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## *Grace Congregational Handbook Introduction*

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### **1 Timothy 3:14-15**

*These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: 15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. \*unless noted Scriptures are from the Authorized Version KJV*

### **1 Timothy 3:14-15**

*These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; 15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. NKJV*

These words were penned by the Apostle Paul around 62-64 A.D. shortly after his release from his first Roman imprisonment. We have had over 2000 years of church history since then and much has occurred that has affected and shaped the Lord's Church. No church has ever been nor will be perfect on this side of Heaven, but God has provided a prescription to keep every church healthy. This handbook is presented to help guide the members of Grace into a greater Biblical understanding of the church. It is presented in both a teaching and instructional format. This is made evident by the lengthy paragraphs and outlines instead of just brief statements and bullet points. These principles were laid out in the year of our Lord 2010 with the express goal of bringing glory to God by exalting the rightful head of the church, His Son and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A commitment to Christ involves the whole person, with the mind we embrace truth, with our heart we believe it, and with our will we surrender to it. Christianity is the combining of rich theological teaching with sound logical reasoning. It makes good sense to submit to, adore, and serve Jesus Christ, and understanding is necessary for a person's complete commitment. What cannot be thought through and expressed with reasonable clarity, cannot demand nor expect full allegiance. The Christian Faith holds firm in the belief that God is Truth and that He revealed Himself to mankind through His Son and Scripture. This handbook helps define our beliefs and develops direction and unity among the membership. Both of which prayerfully will draw each believer to a deeper commitment to Christ.

May the Apostle Paul's prayer to the congregation of Ephesus be our prayer for Grace

### **Ephesians 3:15-21**

*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

## *GRACE STATEMENT OF FAITH*

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- 1) We believe in one God, eternally existent as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- 2) We believe that the Bible, composed of the Old and New Testaments, is God's inspired and infallible Word, and is the supreme standard and final authority for all conduct, faith, and doctrine. We believe in the total sufficiency of Scripture.
- 3) We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, in his virgin birth, in his sinless life, in his miracles, in his \*vicarious and \*atoning death, in his bodily resurrection, in his ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in his personal return in power and glory.
- 4) We believe that man was created in the image of God, but by willful disobedience became sinful and is justly under the condemnation and wrath of Almighty God.
- 5) We believe the only salvation from this guilt and condemnation is through faith in the righteousness and atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that this salvation is the free gift of God's love and grace.
- 6) We believe in the person of the Holy Spirit and that his ministry is to reveal Christ to men, to convict of sin, to regenerate repentant sinners and, by his presence and power, to sanctify the lives of the redeemed. Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the ordinances of baptism and communion; that baptism is only to be administered upon profession of faith in Christ, by immersion, thereby declaring our faith in a crucified, buried and risen Savior; that communion is only for believers, to be preceded by faithful self-examination, and in remembrance of the Lord's death until he comes.
- 7) We believe that a New Testament church is a body of believers, baptized by immersion, associated for worship, service, and the spread of the gospel of the grace of God to all the world.
- 8) We believe that there will be a resurrection of the just and the unjust; the just, having been redeemed by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be with him throughout all eternity in glory; the unjust, having died unreconciled to God, to eternal condemnation in hell.

\* vicarious when one person suffers in place of another. A vicar is a substitute.

\* atonement to pay in order to make right. Christ's death puts us "at-one" with God.

*Note: GBC's Twenty Confessions of Faith are available upon request. Please contact the church office.*

## *Scripture Concerning Christ, The Head of The Church*

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### **Ephesians 1:22**

*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church*

### **Ephesians 3:21**

*Unto him (God) be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

### **Ephesians 5:23-33**

- Marriage was designed by God to be a portrait of Christ's relationship to His Church.

*For the husband is the head of the wife, **even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.** 24 **Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ,** so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 **Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;** 26 **That he might sanctify and cleanse it** with the washing of water by the word, 27 **That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.** 28 **So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.** 29 **For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:** 30 **For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.** 31 **For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.** 32 **This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.***

**Colossians 1:12-18** *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet (enabled or qualified) to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 **And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.***

**Romans 12:3-5** *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, **are one body in Christ,** and every one members one of another.*

## *Biblical Principles Concerning the Church*

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- The Church is by divine design, *not* human origin. The church was in God's mind before the creation of the world; it wasn't an afterthought for Him nor was it a reaction of the disciples as a result of Christ's crucifixion.
- The church is all about Christ. He is the head and He alone is to have preeminence.
- God is glorified when we submit to Christ and recognize and practice our role in His church.
- God has *not* provided every detail on the way His church should operate but has laid out clear principles for every believer to embrace and apply.
- God receives glory, and the believer receives joy, when the "one another" commands are put into consistent practice. (The one another commands are identified later in this handbook.)
- Ecclesiology is the study of the church; it comes from the Greek *ekklesia* meaning "called out assembly." The church is a called out group of believers with the express purpose of honoring their Lord through obedience to his commands.
- A body of believers may fail to meet all of their responsibilities and still be a true church, however, when it (1) ceases to acknowledge and submit to Christ as its supreme head, (2) ceases to recognize the Scripture as its final authority for faith and practice, or (3) ceases to confess that salvation is in Christ's finished work through faith alone and grace alone. Then, it ceases to be a true church and should be recognized for what it is, simply a religious society.

### **Galatians 1:6-9**

- The church has two offices: pastor (same as elder and bishop) and deacon.
- The church has two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper (communion).

### **The Believer and Church Membership**

The spirit of our age is one of autonomy and commitment phobia. We like our independence and personal freedom. There is a place for both, however, we must understand that God designed us in a way that we are not to live only for ourselves. We were redeemed by Christ to live a life of spiritual community. We were meant to see life through more than just our physical eyes. **Ephesians 1:17-23**

We were created to be a part of something much bigger than ourselves. The Church is filled with people of diverse backgrounds, personalities and preferences who are called and enabled by God to serve together and serve one another. This unity amidst such diversity is the very thing that brings Christ glory, the believer joy, and fulfills the Church's mandate to be salt and light to those outside of Christ.

**"There is nothing more pleasing to God, more refreshing to believers, and more appealing to non-believers, than a church that is functioning biblically. When God's people are doing God's work, God's way there is a fragrance which is released that is indescribable and irresistible."** Warren Weirsbe

There is no single passage that clearly states that after salvation God expects you to officially “join a church”. However, the New Testament clearly implies membership:

- **Matthew 18:15-20** deals with a believer who refuses to repent of their sin and is therefore brought before the church.
- **1 Timothy 3:1-16, Titus 1:1-9** provides the qualifications for pastors and deacons
- **1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians** are letters written to churches providing encouragement, instruction, and, at times, rebuke for those in the church.
- **Revelation 2-3** Jesus addressed seven churches with words of commendation and condemnation.
- **1 Corinthians 5:1-13** is the clearest and longest chapter on church discipline. It deals with a professed believer who was having immoral relationships with his step-mother. The man was addressed for discipline, and yet, the woman was not addressed, communicating she wasn't a member.
- **3 John 9** rebuked Diotrephes for treating guests of the church so rudely as a result of his desire for preeminence within the church.
- **Hebrews 13:17** Submission called for towards the spiritual leaders who will give an account to the Lord of those under their soul care.
- **Acts 13:1-3** The church at Antioch sent out the first team of missionaries suggesting a plan and a commitment for financial support.

The Bible describes leaders, submission, future accountability, church discipline, sending of missionaries, individuals named in rebuke and has hundreds of passages directly written to churches. These all suggest that there was active membership in place within the context of first century Christianity.

## *Membership into Grace / Membership Classes and Baptism*

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There are four prerequisites to become a church member: salvation, baptism, signing of the church covenant, and a majority vote of the church membership. (Reference the Church Constitution for further details.)

It was not that long ago when communities had one of each of the major denomination churches. It was common for a family to raise their children in the same church they were raised in. Society was not that mobile and people did not see the need to change churches. We are not defending the “good ole days” or a so-called “golden era” of church life. Nor is there a belief that these churches were trouble free. What we are defending is that fact that people have many more choices and a variety of more styles in churches than in the recent past, adding into this mix that subjective truth has had a major influence not only in our culture but also in the church. The call for churches is to make disciples and guard sound doctrine, which needs to be a priority for congregations. The command for repentance should never be sacrificed in the name of recruitment. This is why Grace endorses a membership information class that needs to be completed prior to congregational approval of membership.

- God’s design is for every believer to get baptized and join a Bible-believing church; however, He has not commanded that it be Grace. Therefore, we baptize those who provide a testimony of faith in Christ as their Lord and Savior without requirement to membership at Grace.
- Baptism is for those who make a profession of faith in Christ, and it is to be by immersion. For this reason we do not accept infant baptism as Scriptural. There are four requirements for Scriptural baptism. (1) Proper subject: The one who is submitted to baptism must profess to know Jesus as their personal Savior. (2) Proper purpose: The reason for baptism is obedience and to identify publicly with Jesus Christ. Baptism is a vital part of the Christian life but is not essential for salvation in any manner. (3) Proper method: The New Testament teaching is clear that baptism was performed through immersion and that is the mode we embrace. (4) Proper authority: The local church has the authority to baptize and the liberty to perform the ceremony at any location they so desire. **(Matthew 3:13-17; 28:18-20; Acts 2:41; 8:29-39)**
- The authority to baptize rests within the church and though usually administered by the pastors the congregation can grant authority to others when deemed appropriate.
- After completion of the Membership Information Class, a personal meeting is to be held with a pastor. This provides an opportunity for the prospective member to share their personal testimony as well as additional time for further spiritual examination.
- When the class and the meeting are completed and all requirements are satisfied, the prospective member is presented to the congregation for membership at their request.
- Children who make a profession of faith will have their commitment evaluated by the leadership of Grace. Upon approval from the staff and parents, they will become candidates for baptism and placed under the soul care of the church. At age 14 they are encouraged to attend the Membership Information Class. Upon fulfilling the necessary requirements, including the signing of the Church Covenant, they will be recommended to the congregation for membership.

- Members of Grace must be of age 18 for voting privileges and age 21 to be qualified to serve as a church officer.
- We receive members through the following three ways.
  - \* Profession of faith in Christ and baptism
  - \* Transfer of letter by church of like doctrine<sup>1</sup>
  - \* Statement of faith and testimony of scriptural baptism, where for legitimate reasons a letter of transfer is not available.

### **A Covenant of Membership**

Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it. **Ephesians 5:25** He calls for believers to have a seriousness of commitment in regards to His church. The conduct of members within and without the church services is of great important to the name of Jesus Christ. A Covenant differs from Statements of Faith in that they emphasize conduct over doctrine. A Church Covenant (1) Highlights a meaningful and sincere commitment which follows the pattern of Scripture; (2) Gives the covenant-making member an opportunity to visibly display their commitment to Jesus Christ and to the body of believers; (3) Encourages members that their godly lifestyle makes an evangelistic impact upon the community.

The signing of the Covenant should only be completed after sincere heart examination and commitment to Jesus Christ has been made. The following Covenant is first and foremost made to God and then to fellow brothers and sisters who are members of Grace Baptist Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Not necessary like name. If the church holds to salvation through Christ alone, by faith and grace alone, we will accept their letter and baptism, provided baptism is by immersion. Churches that hold to works of any type as a part of the salvation process will not be considered as "like doctrine." Example: baptism regeneration which teaches baptism is necessary to complete salvation.

**Galatians 1:6**

# THE GRACE MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Having received Christ as my Savior and having been baptized, being in agreement with the Grace Statement of Faith, and accepting the Bible as the inspired word of God and my final authority in all matters of faith and practice, I now believe I am led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the Grace Baptist Church family. In so doing, I commit myself to God and to the other members of Grace to do the following:

1. **I will protect the unity of Grace**
  - a. by acting in love toward other members (**1Peter 1:22**)
  - b. by using my words to build up one another (**Ephesians 4:29**)
  - c. by following the leaders of Grace (**Hebrews 13:17**)
  
2. **I will share the responsibility of Grace**
  - a. by praying for the leaders, members, ministers, and growth of Grace (**Eph. 6:18-19**)
  - b. by inviting the unchurched to attend services (**Luke 14:23**)
  - c. by warmly welcoming those who visit (**Romans 15:7**)
  
3. **I will serve the ministry of Grace**
  - a. by discovering my gifts and talents and using them at Grace (**1Peter 4:10**)
  - b. by allowing myself to be equipped for the work of ministry by my pastors (**Eph. 4:11-12**)
  - c. by developing a servant's heart (**Philippians 2:3,4,7**)
  
4. **I will support the testimony of Grace**
  - a. by attending faithfully (**Hebrews 10:25**)
  - b. by living a godly life through the power of the Holy Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-25**)
  - c. by regular financial giving (**1Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7**)

Recognizing my inability in my own strength to keep this covenant, yet believing that God will enable me to fulfill its terms; I hereby attach my signature below, implying the ready assent of my heart to each of the terms of this covenant.

I have read the 2011 Church Constitution, specifically in the area of church discipline, and give my consent thereof.

Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Church Government (Polity) | *Grace and Congregationalism*

There have been three (3) major forms of church government developed and practiced throughout the past two centuries of Christianity. It is fair to say that within each model there have been healthy and God-honoring churches throughout history. That is not to say that all three forms of church government can be equally supported by Scripture.

1. Episcopal Church Government (Greek, *episkopos*) meaning bishop, who is the key figure in this system. He has oversight over all of the congregations in an area called a diocese. He alone has power to ordain those who serve individual congregations. They are referred to by various titles in different denominations; minister, rector, or priest. The bishop assigns these individuals to their congregations. More developed forms of this polity add a level above the bishop called archbishop, who is over a number of bishops. Authority flows down from the top down. The system is followed by the Roman Catholic Church, The Anglican (England) Episcopal (America) Church, The United Methodist Church and other denominations.

2. Presbyterian Church Government - (Elder Rule) “Elder” is the title used in the New Testament and refers to those in leadership position. This form is followed in various ways by a wide variety of churches. On a local level this stands for the governing of the church by the presbyters, or the elders. This group is called the session, or consistory in Christian Reformed, and elders in Bible independent or nondenominational churches. Within this polity there are ‘teaching elders’ and ‘ruling elders.’ Denominations who follow Presbyterianism add other organizational levels beyond the local church. Representatives from each session in an area form a presbytery. The presbytery can review decisions or resolve disputes between sessions (churches). Some denominations have a regional level called synod, but the highest level is the national level, called the general assembly, composed of representatives from the various presbyteries. The general assembly sets all doctrine and policy for all the local congregations that compose the denomination.

3. Congregational Church Government - (Pastor/Elder Led; Congregational Rule). Note the transition used from elder rule to elder led. The title “pastor” is the Baptist-friendly term; however pastor, bishop and elder are terms used to describe and define the same office. In their confessions of faith, Baptists have traditionally stood for congregational church government. In this model, the congregation exercises the ultimate human authority in the church, under the divine authority of Christ. Since all believers are regenerate (born-again), thereby being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, all are able to receive guidance from Christ. The individual priesthood of the believer is the scriptural teaching that everyone in Christ has equal access to God’s throne room of grace and mercy (**Hebrews 4:14-16**). The Pastor (s) is/are to lead and direct the congregation into spiritually minded decision making. Pastors are to exercise an entrusted measure of authority to biblically influence the congregation, but in the final analysis the highest human authority is vested within the body, not the leadership. Congregationalism also recognizes and values the local nature of the church and sees no Biblical support for an authority outside such as a bishop, presbytery, assembly or convention. However, local church autonomy should not be equated with local church isolation, and there is wisdom and value in cooperating with other churches in various worthy endeavors.

## A Biblical Defense for “Pastor Led/Congregational Rule” Church Government

- **Matthew 18:15-20, 1Corinthians 5:1-13** The discipline of an erring member rested within the authority of the congregation
- **Acts 1:15-25** Neither Peter, nor the disciples on their own, decided the replacement for Judas. The 120 believers did.
- **Acts 6:1-7** The congregation chose who the seven men would be who were to help the disciples fulfill their responsibilities.
- **Acts 13:1-5** God called the first set of Missionaries out of the church of Antioch, and they returned back to the congregation to provide a report of their ministry.
- **Acts 15:3, 22, 14:21** The church was an active part of the council held in Jerusalem.
- **Acts 17:10-11** The members of the Church in Berea were commended for how they verified teachings by studying the Scriptures themselves.
- **2 Corinthians 2:6** The majority of the congregation, not just the pastors, confirmed the repentant member’s confession.
- The Apostle Paul addressed entire congregations in his letters.
- **Galatians 1:6-9** Paul charged the congregation for being responsible for doctrinal purity regardless of what position the speaker may have held.

Below are two quotes by John Piper. Notice the pastor’s role of leadership is ‘primary’, not sole or final.

**Biblical Authority** refers to the divine calling of spiritually gifted men to take primary responsibility as pastors in Christ like servant leadership and teaching in the Church.

**Biblical Submission** refers to the divine calling of the rest of the congregation, both men and women, to honor and affirm the leadership and teaching of the pastors and to be equipped for the hundreds of various ministries available to men and women in the service of Christ.

**Baptist**, biblical, pastor-led congregationalism is distinct from Presbyterianism because it does not appeal outside the congregation to another authority against sin and wrong. It is distinct from the type of Elder-rule practiced in many independent and Bible churches because it recognizes that the final responsibility indeed rests with the congregation. (Adapted from Mark Dever)

**Ephesians 4:11-13** *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

The following commentary on **Ephesians 4:11-13** is adapted from Warren Weirsbe:

Paul moves now from what all Christians have in common to how Christians differ from each other.

**Apostles** (v.11 a): The word means "one who is sent with a commission." Jesus had many disciples, but He selected 12 Apostles (**Matthew 10:1-4**). A disciple is a "follower" or a "learner," but an apostle is a "divinely appointed representative." The Apostles were to give witness of the Resurrection (**Acts 1:15-22**), and therefore had to have seen the risen Christ personally (**1Corinthians 9:1-2**). There are no apostles today in the strictest New Testament sense. These men helped to lay the foundation of the church - "the foundation laid by the Apostles and prophets" (**Ephesians 2:20**), and once the foundation was laid, they were no longer needed. God authenticated their ministry with special miracles. (**Mark 16:17-18, Hebrews 2:1-4**)

**Prophets** (v.11 b): We commonly associate a prophet with predictions of future events, but this is not his primary function. A New Testament prophet is one who proclaims the Word of God (**Acts 11:28; Ephesians 3:5**). Believers in the New Testament churches did not possess Bibles, nor was the New Testament written and completed. How, then, would these local assemblies discover God's will? His Spirit would share God's truth with those possessing the gift of prophecy. Paul suggests that the gift of prophecy had to do with understanding "all mysteries and all knowledge" (**1Corinthians 13:2**), meaning, of course, spiritual truths. The purpose of prophecy is "edification and encouragement" (**1Corinthians 14:3**, literal translation). Christians today do not get their spiritual knowledge immediately from the Holy Spirit, but through the Spirit's illuminating ministry of the Word. With the Apostles, the prophets had a foundational ministry in the early church and they are not needed today (**Ephesians 2:20**).

**Evangelists** (v.11 c): "Bearers of the Good News." These men traveled from place to place to preach the Gospel and win the lost (**Acts 8:26-40; 21:28**). All ministers should "do the work of an evangelist," but this does not mean that all ministers are evangelists (**2Timothy 4:5**). The Apostles and prophets laid the foundation of the church, and the evangelists built on it by winning the lost to Christ. Of course, in the early church, every believer was a witness (**Acts 2:41-47; 11:19-21**), and so should we be witnesses today. But there are people also today who have the gift of evangelism. The fact that a believer may not possess this gift does not excuse him from being burdened for lost souls or witnessing to them.

**Pastors and teachers** (v.11 d): The fact that the word "some" is not repeated indicates that we have here one office with two ministries. Pastor means "shepherd," indicating that the local church is a flock of sheep (**Acts 20:28**), and it is his responsibility to feed and lead the flock (**1 Peter 5:1-4**, where "elder" is another name for "pastor"). He does this by means of the Word of God, the food that nourishes the sheep. The Word is the staff that guides and disciplines the sheep. The Word of God is the local churches protection and provision, and no amount of entertainment, good fellowship, or other religious substitutes can take its place.

### **The Two Offices of a Church (Pastor and Deacon)**

\*Pastor, Elder, Bishop are the same office using different titles.

**Acts 20:17, 28, 21:18, Ephesians 4:11, 1Timothy 3, 5:17-20, Titus 1:5-9, 1Peter 5:1-4**

- In the New Testament the words 'elder', 'shepherd', or 'pastor', and 'bishop' are used interchangeably in the context of the local church office.

- Elder is the most common title used, (Greek *presbuteros*) this identifies the office or position
- Pastor (Greek *poimen*) defines one of his responsibilities as a shepherd; bishop is the Greek *episkopos* and defines another responsibility being an overseer.
- A plurality of Pastors (elders) is taught throughout the New Testament **Acts 11:30, 14:21-23, 15:4, 20:17-28, Philippians 1:1, 1Thessalonians 5:12, 1Timothy 5:17, Titus 1:5, Hebrews 13:17, James 5:14, 1Peter 5:1**
- The pastors could be made up of staff and lay pastors. Each should sense the call of God on their life for such a task and be carefully examined spiritually.
- The question to ask in seeking a lay pastor (elder) is, “Does this person have the gifts and spiritual qualifications to pastor?”
- If lay pastors are selected to serve alongside staff pastors, they are to be ordained by the congregation, and the weight of their votes regarding the spiritual direction of the church would be the same as staff pastors.
- There are arguments for and against having term limits on lay pastors. The best scenario appears to have them serve indefinite terms. This grants liberty to allow the pastors themselves to determine if and when a lay pastor should step down for a period of time.
- If lay pastors are not established, the staff pastors may select an individual or group of men to serve as spiritual advisors. This selection may be from the deacons but not limited to the deacons.
- Deacon is the Greek *diakonos* and literally means a table waiter, one who runs errands.
- The Elder (Pastor / Bishop) shepherds or leads the church, and the Deacons serve to allow the Pastors to provide spiritual direction for the congregation.
- Common Errors in regards to the office of a Deacon
  - Assuming spiritual maturity is *not* needed since it is not the office of a Pastor **Acts 6:1-4**
  - Assuming spiritual leadership of the congregation which is reserved for Pastors
  - Assuming the office of a deacon is less important than one of a Pastor

The office of a Deacon should *not* function, as it were, as a second house of the legislature, a kind of House of Representatives to the Pastor’s Senate. Their work is to care for the physical and fiscal needs of the church, to help create and protect unity in the body and to support the work of the Pastors. Their office is one of grave importance.

- Deacons are also held to a high standard. **1 Timothy 3:8-15**
- Their wives must demonstrate spiritual maturity.
- Faithful deacons receive rewards from the Lord for serving.

What an encouragement to a faithful deacon! God will honor him spiritually and give him more and more respect among the saints, which means greater opportunity for ministry. A faithful deacon has a good standing before God and men and can be used of God to build the church. What a joy it is to a congregation to see deacons fulfill their office. At times God calls them into pastoral ministry on a fulltime basis. (It should be remembered that, in the New Testament churches, the elders were called from out of their own local congregations. They were not usually imported from other places.)

*Adapted from Warren Weirsbe*

## **Biblical Church Discipline / Member Restoration**

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By design, the word “Biblical” stands before “Church Discipline” and for good reason. Most of us are aware of how church discipline has been misused and abused. However, the remedy for poorly practiced church discipline is *not* to stop practicing church discipline, but to practice it in the right way (i.e., according to biblical standards). Church Discipline is defined as the loving, compassionate, and humble confrontation and appeal by the body of Christ to a sinning believer, calling for repentance and recommitment to Jesus Christ.

### **Wayward members**

The church constitution provides the steps of action to be taken regarding members who purposefully refuse to attend church services. Continuous willful absence from services shall result in steps of restoration. The issue of willful absence from the assembling of ourselves together (**Hebrews 10:25**) is an act of disobedience. The motive of our steps of actions is to communicate the seriousness and importance of honoring Christ through His church.

- The primary reason for church discipline is to glorify God through obedience to His commands.
- We must place the spiritual rescue of erring brothers and sisters above our own comfort. Diligent effort should be made to reclaim all members who spiritually fall. **Galatians 6:1**
- Church discipline is redemptive in nature, not punitive.
- Far too many congregations tolerate sin in general as well as in their own membership.
- Past failure on the churches’ part in the matter of discipline should motivate us to demonstrate an accurate view of it, not a neglect of it.
- Though sometimes misunderstood, it is very loving to graciously call sinning believers to repentance, helping them restore proper fellowship with God.
- Church discipline provides a platform for the church to display genuine love.

**Love is helping people** toward the greatest beauty and the highest value and the deepest satisfaction and the most lasting joy and the biggest reward and the most wonderful friendship and the most overwhelming worship – **love is leading people toward God.** John Piper

**Love is a willing self-sacrifice** for the good of another that does not expect reciprocation nor is it given because the one being loved is deserving of it. Adapted...Paul Tripp

- Our obedience to church discipline is an issue of faith: trusting God enough to obey Him.
- **Faith is obeying God** regardless of feelings, circumstances or consequences.

**This definition of faith** needs to be explored more carefully. (1) Faith is **obeying God**, in this context, obeying the clear command of Jesus Christ in confronting believers who continue in sin. (2) Faith is obeying God regardless of **feelings**; everything inside us wants to ignore confrontation. We want to wish it away, minimize it, and rationalize within our minds why we do not have to address it. (3) Faith is obeying God, regardless of feelings and **circumstances**. The circumstances that surround confrontation are never appealing. When God's Word is consistently being ignored by a fellow believer we must respond to it in a Biblical manner. Once we become aware of a sinning believer, the circumstances before us will result in either our obedience or disobedience. (4) Faith is obeying God regardless of feelings, circumstances or **consequences**. There is a chance the erring believer will not repent; this will probably result in your appeal being rejected and misunderstood. Jesus made no guarantee that restoration would occur as a result of our appeal and this is exactly why faith is needed. Our obedience is a wonderful way for the body of Christ to exhibit faith, and faith is what pleases God! **Hebrews 11:6**

### **Special Blessings Accompany Membership**

- Submission to spiritual authority is sign of humility, and God promises grace to the humble. **James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:6**
- A non-believing spouse is blessed by God just by the very fact that there is a believing partner within the marriage. **1 Corinthians 7:14**
- Potiphar's house was blessed as a direct result of godly Joseph being one of his servants. **Genesis 39:5**
- God's blessings are removed when the church brings discipline, thereby allowing Satan and sin to have more authority upon the life of the erring member. **1Corinthian 5:1-13**

### **Five Biblical Principles in Confronting Others In A Way That Glorifies God**

1. Evaluate Your Motives...(Ask yourself, "Why do I want to get involved?")

- A. Curiosity or Concern
- B. Jealously or Sincerity
- C. To Humiliate or to Help
- D. To glorify God by obeying his one-another commands

2. Examine Your Own Life

- A. Does not mean you have to have your act totally together first – because no one does!

- B. Does mean that you are in proper fellowship with Christ and His Church
- C. Does mean you understand how God has poured grace and mercy into your life

### 3. Exhibit Grace

- A. See the sin as the problem, not the person as the problem.
- B. Err on the side of grace and mercy.
- C. Use “we” and “us” often in your conversation (“We all struggle.”, “All of us have issues.”)
- D. Grace and Firmness work together well. Don’t go light on sin and a call for repentance.
- E. It is easy to give grace when you realize how much you need it in your own life.

### 4. Exalt Christ

- A. You cannot say enough about who Christ is and what he has done for us.
- B. Focus on the price Jesus paid for us on the cross. **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**
- C. It is the person of Jesus, not just his commands we are to hold before others.
- D. It is his will, not our own agenda, which is to be highlighted.
- E. Jesus died for more than just our future. He died for our day-to-day life on this side of Heaven.

### 5. Engage in Prayer

- A. Pray for yourself in regards to obedience, spiritual courage, and that your appeal is grace-filled.
- B. Pray for the one you will confront, remembering it is God’s responsibility to change hearts.

“It is ever the Holy Spirit’s work to turn our eyes away from self to Jesus; but Satan’s work is just the opposite of this, for he is constantly trying to make us regard ourselves instead of Christ. He insinuates, ‘Your sins are too great for pardon, you have no faith, you do not repent enough, you will never be able to continue unto the end, you have not the joy of his children, you have such a wavering hold of Jesus.’ All these are thoughts about self, and we shall never find comfort or assurance by looking within. But the Holy Spirit turns our eyes entirely away from self; he tells us that we are nothing, but that ‘Christ is all in all.’ Remember, therefore, it is not your hold of Christ that saves you – it is Christ. It is not your joy in Christ that saves you – it is Christ; it is not even faith in Christ that saves you, though that be the instrument – it is Christ’s blood and merits; therefore look not so much to your hand with which you art grasping Christ, but to Christ.; look not to your hope, but to Jesus, the source of your hope; look not to your faith, but to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith.

We shall never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our doings, or our feelings; it is what Jesus is, not what we are, that gives rest to the soul. If we would at once overcome Satan and have peace with God, it must be by ‘looking unto Jesus.’ Keep your eye simply on him; let his death, his sufferings, his merits, his glories, his intercession, be fresh upon your mind; when you wake in the morning look to him; when you lie down at night look to him. Do not let your hopes or fears come between you and Jesus; follow hard after him, and he will never fail you!” C.H. Spurgeon 1834-1892

## A Brief Exposition of Matthew 18:15-20

**Matthew 18:15-20** *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee*

as an heathen man and a publican. 18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. KJV

**Matthew 18:15-20** Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. 18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." NKJV

**Matthew 18** records the teaching of Jesus Christ in regards to (1) humility, (2) compassion, (3) confrontation and (4) forgiveness. The context of the chapter is built around a response from Christ to his disciples who asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (v1)

- The teaching of **humility** was built around God's view of children. An alarming illustration was given by Christ in regards to offending children. **18:1-10**
- The teaching of **compassion** dealt with a shepherd's concern for one lost sheep despite the fact that he had safely accounted for 99 sheep. **18:11-14**
- The teaching of **confrontation** directly deals with our topic of church discipline. **18:15-20**
- The teaching of **forgiveness** focused on two men and their debts. The parable ended with a serious warning of divine judgment for any who refused to forgive. **18:21-35**

The context of **Matthew 18:15-20** is that Jesus provided four steps of action in calling a sinning believer back to repentance. None of these steps have a promise from Christ that restoration will occur. Notice the use of the word "if" throughout the passage.

### **Step 1: Go alone.**

**Matthew 18:15** Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

### **We exhibit a number of Biblical mandates when this passage is put into practice:**

- Biblical love **1 Corinthians 13**
- Genuine concern for a fellow believer's spiritual welfare **Galatians 6:1-2**
- Awareness of how sin deceives and hardens the heart, making confrontation necessary **Hebrews 3:12-23**
- Keeping the matter private; retaining the information to the closest circles as possible **Proverbs 17:9**

- An opportunity for reconciliation **2 Corinthians 5:18-20**

### **Seven Cautions to Step 1...**

1. Assuming a scriptural violation has occurred, when the real issue is personal expectations or preferences that were not met, causing your feelings to get hurt.
2. Focusing more on how you were sinned against versus how God was sinned against.
3. Placing the emphasis on how you were offended instead of the spiritual recovery of the one who has sinned.
4. Confusing the balance between forbearance and confrontation.
5. Minimizing the sin to justify why you will not confront the erring believer.
6. Sharing the offense with others violates Scripture and creates additional problems.
7. Knowing if an offense is addressed, you will need to demonstrate forgiveness to the one who sinned against you. **Matthew 18:21-35**

### **Step 2: Go again this time with one or two other believers.**

“**Considerable weight** is to be given to the judgment (counsel) of men and women who live near to God, and in most instances their verdict will not be a mistaken one...” C.H. Spurgeon

- The second confrontation with others demonstrates even greater love and concern.
- This intensifies the seriousness of unrepented of sin.
- The one or two other believers are usually, but not limited to, church leaders such as Pastors and Deacons.
- This step protects all parties involved from allowing emotions to blur the facts and goal.
- If repentance occurs, the process is ended there.
- When steps 1-2 are ignored, step 3 is to be put into motion.

### **Step 3: Go to the congregation.**

- If the sinning member refuses to repent then he / she needs to be exposed to the congregation.
- Keep in mind that only unrepented of sin is addressed and only to the congregation if step one and two received a negative response from the sinning member.
- This is formal “church discipline” in the fact that the entire congregation is called forth to help in the restoration process.
- The goal of spiritual recovery does not change, only the number of people involved.
- Nothing will reveal a congregation’s commitment to Scripture like *biblical* Church discipline.
- The church is not infallible in the Matthew 18 passage nor will God ever endorse error, but when a congregation responds God’s way, they have his blessings.
- God himself is the authority of church discipline.
- You are richly blessed if you are a part of a church that practices biblical discipline upon its membership.
- If the sinning member refuses to listen to the congregation, then the final step needs to be taken.
- The goal of all three steps is always the same: to get the sinning member restored.

#### **Step 4: Excommunication by the Congregation from Membership**

- This is done to protect the name of Christ and to intensify the seriousness of sin to the offender.
- This action confirms the sad state of a believer who is more committed to sin than they are to Christ and His church.
- Privileges of membership such as the Lord's Supper and church fellowships are forfeited, but the offender is encouraged to attend the preaching and teaching of God's Word. Even non-believers are welcome to the public proclamation of Scripture.
- Members should avoid personal fellowship unless the purpose of the time together is to call the believer back to repentance. It is a common error for some to play the role of the "loving member" and ignore the steps of action presented by the church.
- Excommunication is reversible; if repentance and confession occurs, then membership should be reinstated and should be done so with a spirit of rejoicing and wholehearted support.

#### **2 Corinthians 2:5-10**

**A member who is in the process of church discipline cannot avoid this** by stating they no longer choose or desire membership. Though it is true they are free to stop attending services and may choose to exercise that right, their membership is bound by a congregational vote for official removal. Members waive their right to withdrawal from membership when discipline is pending and must wait for the congregation's fulfillment of their Biblical mandate to encourage repentance and restoration. One's commitment to membership is a commitment to *not* run from discipline and grant the congregation liberty in their attempt to rescue and spiritually restore the member.

### **Possible Objections to Church Discipline**

#### **1. "We would be constantly confronting believers because we sin against each other all the time."**

First of all, make sure a biblical violation is clearly in order. You must be able to clearly identify it. There is no doubt this step has been abused because of a member who was too suspicious or sensitive, which led them to imagine themselves wronged without any true foundation. However, we cannot disregard our Lord's command simply because some abuse this step. On the other hand, the nature of sin is that it is never satisfied. Delay will only lead to one becoming more persistent in their sin as well as leading others into their sin. The bottom line is this: sin complicates life for everyone involved and we need to encourage one another to protect our hearts from it. **Proverbs 4:23, Hebrews 3:12-13**

#### **2. "What if I obey this command and the believer continues to sin against me?"**

This is the same objection Peter brought up in **Matthew 18** and Jesus addressed in verses **21-22**. The bottom line is this: does forgiveness have a limit? No, it does not. Does this mean we become foolish in how we allow people to treat us or do we become some form of doormat for others to abuse? Of course not. If a person continues to repeat their sin toward you, sound reason would serve that there is a lack of genuine repentance and a need for additional help is in order. You would seek counsel and support from other spiritually mature believers.

### **3. “If you bring a member before the congregation, you could possibly cause a serious division.”**

This is very true, but if the goal of restoration in a spirit of love is portrayed, the damage should be minimal. This being said, losing members is not a pleasant thing to deal with. However, nothing will prove the congregation’s commitment to Scripture more than church discipline. When a member has family or friends under discipline, the true test of love for Jesus Christ is on the line.

### **4. “Every member sins and some sin in a very offensive manner. We would have church discipline constantly if we took it seriously.”**

It is true we all sin and we should not take any sin lightly even though our sin does not lessen God’s love for us in one degree. However, unconfessed sin does break fellowship with God and calls for his displeasure and discipline. **Hebrews 12:5-11** The answer to the objection is this: only **unrepented** of sin is brought before the congregation. That is the reason for the process of step one and two. If repentance occurs, then church discipline ceases.

### **5. “Church discipline, especially excommunication, seems so unloving.”**

It may appear unloving but the very opposite is true. Nothing is more loving than calling a person to be in a right relationship with Jesus Christ. The problem with this objection is that the church has bought into the culture’s definition of love. Church discipline is a great opportunity to reveal what true love looks like.

### **6. What if the disciplined member wanted to meet with me or have lunch?**

The social impact of discipline has lost its force in our day due to various reasons and the reality is that many who are under discipline just join another church. With that said, the mandate found in 2 Thessalonians 3:14-16 states that to “have no company with him”, and 1 Corinthians 5:11 states “not to keep company with” and “not even eat with such a person.” It seems clear that any and all normal types of church wide fellowships are jeopardized. Yet the Thessalonian passage also states “admonish him as a brother.” Is it a hard and fast rule that any meal or meeting with an excommunicated member is out? The Corinthian passage lists others for exclusion of fellowship, the sexually immoral, greedy, idolater, abusive, drunkards and swindlers. The context is this, these members were known for their ungodly lifestyle and yet they desired to participate in church fellowship. They wanted both their sin and their spiritual community; they loved the world and yet did not want to give up the benefits of the church. Scripture teaches you don’t get both, and the church family supports such teaching by not allowing them to join in on the communion and fellowship dinners. But does this also mean individual members could not meet with the sinning brother or sister? The Matthew 18 passage informs us to treat the member who has been excommunicated like an unsaved person. We would want to be kind to someone without Christ; we would want to spend time with them to share the gospel. So the question is what if the one under discipline asks to meet you for lunch? This is a difficult question with various perspectives. Perhaps like other New Testament principles, God left some room for variation. One thing is certain, when working through church discipline; the variables are unlimited with the erring member as well as with his or her family and friends. Church discipline seems as if you are aiming at a moving target due to the numerous circumstances and the varying levels of spiritual maturity of all personalities directly or indirectly involved. At excommunication, the entire congregation is involved. With these challenges in mind,

the following points are presented as guidelines to help each believer navigate through the murky and unsettled waters that at times accompany church discipline.

### **Guidelines regarding meeting with an unrepentive member:**

A. What is the motive or purpose for meeting? It would have to be clear, very clear that the purpose for meeting was to defend the decision of the congregation and call the person to repentance. This topic to some degree must be a part of the conversation. Motives play a major role in the Christian life. God looks at our heart and we need the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to help reveal our motives. Therefore if the motive is to call the one we are meeting with to repentance, then effort should be made to do so. (Hebrews 4:12-13, Psalm 139:23-24)

B. A full and pure application to the command “don’t eat with them” in 1 Corinthians 5 would mean no member should meet for lunch or dinner with one who is under formal church discipline. Again, the question is this, was the command regarding church-wide dinners that were very common and called agape or love fellowships? Such meals were designed to meet both physical and spiritual needs of the members.

Perhaps the “spirit of the command” would allow an individual member to meet him or her at a house or at another private setting, but at a location that would not place you in a compromising position. Again, the meeting is to occur only if the motive is to call for repentance. The reason for a consideration of the “spirit of the command” allowance is that it provides an opportunity to speak truth into a person’s life without them being connected to church-wide fellowship. The question is was Paul’s example of “do not eat with” only referring to the church at large when they had dinner fellowships? Was Paul also referring to the individual member? It makes more sense if Paul only had the church fellowships in mind because it would allow for the “spiritual” members to admonish the fallen member to repentance. However, if a congregation embraces the view that it allows for “individual members” to reach out to these disciplined members the following should be in order. 1. The church leaders are to be made aware of the meeting to protect the testimony of the one reaching out. 2. The leaders would determine if the congregation would need this same information. For example, if the disciplined member was very influential or there was concern over social media, then the membership may be included.

### **7. “What if the excommunicated member feels injustice has occurred in their dismissal?”**

Rest assured, in most cases where repentance is *not* displayed, the expelled member is sure to think they have been dealt with unjustly and more than likely they will have certain members who agree. For this reason, careful attention needs to be given to how graciously the steps of actions are handled, and clear and deliberate teaching needs to be demonstrated before the congregation.

### **Biblical Examples of Discipline**

- **1 Corinthians 5:1-13** This is perhaps the best known and longest passage on church discipline. There was a member of the church who was having an immoral relationship with his father’s wife. The judgment passed down was very severe due to his lack of repentance. The member was to be excommunicated in hope that his sinful desires would bring him to an end of himself. Take notice of how Satan’s influence is brought into play once the man is removed from the blessings of being a part of God’s church. The purpose in Paul’s instruction was in hope that the man would eventually repent

and recommit himself back to God. Notice the stepmother was not addressed and we could assume for the reason that she was not a member of the church. This implies that the idea of membership was practiced in the early church despite some people's claim that membership cannot be found in the New Testament.

- **2 Thessalonians 3:6-15** In this congregation, certain members were being slothful and justified their inactivity by saying it was God's will. The instruction to the church was to disassociate themselves with those guilty in order that shame may bring them to repentance.
- **1 Timothy 1:20** Paul informed Timothy of two men who had made a shipwreck of their walk with Christ, and he turned them over to Satan that they would learn some important lessons about sound doctrine.
- **1 Timothy 5:19-20** Instructions were provided on how to discipline a leader of the church. The purpose of public rebuke was to express to the entire body how seriously God takes godliness within the lives of his children.
- **Titus 3:9-11** Some members of the church where Titus was pastor caused some disunity among the congregation. They were to be repeatedly warned by the leaders of their seriousness of this sin, and if repentance did not occur then they were to be excommunicated.
- **Romans 16:16-17** Those who cause division as a result of their false teaching were to be exposed before all and were to be avoided lest they bring further damage to the Lord's church.

It is clear that the church has the right to expose and excommunicate those who refuse to take purity and unity seriously. The work of the Church is of eternal consequence, and to have the name of Christ damaged by a member who refuses to take their sin seriously cannot go unchallenged.

**In review** we must remember that our primary goal is to glorify God by calling sinning believers to repentance. This process requires a great amount of faith on the part of the congregation at the risk of being misunderstood and misrepresented. However, the practice of church discipline pleases God and makes possible spiritual restoration thereby making obedience well worth any risk.

**1 John 1:1-7** *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, **that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.** 4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. 5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. NKJV*

**The appeal** of the church's call for repentance and restored fellowship is that **their fellowship is with the Father and Jesus Christ.** There could be no better, richer, greater, deeper reason to be in a right relationship with one's church family. **"...that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ..."**

## The One–Another Commands

**Titus 2:11-15** *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. 15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.*

God is *not* vague on the responsibilities he has for us. The Bible is filled with practical ways we are to demonstrate our commitment to Jesus Christ. These are called the one another commands.

Mark 9:50	Be at peace with <b>one another</b> .
John 13:13	Wash <b>one another's</b> feet. (Serve each other)
John 13:34,35	Love <b>one another</b> .
John 15:12,17	Love <b>one another</b>
Acts 20:7	Break Bread <b>together</b>
Romans 12:5	We are members <b>one of another</b>
Romans 12:10	Be devoted to <b>one another</b>
Romans 12:16	Be of the same mind toward <b>one another</b>
Romans 13:8	Owe nothing except to one love <b>one another</b>
Romans 14:13	Don't be a stumbling block to <b>one another</b>
Romans 14:19	Pursue peace. Build <b>one another</b> up
Romans 15:5	Be of the same mind with <b>one another</b>
Romans 15:7	Accept <b>one another</b> as Christ accepted us.
Romans 15:14	Admonish <b>one another</b>
Romans 15:30	Strive <b>together</b> in prayer
Romans 16:16	Greet <b>one another</b> with a holy kiss. (see also 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14)
1 Corinthians 3:9	We are laborers <b>together</b> with God.
1 Corinthians 11:33	Wait for one another – be polite to <b>one another</b>
1 Corinthians 12:25	Have the same care for <b>one another</b> – no divisions
1 Corinthians 12:26	Suffer and rejoice with <b>one another</b>
2 Corinthians 6:1	We are workers <b>together</b> with Him.
Galatians 5:13,14	By love, serve <b>one another</b> .

Galatians 5:15	Don't bite and devour <b>one another</b> .
Galatians 6:2	Bear <b>one another's</b> burdens.
Ephesians 4:2	Forbearing <b>one another</b> in love.
Ephesians 4:16	We are joined <b>together</b> as a body.
Ephesians 4:25	We are members <b>one of another</b> .
Ephesians 4:32	Be kind to <b>one another</b> . Forgive one another as God forgives us.
Ephesians 5:21	Submit to <b>one another</b> .
Philippians 1:27	Stand firm <b>together</b> for the faith.
Colossians 3:9	Don't lie to <b>one another</b> .
Colossians 3:13	Forbearing with <b>one another</b> . Forgive one another.
Colossians 3:16	Admonish <b>one another</b> .
1 Thes. 3:12	Abound in love toward <b>one another</b> .
1 Thes. 4:9	Love <b>one another</b> .
1 Thes. 4:18	Comfort <b>one another</b> .
1 Thes. 5:11	Edify (promote spiritual growth, build up) and encourage <b>one another</b> .
1 Timothy 5:21	Don't prefer <b>one</b> before <b>another</b> .
Hebrews 3:13	Exhort <b>one another</b> daily.
Hebrews 10:24	Meet <b>together</b> . Provoke (stimulate, stir up, to call) <b>one another</b> to love and good deeds.
James 4:11	Speak no evil of <b>one another</b> .
James 5:9	Don't complain against <b>one another</b> .
James 5:16	Confess your faults <b>one to another</b> .
1 Peter 1:22	Love <b>one another</b> with a pure heart.
1 Peter 3:8	Have compassion for <b>one another</b> .
1 Peter 4:9	Show hospitality to <b>one another</b> .
1 Peter 4:10	Minister to <b>one another</b> .
1 Peter 5:5	Be subject to <b>one another</b> .
1 John 1:7	Have fellowship with <b>one another</b> .
1 John 3:11,23	Love <b>one another</b> . (1 John 4:7,11; 2 John 5)

## Intentional Community ...

### Putting Into Practice the “One- Another” Commands

We have established 23 statements concerning the call to, and challenges of, “doing community”. They are designed for personal study, evaluation and application.

1. As a believer I have clear commands from Scripture defining my responsibility to other believers.
2. To embrace the “one another” commands is how I demonstrate my love for Christ and communicate to the unsaved that I am genuine believer.
3. Some believers are naturally more comfortable than others in regards to getting involved in **Community**. Therefore, those who have a more difficult time will need to rely upon Christ in a greater way.
4. Everyone who gets involved with fellow believers soon discover it can get messy...feelings get hurt, misunderstandings occur, and expectations go unmet.
5. It “appears” safer and it is easier to do ‘faith walk’ alone; however this is in direct opposition to Christ.
6. Though committed to Christ I still have potential to do great harm to myself and my relationships.
7. In doing **Community** I will be tempted to make relationships either *less* or *more* than God intends.
8. Disappointment from within the **Community** of believers is inevitable; disobedience on my part is optional!
9. Every painful experience within **Community** is designed to drive me to my end and lead me to God’s grace.
10. God has a bigger agenda for **Community** than I do. He wants to give me what I need, not what “I Think” I need.
11. God-honoring, commandment-obeying, joy-providing **Community** takes great effort and patience.
12. Every time I am sinned against in my relationships it provides for me an opportunity to **glorify God**, express **my love for Christ**, and reveal **my commitment to Scripture**.
13. When faced with conflict in **Community** I am tempted to handle it in human wisdom and techniques.
14. Our personal struggle with inward sin is made evident when we do **Community** and that is the reason many believers do not get involved.
15. God does not ignore the bad things that people do to me.
16. **Community** brings the *greatest satisfaction* when I enter it not to please myself or even others; but when I enter it to please God.
17. In resolving problems in **Community** I must start with God’s revealed truth.
18. God purposefully fills His Church with diversity to better equip believers and to bring Himself greater glory.
19. I cannot take Christ seriously without taking His Church seriously.
20. When *church-life* is done out of selfish motives, fellow believers become either obstacles that hinder my personal agenda or instruments to advance them.
21. My most joyous times *and* the deepest disappointments come from getting involved in **Community**.
22. Frankly stated, **Community** makes me vulnerable to getting hurt and being exposed.
23. Each of us will be tempted at some point to question Christ’s model of **Community**.

➤ The **ic** statements are adapted from Paul Tripp’s book – *Relationships, A Mess Worth Making*

The following statement is a strong rebuke from Pastor John MacArthur concerning community:

**For a Christian to fail to participate** in the life of a local church is inexcusable. In fact, those who choose to isolate themselves are disobedient to the direct command of Scripture. **Hebrews 10:24-25** charges believers to "consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near." The Bible does not envision the Christian life as one lived apart from other believers. All members of the universal church, the body of Christ, are to be actively and intimately involved in local assemblies."

# Procedures, Policies and Ministries of Grace Baptist Church

Policies allow Grace to be proactive and not reactive. When issues arise, policies demonstrate that the church is not only aware, but presents a plan of action to limit further challenges. Policies are subject for review and revision as needed. Good policies do not hinder a ministry from moving forward but grants direction and clarity to free it to be more effective.

## The Pillars of Ministry

- A high view of God
- The total sufficiency of Scripture
- An accurate view of man
- The purpose of the church
- The need for and priority of biblical leadership
- A high priority on the family

### ➤ **Baby Dedication**

**Psalm 127:3** Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

We as Christians have a tremendous responsibility given to us when the Lord blesses us with a child. He is entrusting us to raise the child in a way that would honor Him. We want to establish early for our child a foundation built upon Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6 commands us to raise our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This deals with training and instruction. The best way this is done is by being an example of what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

A Biblical Example of Dedication:

Hannah made a vow (sacred promise) to God that if He blessed her with a child she would dedicate him back to the Lord. That child was Samuel, the great priest and prophet of the Lord. **1Samuel 1**

Baby Dedication is a very sacred time and is to be viewed as such. It is different from our annual baby recognition day. Recognition day is when we celebrate with parents over how God has blessed their family. Parents do not have to be a member of Grace or even a believer for baby recognition day.

However, baby dedication is actually 'family dedication'; dad and mom are publicly stating that they will lead their child in the way of the Lord. It is not necessary to have a public dedication; all parents should first and foremost have already dedicated their child to the Lord on their own. However, we support parents who desire to have a public dedication to signify what they have already promised to God in their home.

**The following is to be prayerfully considered before requesting the dedication of your baby.**

1. That at least one of the parents know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, be a member of Grace Baptist Church and promise God with His help, to raise their child in the way of Jesus Christ.
2. Your commitment / covenant / vow is that you will be an example of Christ to your child (children)

➤ **Business meetings**

There are no mandated times for business meetings. They are determined and called by need with notice of such meetings being provided from the pulpit. A business meeting may be requested by the membership and determined if warranted by the pastor(s). Such meetings provide an opportunity to conduct official church business and take necessary votes.

➤ **Finance Responsibilities at Grace**

Ministries of GBC are primarily funded by the collective generous contributions of GBC members. Once in awhile special projects are done to raise funds for special missions trips or projects. GBC does not participate in church sales or gambling type fund raisers (lottery, raffles, bingo, etc.).

**Tithes and Offerings**

Tithe means “tenth” or “ten percent” and serves as an external testimony of God’s ownership of the material and spiritual possessions of our lives. It is argued by some that it is only for the Old Testament, under the Law. However, tithe is mentioned prior to the Law of Moses in regards to Abraham. **Genesis 14** This section is not designed to argue for or against the use of “tithe” in the New Testament. Regardless of what one calls their offering – “stewardship”, “grace giving” or “tithe” the principle should be the same: be as generous as possible with a grateful heart that recognizes God owns everything and we are only the managers (“stewards” is the Bible Term). God warned the Israelites that there would be a temptation to take credit for their ability to make money. This same temptation is faced in our day. **Deuteronomy 8:11-18** God rebuked His people through the prophet Malachi for ‘robbing from Him’ by holding back their tithe and offerings. **Malachi 1:6-8, 3:8-10** A lack of giving is an external indicator that spiritual examination and changes need to occur. If members were more honest, the issue of giving is rarely a shortage of money and more of priority in lifestyle choices. The Covenant of Membership states that each member is to support the church through their faithful attendance and offerings. **Matthew 6:19-20, 24, 33**  
**1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7**

According to the Grace Baptist Church Constitution the **Treasurer** “shall have charge of all church funds from all sources, and shall keep a record of same. He shall be responsible for church financial reports at business meetings and shall keep detailed records of monies received and paid out.”

**The Treasurer**

1. Position: Appointed
2. Responsibilities:
  - a. To disburse all money contributed to the local church budget, keeping accurate records of how money is spent.
  - b. To provide accurate monthly financial reports.
  - c. To assure there are adequate records documenting the assets of the church for insurance and other purposes.
  - d. To make recommendations for the investment of excess funds (if any).
  - e. To insure that all church property is appropriately covered by insurance for casualty and liability losses.
  - f. To insure that all governmental taxes, reporting forms, and regulations are met on a timely basis.
  - g. To be accountable to the congregation for church finances.
  - h. To be the registered agent for non-profit corporation for the state of Ohio.

3. The Treasurer may delegate these duties and responsibilities to others as he sees fit. As of February 2011.

### **Finance Manager**

1. Position: Paid – part time
2. Responsibilities:
  - a. To insure that the corporation of the congregation is in good standing.
  - b. To be responsible for adequate insurance coverage on all church property and to secure adequate liability coverage for church staff and volunteers.
  - c. To oversee preparation of the annual budget with Church Officers and to present to congregation for approval.
  - d. To provide monthly financial reports to Church Officers, Church Staff, and Missions Leadership Team
  - e. To make certain that all designated gifts are distributed appropriately.
  - f. To oversee responsibilities of the Finance Secretary
  - g. To make sure all financial obligations are met on time
  - h. To administrate payroll services
  - i. To make sure all church bank accounts reconcile
  - j. To insure regular audits of the church books.
3. The Finance Manager may delegate these duties and responsibilities to others as he sees fit.

### **Finance Secretary**

1. Position: Paid – part time
2. Responsibilities:
  - a. To work according to the guidelines established by the Finance Manager.
  - b. To receive funds from whatever source, record them, and report them to the church Treasurer and the Finance Manager.
  - c. To insure money is deposited in a bank as soon as possible after it is received. All deposits should be made within two days of receipt.
  - d. To produce individual charitable gift receipt summaries of all donations received during a calendar year and distribute within thirty days of the end of that year.

### **Trustees**

1. Position: Non-Paid - Elected
2. Responsibilities:
  - a. To oversee, care for, maintain, and supervise all church property
  - b. To be responsible for the annual General Fund Spending Plan (budget)

### **Deacons**

1. Position: Non-Paid - Elected
2. Responsibilities:
  - a. To be responsible for annual Staff Compensation
  - b. To be responsible for benevolence funds and the appropriation thereof

### **Missions Leadership Team**

1. Position: Non-Paid - Appointed
2. Responsibilities:
  - a. To be responsible for the annual Missions Fund Spending Plan (budget)
  - b. To decide financial support for all Missions projects, including Church plants

### **Finance Audit Team**

1. Position: Non-Paid – Appointed
2. Responsibilities:
  - a. To provide accountability that financial procedures are being followed
  - b. To provide internal financial audits

### **Procedures for Handling Church Funds**

- 1) Funds received are counted and verified by at least two Church Officers and noted on Contribution Form
- 2) Counted funds and Contribution Form are given to Church Office to validate, update giving records and deposit monies to bank
- 3) All Accounts Payable are paid upon receipt
- 4) Monthly reports are reviewed by Church Officers, Pastoral Staff, Treasurer and Finance Manager
- 5) Ministry Leaders receive monthly reports of their budget progress and available funds to spend
- 6) Periodic Financial Snapshots are provided to Congregation and discussed publicly.
- 7) Any further detailed information desired may be obtained from Treasurer or Finance Manager upon request.
- 8) Authorization to persons to bind the church to contracts and/or financial obligations is stated in the **GBC Authorization Resolution** kept on file in the main church office.

#### ➤ **Rental of Building and Properties Procedure**

If you are a member, and would like to request the use of a room, or part of the building or property please fill out the appropriate CCB form at [gbcmason.ccbchurch.com](http://gbcmason.ccbchurch.com).

#### ➤ **Request for Financial Assistance Policy and Procedures**

Periodically, Grace Baptist Church will receive requests for financial support from church members, as well as from non-church members. The responsibility for handling these requests for financial assistance lies with the Deacons of the church. In attempting to help those with sincere needs, we bring honor to our Lord. (Proverbs 14:31) A copy of this policy is available from the Deacons.

➤ **Staff Positions and Accountability**

The authority to vote for 'full time positions' rests within the congregation and these positions may consist of both pastoral staff and support staff. The lead pastor (senior pastor) is voted in or dismissed by a congregational vote as stated in the constitution; all other positions are filled at the discretion of the lead pastor using the Deacons as an advisory board. Members other than Deacons may be selected to serve as advisors as well in regard to selecting an individual to a position.

The Pastors have an individual meeting with some selected Deacons annually wherein the Pastors are asked a number of accountability questions. There are approximately 35 questions on the form. These questions may be requested for review by any member.

## Theological Issues

### ➤ Baptist Historical Confessions of Faith

The London Baptist Confession of Faith 1644

The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith 1677

The New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith 1833

### ➤ Bible Translations

A great deal of debate has occurred, and will continue to occur within the body of Christ in regards to Bible translations. Provided in our statement of faith as recorded in this Handbook is the following: *We believe that the Bible, composed of the Old and New Testaments, is God's inspired and infallible Word, and is the supreme standard and final authority for all conduct, faith, and doctrine. We believe in the total sufficiency of Scripture.* The original texts are inspired of which no copies remain. However, abundant historical evidence assures us that God has secured for His people accurate manuscript copies of early texts. These have been used to provide God's Word, the sacred Scripture for the English language. Our first English Bible came from the hands of John Wycliffe in 1380 and was translated from the Latin Bible. The first English Bible from the Hebrew and Greek copies were given to us by William Tyndale; New Testament 1526, Old Testament, with the help of two associates in 1535. The Great Bible of 1539 was the first authorized English Bible for public use. The Geneva Bible of 1560 was the first to provide verses to the chapters and was the choice of Bibles for English speaking people for over 100 years. It was the first Bible taken to America and was the Bible of the Puritians and Pilgrims. In 1611, the King James Version was completed. After a number of revisions, the 1769 version was finalized. The version that is used today is from the 1769 revision. Grace uses the King James Version as its text and other translations are used at the discretion of the pastors. There are within this congregation various and strongly held viewpoints in regards to particular translations. Such diversity provides an opportunity to express Christian liberty and graciousness, which honors God more than one's choice of translation. Our stand on Bible versions is not designed to diminish the importance of sound Bible translations or a members particular view of a selected version, but to promote and ensure unity among the Lord's Church.

### ➤ Concerning Christians and Lawsuits

Ten Questions A Christian Should Ask Before Going to Court

- What action by me is likely to bring the most glory to God? (1Corinthians 10:23-33)
- What are my true motives for getting involved in litigation? Is it a desire for revenge or security?
- (1Corinthians 13, Matthew 5:38-48, 7:1-5)
- Is there a principle or issue at stake which is broader than my personal interests?
  - (Acts 5:17-32)
- Will the action I take compromise my witness before other Christians? Will I be a stumbling block? (Romans 14:13, 1Timothy 4:12)
- Will the action I take compromise my witness before non-Christians? Will I be a hindrance to their receiving the gospel? (1Corinthians 6:1-8, 10:32-33)
- Will the action I take compromise my witness before the other party, their counsel, or my counsel? (Romans 15:1-3)
- Will the action I take compromise the testimony of the church or other Christians?

- (1 Corinthians 6:1-8, 10:32-33)
- Will my action have potentially damaging consequences on ‘innocent’ third parties?
  - (Matthew 18:1-6, Mark 9:42, Luke 17:1-5)
- Am I most concerned about my name, reputation and feelings? (Matthew 5:38-42)
- What are my other alternatives? (Matthew 5:23-26, 6:8-15, 18:15-18)
- Is forgiveness appropriate? Always
- Is settlement and compromise appropriate?
- Have I met with the person one-to-one to discuss my views and listen to his?
- Have I sought out counselors or mediators to assist in reconciliation?

### ➤ **The Lord’s Supper / Communion**

It is also referred to as The Lord’s Table, or the Eucharist; which means the giving of thanks. It is a memorial of when our Lord met with his twelve disciples in the Upper Room.

**Matthew 26:26-28** *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; 28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

**1 Corinthians 11:23-32** *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: **this do in remembrance of me.** 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: **this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.** 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come. 27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 **But let a man examine himself,** and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*

### **There are various views regarding the Lord’s Supper.**

- The Roman Catholic view is known as transubstantiation. In this view the bread and wine when properly consecrated by the priest is said to actually physically change into Christ’s body and blood even though the appearance of the elements remain unchanged.
- The Memorial View is what we embrace here at Grace. The elements are understood as representative symbols of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. The primary purpose is in the remembrance of Christ’s work on our behalf. It should be participated in only after careful self – examination has occurred by the believer. It is a time for personal and corporate praise for what Christ has done, as well as a reminder of his return.
- **Open Communion** is when anyone who claims to be a believer is welcome to participate regardless of their church or denominational affiliation.
- **Closed Communion** is when only the members of that local congregation are permitted to participate.

- **Close Communion** is what we embrace here at Grace. Non-members are welcome to participate, however these guests should (1) know Jesus Christ as their personal savior (2) be in a right fellowship with Christ which involves personal examination (3) be a member of a church of like faith and practice
- The Bible does not specify how often the church should observe Communion. Some churches observe it every Sunday, some once a quarter, some only once a year keeping in line with the Jewish Passover. At Grace we celebrate Communion during January to acknowledge a New Year, on Palm Sunday, during Thanksgiving week, and various other Sundays.

➤ **Divorce and Remarriage**

The Four Common Views of Divorce and Remarriage are: (1) divorce is never permissible under any circumstances though there will be divorce among Christians because one or both of those involved disregard biblical principles, (2) both divorce and remarriage is permissible for various and numerous reasons, (3) divorce is permitted under certain circumstances but remarriage is never permitted and, (4) both divorce and remarriage is permitted under certain circumstances.

Pastor and Bible teacher Chuck Swindoll wrote the following: 'I don't believe a bus load of American theologians would be unanimous on divorce even if they toured the U.S. an entire summer. It's a controversial issue for sure. Therefore no matter what I conclude, I am confident that some very reliable, competent and equally sincere people will disagree.'

Regardless of ones' particular view on divorce and remarriage there seems to be no satisfactory solution to this very complicated and serious issue. We are not 100% convinced that our view or policy is correct, and therefore we appeal for liberty and graciousness from those who we may offend as a result of it. We realize there is a much easier and less emotionally painful path to take in regards to remarriage, but our desire is to help communicate how serious a marriage covenant is, thereby leading us to travel a very difficult and lonely road.

Therefore, the policy at Grace is: a wedding ceremony at Grace is forfeited when the requesting person(s) for marriage still has a living spouse from a previous marriage.

In regards to our policy:

- \* Again, we state that we are not fully persuaded that we have taken the correct approach.
- \* As a concession, we understand that a member may choose to go forward with a remarriage and such would not forfeit any standing of membership.
- \* We do not believe that divorce or remarriage is an unpardonable sin.
- \* God can and does use those who have been divorced in various ways for his service.
- \* Not all the pastors and lay leaders necessarily agree on this interpretation and policy
- \* A 12- page positional paper on Divorce and Remarriage is available upon request.

➤ **Immorality or Sexual Sins**

As believers we should never minimize the offense and seriousness of sexual sins

**(Ephesians 5:3)**, yet we are aware of the fact that any sincere follower of Christ is capable of yielding to sexual temptation. Therefore, we have established the following to provide guidance for all parties involved as well as for the membership at large. Counsel and encouragement is to be provided for those involved in the sexual sin as well as for the parents (if the member is under 18 years of age.) This provides guidance for all parties involved as well as for the membership at large.

If the sin is public; example: a pregnancy out of wedlock, then once repentance is demonstrated the following steps will in be order: a pastor or deacon will share with the congregation that such repentance has occurred and that the membership should express forgiveness, encouragement, fellowship, and any other acts of support that God so impresses upon their hearts. The restored member will receive all rights and privileges which include but not limited to a church sponsored baby shower as per requirements of any member and a church wedding as per requirements of any member. In the event repentance is not expressed by those involved then the necessary steps of church discipline will be taken. This action will involve only those who are members.

**(1 Corinthians 5)**

## Ministries

➤ **Children and Student Ministries** The final authority and primary responsibility of the spiritual training of children rests within and upon the parents. **Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Ephesians 6:4** The church is to equip and encourage parents in their role. We have requirements and guidelines for those who choose to work in our Children's Ministry. There is a Children's Ministry application form that is to be completed prior to active involvement. This is designed as a proactive measure, which communicate our belief that the church should be one of the safest places for a family.

➤ **Global Evangelism and Missions**

The last words of Jesus before His ascension into heaven (**Acts 1:8**) clearly communicated the command to share the gospel around the world. Grace has a strong passion to fulfill this command and does so by partnering with missionaries. Our support of Missionaries is demonstrated in a number of practical ways, one of which is through financial support. Over two million dollars has been given to Missions to help spread the gospel and plant churches around the world. We have a sincere and deep commitment to worldwide evangelism and trust that each member of Grace shares this same vision.

Our ability to financially support additional missionaries is determined by subtracting from the annual missions budget existing support, anticipated money for special projects, conference expenses, and the estimated cost of mission trips. The remaining funds may then be divided to determine new missionaries we can support. The Missions Leadership Team will determine how many new missionaries we will take on for support. The support level for non-Grace missionaries is \$100 per month and our intent is to support each for as long as they serve as missionaries. We also have a Home Missions program through which we provide support in establishing new churches. This support is temporary, and ranges anywhere from one to three years.

➤ **The Grace Mission Team | Tanzania**

God has graciously called Grace Baptist to reach Kenyans with the Gospel. In 2007 The Grace Mission Team was birthed and is currently made up of a number of families who are all members of Grace. These families have surrendered their lives to be vocational missionaries while we have committed to supporting them. They have been approved by ABWE (Association of Baptist for World Evangelism) Mission Board of Harrisburg, PA. It is a great honor for God to use Grace to send forth missionaries. With this honor comes greater responsibility because being a sending church is a completely different role than being a supporting church.

➤ **Grace Biblical Counseling**

Biblical counseling involves understanding the problems of living in a fallen world, and their solutions – from a biblical perspective. The Bible is used both to define the problems and to develop methods for solving those problems. The lead counselors at GBC have received formal training in biblical counseling. They are not licensed psychologists, but rather Biblical counselors. They have been trained by the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, a national organization devoted to ensuring the quality of counseling offered by biblical counselors.

\*Additional information is available upon request.