



Grace Fellowship San Antonio

a theological vision

Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in every aspect of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Collect for Guidance – BCP, p.100)

Identity: Who We Are

We are a Gospel community making disciples and developing Kingdom leaders to live on mission.

Gospel Community

The Gospel is a declaration of relationship. It describes who God is and who God has created, redeems, and empowers us to be. God makes us in His image and likeness to enjoy life in a loving relationship with Him and one another. Tragically, sin separates us from God and corrupts His design for our lives. The Good News is this: God makes a way to forgive our sin, to restore His image upon us, and to reunite us together with Him.

The Gospel declares the reclamation and fulfillment of our true identity, and it immerses us into eternal community as the people of God. We are a spiritual family of dearly loved children of the Father; saved by the grace of Jesus; for the purpose of enjoying new life together in the Spirit. The Gospel is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes. It creates the Church and matures us as the people of God.

We are passionate about Gospel community. We lift up the Gospel as the transforming message that saves our souls. We embrace the Gospel as the definitive story that shapes our lives. We adhere to the Gospel as the instructive narrative that strengthens our relationships. We learn to become fluent in the Gospel as the language of the Kingdom. We speak the Gospel as the Good News that brings love and hope to all who hear. We cling to the Gospel as the promise of a future life perfected in the presence of God forever.

Above all else, the Gospel inspires and informs our identity as a community.

(See Matthew 28:19-20; John 1:11-13; 17:21; Romans 1:16-23; 3:23-24; 5:9-11; 8:1,11,14-16; 10:17; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 4:5-6; Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 1:21-23; 1 John 1:3; Revelation 21:1-7; 22:1-5).

Making Disciples

God creates us to enjoy a soul satisfying relationship with Him and one another. Sin separates us from God, and the devil draws us into isolation from His people. Jesus comes to restore us to life together in community with God and one another. His invitation to fellowship is: “The time promised by God has come at last! The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News! Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!”

Disciples are lifelong learners, who follow, imitate, and reproduce the life of Jesus Christ, increasingly reflecting His character, conduct, and commitments. We grow as disciples primarily through Life Groups. Grace Life Groups are smaller, relational expressions of what it means to BE the church together. Life Groups relationally pursue and continually invite people disconnected from Jesus and His Church to enjoy spiritual friendship. Groups facilitate short, simple, and refreshing times of worship. They read the Scripture together – and speak the truth in love by ‘Gospeling’ one another utilizing The 5 Questions: *Who is God? Who does God create us to be? How does sin corrupt our identity? What has Jesus done for us? How we can live in grateful response?* Life Groups also pray and care for one another – and for those the Lord leads the group to love for His sake. By doing so, we are transformed by the Gospel in ways we cannot be alone.

Grace Life Groups are “mini” Gospel communities making disciples and developing Kingdom leaders to live on mission.

We encourage everyone to belong to a Life Group.

(See Mark 1:15-17; Matthew 11:28-30; Luke 6:40; Acts 2:42-47; Colossians 1:11-14; Hebrews 10:24-25)

Developing Kingdom Leaders

The greatest leader of all time is Jesus Christ. He defined and practiced leadership as follows: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Jesus submits to God, humbles Himself to love and serve others onto God’s agenda, and brings people into Gospel Community for God’s glory. Kingdom leadership is modeled upon the character and behavior of Jesus.

Sin corrupts leadership. It motivates a leader down the devastating path of pride and performance based acceptance that seeks positional power to grow a personal kingdom. Confessed, forgiven, and redeemed sin purifies leadership. It motivates a leader down the blessed path of surrender, Gospel-based acceptance, and Christ-like servant-hood that grows the Kingdom of God.

We develop Kingdom leaders by helping people clarify God's **calling** on their life, cultivate Christ-like **character**, and maximize their **contribution** for the sake of the Gospel. In doing so, we equip leaders that know who they are, what they do, how they do it, and with whom they do it best. Like Jesus, Kingdom leaders submit to God, humbling themselves for the sake of loving and serving others onto God’s agenda and into Gospel Community for God’s glory.

(See Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10; 22:42; John 5:19; 1 Corinthians 12-13; Ephesians 2:10; 4:11–16; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 1:3–11; Hebrews 13:7; Jude 1:3)

Living on Mission

God is on a mission. He loves the whole world and desires all people to be in a right relationship with Him. To this end, God includes us in His strategic plan. God reconciles us in Christ, and then He gives us the ministry of reconciliation. Jesus calls all of His followers to continue His mission and ministry, saying: "As the Father sent me, I am sending you."

This commission is why we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to share the Gospel and make disciples. It is tempting to avoid our assignment for fear of what others might think of us. But to withhold the grace and truth of Jesus would be to deny our identity as the Church. That is why the Holy Spirit enables us to love others as Jesus loved us. The Holy Spirit empowers us to be missionaries in our spheres of influence.

We are passionate about living on mission in the everyday, cultivating spiritual curiosity that we might speak the truth in love. We aim to see every man, woman, and child in San Antonio receive multiple opportunities to hear and respond to the love of God in Christ – with the goal of immersing them into the life of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit – and the hope of drawing them into Gospel community with us. There is no greater love than this.

(See John 13:34-35; 20:21; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:5,8; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; 1 Peter 3:15-16)

Activities: What We Do

We create relational opportunities to express our identity through four interrelated activities.

Because connecting, worshipping, growing, and serving are significant values for Jesus – they are significant values for us. This is what we do to live out our identity and continue Jesus' mission and ministry.

We **CONNECT** with Jesus Christ as His Church, inviting others to join us.

We **WORSHIP** the triune God dynamically nourished by the Spirit, the Scriptures, and the Sacraments.

We **GROW** in Christ and Christ-likeness by making disciples, equipping leaders, and starting new Gospel works.

We **SERVE** together to demonstrate and declare the Gospel by strengthening the church, blessing this city, and reaching the world with God's love.

Rhythms: How We Practice the Faith

We bring the Gospel into the center of our identity, activities, circumstances, and relationships

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Rhythms express how we follow His way, practice His truth, and experience His life to the full. Rhythms are Gospel patterns. They are not something we add to our already busy lives, they are how we demonstrate and declare the Gospel in the center of what we are already doing.

Authenticity – *being who God created and redeemed us to be*

God is the author of life. Our significance is derived from being created in His image and likeness. Our purpose is found in glorifying Him by enjoying Him and His design for us. We are God's masterpieces - to seek our identity in anything less is idolatry. Sin corrupts our identity and compels us to lead counterfeit lives. Even so, God's love prevails. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God reconciles and restores us to His original design for us. By God's lavish grace, through faith in Jesus, we are recreated to do the good things He planned for us long ago.

In grateful response, we follow the way of Jesus, practice His truth, and experience His life by being authentic to who God created and redeemed us to be, especially by:

- being **real** with God and one another, not putting on masks or holding up pretenses
- being **transparent** with our struggles and needs, not hiding or shrinking back from others
- being **sincere** in our attitude and actions, without manipulation or falsehood
- being **honest** and direct in our speech, not withholding or embellishing the truth.

(See Genesis 1:26; Psalm 51; John 1:12-14; Romans 3:23-24; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; Colossians 1:13-14)

Rest – *ceasing to work or strive in order to restore our identity, peace, and strength*

After creating the universe, God rested. It signified His delight in Himself and His pleasure in all His works. We are created to rest as well. To rest means intentionally stopping to appreciate God and relish His goodness. It entails being content and satisfied in Him—trusting in His purposes, provision, and care. Rest is an act of worship. We cease to rest when our identity flows out of *doing* rather than out of *being*. Sin compels us to strive for significance and approval through effort and merit. So God sends Jesus to be our peace. Ultimate rest is found by placing our identity solely in the finished work of Jesus on our behalf. Jesus is our Sabbath, who says: "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

In grateful response, we follow the way of Jesus, practice His truth, and experience His life by having His same attitude, humbling ourselves by:

- acknowledging our desperate need for God
- turning away from seeking to earn God's approval by what we DO and trusting solely in Jesus for what He has DONE
- reminding ourselves and each other of our new identity in Christ
- inviting the presence, comfort, and guidance of the Holy Spirit
- withdrawing from our normal schedules for recreation and sleep as an act of worship.

(See Genesis 1-2:3; Deuteronomy 5:12; Matthew 11:28-29; Mark 1:15; 2:23-28; Luke 11:9-13)

Humility – *considering God and others as more important than ourselves*

God creates us to regard Him and one another in higher esteem than ourselves. Humility is not low self-esteem; it is low self-preoccupation. It is not thinking less of oneself; it is thinking of oneself less. God desires us to walk humbly before Him – holding Him in high esteem and focusing on the needs of others. Sin corrupts our heart and compels us to be arrogant and self-serving. So God gives us a new heart. In the greatest act of humility, God sends Jesus, who empties Himself; takes on the role of a servant; and dies on a cross to cleanse our heart of pride and fill it with His selfless and sacrificial love.

In grateful response, we practice the same attitude as Jesus, humbling ourselves by:

- submitting to the will of the Father with joy and reverence
- valuing others above ourselves
- doing nothing out of selfish ambition or to impress others
- trusting God's power is best displayed in our weakness
- surrendering to Love and becoming a sacrificial servant.

(See Genesis 3; Philippians 2:1-16; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; 1 John 2:5-6).

Forgiveness – *pardoning the offense without holding the offender in contempt*

God creates us to live in a harmonious relationship with Him and one another. Sin is dissent against God and disagreement with His ways. The consequence of sin is separation from God that leads to discord, anguish, and death. But God loves us so much that He gives us Jesus, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. Jesus teaches us to forgive those who sin against us, just as our heavenly Father forgives us for our sin against Him. This is how we love one another as Jesus loves us.

In grateful response, we follow the way of Jesus, practice His truth, and experience His life by forgiving one another as He forgives us. We do this by:

- upholding the truth and grace of Jesus in all our relationships
- patiently enduring with one another
- showing kindness and compassion
- humbly acknowledging our own fault
- readily saying: "I am sorry, will you please forgive me"
- readily responding: "Yes, I forgive you"
- intentionally pursuing reconciliation.

(See Matthew 6:12,14-15; 7:3-5; 18:15-20; John 13:34-35; 15:13; Romans 5:14-16; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Ephesians 1:7; 4:32; Colossians 1:13-14; 3:13; 1 John 1:8-9)

Prayer – *communicating with God in faith*

God creates us with the ability and the desire to talk and to listen to Him. Prayer is conversation with God. It is foundational to a close relationship with Him. Sin disrupts our communication with God, causing us to remain silent, fear God's voice, and listen to rival influences. This is why Jesus comes. The eternal Word of God becomes truly human that we might recognize and trust His voice.

In grateful response, we pray like Jesus teaches us:

- We address God as our holy and loving Father
- We seek God's kingdom, inviting His rule and reign to come into every situation
- We desire God's will to be done
- We trust in God's provision, confident that He will give us all we need for life and salvation
- We confess our sin, asking and receiving His forgiveness, and freely forgive others as He forgives us
- We plead for protection from the desires of our flesh and for deliverance from the assaults of the evil one
- We declare His sovereign rule and gracious reign as King over all creation, including: disease, fear, loneliness, the wind and the seas, sin, death, and Satan
- We speak physically, emotionally, and spiritually healing and blessing over one another just as Jesus taught His disciples to do so in His name.

(See Matthew 6:9-13; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:18-19; 9:1-6; 10:1-9; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:18-19; Philippians 4:6-7; James 5:13-15)

Obedience – *coming under the authority of Jesus and putting His Word into practice*

God elevates Jesus to the place of highest honor, giving Him the name above all other names. All authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him. Our life resonates with the greatest possible freedom, joy, and peace when we come under the authority of Jesus. We do so by obeying Him. To obey Jesus is to hear, agree, and put His Word into practice. To disobey Jesus is sin. We disobey Jesus by elevating ourselves above Him and by honoring the false narratives of our culture rather than the Scriptures. Defying Jesus results in bondage, suffering, and division. Once we were dead in our disobedience and conformed to the patterns of this world, but God gives us life and the ability to know and do His perfect will through the resurrection of Jesus. To obey Him is our greatest act of worship, and we do so because He loves us and knows what is best for us.

In grateful response, we come under the authority of Jesus and put His Word into practice by:

- professing Jesus as the Forgiver of sin, the Leader of life, and the Head of the Church
- upholding the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God that teach us what is true, correct us when we are wrong, and align us with the righteousness of Christ
- aligning our motives, beliefs, attitudes, and actions to reflect faith in Jesus and His Word
- following the prompting and leading of the Holy Spirit
- honoring the godly leadership of those in spiritual authority because they keep watch over us.

(See Romans 5:18-19; 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 1:11-22; Philippians 2:9-11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Hebrews 13:7,17; James 1:21-22)

Generosity – *sharing our words, time, gifting, and money - joyfully, sacrificially, lovingly and plentifully*

God is generous. Every good, right, and perfect gift comes to us from Him. God creates us to be generous too. Being generous is simply a way to acknowledge and imitate God's generosity. Sin stifles generosity. It motivates us to be stingy, selfish, greedy, and miserly. Rather than sharing to bless others, we withhold for our self-interest. But God saves us from this kind of lifestyle. In His mercy, God washes away our sin and gives us a new life through the Holy Spirit, whom He generously pours out upon us through Jesus.

In grateful response to the generosity of God, we practice generosity by using our:

- **words** to bless and build up, speaking the truth in love to one another. We talk honestly, appropriately, respectfully, and directly with one another. We affirm how we see God at work in each other's lives, protect each other's reputation, keep each other's confidences, and refuse to gossip
- **time** to be available and present with a joyful attitude
- natural and spiritual **gifting** to strengthen the Body, motivated by love, in the Spirit's power
- **money** to pursue God before idols and His Kingdom before possessions, giving from the heart in and through this local church, with the goal of reaching and surpassing the biblical tithe.

(See 2 Corinthians 9:11; Ephesians 4:15,22-25; 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12-13; James 1:17; Matthew 6:19-24; 1 Timothy 6:17-19)

Theological Vision Summary

Grace is a Gospel community making disciples and developing Kingdom leaders to live on mission. By connecting, worshipping, growing, and serving – we uphold the values of Jesus and continue His ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. We practice the Faith – demonstrating and declaring the Gospel through: authenticity, rest, humility, forgiveness, obedience, generosity, and prayer. For God's glory and with the Spirit's help, this is our passionate commitment as we belong and follow Jesus with Grace. By doing so, we embody the Great Commandment and the Great Commission—making disciples who make disciples, equipping leaders who equip leaders, and starting new Gospel works that start new Gospel works.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, grant me the grace to uphold and enjoy these affirmations as your dearly loved child, fully reconciled and restored to you.

Jesus, Savior and Lord, I come to you in faith to follow you by grace, asking for the strength to love and serve You and your Kingdom above all else.

Holy Spirit, clothe me in power and make me an ambassador of the Gospel, that all my works might point to Jesus for the honor and praise of the Father.

This I humbly ask in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.