GCF Core Values: Grace

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- Embracing Word and Spirit
- Grace
- Hospitality
- Family
- Courageous Faith
- Growth

Grace

In Christ, believers never have to perform in order to be fully accepted; we simply are. God sincerely loves His people as they are, and calls them to live new, holy lives. That is the definition of grace. As Christians, we strive to grow in Christ by the power God has given us to overcome sin and walk in His ways. We don't strive to be accepted; we strive to grow because Christ has made us his own.

We extend this same grace to others as a reflection of our relationship with God, imitating the acceptance and empowerment we have received.

Having grace for other Christians leads us to have unity in spite of our disagreements. We are unified in the key doctrines of the faith and allow room for different opinions in secondary matters.

Because God accepts us, we accept ourselves as we are, while seeking to grow. Because God accepts us, we accept others as they are, while encouraging each other to grow.

What Grace Means to Us

- What the Bible means by grace
    - God's Grace is His unmerited goodness towards us
    - But the biblical concept of grace has a bit more detail to it than that. It's not just unmerited goodness; it's unmerited goodness that shows itself in two big ways that are always working together in unity. Those two ways are Favor and Empowerment
    - Favor (Ephesians 2:8; 1 Peter 4:10; Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:3-6)
    - Empowerment (Hebrews 13:9; Acts 18:27; 2 Corinthians 12:9)
    - Always both together

Why Grace is Important to Us

- It's a central theme in the Christian life
- It has a major impact on your intimacy with God
- It has a major impact on your emotional health
- It has a major impact on your relationships
- A gospel without grace isn't the real gospel (Galatians 1:6-8, 3:10)

What Valuing Grace Means for Us as a Church (Practically Speaking)

- Properly understanding and accepting God's grace
- Having grace towards ourselves
    - Accepting yourself as you are
    - Forgiving yourself
    - Fully embracing God's forgiveness
    - Challenging yourself to grow

- Having grace towards others
    - Doing good to others (even when they don't deserve it)
    - Accepting others as they are
    - Helping others to grow
- Seeking to rely on God's power in our daily lives
    - Since we can't bear the fruit of the Spirit apart from God's empowerment, part of living out grace is just daily seeking to rely on God's power
    - Relying on His power through His Word (Matthew 4:4)
    - Relying on His power through His Spirit (Galatians 5:16)
    - Relying on His power through His Church (1 Peter 4:10)
    - Relying on His power through Prayer (Matthew 26:41)

How You Can Grow at Being Grace-Based

- Learn to spot lack of grace in your heart
    - Self-condemnation
    - Moral superiority
    - Condemning others
    - Thinking you don't need help
- Try to work through your issues with God's love for you
    - List them
    - Pray
    - Study
    - Seek help
- Learn to have good boundaries
    - Having good boundaries with others is part of having grace towards them (because God's grace is both favor and empowerment)
    - When I say have good boundaries, I mean "learn to clearly separate your responsibilities from their responsibilities" (Galatians 6:1-5)
        - We ought to bear one another's burdens
        - Each will have to bear their own load
        - Both of these are true
    - Being gracious involves serving and being generous and helping people, but don't serve or help people in such a way that helps them to put off their responsibilities
- Understand that God delights in the journey of your growth
    - God delights in the journey of our growth
    - God could make us perfect immediately when receive Christ, but He doesn't, and the reason He doesn't is because He has delight in the journey of our growth
        - It brings Him glory
        - It brings us closer to Him
    - Understanding this makes it easier to have grace towards yourself and others
- Understand that everyone is a mix of giftedness and dysfunction
    - Another way I could have worded this point is "try to have realistic expectations"
    - Being realistic and being gracious are closely related
    - Having unrealistic expectations about people makes it hard to have grace towards them (Psalm 103:13-14)
    - One thing you can do to have more realistic expectations about yourself and about others is to understand that everyone is a mix of giftedness and dysfunction