



GRACE

Discover Grace Seminar

Units 1-4

Discover Grace

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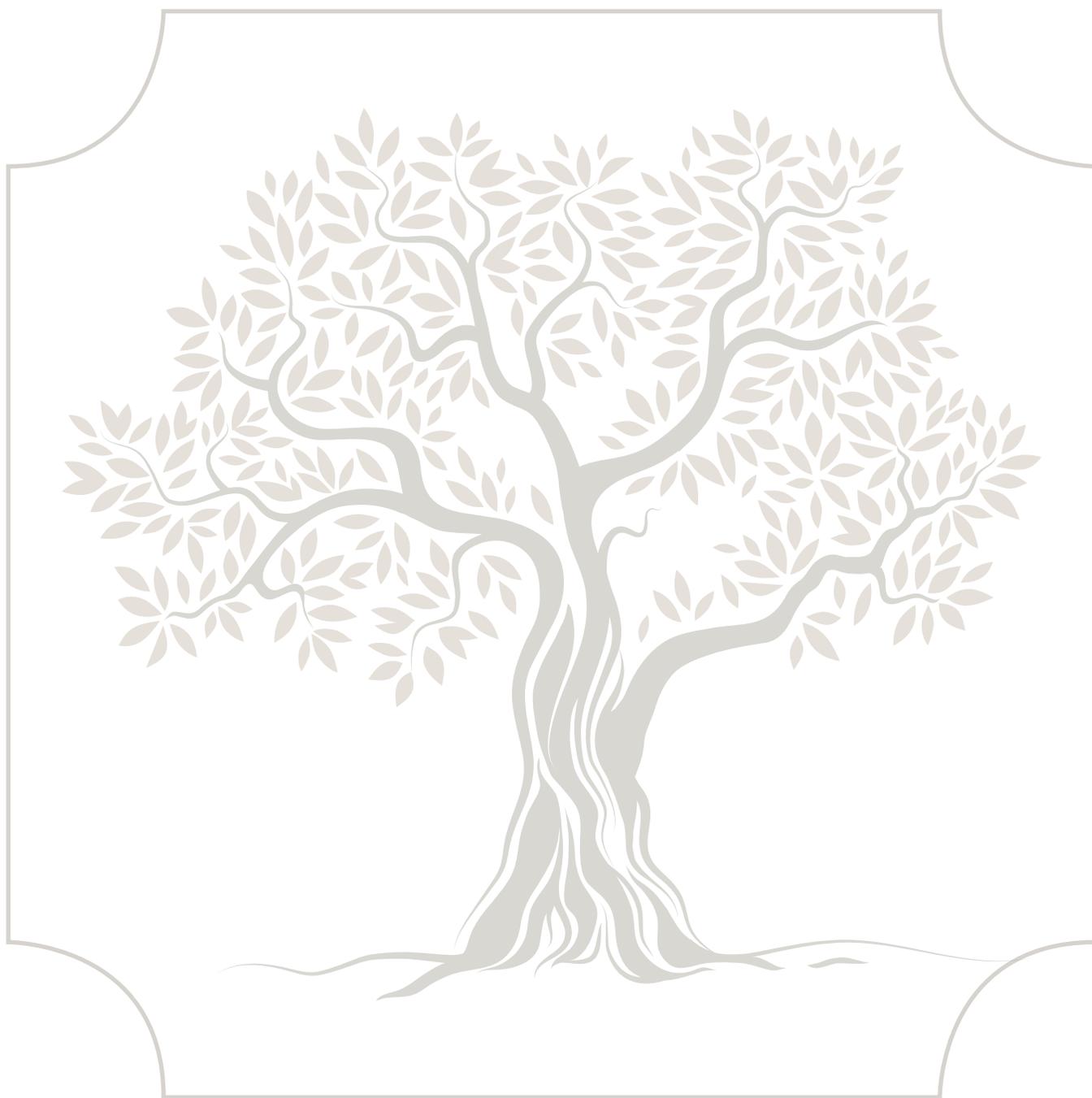
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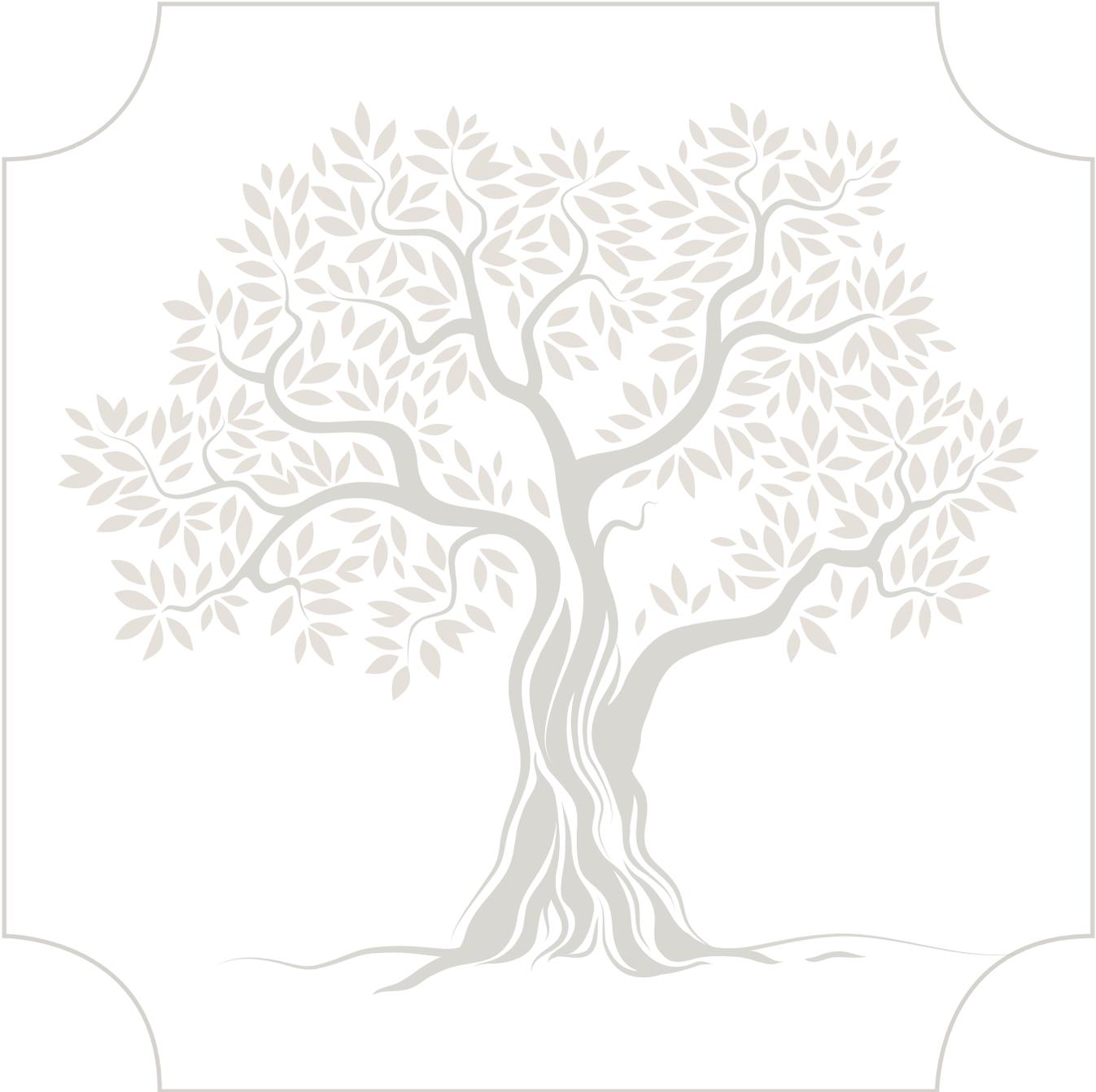
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UNIT I

DISCOVERING GRACE





Session 1: The Gospel

1) The Gospel

God's purpose for man

- Full & Abundant Life — *John 10:10*
- Eternal Life — *John 3:16*

Man's problem

- Sin: Fall of Man
- Sinful Nature — *Mark 7:21-23*

God's wrath

- Ephesians 2:3
- John 3:36

God's grace

- Man cannot satisfy God's law — *Romans 3:20*
- God gives us the righteousness of Christ — *Romans 3:21-22a*
- God forgives our sin through Christ — *Romans 3:23-25a*

God's salvation is received by faith alone

- Ephesians 2:8, 9

Assurance of salvation

The only unshakable assurance of salvation is faith in Christ

- Witness of the Spirit: Subjective
- Changed Life: Relative
- Work of Christ: Objective

Spiritual growth is seeing our increased need of God's Grace

- 1 Corinthians 15:9
- Ephesians 3:8
- 1 Timothy 1:15
- Romans 1:17; Galatians 2:20

Notes

Gospel Reconciliation

- The Full Gospel is the good news of reconciliation with God and with one another.
 - » The gospel bring vertical & horizontal reconciliation
 - » Reconciliation is not merely individualistic. It is communal!
- Reconciliation between one another, especially across the lines of race and class, should be seen in the local church.
 - » The big issue of the NT Church was Gentile inclusion
 - » Gentile inclusion is why Paul ended up in prison (Acts 22; Eph. 6.19-20)
 - » Racial integration is at the heart of the church (Colossians 3.11-12)
- Full Gospel Reconciliation is the vision & mission of Grace Church.
 - » See “Our goal is to reach ALL peoples in our community.” on page 6
 - » See “The multi-ethnic, cross-cultural church is best equipped to carry out the Great Commission” on page 8
 - » See “Grace Church Purpose Statement:” on page 9
 - » Please read the booklet “Why a Multi-Ethnic Church?” It will help you grasp why we have this vision and mission.

2) Beliefs held in common with most evangelical churches

The Bible

We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the supreme and final authority in all matters of faith and life.

God

We believe in one living, sovereign and true God, who is infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, coequal in power and glory, having the same attributes and perfections.

Creation

We believe that in the beginning God created the world and all the things therein out of nothing and by His sovereign power and providence He continues to sustain and order His creation to fulfill His divine purposes and manifest His glory.

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Man

We believe that man was created in the image of God to have fellowship with Him and to glorify Him and therefore has great dignity and value but man fell into sin and thereby became spiritually dead, separated from God, under God's condemnation and totally unable to please God or merit salvation.

God's plan of salvation

We believe that God has graciously provided a plan of salvation for fallen man. In this plan, Jesus Christ has become our representative, taking our sins upon himself, having offered himself as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God. All who by faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ are justified on the basis of His shed blood, become children of God and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit until the Day of Redemption.

Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He is now our High Priest and Advocate.

The Church

We believe in the one universal church of which Christ is the head. The visible church is the ordinary means for the spread of the gospel and the building up of God's people in Christ. Water baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments to be observed by the Church during this present age.

Last things

We believe in the personal, visible coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting punishment of the lost in hell, and the everlasting blessedness of the saved in heaven.

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3) Grace Church (PCA): Core Values and Beliefs

What is it that makes Grace Church distinctly what it is? The first way to answer this question is to consider the *doctrinal commitments* that we embrace. Those are the creeds and summaries of what we believe the Bible teaches about God, man, salvation, the Bible, the church, the world, etc. As a church, Grace stands with *all* churches in affirming the Apostle's Creed, and with the Protestant and Reformed churches in affirming the teachings of the Westminster Confession of Faith. It is these doctrinal standards that inform our Christian world and life view.

However, in every time and place a church must decide *how* these doctrinal commitments will be taught and lived out within the context in which it finds itself. This could be called the *theological vision* of the congregation. This is what we are calling our "core values and beliefs" or "philosophy of ministry." The following is a (partial) summary statement of the basic guiding values of Grace Church.

Corporate worship is the centerpiece of our life as a community.

- God's primary desire for His people is the worship of his name. When he redeemed the children of Abraham from slavery in Egypt his purpose was that they might worship him (Exodus 3:12; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1,13; 10:3, 7, 8, 24, 26).
- The sheer volume and detailed instructions for worship given through Moses testify to the centrality of worship in the corporate life of the people of God in the Old Testament.
- In the New Testament, worship is underscored by Jesus who declares that the Father is seeking those who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23).
- The "Great Commission" is given in the context of worship (Matthew 28:16-20)
- Paul describes the worship of gentiles and Jews as nothing less than the confirmation of God's promises made to the patriarchs (Romans 15:7-12).
- The Bible concludes with the Book of Revelation where a *great multitude* of people is described. We are told that this multitude is so great *no one could count* them, and that they were *from every nation, tribe, people and language*. This great gathering of God's people is united in the worship of God (Revelation 7:9ff). The great and ultimate goal of evangelism is the worship of God.

The celebration of the gospel is at the heart of our worship.

The Apostle John writes in Revelation 5:9–11 that those worshipping Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God

"...sang a new song, saying,

"Worthy are you... for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people

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and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God.... Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

The Apostle Peter writes (1 Peter 2:9, 10)

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Though we worship God for all his glorious attributes it is his loving grace, seen in the gospel, that lies at the heart of our worship. That grace has made us his people... his sons and daughters through faith in his Son. Worship is, at its heart, a celebration of the grace of God.

The Great Commission is the primary task of our church.

True worship results in a deep passion for evangelism. If great multitudes of people are going to worship God then they must be reached with the gospel of God's mercy in Christ. Indeed, the multitudes of worshippers in Revelation are described as those who are purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:9). This multitude of people from *every nation, tribe, people and language* is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that in him all people on earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3) and that he would be the father of many nations (Genesis 17:4-6).

This promise is realized as people come to faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26, 29), thus evangelism is the means whereby the vision of multitudes of people worshipping God becomes a reality. True passion for the worship of God demands an equal passion for evangelism.

The Great Commission calls us to make disciples of all people.

In the Great Commission Jesus says, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" This means that as we bring the gospel to all people, those who believe, are to be initiated and thus incorporated into the visible church through the sacrament of baptism. Furthermore, we have a responsibility to all those whom we baptize and bring into our church whether they be long time members or new converts. We must teach them and assist them to obey everything Jesus has commanded us. Thus it is imperative that every believer God has entrusted to us be guided into the word of Christ.

We believe the best context in which this can happen is a small group. It is in the context of a small group that people can be best "discipled." This however, is not the only place. Our Sunday school ministry is another excellent context for people to be helped to obey the commands of Jesus, as is Sunday worship where the word of our Lord is opened, read and taught. Broadly speaking we see mature disciples

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- In Ephesians 2:14 he tells us that the racial division between Jew and non-Jew has been destroyed through Jesus Christ who “...*himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility*”
- In Colossians 3:11 he says that in the church “...*there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.*” Thus he calls on the Colossian Christians to live out this unity in their church in the verses that immediately follow (vv.12-17).
- He writes to the Christians of the church in Rome who were experiencing the racial tensions of Jew vs. Gentile and reminds them that it has always been God’s intention that all peoples be united in their worship of Him (Romans 15:7-12). He begins his exhortation with the words, “*Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*”

But it is not only the divisions of race that are overcome by the gospel. Paul tells us that *in Christ there is neither slave nor free*. The divisions of class & wealth are removed in Christ. James exhorts the church about the dangers of valuing the rich over the poor. He says to the church, in James 2:2-5,

“For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?”

He goes on to say in verses 8-9,

“If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors..”

And there are other things that divide people. Gender has been and continues to be a source of tension even in our own society. Throughout history and even in our day there are cultures that view women as inferior to men to such an extent that in some cultures women have been viewed as mere property of men. But Paul declares that *in Christ there is neither male nor female*. This does not mean there are not differences and distinctions between men and women. Rather, it means that men and women are of equal significance, worth and dignity in Christ. There are other things that divide people such as age, political convictions, etc. All of these issues that divide people are set aside by the gospel. Through Christ we are reconciled not only with God but also with each other and it is this unity that we seek. We pursue a *no barriers* mentality within the context of biblical teaching. Thus, we seek to break down human barriers through the gospel as we seek to carry out the Great Commission among the peoples of our own community and seek to gather them together in the worship of God.

1) Life in the church at Grace

Worship

The Lord's Day is to be honored by making corporate worship the priority of the week

Learning

God's word is foundational to the Christian life therefore we seek God's guidance in what we are to believe and how we are to live.

Fellowship

- The church is a body therefore we are dynamically inter-related.
- The New Testament is filled with "one another" commands which assume & require personal relationships (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- One very practical way to live out God's call to fellowship is in a small group of believers that meet regularly.

Ministry

God has **SHAPE**(d) each of us to serve in Christ's Church

- **S**-piritual gifts
- **H**-eart (passions)
- **A**-bilities (talents)
- **P**-ersonality
- **E**-xperiences

Stewardship

- God is the ultimate source of everything we have
- We are stewards of our Time, Talents & Treasures and are accountable to God
- Stewardship is motivated by love & gratitude to God (Romans 12:1)

2) Forms of Church Government

- Episcopal
- Congregational
- Presbyterian (Session / Presbytery / General Assembly)

Notes

3) Church Discipline

The contemporary church struggles with the subject of discipline. It is not popular to judge one another, nor is it an easy thing to confront one another. Many would rather ignore sin and conflict than go through the struggle of facing it and forgiving it under the proper conditions. But we cannot hope for an effective ministry and neglect the necessary purification of our lives and of our fellowship. Church discipline is the exercise of the authority which the Lord Jesus has given his church to promote the church's purity, to benefit those who are in sin and to vindicate Christ's honor. It is the act of biblically and lovingly confronting a brother or sister in Christ, who is in serious sin, with a view to reconciliation and restoration.

Steps to Biblical Church Discipline — *Matthew 18:15-20*

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Step One

- Go and show him his fault, just between the two of you (v. 15)
- Failure to keep it “just between the two of you” results in
 - a) gossip
 - b) tempting the listener to take up the offense
 - c) destroying your sincerity when you approach the individual

Step Two

- Take one or two others along (v. 16)

Step Three

- Tell it to the church (v. 17)

Step Four

- Treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector
- This is the action of the Session

Notes

In the case of a minister

- Step One: Go directly to him
- Step Two: Take one or two ministers from the Presbytery (see Appendix II for ways to get a list of ministers)
- Step Three: Take it to the Presbytery
- Step Four: Action of the Presbytery

4) Membership Vows

Profession of Christ as Savior and Lord (questions 1 and 2).

1. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope except in His sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

Participation in the Life of the Church (questions 3, 4 and 5).

3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as is fitting for a follower of Christ?
4. Do you promise to support this Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
5. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of this Church, and promise to strive earnestly for its purity and peace?

The Purpose of Church Membership

- To follow the model of the New Testament. The New Testament presents a picture of definable groups of people who, once committed to the Lord, identified with and committed themselves to a particular local body. (Acts 11:26; Romans 16:1; I Corinthians 1:2; II Corinthians 8:1, Philipians 1:1)
- In order to implement the principles of accountability and commitment to the local body of Christ, as defined in the New Testament and practiced in the early churches, Grace Church recognizes the need for formal membership.

Session 3: Doctrines of Grace & The Lord's Supper

Our Distinct Beliefs

- 1. The Doctrines of Grace (See Appendix 2)
- 2. Holy Communion See Appendix 3)
- 3. Mode of Baptism (See Appendix 4)
- 4. Covenant Theology (See Appendix 5)
- 5. Infant Baptism (See Appendix 6)

1) The "Doctrines of Grace"

All are sinners and under God's wrath

- Romans 3:10-12, 23
- Ephesians 2.1-3

Salvation is not based on any precondition but entirely on God's grace and mercy.

- Ephesians 2:4-5, 8-9
- Titus 3:4, 5a

Christ's death atones only for those who believe in Him

- John 3:18, 36
- NOTE: If Christ's death actually atoned for the sin of every single person, salvation would be universal. This view is held by some and is referred to as "Universalism".

Salvation is all of God.

- Faith itself is the gift of God – Ephesians 2:8-9
- The "New Birth" precedes faith – John 3:3-8
- All to whom God gives the gift of the "New Birth" come to faith. – John 6:37, 65

God keeps all those who are "born again" in the faith.

- Philippians 1:6
- Jude 24, 25.

1) Mode of Baptism

See Appendix 5.

There are three modes of baptism:

- » Emersion (cleansed of sin by being buried with Christ and risen to life with Christ);
- » Pouring (cleansed by the Holy Spirit who is typically “poured” out on God’s people);
- » Sprinkling (cleansed by the blood of Christ which is “sprinkled” on God’s people – the Old Testament picture).

We view each mode as valid but practice sprinkling.

- Baptism pictures the purifying work of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5, 6)
- Holy Spirit Baptism is described in Scripture as “pouring” or “sprinkling”
- Therefore pouring or sprinkling best pictures the Spirit’s work (Ezekiel 36:25-27)
- NOTE: We recognize immersion or dipping as valid since it signifies the believer’s cleansing from sin through identification with Christ in His death, burial & resurrection.

2) Covenant Theology

See Appendix 5.

The key idea in Covenant Theology is the unity & continuity of God’s People (Israel & the Church).

- Ephesians 2:8-22
- Romans 11:11-29
- Galatians 3:16, 26-29

Notes

3) Infant Baptism

See Appendix 6.

- There is one unified people of God (Covenant Theology)
- In both the OT & NT there is an initiatory rite into the community of God's people: circumcision in the OT & baptism in the NT.
- Circumcision & Baptism picture the same reality: purification from sin through faith (Colossians 2:9-10).
- Though neither circumcision nor baptism save, they mark a person as a member of the community of God where God speaks through His word (Romans 2:28-3:2) and they are the objects of God's special care (Genesis 17:7; Acts 2:38-39, 16:14-15, 16:29-31; 1 Corinthians 7:13-14).
- The burden of proof lies on those who would deny baptism to the children of believers.

Conclusion

Appendix 1: Standards of Leadership: Elders, Deacons, & Deaconesses

1) General Requirements For Church Leaders:

1. Elders and deacons must be a male member of the congregation (I Timothy 2:12; 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6), actively involved in the basic life of the Church (worship, fellowship, ministry) and presently manifesting the gifts and abilities required of the office. Deaconesses must be female members of the congregation (Romans 16.1-2; 1 Timothy 3.11) actively involved in all the basic life of the church and presently manifesting the gifts and abilities required in the mercy ministry role of deaconesses.
2. Must exhibit the character qualities of a spiritual leader (See I Peter 5:1-4; I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9; Acts 6:1-6) maintaining the practice of time alone with God in Bible reading and prayer. These leaders:
 - » Must have lives that are marked by moral and spiritual integrity.
 - » Must have a wholesome reputation among believers and unbelievers alike.
 - » Must have a firm grasp and conviction of the truths of the Christian faith as revealed in the Scriptures.
 - » Must have the spiritual capability to discern, expose and withstand the assaults of heresy and unbelief. (elders)
 - » Must have homes that reflect an atmosphere of harmony, godliness, reverence, and hospitality.
3. Must have completed the Training Courses taught by the Pastors.
4. Must have thoughtfully considered the following six questions and be willing to answer them in the affirmative.

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2) The Biblical Character Of Godly Leadership:

It is our conviction that a man seeking the office of Elder must be a man who demonstrates what it means to walk with our Lord Jesus. Additionally, taking our precedent from Jesus in John 10:1-18, we also believe that it is indispensable for the man wishing to take on the responsibility of judging and presiding over God's flock, in the office of Elder, to have first demonstrated his gift and maturity to shepherd God's people. Elders are first and foremost shepherds. Therefore, the current session will evaluate the Elder candidate's present and past shepherding ministries to see evidence of his gift and maturity. In similar fashion the current session will evaluate the diaconal candidates' gifts and maturity within the context of past and present service ministries. Similarly, deacons and deaconesses have the vital spiritual role of serving in the mercy ministry of the church and as such lead by example and challenge the congregation to acts of mercy and service to those in physical need.

Furthermore, it is our goal at Grace Church to elect elders, deacons and deaconesses who are not disqualified by the character qualifications of leaders found in scripture. The following is a compilation of I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9; 2:1-5, and 1 Peter 4:8-9; 5:1-4 where many of these qualifications are given. Again, it is our view that these characteristics are given, not as a list of those things which a candidate must meet perfectly (only Jesus could meet such a requirement) but as a list of "disqualifiers." That is, if someone is utterly failing in any of these, that person is thereby disqualified from serving.

In these texts we see that spiritual leaders ...

1. must be above reproach (I Timothy 3:2 and 8; Titus 2:7); that is, blameless or of good report. There is to be no grounds for accusing them of improper Christian behavior.
2. must be the husband of one wife (I Timothy 3:2, and 12; Titus 1:6); that is, not a bigamist. In a culture where men frequently cohabited with more than one woman, Paul needed to make it very clear that an elder in the church was to be a "one-wife man" – loyal to her and to her alone. Indirectly, this applies to deaconesses as well in that they should evidence that they are a "one-man woman" – loyal to him and to him alone. Thus this requires that those spiritual leaders who are married, exhibit the relationship between Christ and His church (Ephesians 21-33).
3. must be temperate (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8, 2:1-6); that is, self-controlled. They must not be those who are in bondage to themselves and to the desires of the flesh.
4. must be prudent (NIV: self-controlled) (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; 2:4); that is, sensible, wise, and balanced in judgment. They must not be given to quick and superficial decisions based on immature thinking.

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5. must be respectable (I Timothy 3:2); that is, he must have an orderly life. They must demonstrate good behavior.
6. must be hospitable (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8, 1 Peter 4.8-9) that is, he must be unselfish and willing to share his blessings with others. Their home lives and personal lives must be characterized by “hospitality”.
7. Elders must be able to teach (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9); that is, able to communicate the truth of God to others and “to exhort in sound doctrine” in a nonargumentative way (II Timothy 2:24-26). The role of guarding the truth and exercising discipline in the church is the unique function of the elders of the church.
8. must not be given to drunkenness (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7, Titus 2.3); that is, they must not be “addicted” to wine.
9. must not be violent, but gentle (I Timothy 3:3 and 8; Titus 1:7; 2.1-5); that is, they must not be “strikers” or a people given to physical violence, but those who are characterized by forbearance and tenderness.
10. must not be quarrelsome (I Timothy 3:3, Philippians 4.2-3); that is, not given to selfish argumentation and contention.
11. must not be a lover of money (I Timothy 3:3 and 8; Titus 1:7; I Peter 5:2); that is, not “greedy for money” or stingy with his material blessings
12. must be one who manages his own family well and sees to it that his children obey him with proper respect. (I Timothy 3:4 and 12; Titus 1:6); that is, he must have the respect of his family and be recognized as the leader of the household. His children must be trustworthy and faithful (Titus 1:6). Paul adds, “But if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?” (I Timothy 3:5). This requirement is particularly aimed at elders in that it reflects the parallel disciplinary authority of the men, in the context of marriage and church.
13. must not be recent converts (I Timothy 3:6); that is, one who is a new Christian and a babe in Christ. Leaders must be mature believers and obviously one who has been a Christian for a period of time—at least long enough to demonstrate the reality of true conversion and the depth of spirituality.
14. must have a good reputation with those outside the church (I Timothy 3:7- 8); that is, unbelievers must also respect their character and integrity.
15. must not be overbearing (Titus 1:7); that is, stubborn and one who tries to have his own way. They must not be an insensitive person, forcing their own ideas and opinions on other people.
16. must not be quick-tempered (Titus 1:7); that is, one who gets angry quickly and “flies off the handle.” They must be in control of their own spirit.
17. must love what is good (Titus 1:8); that is, he must not follow after and desire those things which are evil and sinful. They must be the kind of persons who desires to do the will of God in everything (I Peter 5:2).

Appendix 2: The Doctrines of Grace

In 1610 the followers of John Arminius brought a “Remonstrance” to the state of Holland rejecting, in 5 specific areas, the doctrine contained in the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg catechism. In 1618 a national synod was held to respond. Out of this “council in Dort” grew the “5 Points of Calvinism” often referred to as “The Doctrines of Grace” because they emphasize God’s grace rather than man’s effort or desire in salvation. Though Calvin himself did not articulate them as such, the points are part and parcel with his system of doctrine. It is flowing out of our high view of Scripture that we embrace the following.

The Condition of Fallen Man: Man is spiritually dead.

Because of the fall, man has become spiritually dead, blind and deaf to the things of God and is therefore unable of himself to choose spiritual good and determine his eternal destiny. All of the following points (B-E) really flow out of this one.

Ephesians 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of the this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

Romans 8:7,8 The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

John 6:65 He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”

Phillippians 1:29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.

Acts 11:18 When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.”

Acts 13:48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

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The Nature of God's Election: God's election is unconditional.

God's choice of certain individuals for salvation before the foundation of the world was not based on any foreseen response of obedience on their part (such as repentance or faith), but was based solely in His own good and sovereign will.

Ephesians 1:4,5,11 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will ... In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

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

Matthew 11:25-27 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

The Design of Christ's Atonement: Christ's death was designed to actually SECURE the salvation of all God's chosen people

Christ's death secured and actually accomplished the salvation of all of God's chosen people. God has determined that all for whom Christ sacrificed himself will be saved.

John 10:14,26-29 I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

John 17:1,2,6,9,20,21,24-26 "After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him..."I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word...I pray for them. I am not praying for the

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world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours... “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me...” Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

The Work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit regenerates everyone of God’s chosen people, enabling them to believe. The Holy Spirit graciously regenerates every one of God’s chosen people, creating within them a new heart and enabling them to freely and willingly believe in Christ as Savior and Lord. The New Birth precedes and makes possible Saving Faith. Life gives Faith.

John 3:3-5,8 In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” “How can a man be born when is he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit... The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

John 5:21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

Corinthians 2:4,5,14 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Ephesians 2:1,4,5,8 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy... made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved... For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

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The Nature of Faith: Perseverance of the saints.

All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in Faith by the Power of Almighty God and therefore continue to persevere in faith.

John 6:37,39 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away...And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

Ephesians 1:13,14 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Jude 24,25 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior by glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

What the Doctrines of Grace do not mean:

1. That man is not responsible to choose
2. That it makes no difference what a person does or does not do
3. That there is no incentive to preach the Gospel or pray
4. That God is insincere in inviting all men to salvation

The paradox of God's sovereignty & human responsibility is incomprehensible Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

1. Our minds are finite
2. We do not have all the facts
3. We are sinful

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Objections to the Doctrines of Grace*“It’s not fair!”*

RESPONSE: All men are sinners and merit God’s judgment. God is not under obligation to anyone.

- Because he shows mercy to some does not therefore require him to show mercy to all.

Romans 9:14-16 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.

- If this were so then it would cease to be mercy or grace.
- The question regarding God’s choosing some unto salvation is not: “Why has he not chosen all?” But rather: “Why has he chosen any at all?”
- The doctrines of grace result in complete humility before God.

“It does violence to human responsibility.”

RESPONSE: It does not do violence to human responsibility because the Bible clearly holds men responsible for their sin and indeed calls all men everywhere to repent of their sin. The problem lies in man’s unwillingness to embrace both God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. There is mystery here!!

D.L. Moody (quoted in The Daily Bread said):

I am glad there’s a depth in the Bible I know nothing about, for it shows its Divine authorship. A man once came to me with a very difficult passage and said, ‘Mr. Moody, how do you explain that?’ ‘I don’t interpret it.’ ‘Well, how do you understand it?’ ‘I don’t understand it.’ ‘What do you do with it?’ ‘I don’t do anything with it.’ ‘You don’t believe it?’ ‘Yes, I believe it! I believe many things I don’t understand. In John 3, Jesus reminded Nicodemus that if he was unable to grasp earthly things, heavenly things would be far beyond him. Nature itself is filled with wonders we cannot fathom, so how can we expect to know everything spiritual?’

J. I. Packer in his book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* observes:

All Christians believe in divine sovereignty, but some are not aware that they do, and mistakenly imagine and insist that they reject it. What causes this odd state of affairs? The root cause is the same as in most cases of error in the Church—the intruding of rationalistic speculation, the passion for systematic consistency, a reluctance to recognize the existence of mystery and to let God be wiser than men, and a consequent subjecting of Scripture to the supposed demands of human logic. People see the Bible teaches man’s re-

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responsibility for his actions; they do not see (man, indeed, cannot see) how this is consistent with the sovereign Lordship of God over those actions. They are not content to let the two truths live side by side, as they do in the Scriptures, but jump to the conclusion that, in order to uphold the biblical truth of human responsibility, they are bound to reject the equally biblical and equally true doctrine of divine sovereignty, and to explain away the great number of texts that teach it. The desire to over-simplify the Bible by cutting out the mysteries is natural to our perverse minds, and it is not surprising that even godly men should fall victim to it. Hence this persistent and troublesome dispute. The irony of the situation, however, is that when we ask how the two sides pray, it becomes apparent that those who profess to deny God's sovereignty really believe in it just as strongly as those who affirm it.

It undermines the free offer of the Gospel.

RESPONSE: Not So! The Bible clearly offers the Gospel freely.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 10:9-15 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord." And believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Acts 17:30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

- "But someone will ask, "How do I know if I've been chosen?" The answer: "Come to Christ."

John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

- No one will ever say, "I sought Christ for salvation but he rejected me because I was non-elect."

Notes

Results of the Doctrine of Grace.

1. Confident Witness.

- Paul clearly believed what he taught (as can be seen by all the references from his epistles noted above) and he was the world's greatest missionary!
- GOD SAVES! Man is dead in his sin but God raises people from the dead! Therefore we go with the confidence that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It is precisely because of his willingness and power to save that the church has any hope at all of being successful in its mission.

2. Grateful Praise.

- This is the inevitable conclusion to be drawn. Since salvation is All of God, He alone deserves All the praise. God has saved us in order that, in the words of Paul,

“...in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:7)

- Our salvation is to the praise of his glorious grace ... for the praise of his glory ... to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14)

Revelation 5:6-14 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve out God, and they will reign on the earth.” Then I looked and heard the voice of many angles, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.” Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!” The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshipped.

Appendix 3: Sacrament of Holy Communion

Needless to say, throughout the history of the church there has been much debate over the sacrament of Holy Communion. Our intention is not to seek to refute other views but to present ours with the hope that you will approach it with an open mind.

1) We believe that in receiving Holy communion, we truly receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

Christ declares it:

John 6:53-58: Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink, Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that comes down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.

Matthew 25:26-28: While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

The Apostle Paul teaches it:

1 Corinthians 10:16: Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

The Early Fathers taught it:

Ignatius [Bishop of Antioch ... died c. 98-117 AD]: They (the docetics) abstain from the Eucharist and prayer because they do not admit the Eucharist is the flesh of our savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, which the Father in his goodness raised up.¹

Justin (Martyr) [lived c. 100-165 AS]: This food is called with us the Eucharist, and of it none is allowed to partake but he that believes that our teachings are true, and has been washed with the washing for the remission of sins and unto regeneration, and who so lives as Christ directed. For we do not receive then as ordinary food or ordinary drink; but as by the word of God, Jesus Christ our Savior took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also, we are taught,

¹ Documents of the Christian Church, Henry Bettenson (Oxford University Press), 1971, p74

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the food blessed by the prayer of the word which we received from him, by which, through its transformation, our blood and flesh is nourished, this food is the flesh and blood of Jesus who was made flesh. For the Apostles in the memoirs made by them, which are called gospels, have thus narrated that the command was given; that Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and said, 'This do ye in remembrance of me; this is my body.' And he took the cup likewise and said, 'This is my blood.' and gave it the them alone.²

John Calvin taught it:

"Calvin freely and frequently admits that the answer to the question What is given in the sacrament? is exactly the same as those of the Lutherans and the Roman Church. He agrees with his opponents that the flesh of Christ is given in the sacrament. "Westphal insists on the presence of the flesh in the supper. We do not deny it.' ... 'The controversy with us is not as to the reception but only the mode of reception.' ..'That we really feed in the Holy Supper on the flesh and blood of Christ, no otherwise than as bread and wine are the aliments of our bodies, I freely confess."³

The Westminster Confession of Faith teaches it.

In Chapter 30 section 7 we read,

"Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and win; yet as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses."

The framers of the confession were obviously wrestling with the fact of receiving the body and blood of Christ and the manner or this receiving. Thus in the next section (section 8) the Confession goes on to say,

"Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament; yet, they receive not the thing signified thereby; but by their unworthy coming thereunto, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation ..."

Notice that the Confession implicitly states that those who are not ignorant and wicked receive the thing signified. What is signified in the elements of the Lord's Supper? The body and blood of our Lord! So, not only are the elements received, but by faith the very body and blood of Christ is received.

² Documents of the Christian Church, Henry Bettenson (Oxford University Press), 1971, pp. 66,67

³ Ronald S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of The Word and Sacrament, Geneva Divinity School Press, Tyler, TX, 1953, 1982, p. 199.

Notes

The elements of “COMMUNING” FAITH (1 Cor. 11:23-29)

1. We must believe Holy Communion to be instituted by Christ.

That is, we must clearly understand that this is not a human invention. Christ says in verse 24 “do this” and the Gospels record the fact of Christ’s institution of this Sacrament. Failure to come to the Table constitutes disobedience to Christ!! We come to the Table by the direct invitation of Christ Himself!

2. We must believe Christ designated Holy Communion as THE principal means of remembering His death.

It is, of course, possible to remember Christ’s death at any time and place. BUT, Christ has designated a specific time and place to remember His death and that is in the corporate gathering of his church, in the celebration of Holy Communion.

There are many ways that we can remember the death of Christ on our behalf BUT there is ONLY ONE WAY Christ has explicitly told us to do so: In Holy Communion ... “Do this in remembrance of me.”

Can Holy Communion be received too frequently? (There are churches that have Communion only once a year!) Only if His death can be remembered too frequently. Christ’s death is central to the Christian Faith (“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” 1 Cor. 2:2) His death cannot be overemphasized or remembered too often!!

3. We must believe that in Holy Communion we receive the benefit of Christ’s death.

The purpose of Christ’s death was the atonement of our sins. In Holy Communion Christ offers to us His Body and Blood again and again because we need continual forgiveness.

When we receive the bread and the wine in faith (i.e. When we truly believe we receive His Body and Blood) then we receive the benefit of His death, the forgiveness of our sins.

There is a false notion about that teaches we must come to the a Table of our Lord having confessed and having been forgiven of all sin ALREADY. Then alone can we be qualified to come to the Table. However, this misses the point entirely!! It is IN Holy Communion that we receive forgiveness! As Jesus said, “This is my blood of the of the covenant, which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins.”

This is why Paul says in 1 Cor. 11:28 that we should examine ourselves before we eat of the bread and the wine. That is, the realization of our sin and our need of Christ’s forgiveness is the very thing needed to be prepared to come to the Table. We must come in confession to receive Christ’s loving forgiveness as he offers to us the very body and Blood that brings atonement.

4. We must believe Christ is present in Holy Communion. Paul says in 1 Cor. 11:29 that we must eat and drink,

“recognizing the body of the Lord.” When we look at the bread and the wine we must “see” the body of Christ. We must have the eyes of faith to believe Christ when he says to us, at his Table, “This is my body...This is my blood.”

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We must not be distracted by the many theories as to the HOW of Christ's presence. We must rather accept the FACT of His presence. Don't worry about resolving the mystery ... Take Christ at His word; "This is my body ... This is my blood." That is, 'I'm present in this Holy Supper ... come ... receive my body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins.'"

5. We must believe that in Holy Communion we are united with fellow believers.

When Paul speaks of "recognizing the body of the Lord," he is speaking, not only of Christ's physical body but also of His spiritual body, the Church. If you consider the context you will see that the particular sin of the Corinthians was failure to recognize the Body of Christ in that, had Christ been there, they would surely have shared of their food and drink with Him. Well, in fact, He was there ("in as much as you've done it unto me") but they did not recognize Him and let Him go hungry while they got drunk. (verse 21,22) Paul ends this section on the same note. (verse 33,34) Thus in Holy Communion Paul calls on us to see our union with each other by virtue of our union with Him. Since we "commune" with Christ at His Table we also "commune" with one another. This we must see and believe, says Paul. Failure to do so is failure to "recognize the body of the Lord" and forfeits the grace offered. ("For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.")

These 5 things are ingredients in COMMUNING FAITH.

4) We believe that in Holy Communion God is "reminded" of His Covenant with His people.

This concept comes from the understanding of the Covenant. In a covenant two parties bind themselves to each other according to the stipulations of the covenant. In the New Covenant God had bound Himself to forgive the sins of His people through the substitutionary sacrifice of His Son in their behalf.

God gives "signs" of his Covenants. One of the two signs of the New Covenant is the Lord's Supper. (the other is Baptism,) and when God gives a sign it is to be a sign between Himself and those with whom the covenant is made. Thus it is a "reminder" to Him.

Now by "reminding" we do not mean that God is forgetful! This is "covenantal" language. In the signs of His covenants, God gives, as it were, tokens of His commitment. They are, of course more than mere tokens, but they do, nevertheless point to something beyond themselves and are to that extent, tokens. The clearest example of covenant signs being "reminders" to God is the Noahic Covenant in which, after the Flood, God covenanted with mankind never again to destroy the world by means of a flood. The sign of this covenant is the rainbow.

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Now who was to be reminded of the covenant by this sign...men? NO! Look at Genesis 9:12-16,

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds, over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures on the earth."

In the same way, Holy Communion is a physical action whereby God is "reminded" of His Covenant with us. He sees the Blood of Christ on the Table and is reminded that this is the "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:28)

God has made great and wonderful promises to us in His Covenant. Every time we place before Him the Body and Blood of our Lord, He is "reminded" of that Covenant.

5) We believe Holy Communion to be vital to the life of the church and to the life of every believer.

This should, by now, be obvious. If the Body and Blood of our Lord is received in the Supper ... if Grace is received in the Supper ... and if God is "reminded" of His Covenant in the Supper, then Holy Communion is assuredly vital to the life of the church and the believer. You should seek to avail yourself of every opportunity to be seated at the gracious Table of our Lord!!

BAPTISM BY SPRINKLING OR POURING**Christian Baptism Defined**

Christian Baptism is an initiatory rite, wherein Christ has ordained the use of water in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, to signify the cleansing from sin and union with the triune God which is accomplished for sinners through the work of Christ and is applied by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)

The Biblical Basis of Determining The Proper Mode Of Water Baptism

- Water Baptism is an outward rite which signifies the inward work of the Holy Spirit by which God's people are purified from sin and united to Christ.

"While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days." Acts 10:44-48

"...he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." Titus 3:5-6

- The mode of Holy Spirit Baptism is described in Scripture as either pouring or sprinkling.

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." Ezekiel 36:25-27

(See also Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17, 33; 8:15-16; 10:44-45, 11:15-16)

- Therefore the external mode of Christian Water Baptism which best symbolizes the internal mode of Holy Spirit Baptism is pouring or sprinkling.

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Conclusions on Mode of Baptism

Most Baptists will not recognize baptism administered by sprinkling or pouring as valid baptism yet those who practice baptism by sprinkling or pouring do usually acknowledge baptism by immersion as valid baptism. The Westminster Confession of Faith states “Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person.” (WCF XXVIII, p.3)

The reason immersion or dipping is recognized as valid baptism is because it still retains certain essential elements, such as the use of water in the name of the triune God and the significance of the believer’s cleansing from sin through his identification with Christ in three aspects of His Works: His death, burial, and resurrection.

Yet Baptism is seen as “more rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling.” This mode of baptism shows quite beautifully the work of the Holy Spirit as He cleanses the believer from sin and unites him to Christ, not only in his death, burial and resurrection but in all other aspects of his mediatory work. (NOTE: Baptism points to the saving work of the Holy Spirit rather than the subject experience of the person baptized).

As the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was given to show the primacy of the work of Christ, so the sacrament of Baptism was given to show the primacy of the work of the Holy Spirit. It may be said that these two sacraments were given to the Church by God the Father to show forth the work of God the Holy Spirit (Baptism) as visible displays of the glorious gospel through which God’s people are redeemed.

Pouring or sprinkling is as the salvation it symbolizes, of universal application, simple, and as immediately available at the north pole as at the equator. Unlike immersion, it is easily administered in homes (ACTS), for prisoners in jail, for desert countries, and for multitudes coming to one man (as John the Baptist). It is readily available for those who receive the Savior, whether they be too handicapped to move or on beds of fatal illness. This sign of the covenant is to be faithfully applied to all of God’s covenant people until that final day when Christ returns.

Covenant Theology Defined:

A definition:

Covenant Theology understands all of history after man's fall into sin as a progressive outworking of God's Covenant of Grace. Beginning with the first promise to Adam after the fall and continuing throughout history to the end of the ages, God orders all things in view of His single purpose of redeeming a people to himself.

The Covenant Of Grace Unfolded*In the Old Testament*

This covenant (The Covenant of Grace) had a different administration in the time of the law than it has in the time of the Gospel. Its administration under the law is called the Old Covenant. It was administered at that time by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision and the Passover Lamb as well as other types and ordinances given to the Jews. These signs were for that time sufficient through the work of the Spirit to instruct and build up God's people in their faith in the promised Messiah. By Him God's people had full forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation.

In the New Testament

In the time when Christ, the reality, was revealed, the covenant of grace was called the New Covenant. The ordinances in which this covenant is administered are the preaching of the Word and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Although these are fewer, simpler and outwardly less splendid, in them the covenant is revealed more completely, clearly and powerfully to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles. There is only one Covenant of Grace under both "dispensations."

The Relationship of The Two Time Periods

Although the distinction between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant marks a major structural division within the history of redemption, these two great time periods should be seen as relating integrally to one another as promise and fulfillment and as shadow and reality.

Notes

The Key Distinctives of Covenant Theology

The Unified People of God

- Ephesians 2:11-22
- Romans 11:11-29 (The Church has been grafted in to the “olive tree” of which Israel was a “natural branch”)

The Unified Promises of God

“Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.” Galatians 3:16

“...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.” Galatians 3:26–29

The Unified Plan of God

- Romans 4:1-17
- God’s plan of salvation has always been by faith alone. Old Testament saints were saved in the same way as New Testament saints.(cf. Gal.3:1-14)

The Biblical Argument

Old Testament Covenant Sign

1. God's plan of salvation (Covenant of Grace) is essentially the same in all ages and has always been accompanied by God given signs of the covenant.
2. In the Old Testament Church, God established the practice of applying the Old Testament sign of the covenant (circumcision) not only to adults after they believed, but also to their infant children before they believed. This practice was carried out by God's people for almost 2000 years before the time of Christ. (Genesis 15:5,6; 17:3-12)
3. The application of the Old Testament Covenant sign to the infant children of believers did not mean that the child was somehow saved by that sign. Each child still had to come to personal salvation by grace through faith. (Romans 2:25-29; 9:6)
4. God commanded that this Covenant sign be applied to these infants as a sign of their being set apart from the world and numbered among God's Old Testament Covenant People.
5. This external sign was also given as a sign of spiritual cleansing in anticipation of the internal purification of sin that comes only by grace through faith. (Note: circumcision, a sign of purification Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 9:25, 26)
6. By application of the Covenant sign, these children were formally set apart from the world and into the covenant community of God's people where the child was to be exposed to all of the means of God's grace through which he may be brought to personal salvation. (Romans 3:1-2)
7. Although all who received the Covenant sign did receive the temporal blessings of being in God's covenant community, all did not receive the eternal blessings of personal salvation.

Notes

New Covenant Sign

1. In the New Testament Church we are still under God's unfolding Covenant of Grace. Rather than being saved by grace through faith in a prophetic Christ to come we are now saved by grace through faith in the historic Christ who has come.
2. In this New Covenant age God has replaced the Old Covenant signs with New Covenant signs. No longer are God's people to observe the bloody Passover feast but instead God has replaced it with the sacrament of Holy Communion. No longer are God's people to observe the bloody rite of circumcision but instead God has replaced it with the sacrament of water baptism. (Colossians 2:11,12)
3. The Covenant sign once made available for only one gender and one nation is now made available to both male and female among all nations. (Galatians 3:28)
4. This New Testament Covenant sign of baptism carries with it the essential meaning of the Old Testament covenant sign of circumcision in that it is to be applied to the infants of believers as a sign of admission into God's present covenant community, the church, setting the child apart from the world and numbering the child among God's people (Acts 2:38-39, Acts 16:15, Acts 16:33). The Apostle Paul taught that the child of even one believing parent was "holy" (i.e. Set apart unto God) (I Corinthians 7:14). Baptism is also to be applied to infants of believers in anticipation of that inward work of purification which is promised to all who come to saving faith. The New Testament gives a more complete description of this inward purification as a "sprinkling with Christ's blood" by the "pouring out of the Holy Spirit". (I Peter 1:2; Titus 3:5,6)
5. If the God-ordained practice of applying the sign of the covenant to infants was meant to be discontinued, one would expect some clear and definite word to that effect in the New Testament. What we find instead are indications of God continuing to work within the solidarity of the family in covenant relationship.
6. Therefore, we believe that the long established, God-given practice of applying the sign of the covenant not only to adults after they believe but also to their infant children before they believe should be continued today in the baptism of our infants.

Notes

- Both symbolize justification through faith.
 - » “...through your faith...”
- Both symbolize spiritual purification
 - » “... putting off of the sinful nature...”
- Both symbolize union with Christ.
 - » “...In him you were also circumcised ...”
 - » “...having been buried with him in baptism”

The Logical Argument — Part 3:

1. Circumcision and baptism signify the same reality.
2. Circumcision was administered to adult believers and their infant children.
 - Example: Abraham (Romans 4:11 and Genesis 17:12)

THEREFORE: Baptism should be administered to adult believers and their infant children.

Unless, of course, the New Testament teaches to the contrary. However, this is corroborated by the scriptures:

And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Acts 16:29–31

Note: Paul said this before speaking to the jailer’s household.

“And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” Acts 2:38-39

Note: Peter’s words were addressed to Jews so the “Covenantal Ring” of his words, so reminiscent of the Abraham Covenant, would not have been lost on them!

3. The New Testament nowhere restricts children of believers from being baptized.
 - Note: Given the Jewish character of the early church it is inconceivable that they would not have been prone to baptize their children. Therefore we would expect teaching against this false view. The burden of proof lies with those who would deny baptism to the children of believers.