. In fact, Scripture is clear that an authentic relationship with Christ *will find expression* in the faithful use of our resources for His purposes. For the remainder of this lesson, we will examine a second important means of participation in the Christian journey: the use of our money and possessions for the glory of God, the work of His church, and the well-being of others.

“Christian stewardship is the management of life and all its resources for the glory of God.”

Murray J. Harris

A. The reality of stewardship.

The faithful use of our resources begins with a stark realization: God owns everything! All that we have comes from Him, and therefore we don’t really own anything; we are merely stewards—overseers or managers—over things that belong to God.

Psalm 50:10-12: “For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine.”

B. The significance of stewardship.

The faithful use of our resources is not only commanded by God; it is in fact an undeniable indicator of our spiritual health. Materialism, selfishness, greed, hoarding, anxiety over money—all of these reveal that our trust lies not in God but in money. In the same way, generosity and faithfulness reveal that our trust is in God—by such things we confess that God is the source of our life, not our possessions.

The People on the Journey
Relationships in the Church, Part 2, Lesson 9

Luke 16:11-13: "If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Matthew 6:19-21: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

C. *The substance of stewardship.*

In addition to meeting our physical needs, God provides material resources to further the work of His kingdom through the local church.

Throughout salvation history, God has called His people to support His work through giving.

- 1) In the Old Testament, God's people were to give a tithe, or the first tenth, of their income to God. This practice predated the giving of the Law (Gen. 14:20; Gen. 28:22), and was later formalized in the Law of Moses for the maintenance of the temple and provision for the priests and Levites who served there (Lev. 27:30-32; Deut. 14:22-24).
- 2) In the New Testament, giving to support the work of the church remains an expectation of believers.
 - Giving to support the needs of individuals:

Acts 4:34-35: "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need."

- Giving to support the church's leaders so they can devote their time and energies to serving the church:

1 Cor. 9:13-14: "Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel."

- Giving to support the extension of the gospel:

Philippians 4:15-16: "And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again."

- 3) The practice of tithing illustrates important guidelines and provides a helpful starting point for regular giving to the church.

The People on the Journey
Relationships in the Church, Part 2, Lesson 9

- The financial support of the New Testament church is likened to the support of the temple in the Old Testament.

1 Cor. 9:13-14: "Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel." (cf. Matt. 10:10)

- Believers are commanded to financially support the local church where they receive care and training.

1 Tim. 5:17-18: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages.""

Galatians 6:6: "One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches."

- We are to give regularly and systematically. This demonstrates a commitment to God and a trust that He will provide for all our needs (see Ex. 23:19).

1 Cor. 16:2: "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper. . ."

- In the New Testament, obedience to God's law is intensified due to the transforming work of the Spirit in light of Christ's work on the cross (for example, hatred is likened to murder—Matt. 5:21-22; lust is likened to adultery—Matt. 5:27-28). In the same way, our giving is not merely to be thought of as "paying our dues," but should flow from the giving of our entire selves to God. In light of this, tithing is a reminder of God's ownership of us, and is an appropriate starting point for our giving.

2 Cor. 8:3-5: "For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us."

- 4) Offerings over and above our regular giving provide for special needs, specific ministries, care for the deserving poor, and the expansion of the gospel.

Acts 4:34-35: "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need."

Philippians 4:15-16: "And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again."

(a) *The heart of stewardship.*

The People on the Journey
Relationships in the Church, Part 2, Lesson 9

What we actually do with our money reveals where our heart truly is (Matt. 6:21). But in addition to the command to give, Scripture also addresses our motives and attitudes towards giving. Here is just a sampling:

5) *Giving is to be generous, not stingy.*

2 Cor. 9:6: “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

6) *Giving is to be enthusiastic, not grudging.*

2 Cor. 9:7: “Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

7) *Giving is to be deliberate, not haphazard.*

2 Cor. 9:7: “Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (cf. Acts 11:29)

8) *Giving is to be discreet, not showy.*

Matthew 6:1-4: “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

9) *Giving is to be with faith, not anxiety.*

Malachi 3:10: “Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.”

IV. THE PRIVILEGE OF PARTICIPATION

One of the great tragedies in much of western Christianity is the misconception that “church” is an ornate building or a service to be attended, rather than the community of God’s people, saved by His grace. By definition, then, to be a member of the church is to be a participant in the life of God, with the people of God, made possible by the grace of God. Viewed in this light, our participation in the life of the church is not an option, or the prerogative of a privileged few, but the call and responsibility of every person redeemed through the work of Christ on the cross. Having been purchased by God, we have the awesome privilege of offering all that we are and have to Him for His glory.

Ultimately, the giving of ourselves through servanthood and stewardship is not merely a duty—as if we somehow could “repay” God through our giving or service. On the contrary, before we can give, we must possess, and before we can possess, we must receive. Therefore, all of our serving and giving is simply offering back to God what we have been so graciously given. Our time, talents, and resources are all gifts

The People on the Journey

Relationships in the Church, Part 2, Lesson 9

from God, and it is a consummate privilege to offer these gifts in service of God’s glory and purposes. What a gracious invitation God has given us to “participate in the journey” of the Christian life! Who could imagine a more noble, meaningful, and fulfilling existence?

V. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: A LIFE TO BE SHARED

The Christian life is not a matter of privatized belief. Jesus described the existence of believers in astonishing terms: “*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but **has passed from death to life.***” (John 5:24). As we see in the New Testament, this life is one that is to be *shared* with others. Just the Holy Spirit is a foretaste of our eternal life in heaven (2 Cor. 1:21-22), so is the life of the church—with all its imperfections—to be a foretaste of our fellowship with the saints in heaven (Heb. 12:22-24). May this amazing privilege be our ongoing experience as we “continue the journey together.”

“By his grace, together we are being changed into the image of Jesus Christ through progressive sanctification. Together we are experiencing mutual care, genuine fellowship, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We no longer just see—we observe. We no longer simply attend—we participate. We no longer selfishly consume—instead we are carrying out God’s purpose for our lives as we contribute to the building of the local church.”

C.J. Mahaney

STATEMENT ON CONFLICT, DISPUTES, AND LAWSUITS

For Members of King of Grace Church

Adopted June 1, 2002

The church is populated by sinners who have received grace but continue to face challenges in working out their salvation,¹⁶ especially in relationships. As the people of God, we commit to overcome our offenses in a biblically prescribed manner leading to resolution and peace. Bitterness, resentment, and broken relationships are not acceptable for the people of God.

The church has adopted as its practice the principles taught in Ken Sande's book, *The Peacemaker*¹⁷, which provides wise biblical counsel for resolving disputes.

When two church members cannot resolve a conflict privately, they should seek the help of other wise church members. The church's pastors also are trained and desire to assist members in mediating disputes. If a dispute becomes long-standing without successful conciliation, members should seek pastoral help.

According to 1 Cor. 6:1-8, Christians should never bring a dispute among believers before a civil law court. Instead they should seek the mediation of the church through pastors; if one or both parties prove to be refusing to turn from sin that produces the conflict, the pastors should seek to apply the steps of church discipline to restore peace and order in the church. Church members agree to refrain from any law suits between Christians and to seek means of conciliation through the church.

If a church member has a dispute with a pastor that he does not believe has been successfully resolved after repeated attempts, he should seek the assistance of another pastor and if he deems necessary inform the Lead pastor for evaluation by the pastoral team.

Church members agree to refrain from filing lawsuits against other Christians and to seek conciliation through the church, *unless* a minimum of two pastors review their situation and confirm that litigation is biblically legitimate.

¹⁶ Philippians 2:12

¹⁷ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 2nd Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997).

CHURCH DISCIPLINE FOR MEMBERS OF KING OF GRACE CHURCH

Adopted June 1, 2002

Throughout its pages, the Bible sounds a recurring theme: those God loves, he disciplines.¹⁸ Discipline is a sometimes-challenging process of God correcting his people's thoughts, words and behavior so they can fulfill their calling to become like him. God disciplines his people through a variety of means. He calls his people, first, to self-discipline. Each Christian is called to hear the Word of God as he reads the Bible and hears the Bible taught and applied.¹⁹ As he compares his life to God's Word, he adjusts himself to conform to his Savior. But individual interaction with God through his Word is not the only means that God uses to make his children holy. God also uses his people. "Brothers," writes Paul, "if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness..."²⁰ As members of King of Grace Church we take seriously our responsibility to "restore" members who fail to allow God to discipline them personally for their sins. This means that beginning with private confrontation and, if necessary, leading to public rebuke, we seek to help one another overcome any refusal to repent of those words and actions that the Bible clearly defines as sin.²¹ This includes not only sinful words and behavior, but also refusal to turn from heretical doctrine.

Jesus outlined a process for addressing another believer's sin in Matthew 18:15-17.²² As a church we agree that this is the way for us to approach someone who refuses to appropriate God's grace for change. Initially, church discipline should be informal: if a Christian sees sin in a brother or sister that appears to be continual, he should approach that person and inquire about it. If in fact there is unrepentant sin and a refusal to repent, then the concerned brother or sister should involve one or two others, which may include a pastor. If this group confirms that, in fact, sin continues without repentance, the process must move to formal church discipline.

When the church begins to formally discipline a member, the church's pastors inquire with the individual member in question to confirm fact and to appeal for change. If change is not forthcoming, the pastors will inform the church of the member and his sin, urging members to contact the erring member and appeal for repentance. During this time, the member under discipline may not participate in the Lord's Supper or attend meetings for the purpose of fellowship. Instead, his participation with members should revolve around his need for change. If, after a reasonable period of appeal, no repentance is forthcoming, the pastors will inform the church again, this time announcing that they must revoke membership and that the church must now treat the unrepentant person as they treat unbelievers: in other words, when they interact with this person they should not have "fellowship" as the Bible defines it, but they should appeal for the former member to put his faith in Jesus' work on the cross for them and turn from his sin.

Church discipline has nothing to do with "shunning" a person. It involves first confronting in love and gentleness and, if unsuccessful, withholding fellowship. It is not rejection of a relationship but a change in the nature of a relationship. If a person under discipline is not factious or disruptive or a harmful influence, he is welcomed to attend all church meetings that are open to unbelievers with the exception of

¹⁸ *And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives".* (Hebrews 12:5-6 ESV, see also verses 7-13)

¹⁹ See John 15:3, 10, 20; John 17:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:11-13;

²⁰ Galatians 6:1 ESV

²¹ Other New Testament passages (besides Galatians 6:1 and Matthew 18:15-17) that support this practice include: 1 Cor. 5; Acts: 20:28ff; Galatians 2:11-14; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 3:10-11; Rom. 16:17; 2 Cor. 2:5-11.

²² *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. 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. 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.* (ESV)

small groups that meet for the purpose of fellowship. The pastors may decide to abbreviate or eliminate the process of appeal for repentance if the sin is especially notorious, or if the member proves to be factious, disruptive, or leading others into sin or error. In these cases, the pastors may ask church members to avoid all contact with an individual in order to mitigate his sinful influence.

At times a member may seek to withdraw from the church to avoid church discipline and its consequences. Just as a good shepherd will go after a sheep that has wandered from the flock (Matt. 18:12-14; Ezek. 34:4,8,16), so shall the pastors and members of this church seek to restore a wandering member to the Lord through biblical discipline. Therefore, discipline may be instituted or continued either before or after a member seeks to withdraw from membership if the Board of Governing Pastors determines that such discipline may serve to guard and preserve the honor of God, protect the purity of the church, or restore the wandering member to the Lord. While the church cannot force a withdrawing member to remain in this congregation, the church has the right and the responsibility to encourage restoration, to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, and to make a final determination as to the person's membership status at the time withdrawal is sought or acknowledged. In doing so, the Board of Governing Pastors, at its discretion, may temporarily suspend further disciplinary proceedings, dismiss any or all charges pending against the accused, or proceed with discipline and pronounce an appropriate censure.

If a member leaves the church while he is under the scrutiny of the disciplinary process or while a censure against him is still in effect, and if the Board of Governing pastors learns that he is attending another church, the Board may inform that church that the person is currently under church discipline and may ask that church to encourage the accused to repent of his sin and to be restored to the Lord and to any people whom he has offended. Such communications enhance the possibility that a person may finally repent of his sin, and, at the same time, serve to warn the other church to be on guard against the harm that the accused might do to their members (see Matt. 18:12-14; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-14; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:16-18; 4:9, 14-15; 3 John 9-10).

Once the pastors make a sin publicly known, they commit as well to inform the church of repentance and restoration to fellowship as appropriate to the situation and the good of the church.

Christians who attend King of Grace Church and have been excluded from fellowship from another church will not be allowed to participate in fellowship in King of Grace unless they repent of their sins and make confession and restitution with their former church or unless the pastors of King of Grace are able to determine that the former church did not apply church discipline according to Scripture.

STATEMENT ON REDEMPTIVE SPEECH

For Members of King of Grace Church

Adopted Sep 1, 2007

A distinguishing mark of the New Covenant people of God is their love for one another. Jesus says in John 13, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35 ESV). This commandment is fulfilled in our attitudes, actions, speech and behavior. A common challenge for us is to speak in ways that are loving and helpful not uncaring nor harmful (James 3:10.) Ephesians 4:29 clearly exhorts us towards redemptive speech in all we do, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." (Ephesians 4:29 ESV) At King of Grace we are serious about loving one another in our speech. We believe this is one significant way we fulfill Jesus' commandment to love one another and thus testify to the reality of his life among us. Accordingly, we adopt the following policies:

1. When we encounter a person, practice or policy that concerns us we will go directly, discreetly and immediately to those who are responsible for responding to our concerns. If the matter involves sin we will appropriately involve others according to Matthew 18:15-20 and our policy on church discipline. If it is not a matter of sin but preference or perspective we will gladly defer to others and the responsible parties once we have communicated our concern.
2. We affirm that our speech should always be helpful and never harmful. We therefore refrain from sharing critical comments with any parties not directly involved in our concern. We will not participate in negative talk about a person, policy or practice outside of our jurisdiction. This is described as gossip, grumbling or complaining in the bible (1 Cor. 10:10, 2 Cor. 12:20, Phil. 2:14-15, 1 Pet 4:9)
3. When we encounter others practicing gossip, grumbling or complaining we will quickly and graciously redirect them to those who are responsible to address their concerns and we will encourage them to refrain from discussing their concern with any others. We will thus aggressively seek to preserve the love and unity of the body (Eph. 4:3, Phil 2:1-2, Titus 3:10.) If their unhelpful speech continues we will address it according to our church discipline policy.
4. We will seek to submit to and support our leaders as they seek to serve and lead us as a body. We recognize that they labor as those who must give an account to God for the church and thus bear a unique responsibility for our lives (Heb 13:17, 1 Cor. 16:16.) Additionally, we recognize that our heartfelt support is essential for their success and blessing. While we will bring our concerns to the appropriate leaders so they can benefit from our observations and better serve the body, we will be careful to enthusiastically support their decisions and submit to their instructions even when our preferences or expectations are not met.
5. If we perceive that a leader is sinning in a decision, practice or policy we will address their sin according to Mt. 18:15-20 and 1 Tim. 5:19-20 while observing the above. We will immediately, discreetly and directly address the leader and, if necessary, involve other leaders including the King of Grace elders and apostolic overseers. We will submit to the final decision of the elders and apostolic overseers. If we are not able to submit to and support the final decision of the elders and apostolic overseers because of conscience we will seek to peaceably pursue fellowship elsewhere being careful to protect the broader body of Christ from harmful speech.

STATEMENT ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE FOR MEMBERS OF KING OF GRACE CHURCH

Adopted June 1, 2002

Divorce is a sad fact in our society and in the church at large. While God has, from the beginning, intended that marriage be life long²³ and glorify God by reflecting the relationship of Christ to his church²⁴, there are times when our Lord permits a believer to seek a divorce without sinning against God or a spouse. The conditions under which this may happen are only two:

- When a spouse commits sins that involve sexual contact with another person;²⁵
- When an unbelieving spouse abandons a marriage.²⁶

It is important to note that God *permits* divorce in such cases. Divorce is not required, nor will the church encourage a spouse to divorce when he or she has faith toward God for the marriage to be restored—even when the situations listed above exist.

For the church to condone a divorce in these cases, the spouse must submit the facts of his or her marital situation to the pastors to determine before God in Scripture what he would permit. If a spouse who is a member of the church should seek a divorce from another member due to abandonment, he or she must first wait for the church to follow its practice of church discipline to the end of treating the sinning spouse as an unbeliever before divorce may become an option.

Separated spouses awaiting a pending divorce should consider themselves married until the day a civil court declares the divorce final and legally recognized. They should thus conduct themselves in the church as a married person.

If a divorced person becomes a member of the church, he or she must understand that remarriage will only be condoned by the church when the circumstances prior to the divorce, or following after the divorce, fall under the two conditions listed above. If the circumstances of the divorce do not conform to what Scripture deems acceptable, the divorced person should consider before God whether he or she should seek reconciliation with their former spouse. He or she should also seek to confess to God and to his or her former spouse any sins committed in the seeking of a divorce that did not comply with the teaching of Scripture. He or she must recognize that apart from these conditions, remarriage is not an option

²³ Matthew 19:4-5; 1 Cor. 7:10-11

²⁴ Ephesians 5:22-33

²⁵ Matthew 5:31-32

²⁶ 1 Cor. 7:12-16

LESSON 10: LEADERSHIP: PASTORS AND DEACONS

We have explored how the journey of the Christian life is not to be merely an individual one, but a journey we undertake with others. We are not self-sufficient, independent creatures, but we need the help and blessing that comes from relationships with other believers in the context of the local church. In addition to the normal relationships with others in the church, God provides another essential means of grace for our lives: the leadership and care that comes through the church from pastoral ministry, deacons and the whole body.

To enable the building of His church and the extension of the gospel, God has appointed leaders within the local church. All too often, deficiencies in the church regarding the importance of leadership and the biblical role of leaders have sentenced congregations to immaturity and aimlessness. God's desire, however, is for churches to experience the maturity, stability, and fruitfulness that result when leadership and care are extended by gifted leaders with proven character. In this lesson, we will explore the Biblical mandate for, and strategic importance of, pastoral leadership and deacons—God's provision for all of us to experience "care along the journey."

"Effective leadership is the need of the hour, and for the church under mandate to evangelize the world, it is an indispensable requirement—indeed an urgent agenda." Alex Montoya

I. THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR PASTORAL MINISTRY

A. Clarifying the Terms

The New Testament uses three main terms to speak of what we typically call a "pastor": elder (*presbyteros*-Titus 1:5; 1 Tim. 5:17), overseer/bishop (*episkopos*-1 Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:7), and pastor (*poimēn*-Eph. 4:11²⁷). Scholars have long agreed that these terms, instead of indicating separate offices, are actually used interchangeably²⁸, giving us three different facets of the same office:

- ***Overseer/bishop* indicates the role of oversight**
- ***Pastor* indicates the role of care**
- ***Elder* indicates the necessity of spiritual maturity**

B. The Imperative of a Biblical Perspective

It is increasingly popular for pastoral ministry to be pragmatically defined or culturally conditioned, rather than Scripturally determined. When this occurs, the role of the pastor is distorted, and the effect of the pastor is weakened.

VI. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A PASTOR/ELDER

The Scriptures give us clear guidelines for viewing pastors and for determining what pastors are to be like. These markers provide for us both perspective (to view this through God's eyes) and protection (from cultural distortion).

²⁷ The verb form of the word *pastor* appears in 1 Peter 5:2.

²⁸ For example, compare Titus 1:5-6 with v. 7; 1 Peter 5:1 with v. 2; 1 Tim. 3:1-7 with 5:17-19.

The People on the Journey
Pastoral Leadership and Deacons, Lesson 10

A. A gift from God to the church.

Unlike gifts such as prophecy, healing, and mercy, some gifts God gives to the church are actually *people*—the leaders God gives to serve the church. These people are given to bless the church, and are necessary for the church’s maturity, stability, and expansion.

Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-14: “But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” . . . And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until 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, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

B. A model for the church.

Pastors are to lead lives of integrity, faithfully modeling Biblical standards for the Christian life. Indeed, all of the Biblical qualifications for an elder except one deal with *character*.²⁹ Pastors are certainly not sinless, but there should be the consistent display of these characteristics in their lives.

*1 Timothy 4:12: “Let no one despise you for your youth, but **set the believers an example** in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”*

C. A blessing to the church.

Pastors aren’t merely to “keep the church machine running”—their labors are to bear fruit in the lives of the people of God for the glory of God. God therefore gives the necessary gifts to leaders to enable them to serve the church effectively. When gifted men of proven character are released to serve the church, the results in the church will be increased knowledge, growing maturity, and greater stability.

Ephesians 4:11-16: “ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until 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, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 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.”

D. Recognized by the church.

Since God gives leadership to the church, it is the church’s responsibility—and especially the church’s leaders—to recognize and acknowledge this leadership. When we use Biblical criteria to assess leadership in the church, we can be confident that our leaders are called by God and given to the church to lead us.

²⁹ For the two lists of qualifications for an elder, see 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

The People on the Journey
Pastoral Leadership and Deacons, Lesson 10

“God, who drafts men and fits them for ministry, intends that His work in them be on display so brightly that the church is able to see it, and then able to confirm His call through their appointment to public ministry”
David Hegg

VII. THE ROLE OF A PASTOR/ELDER

In the early stages of the church, leaders recognized the importance of maintaining Biblical priorities in their labors (see Acts 6:1-4). The Scriptures outline what the job description of a pastor should be.

A. Lead the church.

According to Scripture, elders are called by God and accountable to God to lead the local church. The Bible describes this in various ways:

*1 Timothy 5:17: “Let the elders who **rule well** be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”*

*1 Peter 5:2: “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, **exercising oversight** . . .”*

*1 Timothy 3:4-5: “[An elder] must **manage** his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he **care for** God's church?”*

*Rom. 12:6, 8: “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: . . . the one who **leads**, with zeal;”*

B. Nourish the church.

God has ordained His word as the primary instrument for the nourishment and strengthening of His church, and He charges pastors with the task of feeding the church with His word. Indeed, the health and future of the church depends upon its leaders faithfully transmitting sound doctrine and Biblical practice to others.

1 Timothy 4:6: “In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.” (NASB)

2 Timothy 4:1-2: “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”

C. Equip the church.

Pastors are to be equippers, training the church so that each member may be positioned for maximum fruitfulness in his or her life. One sign of effective pastoral ministry is the extent to which people are equipped to then serve others. In a healthy local church, leaders **train**—people **minister!**

The People on the Journey
Pastoral Leadership and Deacons, Lesson 10

Ephesians 4:11-12: “ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry . . . ”

D. Protect the church.

As shepherds of God’s people, pastors are called to protect the church from the dangers it faces, such as false teaching, the allurements of the world, and the ravaging effects of sin. Pastors protect the church in a variety of ways:

- 1) Teaching sound doctrine to strengthen the church in its faith and life.

1 Timothy 4:6: “In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.”

- 2) Discerning errors and temptations offered by the culture, to protect the church from erroneous doctrine or practice.

Acts 20:28-31: “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”

- 3) Modeling, encouraging, and protecting Biblical standards of godliness. This includes, when necessary, the administering of church discipline in cases of unrepentant believers in a Biblical and redemptive manner.³⁰

*Matthew 18:15-17: “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that **by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed**. 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.”*

“A shepherd’s oversight of the flock expresses itself broadly in two ways. First, the shepherds provide truthful, positive direction and leadership to the flock. Second, they watch for spiritual dangers such as sin, false teaching, and false teachers, including Satan’s assaults against the church.”

John MacArthur, Jr.

E. Shepherd the church.

Pastors shepherd the flock of God by providing caring structures that help people apply truth, obey Biblical commands, and experience God’s care.

³⁰ King of Grace’s policy for handling church discipline is attached to this lesson.

The People on the Journey
Pastoral Leadership and Deacons, Lesson 10

1 Peter 5:2-3: "... shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

Acts 20:28: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

"Pastoral care is the loving concern of Christ for his flock which he shows them by providing under-shepherds whose duty it is to equip the saints to minister care to each other."

John Piper

F. Serve the church.

Although pastors are responsible to lead the church, they are to do so as servants. Following the example of Jesus who "came not to be served but to serve" (Mark 10:45), leaders are to posture themselves as servants and expend themselves for the glory of God and the good of others.

Mark 10:43-45: "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

1 Peter 5:2-3: "... shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

II. THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR DEACONS

There are numerous passages in scripture that speak of deacons (Rom 16:1, Eph 6:21, Col 1:7, Col 4:7, Phil 1:1, Acts 6:1-6). The word "deacon" simply means servant or minister. In one sense, all God's people are called as "ministers" or "deacons". Ephesians 4 makes clear that Elders are to equip all the saints for ministry – for deaconing. However, there seems to be an official role for some to share that is designated with the title of "Deacon". Although the many passages give us a sense that a deacon is a mature servant of the local church, the clearest passage on the qualifications and call of deacons is 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (ESV): "Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹ They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹ Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

VIII. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A DEACON

The qualifications for a deacon parallel those for an elder in every way except one. He does not need to have the ability to teach. They must hold to the gospel with integrity, they must be proven, they must be examples in home life. While all believers are called as "deacons" in the general sense, official deacons must set a pace for maturity in Christ.

IX. THE ROLE OF A DEACON

Some churches would limit the role of the deacon to serving the physical needs of the church only. While the physical needs of the church are definitely part of a deacon's responsibility, the passage in 1 Timothy 3 seems to hint at something much more than just physical needs. This passage calls the deacon to the same level of spiritual maturity as elders, without the need to be able to teach. This clearly indicates that their duties are spiritual as well.

It is our understanding that deacons serve as pastoral assistants in the local church. They help care for the flock through their example and care for the church. They free up the elders to oversee the church, to minister the word and to pray for the church.. They assist in the care and leadership of the church under the leadership of the elders in such a way as to extend the effectiveness of the elders and to build the church up into maturity.

While deacons are to be as godly as elders, they differ from them in terms of their ability to teach. The authority of pastors and elders is based on their proclamation and exposition of God's Word. Yet right alongside the elders come those who implement what's been taught and whose lives are no less godly than theirs. Deacons are to seem to raise the congregation to the highest level of spiritual virtue, not to set themselves apart as abnormally pious people whom the congregation could never expect to imitate.

John MacArthur

At King of Grace we utilize deacons as CARE Group leaders, as Sunday morning ministry leaders, as members of the Leadership Advisory team, as Outreach Team leaders and in various leadership roles throughout the church. Their ministry is vital to the health and worship of our local church. Thank God for this key role for his church!

X. THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

A. Actively identify your designated place of involvement.

The New Testament is clear that each Christian is allotted by God to a specific local church and to the eldership of that church. This divine assignment results in numerous benefits:

- It helps to ensure that believers are properly cared for.
- It provides an explicit context in which believers are to serve others.
- It helps leaders to identify those for whom they are accountable before God.
- It creates an accountability arrangement in which unrepentant believers can be cared for Biblically and redemptively.

1 Peter 5:2-3: "Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

Hebrews 13:17: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

B. Exercise the responsibilities of membership.

The People on the Journey
Pastoral Leadership and Deacons, Lesson 10

At King of Grace, there are certain expectations of members, which are simply expressions of a Biblical commitment to a particular local church. It would be natural to expect that any member who is pursuing their relationship with God and believes in faith that God has called them to this church will fulfill these expectations:

- 1) Support of the church's statement of faith.
- 2) Consistent participation in the Sunday morning meeting.
- 3) Consistent participation in a CARE Group.
- 4) Regular involvement in serving.
- 5) Regular financial support of the church.
- 6) Willingness to support and follow the leadership of the church .
- 7) A commitment to living by God's word and to growing in godliness.

C. Maintain a Biblical attitude toward your leaders.

To our individualistic culture, the Bible's commands concerning leaders might seem antiquated or, perhaps, authoritative. Neither is the case. And, as with all the Bible's commands, proper understanding and faith-filled obedience will result in blessing for ourselves and for the church as a whole. What should our attitude be characterized by?

- 1) A faith-filled submission.

Hebrews 13:17: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

Submission does not mean passivity or blind obedience. Rather, submission is an expression of faith towards God—that He has appointed leaders for us and He will use them for our good. It recognizes the critical role that leadership plays in bringing about God's purposes in the church and in the lives of believers. Fundamentally, submission is an attitude: *a disposition to affirm and support the leadership of the church, and to increase its effectiveness through joyful and faith-filled participation.*

- 8) A God-honoring appreciation.

1 Timothy 5:17: "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work."

The appeal to honor leaders can seem self-serving. Biblically, though, honor is an expression of *humility* and *integrity*. The Biblical concept of honor exhorts us to recognize God's provision through another person, to cultivate gratitude for this provision, and rightfully to appreciate and acknowledge those who have served and benefited us. In so doing, we are actually giving glory to God for His goodness to us through other people.

There exists an unfortunate confusion between exalting leaders and honoring leaders in the body of Christ. Exalting leaders is idolatry and is totally unacceptable. Honoring leaders, however, is Biblical and should be the regular attitude and practice of every Christian.

The People on the Journey
Pastoral Leadership and Deacons, Lesson 10

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." (Hebrews 13:17, ESV)

"submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:21, ESV)

"be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer." (1 Corinthians 16:16, ESV)

D. Support your leaders in their labors.

The apostle John voiced a sentiment which resonates in the heart of every pastor: *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."* (3 John 4). In addition to passionately pursuing God, believers can support the labors of their pastors in many ways:

- Joyfully participating in the life of the church.
- Praying for your pastors.
- Refusing to listen to slander or accusation against your pastors.

XI. THE BLESSINGS OF LEADERSHIP

Biblically, ungodly leadership (or the absence of leadership) is viewed as an expression of God's judgment, and godly leadership an expression of blessing (e.g., Isa. 3:1-5). The same is true in the church: God appoints leaders for the purpose of bringing about His intentions for the church, including health, growth, stability, and maturity.

Ultimately, the church's leaders are a primary means by which God's *own* care for His people is expressed. Pastors are merely under-shepherds, laboring on behalf of the *Chief* Shepherd—Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:2, 4). As a famous hymn states, the journey of the Christian life is fraught with "many dangers, toils, and snares." Leadership in the church helps provide "care along the journey," that we might not only have safe passage, but grow into the fullness of God's purposes for the church, for His glory.

LESSON 11: LEADERSHIP: POLITY

Like most churches, King of Grace Church as part of Sovereign Grace Ministries has a defined form of church government based upon our best attempts at biblical theology. While our convictions have been formed and applied over two decades of church ministry, we recognize that our "polity" (governing structure) does not warrant the passion reserved exclusively for Christ and him crucified. Indeed we have endeavored to reflect Wayne Grudem's attitude and approach to this important but controversial subject..

At the outset it must be said that the form of church government is not a major doctrine like the Trinity, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, or the authority of Scripture... And church history attests that several different forms of government have worked fairly well for several centuries... It seems to me, then, that there ought to be room for evangelical Christians to differ amicably over this question, in the hope that further understanding may be gained.

Wayne Grudem

Our polity stands upon these principles: elder led congregations, plurality among elders, the lead pastor, the vital role of deacons in assisting elders, congregational participation and partnership with apostolic ministry

I. ELDER LED

"Pastor", "Overseer" and "Elder" all connote roles which involve decisive authority and leadership. It is the elders that are held responsible to oversee, lead and care for the local churches. Though there are many forms of church government which seem to work effectively, it is important that whatever form is used honors and fully enables the biblical call of the elder to "rule."

1 Timothy 5:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ *Let the elders who **rule** well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.*

*1 Peter 5:2: "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, **exercising oversight** . . ."*

*1 Timothy 3:4-5: "[An elder] must **manage** his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he **care for** God's church?"*

*Rom. 12:6, 8: "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: . . . the one who **leads, with zeal;**"*

Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

Because of the clarity of the biblical call to elders to lead or "rule" the local church, King of Grace is committed to a polity that leaves the decision making {governing) responsibility and authority in the hands of the elders. Constitutionally and functionally the elders serve as the governing body for King of Grace Church.

II. PLURALITY AMONG ELDERS

We practice plurality of church leadership for the simple but compelling reason that the churches represented in the New Testament were governed by more than one leader. We call this plurality "team ministry." It is the strength and unity of team ministry that provide the foundation from which elders serve the church and stand accountable for their lives and doctrine.

Equally important to church leadership and a necessary protection for the church is the concept of team ministry or a plurality of elders. The Bible clearly models a plurality of elders as normative for church leadership. Jesus appointed twelve apostles, not just one, to succeed Him in the founding of the church. In Acts 6:1-6, the apostles appointed twelve deacons, not just one, to serve the physical needs of the congregation in a way that brought unity to dissenting groups. The following references document instances in which the plural "elders" is used in combination with the singular "church": Acts 14:23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; James 5:14. The plain meaning is that there were multiple elders in each local assembly.

At King of Grace Church we have not yet grown to the size where we can support more than one pastor. We currently employ a "Leadership Advisory Team" in lieu of a regular team of elders. This non-governmental group is composed of men with character and insight who serve the lead pastor with an alternative voice of counsel, a context for relationship and a forum for accountability. Additionally, the apostolic oversight from Sovereign Grace Ministries provides additional voices in leadership and the vital counsel, encouragement and accountability to serve our church until we have an elders team. We plan to acquire a second and subsequent pastors as soon as possible that then will serve as the regular elders team.

III. THE LEAD PASTOR

The role of lead pastor is based upon the foundation of plurality, which prevents a drift towards autocracy. The Old Testament offers a gallery of names that remind us of God's practice of using one to influence many. In the gospels, we are told that Christ chose the Twelve, but ordained Peter to fill a uniquely prominent role. In New Testament times, the Jewish synagogues were ruled by a council of elders, but each council had a chairman, or "ruler of the synagogue." In like manner, Paul led a growing team of apostolic men. In the Trinity there is a head, in the church there is a head, and in the home there is a head. These examples, and many others, illustrate the notion that biblical leadership, though shared, is most frequently organized and facilitated by a central figure. The lead pastor is therefore called to build a team, not a personal ministry. His effectiveness should be measured by the maturity of his plurality.

IV. DEACONS

As discussed previously, deacons assist the elders in the care and leadership of the church. While they are not responsible for the ultimate decision making of the church, deacons, because of their maturity and their involvement in implementing the decisions made by the elders are involved in all major decisions for the purpose of counsel and affirmation.

This is worked out at King of Grace Church by including deacon as part of the Finance Team, by updating the deacons and soliciting their input on church leadership issues monthly, by seeking their feedback on the annual budget and by seeking their affirmation on any major decision before it is brought before the entire congregation. Additionally, deacons are appointed by elders after their character and suitability is proven and affirmed via the congregation.

V. CONGREGATIONAL PARTICIPATION

We practice elder led polity while affirming the necessity of the voluntary and heartfelt support of the entire body. The whole congregation serves as a crucial aspect in the governance of the local church.

A. Dispute & Discipline

Acts 6:1-5 (ESV)

¹ Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” ⁵ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.

In Acts 6, following the conflict between Hebraic and Hellenic Jews, the Apostles wisely proposed a solution of creating “ministry assistants” or “deacons”. The congregation received the request and gladly implemented it. They chose the men who were to lead in taking care of the care of the needy. The congregation’s approval and active participation was crucial to the success of this endeavor.

Matthew 18:15-18 (ESV)

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.

1 Cor. 5:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

The congregation serves a decisive role in their voluntary participation and authority in deciding church discipline measures. It is “the church” as a whole which is the final place of implementation in dealing with gross sin. The responsibility for disciplining this sinning brother by removing him from membership belongs to the entire congregation, not just the elders.

B. Doctrine

Galatians 1:6-9 (ESV)

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

The People on the Journey
Pastoral Leadership and Polity, Lesson 11

Paul is writing not only to the Galatian elders. He's writing to the whole church. And he's saying that the church is responsible to evaluate the teaching that comes from the pulpit. They are not to passively accept anything that comes out of the preacher's mouth, but are to hold it up to the light of Christ and test it by His Word. And if the teaching fails the test, the whole church is responsible to quit listening to the teacher - even if that teacher is an apostle like Paul himself.

2 Timothy 4:2-3 (ESV)

² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

Paul here lays the responsibility for the presence of false teachers clearly at the foot of the congregation. They are the ones responsible for accumulating to themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires. They are the ones who do not endure sound doctrine, who want their ears tickled, and who consequently turn from truth to myths. They are the ones ultimately responsible for allowing their own desires to determine the kind of teachers they seek out for themselves.

These convictions are worked out at King of Grace by requiring enthusiastic majority confirmation from the congregation of any pastoral candidate before ordination is pursued. Additionally the biblical roles of the pastors and the congregation are fostered by creating a church environment where there are vital relationships, active discussion and cooperation between the elders and the whole church. We provide regular forums of communication and interaction so that we might truly operate as a body, congregational meetings, an open door policy with the pastors and avenues of redress through the leadership team, deacons and apostolic overseers. Any church member has the ability to appeal to members of the pastoral team and those leaders who oversee King of Grace Church at an extra-local level if there is a difficulty that they are unable to resolve through the primary channels available to them. Pastors are expected to lead humbly and lovingly, not harshly and arrogantly. A dynamic relationship of mutual care, respect and elder-led partnership is necessary for a healthy church polity. No church polity will work without the necessary qualifying character on the part of the pastors and the correspondent faith-filled submission of the congregation.

VI. EXTRA-LOCAL OVERSIGHT

With regard to the principle of extra-local ministry, we want to be clear that the men identified as part of the leadership team within Sovereign Grace Ministries, sometimes called the 'apostolic team' are understood by all to hold a position decidedly and radically inferior to that of the original twelve Apostles. But the label is retained because Scripture appears to offer another type of apostle – one that neither writes Scripture, nor is counted among the twelve. In fact, there appear to be at least eight others, apart from Paul himself, who graced the pages of the New Testament in apostolic ministry. In our view, apostolic ministry can exist today without comparing its authority or impact to Paul or the twelve. Briefly stated, the role of the apostolic leader is to ensure that the gospel is preached and applied in the daily life of the church. Concentrating attention on the writings of Luke and Paul, one might conclude that apostles are devoted to church planting, being set apart for the gospel and sent forth with the gospel, that they might protect the gospel and build with the gospel. They are called to serve churches as spiritual fathers, with primary responsibility during a formative season in a local church (much as earthly fathers do with the formative years of their children), a pattern that eventually transforms into a partnership with mature local churches.

Currently, Dave Harvey serves King of Grace Church in this capacity with Aron Osborne as his assistant. Dave and Aron serve as a voice of counsel and guidance, encouragement and accountability

The People on the Journey

Pastoral Leadership and Polity, Lesson 11

for our lead pastor and the leadership advisory team. Like other leadership roles at King of Grace, genuine relationship is a vital ingredient in Dave and Aron’s partnership with us as a local church. We are very blessed to have such leaders and friends serving us.

While we place the primary leadership responsibility for King of Grace on its elders, the apostolic leaders over us exercise clear responsibility in ensuring the purity of the church in doctrine and conduct. King of Grace Church is firmly committed to this apostolic oversight because of clear biblical precedent and outstanding benefit to us as a local church. We expect that as we mature as a local body we may better be able to facilitate the furtherance of the ministries of our apostolic leaders to “regions beyond” us.

THE 10 AFFIRMATIONS OF THE DANVERS STATEMENT

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen. 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor. 11:7-9; 1 Tim. 2:12-14).
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen. 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor. 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen. 3:1-7, 12, 16).
 - In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
 - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity, which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal. 3:28). Both the Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen. 2:18; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
 - In the family, husbands should forsake hardship or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; Tit. 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).
 - In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission – domestic, religious, or civil – ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan. 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet. 3:1-2).
8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim. 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain and authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor. 12:7-21).
10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

LESSON 12: EVANGELISM AND MISSION

Over the past weeks, we've looked at many essential topics that relate to our relationship with God and with other believers in the context of the local church. However, our study wouldn't be complete without giving attention to a critical component of the Christian life: the mandate from our Lord to reach others with the gospel. Our relationship with God was never intended to be merely a private journey concerned only with one's personal beliefs. On the contrary, those who have been reconciled to God through the work of Christ by definition become "ambassadors for God" in sharing the gospel with others (2 Cor. 5: 18-20).

One of the songs of Revelation proclaims that Christ's death ransomed people for God "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). In this final lesson, we will explore the church's mission to glorify God through the proclamation of the gospel throughout the earth. As we will see, each of us has the great privilege and responsibility of "reaching others on the journey" as we share the gospel with others, demonstrate the reality of the gospel in our lives, and participate in the mission of the local church.

I. CHURCH WITH A MISSION

We want to avoid the mistake of viewing church life as simply a routine to fulfill, or viewing ourselves as a static gathering of believers. From the very beginning, God's people had, at the core of their identity, an element of mission, and the goal of expansion.

A. *The plan commenced: God's covenant with Abraham.*

When God revealed Himself to Abraham, He promised not only to bless Abraham, but to in turn make him and his descendants a blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Genesis 22:17-18 "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

B. *The plan continued: The Great Commission.*

After Jesus accomplished his atoning work on the cross, he gave his followers a mandate to proclaim the gospel to all the nations. It is through the proclamation of the gospel that God will gather His people to Himself, and thus fulfill His original promise to Abraham to bless "all the nations."

Matthew 28:18-20 "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.""

C. *The plan completed: The Heavenly Throng.*

We see the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan and Jesus' commission in the book of Revelation, which pictures people from all over the earth giving glory to God and to the Lamb of God who died for them. The Bible is clear that God's intention bring glory to His name by gathering a people to Himself will surely reach its intended goal.

Revelation 7:9-10 "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

II. PEOPLE WITH A MESSAGE: EVANGELISM

Since every Christian has personally experienced the grace of God through the gospel, each of us has a part to play in this glorious commission as we testify to the salvation God offers through the gospel.

"Evangelism is the verbal proclamation of the good news of salvation with a view of leading people to a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ." D.S. Lim

A. The subjects of evangelism: Every Christian!

The work of evangelism is essentially that of *bearing witness*—each of us is called to testify to what God has done for us through the gospel. Each of us has been empowered by God, and each of us has our own story to tell, of God's amazing grace to us through the cross.

Acts 1:8 "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."

1 Peter 3:15 "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (NIV).

B. The substance of evangelism: The Gospel.

We aren't merely calling others to live a moral life, or asking them simply to "believe in God," or trying to convince them that Christians are "nice people." Salvation comes only through faith in the finished work of Christ on our behalf. As the apostle Peter said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Rom. 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

As we saw in Lesson 3, the gospel is the "good news" of God's saving work on our behalf through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Communicating the gospel faithfully will help to preserve its power and protect us from distorting its truth. Here are some ways it will do this:

- 1) *Focusing on the gospel keeps our evangelism God-centered, not man-centered.*

While we want to be sensitive to people's needs, the gospel reminds us that a person's greatest need is forgiveness of their sins and deliverance from God's just wrath. The gospel offers the only solution to man's greatest need.

“Man’s responsibility to his maker is, indeed, the fundamental fact of his life, and it can never be taken too seriously. God made us responsible moral agents, and He will not treat us as anything less. His word addresses each of us individually, and each of us is responsible for the way in which he responds”

J.I. Packer

2) *Focusing on the gospel keeps our evangelism humble, not self-righteous.*

The gospel is explicitly designed “so that no one may boast before [God]” (1 Cor. 1:29). Our relationship with God had nothing to do with our own wisdom or merit, but is solely due to God’s grace and mercy towards us. As His witnesses, we are merely testifying to what He has freely given to us.

1 Cor. 1:26-29 “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-- and the things that are not-- to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”

3) *Focusing on the gospel keeps our evangelism faith-filled, not self-sufficient.*

We can do nothing in our own strength to convince anyone of the gospel’s truth or to save anyone; God is the one who saves, and only His power can regenerate a heart. We can therefore freely share the gospel, and trust God to bring the results.

John 6:44 “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

C. The method of our evangelism: Declaration and Demonstration

4) Declaration: Telling the good news.

Rom. 10:14-15 “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!””

- Since the gospel is, by definition, “good news,” evangelism always involves the sharing of this news. Every Christian is called to be an ambassador of the gospel, and we seek to encourage and equip every member of King of Grace to share the gospel accurately, joyfully, and faithfully. The following approaches help serve this goal:
- The Alpha Program
- Prayer and encouragement towards friendship evangelism via CARE Groups.
- Evangelism training seminars.
- Tracts and invitations.
- Various Gospel Outreach events – street evangelism.
- Email and web page resources.

5) *Demonstration: Living from the good news.*

Matthew 5:13-16: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

In addition to proclaiming the gospel, Christians are to testify to the reality of the gospel by the way they live. The Bible describes believers as “*God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*” (Eph. 2:10). These good works include deeds of kindness and love that express God’s love to people and give credibility to the message we proclaim.

This demonstration of the gospel takes place in countless, daily ways through the lives of individuals and families as they live their lives in our community. We also seek to facilitate this demonstration through various organized ministries in King of Grace through which our members can use their gifts to care for others and testify to the gospel. These ministries include:

- Outreach Ministries.
- CARE Group servant outreach.
- CARE Group benevolence ministry.
- Church-wide benevolence ministries.

D. The context of our evangelism

6) Personal.

We encourage everyone at King of Grace to bear witness to Jesus Christ and share the gospel in the network of relationships He provides to each of us. These “fields of harvest” (see Matt. 9:38) include our family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, classmates—anyone whom God has sovereignly placed in your life. We would encourage every believer at King of Grace to spend at least two hours a week in some context where he or she is interacting with non-believers in the name of Christ.

7) Small Groups

We believe God uses the encouragement and resources of our CARE Groups to help us as we seek to reach family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, classmates – those whom God has placed in our lives.

8) Corporate.

We believe that God has a plentiful harvest for us to reap in the Merrimack Valley. We therefore seek to reach those in the area in which God has placed us, and to provide contexts our members can utilize to reach out to those in their relational network.

III. OUR BROADER MISSION: CHURCH PLANTING

While we have a specific mission as a church, we are also part of a family of churches under the name of Sovereign Grace Ministries. Sovereign Grace Ministries is a growing family of churches in

the United States, Mexico, Canada, Bolivia, Ethiopia, and the United Kingdom. With other Sovereign Grace Ministries churches we share:

- a vision to establish and support local churches
- a passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ
- a commitment to our doctrinal distinctives
- a desire to see the members of these churches glorify God in their public and private lives—both corporately and as individuals

As part of its commitment to equip and develop local churches, Sovereign Grace Ministries:

- provides a number of resources (books, teaching, and music),
- holds several national conferences (small group, worship, leadership, and the annual Celebration Conferences)
- trains new leaders in their Pastors College

- A. **Purpose:** The primary purpose of Sovereign Grace Ministries is to establish and nurture local churches to God’s glory.
- B. **Structure:** Sovereign Grace is led by an apostolic team of men based in various related churches. These men work to care for the family of churches, as well as to lead in the planting of new churches. C.J. Mahaney, founding pastor of Covenant Life Church is the team leader for Sovereign Grace.
- C. **Function:** Individual churches participate in church planting by helping to raise up leaders and sending teams of people to new cities for new church plants. Chesapeake Community Church of Joppa, MD and Covenant Fellowship Church of Glen Mills, PA were instrumental in establishing King of Grace Church.
- D. **Other Ministries:** As part of its effort to equip and strengthen local churches, Sovereign Grace also serves churches in numerous other ways designed to care for pastors, strengthen believers, and to help grow strong churches. Its other activities include:
- “Come and Worship” music materials (CDs, song sheets, etc.)
 - A monthly ministry update.
 - Resources for growth in the Christian life
 - Teaching tapes on a wide variety of topics
 - Conferences
 - Pastors College

IV. OUR SPECIFIC MISSION AND YOU

- A. **Our mandate to proclaim the gospel plays an important role in our overall mission as a church. Earlier in this course, we introduced to you the mission statement of King of Grace Church:**

“Wholeheartedly loving God and one another by Worshiping, Witnessing and Walking in the good news of Jesus Christ for all of life.”

We love because God has first loved us in Christ. As we focus on the glorious news of Christ in his life, death and resurrection we will find power to truly know and love God and love people. We love him and others as we worship, walk together and witness to others in light of the good news of Christ. This good news has life changing relevance to every area of life.

B. If it is your desire to take part in our mission by becoming a member of King of Grace, the process is a simple one with a few straightforward requirements:

- 1) A clear testimony of personal faith in Jesus Christ.
- 2) A demonstrated desire to serve as an active member of this body shown by the following:
 - (a) *Successful completion of the class “Our Journey Together.”*
 - (b) *Affirmation of the church’s statement of faith.*
 - (c) *Support of the values and leadership of King of Grace Church.*
 - (d) *Regular attendance of the Sunday morning meeting.*
 - (e) *Active involvement in a CARE Group.*
 - (f) *A meeting with a pastor to discuss church membership.*

Upon completion of these requirements, you will be welcomed into membership with other new members during the Sunday morning meeting. We welcome new members into the church on a regular basis, and consider these special Sundays as significant days in the life of our church.

V. FINDING YOUR PATH FOR THE JOURNEY

We are so grateful that you have joined us for this “journey” of exploring King of Grace Church. We trust that the past eight weeks have been encouraging and informative as you seek to determine God’s will for your life, especially with regard to your involvement in a local church. What we have said before bears repeating: although we do hope that you will find in King of Grace a church home where you can thrive, our main burden is not that you become a part of *this* church, but that you become a part of *some* church. It is our desire that you develop a Biblical, enthusiastic conviction about the importance of active involvement in the local church, and with this conviction find a church home where you can worship God, grow in your relationship with Him, and serve in ways that glorify Him.

If there are any remaining questions, please do not hesitate to ask. We desire to do all we can to serve you as you consider the very important decision of local church involvement. Whatever decision you make, we hope your time here has increased your love for the Lord, and has strengthened you to “continue the journey” as you seek to glorify God, cherish the Savior, and serve His purposes in the context of the local church. May God’s richest blessings be upon you!



CHURCH COVENANT

OUR COMMITMENTS TO ONE ANOTHER IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

The basis for our joining together as members of King of Grace Church is our relationship with God the Father through the work of his son Jesus Christ communicated to us by the Holy Spirit.

As a member of King of Grace Church, I joyfully agree to walk together with the members of this church making the following commitments according to God's grace:

- I will rejoice in the grace of God, privately and corporately giving thanks to our heavenly Father for the sacrifice of his son Jesus, for the forgiveness of our sins, and for the gift of the Holy Spirit who empowers us to believe and to live for the glory of God.
- I will live together with my brothers and sisters in love, just as God has loved us. I will seek their good through forming relationships that promote holiness, discipleship, worship, and sound doctrine.
- I will care for my brothers and sisters in Christ in distress, sickness, and poverty.
- I will not neglect to meet together in corporate worship and in small group fellowship in those contexts that the church provides.
- I will devote myself to the study of Scripture and to prayer both privately and in the corporate setting.
- I will seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ through seeking progressive growth in holiness through the application of the means of grace as taught in Scripture.
- I will seek to advance the proclamation of the gospel through those relationships God has afforded me in my family, my workplace, and my community, and support those whom the church sends to proclaim the gospel beyond our locale.
- I will participate in the ministry of my church through regular giving of my time, effort, and finances.
- I will pursue conciliation when offense occurs between me and another member, and I will reject all opportunities to speak or to hear gossip or slander.
- I will watch out for church members and admonish anyone whose practice of sin requires it. If a church member requires corporate discipline, I will support the efforts and direction of the church, as led by its pastors, to call that member to repent of his sins. I agree with the church's doctrine and practice of church discipline. I support the church's teaching on conciliating disputes and agree to abide by the church's "Statement on Conflict, Disputes, and Lawsuits."
- I will promote marriage as a reflection of Christ's relationship with his church and bring up any children God gives me in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. I support the church's understanding of the Bible's teaching on divorce and remarriage.

Signature _____ *Print Name* _____ *Date* _____

Pastor _____ *Print Name* _____ *Date* _____



MEMBERSHIP PROFILE

Name _____ Date _____

Name of CARE Group Leader _____

This questionnaire is for the person who is completing the King of Grace Church membership course and intends to become a member of the church. It gives us basic information about you, which serves your pastor in shaping the discussion when he meets with you. As you become a member of the church, we want to do our best to get to know you, to provide you with effective pastoral care and to see that your experience as a member fulfills all the intentions we've outlined in the membership course.

Reception of a completed questionnaire signals to the church that you would like to meet with a pastor to discuss the church and your involvement. We will contact you for an appointment.

Married couples note: each of you please fill out a separate form.

BASIC INFORMATION

The information on this page will go into our church records so that we can best serve and communicate with you.

Name _____ Nickname you prefer _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Email _____

Home phone _____ Work phone _____ Cell phone _____

Sex _____ Date of Birth (month/day/year) _____

Marital status (married, single, separated, divorced) _____

Anniversary date _____

If separated, date of separation _____

If divorced, date of divorce _____

Family Information: Name of spouse _____

Children's Names	Sex	Date of Birth	live with you
_____			yes / no
_____			yes / no
_____			yes / no
_____			yes / no
_____			yes / no

Employer and city _____

Job Title _____

If you are a student, school attending _____

Are you a citizen of the United States? Yes ___ No ___

If no, what is your immigration status? _____

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

When did you come to faith in Jesus Christ? _____

Describe the circumstances of your conversion: (circumstances that God used, who shared the gospel with you, etc.)

Have you attended Alpha? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, when did you complete the course?

In your own words, what is “the gospel”?

Have you been baptized in water? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, when and where?

What is your understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in a believers life?

LIFE CHALLENGES

In order to best care for you, your pastor needs to know about significant life challenges you are facing or have faced. This information will be kept in confidence.

Are you presently under a physician’s care? Yes ____ No ____ If so, for what condition?

Have you recently been under the care of a psychologist or psychiatrist?

Yes ____ No ____ If so, for what condition?

Have you abused alcohol or drugs at any time during the last five years?

Yes ____ No ____

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Yes ____ No ____ If so, for what offense?

Are there any other life challenges that you are currently facing or have faced in the past which would help us to know you and care for you?

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO KING OF GRACE CHURCH

At this point, do you believe you should become a member of King of Grace Church?

Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

What outstanding questions do you have about the doctrines and/or practices of the church?

How did you find out about the church?

Are you coming to King of Grace from another church? If so, please complete attached "Letter of Recommendation" referral?

What is it about King of Grace Church that draws you here?

What CARE Groups have you visited? Which are you currently attending?

Which members of the church do you know best?

Are you serving on a ministry team? What ministry teams would you like to find out more about?

What talents or abilities do you have that could be used to serve the church and its ministry?

What areas of service in the church interest you most?

_____ **For Completion by Pastor** _____

Date of Interview _____ Accepted into membership? _____ Date _____

Pastor's Signature _____ Date _____

Ministry team interest: _____

Pastor: if you and / or the prospective member decide that membership is not appropriate at this time, please note the reasons here and note if any follow up is necessary.

Revised 10-20-04

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

In keeping with the spirit of the New Testament Church (Acts 18:27; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 16:3), we find it helpful to communicate with pastors of the church you attended before coming to King of Grace. If you have been a member of another church prior to your attendance here, would you please give us your pastors name and address?

I was not a member of another church prior to coming here.

I was a member, but I'd like to talk to one of the pastors here prior to your writing.

Please feel free to write.

Here is my former pastor's name and address:

Pastor's Name: _____

Church Name: _____

Church Address: _____

Comments:

My Name is: _____

King of Grace CARE Group: _____