

We Believe ...

Grace Community Bible Church's Statement of Faith

At Grace we believe in truth, absolute truth. We recognize that we are living in an age where truth is up for grabs and to hold a belief that you consider to be absolute is, in itself, becoming antiquated. The day in which we live is unfortunately a day where to believe in truth, absolute truth, is seen as evil. The words of Max Born, German physicist, are sadly the mantra of our times, "The belief that there is only one truth, and that oneself is in possession of it, is the root of all evil in the world."

Breathing the same air as those who live in this post-modern mindset does not mean that we have to conform. However, we live in a time when we must zero in on exactly what we do believe to be true, understand it, agree on it, hold on to it, live in recognition of it, defend it and even die for it if called to do so. When you seriously contemplate dying for truth it tends to cause one to take inventory and come to a settled peace about what is worth dying for and what is not.

Therefore, the church also must take great care to distinguish tradition, opinion and preference from truth. Everything that is not determined to be truth should be held loosely. A root of much evil in the world and in the church is esteeming opinion, tradition and/or preference at the same level as truth. When this happens truth is diluted and devalued. Mark Twain helps us with this by pointing out that, "Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; truth isn't."

Realizing then that truth is bereft of possibilities, we at Grace discriminately value and hold on to truth in the same way we value and hold on to life itself. In the same vein, we value holding loosely those beliefs and practices that are not absolute in and of themselves, but rather are the settled opinions of those who embrace them. We love and respect each other as a community and therefore find great worth in the thoughtful, humble exchange of ideas as we walk with each other on this journey to knowing and loving Jesus Christ.

The following represents a summary of what we at Grace believe to be truth. On these issues and doctrines we are unified with one heart and would be willing to die for them out of honor and respect for our God.

First, it must be stated that we believe Jesus Christ is truth (John 14:6). We believe that He came to us full of grace and truth and through Him we receive grace and truth (John 1:17); we believe that He epitomized and embodied truth. It is on this foundation that we declare the following as truth.

We believe that there is one God and one God only. However, we believe that this one God does eternally exist in three separate and distinct persons. These three persons are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We do not pretend to understand, clearly, how this can be, but we do accept it by faith, believe it to be true and stand in awe of the mystery that is our God. We believe that these three persons are absolutely equal in their deity, eternity and nature. However, we also believe that these three persons are distinct in who they are and what they do as God.

We believe that the Bible is holy and is the inspired, authoritative Word of God which is without error or fallibility in its original writings. We believe that the Bible is sufficient for everything we need to both understand and live life. We believe that the Bible is the final authority for all of life, practice and doctrine and therefore we seek to live in submission to it.

We believe that the first people created by God, Adam and Eve, were created perfectly, without sin and with free will. We believe the record of Holy Scriptures teaches that Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, knowing that God had instructed and warned them to not eat of it. By eating of that tree, in direct disobedience and rebellion to God, they sinned and experienced a collapse of their nature wherein their perfection, innocence and freedom vanished.

The consequences that Adam and Eve experienced due to their decision to disobey God were and are, to this very day, passed on from generation to generation. Therefore, it is our belief that all people are born with imperfect natures,

guilty of sin and without freedom of will. Stated another way, we believe that what Adam and Eve experienced as a result of rebelling against God is the state into which every human being is born.

We believe that God is a God of mercy and grace. We believe that it is His will to show love, mercy and grace more than it is to express His wrath. Since we have all been born into this helpless, lost state, we believe that God initiated and carried to completion His plan, from all of eternity, to redeem and reconcile His people by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to us in order to pay in full the penalty for being children of Adam. We believe, therefore, that the only way to be reconciled to God is through Jesus Christ.

We believe that reconciliation between God and man takes place when God, who has chosen who will be His before the foundation of the world was laid, draws the guilty sinner to Himself. We believe that this drawing is irresistible and therefore, once drawn the guilty sinner commits his faith and life to God through Jesus Christ, thereby becoming justified before God and eternally secure before God Almighty.

We believe that when a guilty sinner is regenerated and justified by God at least two holy actions have taken place. First, the justified sinner is given the Holy Spirit who lives in him and seals him until the day of Christ Jesus our Lord. Second, we believe that when one is justified before God they are eternally added to the universal church of Jesus Christ, being grafted in as a member of the body of Christ.

As a member of the body of Christ we believe that the born-again Christian is to become an active part of a local community of believers where they can be of benefit to others in the community using their gifts, talents, money and time. We believe that we are to serve each other with such selfless love that the lost world around us would notice and give God glory. As a local community, we believe that we are to practice two sacraments, the Lord's supper and baptism.

We believe that we are God's agents for declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ to this world. We believe that we are to be involved both personally and as a community in serving the lost, making disciples and being internationally oriented in our outreach.

Finally, we believe that the world as we know it will come to an end. We believe that the consummation of all things includes the imminent, visible, personal and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the consummation, Satan with his hosts and all those outside Christ are finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment, but the righteous, in glorious bodies, shall live and reign with Him forever. We believe that the church will be in the presence of God forever.