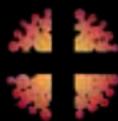




Roots That Give Life

GGF Core Values



GRACE GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP

Roots That Give Life

GGF Core Values

by Frosty Hansen

President of Grace Gospel Fellowship

Original article published in TRUTH Magazine
April-June 2015 Edition, Volume 65, Issue 1.

Used by permission.

Cover photo credit: John Bates

Roots That Give Life

Outside my office window stands a weathered old leafless maple tree. But as I write, it is sprouting the first buds of spring in a cycle once again producing a lush, green canopy of leaves that will soften its aging, gnarled trunk and limbs with a renewed youthful appearance. In a few months the maple's greenery will transform into a cheerful multicolored array. Eventually, a few strong autumn gusts will win out and carry away the last browning vestiges of summer and remind me that the bare maple and I have passed another year together. Such is the cycle of change we can observe in the life of a tree.

What we don't see, however, is that which gives life to the tree. Hidden beneath, in the earth, is a vital system of roots supplying steady nourishment for the old maple, from one season to the next, year after year. It is only because of these roots that the tree continues to stand, surviving winter's cruelties and demonstrating cheerful signs of life in the spring and summer.

The core values of the Grace Gospel Fellowship are like the roots of a tree. Though not

readily visible, these values upon which the GGF stands are foundational, and they determine the life cycle and growth of our ministry. Visible activities, goals, and ministries may change from season to season, but our core values have been and will remain constant, a solid foundation giving life to us who God has called to be the GGF.

The root system of the GGF consists of five important core values: Bible Centered; Grace Theology; Grace Living; Missional; and Partnership.

Bible Centered

Our taproot core value, giving meaning to all of our core values, is our commitment to the authority of the Bible as the Word of God and consequently, its centrality in our preaching, teaching, and lifestyle ethics. As God's divinely inspired revelation, it is through the Bible that God has spoken and continues to speak to us today. That is why the Bible is central in all we do, taking precedence over church tradition, a shifting culture and especially, our own opinions. We approach Scripture as our ultimate guide for faith (what we believe) and living (what we do).

Do you realize how incredible it is that we are able to receive teaching from the Bible?

This is no mere book; the Bible is God-breathed text penned by human authors as they were superintended by the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:16; 2 Pt 1:20-21). It is God who is speaking timeless truth to us! This is why Paul gives Timothy the powerful command, "Preach the word!" (2 Tm 4:2). Why should people settle for the opinions of men while God has already clearly communicated living and powerful truth?

Obviously we are exposed to many today who openly question how an ancient document like the Bible could have relevance in today's world. Rejecting the view that Scripture is God's timeless revelation, they prefer to interpret God's truth through the lens of culture, like the popular pastor and author who recently gave his opinion that "the church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defense. . . ." Such a conclusion is logical from those who view the Bible as nothing more than a collection of faded, millennia-old documents composed by human authors who are influenced by their own ancient cultures.

The Bible, however, never derives its authority from human wisdom; its Author is none other than the self-revealing and self-authenticating eternal God who in wisdom speaks timeless truths

which reach across cultural and generational settings. This is why the Bible's authority remains constant regardless of popular culture or conventional wisdom. No less now than the day he first spoke them, God's truths continue to teach us, rebuke us, correct us and train us in righteousness with the goal of producing Christlike character in our lives (2 Tm 3:16-17). When we recognize God's loving authority in our lives, we make a commitment to Bible-centered living by humbly applying his Word to our lives (Ps 119:59-60).

Grace Theology

This second core value, affirming our commitment to a mid-Acts dispensational approach to the Scriptures, is an important outflowing of our commitment to be Bible-centered. In order to live in harmony with biblical truth and obey its authority, it is necessary to handle the Word of God correctly (2 Tm 2:15). We must be mindful to interpret Scripture carefully, distinguishing between God's unique program for the Church and his purposes for Israel and the rest of humanity in other dispensations.

At the heart of our theological position is the message Christ committed to the Apostle Paul regarding the outpouring of God's grace

by creating a new entity, the Church which is Christ's Body, comprised of all people without distinction who come to Christ through faith. This previously undisclosed program does not annul God's prophesied plan for the nation of Israel, but temporarily sets it aside. Since Paul was God's chosen instrument to reveal this hidden plan regarding the Body of Christ, it is no surprise that it is in his writings alone we find the revelation, position, and destiny of the Church.

Two important clarifications must be made as we speak of this core value. First, the special nature of Paul's writings to the Body of Christ does not mean these are somehow "more inspired" than all other biblical texts. Indeed, Paul himself emphasized that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and all Scripture is profitable (2 Tm 3:16). We commit a tremendous error and do ourselves great harm when we discount or fail to read and study any portion of God's Word. Yet, we must do so in light of God's current revelation through Paul to the Body of Christ.

Secondly, it must be clear that we are not believers in Grace Theology merely because our founders held this position. We certainly owe a debt of gratitude to those who recovered this biblical truth. God has used the preaching, teaching

and writing of these faithful servants to introduce us to a clear understanding of his divine plan for the Church. However our commitment to Grace Theology must never be based in a creed, doctrinal statement or theological tradition passed down from our fathers. Instead we must constantly put all teaching under the microscope of God's Word and "search the Scriptures to find out whether these things are so" (Acts 17:11).

Grace Living

God's grace transforms the way we live. Released from the bonds of legalism we are fully accepted in Christ, free to love and be loved by God without restraints. Grace also allows us to "accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Rom 15:7; NIV). Our third core value reminds us that our lives exhibit grace by being non-legalistic and providing an inviting environment for all people without distinction.

Legalism is a great enemy of grace, shackling us with the pressure to perform and measure up to impossible standards. Whether self-imposed or placed upon us by others, the bonds of legalism suck joy out of living, making even the most devoted follower of Christ despair.

Through grace, however, we have reason to rejoice; the chains of legalism have been broken! In Christ we are complete, totally forgiven of all sin, clothed with His spotless righteousness, and assured that nothing can separate us from his love. So, Paul tells us, don't even think of putting the old yoke of bondage on yourself or on anyone else (Gal 5:1). That's not who you are in Christ.

Such grace and acceptance should seep out of every pore of the Body of Christ. Anyone who draws near ought be able to smell the aroma of grace, regardless of their ethnic background, native language, social status, or any other trait or besetting sin that would tend to make people uncomfortable around one another. Grace breaks down walls. The expectations for someone to "be like me" are removed as together we strive to be like Christ.

We are aware of the historical failures within the Body of Christ to live out our calling to be one in Christ Jesus. The GGF is addressing this core value. A task force has developed a multi-ethnic picture frame with the goal of encouraging leadership and churches to provide an inviting environment for all people without distinction. We are making good and important progress in translating our Grace Theology to Grace Living.

Missional

Our fourth core value speaks of our reason for existence as the GGF, local Grace churches, and individual believers. As critically important as the previous three core values may be, our principal reason for being on this earth is to fulfill our mission as ambassadors for Christ. Our calling is to be intentionally evangelistic, shining as his light in our local communities as we hold out the Word of life (Phil 2:15-16).

The truth is that most in our society have little or no concept of God, sin, or eternity. They may see Jesus Christ as a historical figure but have no understanding of his incarnation, substitutionary death for sin, and resurrection. Since they are basically unaware of their drastic need for salvation, God brings us into the lives of people—a neighbor, a mechanic, a waitress, a classmate, a coworker—to introduce them to the transforming message of the gospel and help them move toward making a decision for Christ.

Evangelism has one purpose: to save sinners. This is increasingly important to emphasize because many Christians in this country have been so caught up in political and social issues that our goal of reaching the lost

for Christ has become secondary. But what profit is there to winning them over to one's earthly cause if they lose their soul? Our primary calling is to engage people with the message of the Cross of Christ, "so that by all possible means [we] might save some" (1 Cor 9:22).

A large implication of being missional is that the gospel is carried to the lost. Churches with the highest impact for Christ are, not surprisingly, those which are actively ministering in and to the local communities. On the contrary, churches which concentrate exclusively on the "holy huddle" gathering of believers and ignore the needs of their neighbors lose their evangelistic effectiveness and, according to researcher Thom Rainer ("Autopsy of a Deceased Church") some eventually die.

Partnership

"Two are better than one," writes the preacher in Ecclesiastes as he builds his case for going through life in partnership. Four benefits of working together are presented: increased productivity on the part of both (4:9); accountability for one another's well-being (4:10); shoring up one another in times of weakness (4:11); and offering needed support

in times of trial (4:12). He concludes by saying that, even better than two working together, "a cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

This kind of partnership is needed today among members of the Body of Christ, and it is central to our final core value as the GGF. We are committed to work in harmony within our fellowship of Grace churches and leaders on a national level, regionally, and locally. In other words, we recognize that we are most effective when we are united in the tasks God lays before us. As we strengthen and encourage one another, we grow stronger and testify to the world of the power of Christ working in us.

But the work of Christ is not confined to the ministries and realm of the GGF. The needs of our world and our communities are great, and God calls us to partner with brothers and sisters in Christ from outside our fellowship who are making an impact for the Savior. Therefore, we also join hands in the work of the gospel with other individuals, churches, and organizations who proclaim salvation by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Partnership is the essence of the Body of Christ. As Paul compares the Church with the effective functioning of the human body in

1 Corinthians 12, he emphasizes mutual dependency. No part of the body has life apart from the whole; each member stands in need of the rest; what happens to one affects the whole. Nor do we choose with whom we form a body, for "God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as He chose" (12:18). Partnership causes us to look at the Body of Christ, both within and beyond the GGF, and resolve to keep on "working together to advance the grace of God and impact the world for Christ."

These five core values form the roots that nourish the Grace Gospel Fellowship. They are the essence of who we are because they are what God has called us to be. In the cycle of seasons we view programs that come and go; a vision will blossom, bear fruit and later be replaced by another; various people serve for their God-ordained time. But as long as the GGF has life, it is because of five core values consistently giving life: Bible centered; Grace Theology; Grace Living; Missional; Partnership.



Published by Grace Gospel Fellowship,
a nonprofit religious corporation,
incorporated in the State of Michigan.

Please contact our offices for additional copies.

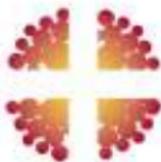
Mailing address:

P.O. Box 9432

Grand Rapids, MI 49509

(616) 245-0100

www.ggfusa.org



GRACE GOSPEL FELLOWSHIP

Our Mission

Working Together to Advance the Grace of God and
Impact the World for Christ.

Our Core Values

1. Bible Centered
2. Grace Theology
3. Grace Living
4. Missional
5. Partnership

We invite you to become involved in the ministry
of the GGF and our affiliated churches.
Find more information at **www.ggfusa.org**.
