

**The mission of Grace Community Church
is to glorify God by building biblical relationships
with God, each other and our neighbors
so that we might reflect Christ.
UPWARD ... INWARD ... OUTWARD**

GRACE MISSION STATEMENT

One of the remarkable things about Christianity is its adaptability. What began with a small group of Jewish believers almost 2,000 years ago has spread across every continent and today transcends differences in race, culture, language, economics and other barriers that have historically divided people. This adaptability should not surprise us because the Bible describes the church as being a living organism (Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 2:19). In addition, we have the Lord's own promise that He would build the church and it would overcome all obstacles (Matthew 16:18).

However, with all of its diversity and adaptability, the Christian church is called to remember and practice some core truths. These values apply across the board, regardless of the passing of centuries and the various cultures encountered by Christians. As Grace Community seeks to fulfill God's purposes, our vision for today and our plans for the future must reflect a conscientious application of God's core values.

Of all the values which have a place in a vision statement, none is more important than that of CHRIST HONORING RELATIONSHIPS. From Genesis to Revelation and every place in between, there is one essential truth upon which everything else is built, and it is the centrality of relationships. Adam was created to be a relational being, both towards God and also with the wife God made for him (Genesis 2:18). And speaking of God, in what way has He primarily chosen to reveal Himself to us? As a Father. This is a deeply personal expression of relationship. And who is Jesus? He is the Son of God, and through our adoption into God's family (Romans 8:15-16; Ephesians 1:5), we are Jesus's brothers and sisters. Much of what the New Testament reveals about the nature of the church stresses the relationships Christians have with one another and with God. The very heartbeat of the church, therefore, must center on building CHRIST HONORING RELATIONSHIPS (Ephesians 4:25 – 5:2).

Once you begin looking for the centrality of relationships within the Bible, you start to see it on practically every page. The great theme of redemption (God saving us from sin) is built around the concept of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:17-21). Having been reconciled to God, Christians should deeply value their relationships with other Christians. Jesus taught that the number one way the church gives testimony to the world about Him is in how we interact with one another (John 13:35).

What does it mean for a relationship to be Christ honoring? It means that the relationship reflects the teachings and personal examples of Jesus, and this by the willing choice of the Christian to apply Jesus' teachings to his/her relationships. The more a Christian is a reflection of Christ, the

more he/she glorifies God. If seeking the glory of God is our highest calling, reflecting Christ in our relationships is our daily goal. Even our worship, which is intended to glorify God, depends on having Christ honoring relationships (Matthew 5:23-24).

Our vision is for Grace Community Church to be a family of disciples where each one views others through the lens of Jesus's teachings and puts Jesus's example into daily action. Love, forgiveness, mercy, truthfulness, patience, helpfulness, accountability, faithfulness, encouragement, mutual submission, confession, confrontation and reconciliation – God's Word speaks over and over about these traits. They are at the heart of genuine Christianity.

What about evangelism? Isn't that the mission of the church? Yes, but even this implies relationships. Jesus followed His teaching on the greatest commandment by giving the parable of the good Samaritan (see Mark 12:28-34 and Luke 10:27-37). This provocative parable broke through centuries-old barriers and clearly proclaimed the centrality of relationships. God commands us to be in right relationship with people who aren't even Christians (Romans 12:14 – 13:10). Evangelism often takes place in this context. And what is the goal of evangelism? Making disciples (Matthew 28:19-20), which again revolves around one's relationship with God and with others.

Grace Community is committed to teaching sound doctrine and helping Christians be theologically literate. Why is this important? Because a biblically accurate concept of God enables us to have a healthier relationship with Him! Misconceptions about God which arise from shallow or inaccurate theology diminish the vitality and joy of being in relationship with Him. The teaching ministry of Grace Community Church must always seek to help people relate to God and to others as God intends.

God intends for our relationships to be built on biblical truth (Ephesians 4:15). The most important relationship is our personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ (UPWARD, Ephesians 1:3-8). Because God has given us a new life, our relationships with other Christians within the local church are of paramount importance (INWARD, Romans 15:1-7). As Christ's ambassadors, we are called to reach out to our unsaved world and to build meaningful relationships as we share the gospel of Jesus Christ (OUTWARD, Mark 2:15-17).

Grace Community's goal is to create an environment where families and individuals can come to find biblical encouragement, counsel and support for addressing relationship problems with God and other people. It is only in this kind of environment that our worship, our giving and our works of service become a pleasant aroma to God, and it is only in this environment that we ourselves become living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2). May God bless and protect Grace Community Church and may our relationships bring Him glory.

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