

**GRACE & TRUTH**  
MINISTRIES

**MEMBERSHIP CLASS**

*Join the Family*

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### OUR HISTORY

Grace & Truth began in June of 2020 as a small group of several families studying the Bible together on Sunday evenings. The ministry was founded by Curt & Suzanne Whitfield to be a family of disciples who are focused on learning God's Word. Sunday morning gatherings officially launched on Easter Sunday in 2021.

### OUR VISION: Who We Are

We are a family of disciples helping each other to be more like Christ.

### What is the Church?

Grk. *ekklesia* - gathering, assembly

- The Body of Christ
- The Family of God
- The Kingdom of God
- The Temple of God's Spirit

### What is a disciple?

Disciple (Grk. *mathetes*) = follower, student

Jesus never used the word "Christian" but repeatedly called us to be disciples.

**Romans 8:29** "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed** to the image of his Son"

**Romans 12:1-2** "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

**God's plan for His family is transformation.**

### OUR MISSION: What We Do

We train disciples to listen and obey.

### Matthew 28:19-20

"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."

**The primary mission of the Church is to make devoted disciples of Jesus.**

In the New Testament, the church is defined as a group of “devoted” disciples.

### Acts 2:42

“And they **devoted** themselves to the apostles' **teaching** and the **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and the **prayers**.”

### TEACHING: We are devoted to God's Word.

- The early church was devoted to learning God's Word together as a family.
- Adult Teaching: Sunday & Wednesday
- Kids Teaching: Kingdom Kids

### FELLOWSHIP: We are devoted to each other.

- Fellowship (Greek: *koinonia*) = sharing resources, relational participation
- Fellowship in the Bible is all about sharing with one another.
- The early church operated as a family. A healthy family shares resources, responsibility, and accountability.
- We share our resources as a family by:
  - Sharing meals together.
  - Faithfully attending family gatherings.
  - Sharing accountability and responsibility.
  - Giving to the ministry and the needs of others.

### COMMUNION: We are devoted to Christ.

- Baptism is our entrance into the family of God.
- Communion is a continual way to take in Christ.
- The church practiced Communion at least every Sunday if not more.
- Communion is an act of allegiance and faithfulness to Christ. It is our weekly reminder of the Gospel and our need to have Christ dwell in us.

### PRAYER: We are devoted to worship.

- Prayer is an act of worship between God and His people.
- Corporate Prayer: singing & praying together as a church family.
- Personal Prayer: spending time alone with God.

### What about all the other things that churches do?

Our ministry strives to stay simple and focused. Therefore, our four areas of devotion are all that we do. For other ministries like outreach and community projects, we partner with other groups rather than creating programs of our own.

## **COVENANT MEMBERSHIP**

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The church is built through faithful members of God's family.

The difference between attendees and members is faithfulness and accountability.

### **What is a covenant?**

A covenant is an agreement between two parties to be in a faithful relationship. In a covenant, both parties agree to be committed to each other in ways that benefit both parties.

### **What is a member?**

A member is a baptized disciple of Christ who is committed to the church family and is in agreement with our Statement of Faith (see next page).

### **Membership Covenant**

Our promises to you as a member of our church family:

- We will teach you the Word of God faithfully.
- We will lead you to be faithful to Jesus.
- We will love you, encourage you, and care for you.
- We will pray for you and with you.
- We will hold you accountable to God's Word.

I agree to be a faithful member of God's family by:

- Attending gatherings with fellow members.
- Learning and living God's Word with fellow members.
- Being accountable to fellow members.
- Serving and giving for the needs of the church.
- Representing Christ well in the community.

To be a member of Grace & Truth is to agree and commit to this Membership Covenant and our Statement of Faith (see next page).

If you are ready to make this commitment, please fill out the Membership Form in our app or online by going to our Membership page.

**Introduction**

The purpose of this Statement of Faith is to provide the foundation and unity of our doctrine and practice of the Christian faith. Our Statement of Faith is not meant to be completely exhaustive but to be a foundation of uncompromised and unwavering truths by which we teach, evaluate, and disciple each other to be more like Christ.

**God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

We believe that God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-3). We believe in the Holy Trinity, that God exists eternally as one in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16-17).

**The Bible is God's Word**

We believe that the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) is God's Holy Word and is our sole standard of doctrine and practice of the Christian life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We believe that the Bible is inerrant in all that it teaches and is powerful, living, and active to instruct and evaluate the mind, heart, and spirit of believers (Heb. 4:12).

**Humanity is the Image of God**

We believe that humans were created by God as male and female to be the image of God (Gen. 1:27). We believe that mankind was created by God to reflect His character by worshiping and honoring Him in the way that we live (Rom. 12:1-2).

**Sin Separates Humanity from God**

We believe that iniquity, transgression, and sin have separated humanity from God (Rom. 3:23) and results in death (Rom. 6:23). We believe that all people are born into a sinful world and will choose to sin. This can only be remedied by faith in the saving power of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; 5:1-2, 18-20; Eph. 2:1-10).

**Salvation is in Jesus Christ Alone**

We believe that salvation from sin and entrance into the family and kingdom of God is found only in the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross (John 3:1-16). We believe that salvation is a gift offered by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). We believe that Jesus Christ is the only source of salvation and the only way, truth, and life (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

### **The Church is the Body of Christ on the Earth**

We believe that the Church, made up of disciples of Christ, is the body of Christ on the earth (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27). We believe that the Church is not an organization nor is it a business, but is a living expression of the body of Christ made up of individual believers who live, love, and serve one another in unity (John 13:35). We believe that Christ has given spiritual gifts to His Church to glorify Himself and edify His Church (1 Cor. 12:1-30). We believe that all spiritual gifts are to be practiced and guided by scripture (1 Cor. 12-14). Grace & Truth Ministries exists to equip the Church by helping people become more like Christ (Rom. 8:29) and by practicing the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

### **Christian Marriage is a Divine Symbol of the Gospel**

We believe, recognize, and perform Christian marriage as a divine symbol of the Gospel (Eph. 5:21-33). We believe and uphold that marriage was created by God to be between one male and one female (Gen. 2:24). We do not support the modern and worldly view that marriage can be redefined. The Bible does not allow nor support homosexual marriage or any other distortion of God's original plan for marriage and sexuality. Therefore, Grace & Truth Ministries does not perform homosexual marriages nor any other unbiblical marriages. However, we will love and serve any person with the Gospel, regardless of their sexual preference, as people made in the image of God.

### **All People Have an Eternal Destination**

We believe that after the death of the body the human soul of the believer will exist eternally with God in eternal life (2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). We believe that those who reject the Gospel will be eternally separated from God by their own free choice (Matt. 7:13-14, 21-23; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 22:14-15). We believe that all people will be judged by Christ upon death (2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:11-15). We believe that because of this truth, believers should pray continually and seek fervently for all people to repent and trust in Christ as Savior (2 Cor. 5:11-21).

### **The Kingdom of God is Central**

We believe that the Kingdom of God is the central message of Christ (Matt. 4:17). While the message of the cross, salvation, and the Church are vital parts of God's Kingdom, these are not the totality of the Gospel. Therefore, all believers should seek God's Kingdom above all else (Matt. 6:33). We believe that the Church (the earthly family of God and body of Christ) is the means by which the Kingdom of God advances on the earth (Luke 17:20-21). We believe that the Kingdom of God is not a physical one, but is a spiritual way of life (Rom. 14:17; Col. 1:13-14). Those who live out the Kingdom of God will seek to obey the teachings of Jesus (Matt. 5-7) and cultivate the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25).

## **The Unseen Realm**

We believe that in addition to the physical realm there is also a spiritual one. We believe that the evil in the physical realm is not only the result of human rebellion but is also the result of spiritual rebellion. We believe that our struggle in this life is not against flesh and blood (humans) but against rebellious and evil spirits (Eph. 6:12). We believe that the scriptures teach that God's spiritual family, created before humanity (Job 38:4-7), rebelled on more than one occasion for the purpose of overthrowing God's plan in creation (Gen. 3; Gen. 6:1-5; Gen. 11:1-9; Ps. 82:1-8; Isa. 14:12-15; Ezk. 28:1-19). We believe that Christ came to reverse the effects of human and spiritual rebellion and has been given authority over all spiritual forces which He also gives to believers as citizens of His Kingdom and members of His family (Matt. 16:13-19; Matt. 28:18).

## **The Restoration of All Things**

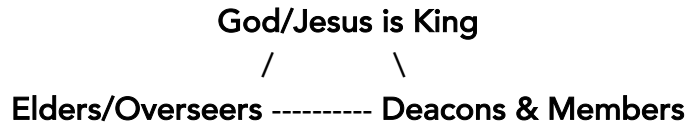
We believe that God's original plan was a worldwide Eden where He and humanity would live together forever (Gen. 1-2). When mankind sinned against God, humanity was separated from God and Eden (Gen. 3). From that moment on God began a process to restore His creation to His original plan. God's creation has been waiting on this process to be completed and the true sons of God to be revealed (Rom. 8:19-23). In the end, God will restore His creation with a new heavens and new earth in which God's people will dwell with Him for all of eternity (Rev. 21-22).

## **Conclusion**

At Grace & Truth we focus on teaching the doctrine of the apostles, which includes how they read and interpreted the Old Testament. While there are certain areas of Scripture that can lead to friendly debate and varying interpretation, the doctrines listed above are not up for debate. Essential doctrines like the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, etc. are historically grounded and biblically sound. Non-essential areas like end times, the age of the earth, worship music styles, English translations, etc. may be discussed in our church, but are not issues that divide us. To be a member of our church family is to agree with the essential doctrines in our Statement of Faith.



Since the church is the family of God, our church is structured like a family. In the Bible, the family household consisted of elders, parents, children, and servants. God's family in the Old Testament was the nation of Israel. God intended to be their King, the priests and elders led and cared for the people, and the Levites served to help the priests and elders. In the New Testament, the Church is the family of God.



### What is an elder/overseer?

The Greek words for overseer (*episkopes*) and for elder (*presbyteros*) are used interchangeably in the New Testament. Elders/overseers are the pastors of the church family. These men are chosen with the church's approval to lead and care for the church family. Essentially, they function as shepherds who lead and feed God's people.

### Qualification of Overseers/Elders – 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (also in Titus 1:6-9)

<sup>1</sup> The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup> not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, <sup>5</sup> for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? <sup>6</sup> He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. <sup>7</sup> Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil."

### What is a deacon?

The Greek word for deacon (*diakonos*) simply means servant or minister. Deacons first appear in Acts 6:1-7, when seven men were chosen to serve food to those in need. This was done in order to give the apostles the ability to study and teach without becoming distracted by other ministry needs. Deacons are godly members who help the leaders of the church manage the tasks of the ministry.

### Qualification of Deacons – 1 Timothy 3:8-13

<sup>8</sup> Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. <sup>9</sup> They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup> And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. <sup>11</sup> Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. <sup>12</sup> Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. <sup>13</sup> 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."