

# The Non-Negotiables of Grace Church Williamsburg

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we'll be in a number of passages today. Again, for our visitors who are not accustomed to what we do here week to week, let me assure you that, again, we will be back in a verse-by-verse study of the book of Genesis soon, God willing, and I have breath for life, and you do too, to come here and listen.

But again, I want to bring this message to you today as we typically try, Greg and I typically try to at least tag-team together on something along these lines each January just to keep us well-reminded of what Grace Church is all about, why we're here.

Keep a sharp focus on those things. Now, we try to do that as we preach the gospel Sunday after Sunday, but every once in a while we'll pull away and really zero in on this.

So, as we settle into our renovated space, I think each of us are marveling at the goodness of God in His blessings on our church family.

For those of you who are visiting, this has only been, what, our second or third weekend here in this amount of space. It was usually cut off with a wall going right down through here, and this was it.

[ 1 : 19 ] God's expanding our ministry. That's the beauty of this. He gets all the glory. It's not because Greg and I are clever men. We are trying to be faithful men.

Very simple, straightforward. Those of you who know us and have been with us for the nine years he and I have been partnering together in ministry, know that we're very simple men. We have a very simple faith, a strong faith, and we want to honor Christ.

Jesus gets the glory for what we're seeing happening here as we need this extra space because He's sending people to sit under His Word and be a part of a family. And we're grateful for that.

In our brief six-year life here in this church start, this new work that we're doing together, the Lord has faithfully sustained us and added precious souls to our ministry.

We're grateful for that. Guys, think about it. We've seen in the last few years particularly numerous salvations. I just told you about one of those with Bob.

[ 2 : 21 ] We have seen scores of baptisms where we've had to go out to Doug and Tara's house and get in the river or in the pool and baptize people. I think a time or two before the last one, we had nine people lined up to baptize.

That's all God working in our midst. Some of those people we baptized were from our own congregation getting themselves right with Christ and saying, you know what? I need to nail this down.

I need to walk with Jesus and make it about Him. And I haven't been doing that. I don't want to have any doubt about where I am in my walk with the Lord. We've seen many tangible expressions of spiritual growth among us as you share with one another and as you invite each other into your life and you share the hope of Jesus with each other as you struggle in the trials of life and weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice.

Now, while we've endured and overcome a host of significant challenges in our efforts to honor the Lord together, one challenge I think is ongoing.

We've met some. We've overcome some. We'll meet some more. God willing in His grace will overcome those as a congregation. But there's one I want to point out today that is ongoing.

[ 3 : 46 ] It is a challenge that we face every week we gather. Throughout the week as we worship God, as individual families before we come in and become this one united family in Christ, it's a challenge that stays with us.

Now, I'll state it negatively to begin with. Stated negatively, it's the threat of losing sight of who we are and why we are Grace Church.

Who we are and why we are Grace Church. Every week we gather, there is a threat that we'll lose sight of the answers to those issues. And we cannot afford for that to happen with even one family.

Stated positively, let me put that same challenge in positive terms. Our challenge is expressed well by the Apostle Paul. This goes way back into the beginnings of the church when it was first being established in the first century under the Apostles.

Like Paul. Paul addressed these very things in a number of places in the New Testament in his letters. And here's an example of what Paul prayed for the Ephesians as he prayed for them to remain faithful in their walk with Jesus.

[ 5 : 10 ] That was the issue that was paramount in his mind. I'll put my title up here for you to see if I could. Wake me up here. Yeah. It's not me.

Tell me when. In a little bit. See, here's the thing. Well, I'll tell you what, bro. I'm going to go ahead and then when it comes up, will you throw up my...

Throw up. Will you put... Will you put on the screen my passage for me? All right. It's in Ephesians and it's chapter 3 verses 16 through 19.

I'm going to have it up here on the deal for you. There it is. And I'm going to take it in halves. Now, notice the emphases that I'll make as we read down through this together. Paul prays that God would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit, notice, in the inner man.

This is Paul's paramount concern. That the inner spiritual quality of your life be carefully, carefully attended to and nurtured in your walk with Jesus.

[ 6 : 26 ] So this isn't about ritual. It's not about religion. It's not about jumping through spiritual hoops or trying to convince yourself you're a good person by doing certain religious things.

Paul is concerned that you be strengthened with power from the Holy Spirit based on the riches of the glory of Jesus in your inner person, your spiritual person.

And he has a purpose for that which is what the so that means. The so that is a purpose clause. Toward what purpose? That Christ may dwell where? In your hearts through faith.

This is the paramount concern of the Apostle Paul as Christians in his time faced the challenge of not making it about Jesus.

Of losing sight that they are the people of God who are called to reflect God's character in the world. To what degree then do you and I reflect Jesus' character in our everyday lives?

[ 7 : 32 ] As you go about your everyday life doing the mundane and routine things of your life, do people see the reflection of the character of Almighty God in how you live?

Your lifestyle. Can they see that? Is it clear and evident to them that Jesus lives in you and that He is your only hope of glory?

Paul doesn't stop there that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith and then notice and that you personally being rooted and grounded in His love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is what?

The breadth and length and height and depth of love and to know the love of Christ which surpasses human knowledge so that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

This is the Apostle Paul's paramount concern for these Christians as they gather as believers as they face off with the trials of life. I want you to know the fullness of God in Jesus Christ living where?

[ 8 : 51 ] in your hearts through faith. This is it. If Greg and I as under shepherds of Jesus come in here and minister to you as we meet you in the hospital rooms of life as we encounter you in the deaths of people that you love if we can't meet you in those spaces and in here and make loving Jesus paramount in our ministry Greg and I are missing pastoral ministry we're missing the point because our only hope is Christ our only treasure is Jesus above all other things in fact the psalm that we read this morning in our call to worship David overflows with confidence but it's not a confidence in himself it's a confidence in God's goodness it's a confidence in God's faithfulness you saw that in the psalm it's a confidence that God loves his people and because

God is good and faithful and loves his people he will never allow anything in this world to overcome you or snatch you out of his hand he will bring to fruition his promise to bring you to himself in heaven that's going to happen if you're a Christian look at this psalm with me again just a few places let me put it up here for you what does David say but I trust in you oh Lord you see Jesus Jesus Christ his faith in the Messiah coming Jesus Christ is his Lord that you're the boss of my life you are the sovereign of my life I say you you are my God I declare that to my own soul I rehearse it in my heart you are my God my times are in your hand oh how abundant is your goodness which you've stored up for those who fear you that is have a high and holy reverence for you in the sight of the children of mankind see people are watching love the Lord love the Lord all you his saints the Lord preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride we need to remember that be strong and let your heart take courage all you who hope in the Lord those are the mandates that we have for following Jesus and making sure that we keep what we say around here the main thing the main thing

Jesus is the main thing so we're not sappy about it we're not sentimental about it we try not to be we're real about that we understand that with life come trials that we're weak and frail we're in bodies that are wasting away this shell will fall away one day and God will raise my soul up and marry it to a glorified body that is fit for all eternity in heaven it'll never wear out I'll never have this back pain again you know things like that won't be an issue now look doing all doing all to the greater glory of God is our primary command that's what a mandate is you've heard that all in the news for the last few months since November when Donald Trump won the election and everybody around him keeps talking about the mandate of the American people well what a mandate comes down to is basically a command we do all to the greater glory of God as our primary mandate following Jesus together and fulfilling that consists of several parts we can think about that followership as we seek to glorify God in several parts let me break it down for you we must do this this greater glory of God we must do this from love for the Lord the baseline of why we do this the grand motive that we all share in is love for Christ not religious duty the religious duty follows on a heart that wants to love

Jesus well if you were to ask me for example let me give you an extreme example if you were to ask me for example Jeff what is the greatest motivation of your heart for being faithful to your wife well I wish I could tell you well it's because I'm a great guy no it's because I'm wholly heart committed to my wife well I want that to be the truth I'll tell you the greatest motivation of my heart for being faithful to my wife it's love for Jesus I don't want to sin against Jesus first and foremost that's why anything that follows on that is icing on the cake but at the core of all of that is Lord I don't want to sin against you I don't want to do that I hope that's your heart too from that heart of love for Jesus we moved out in obedience we want to obey because we want to please him because it blesses his heart and it doesn't grieve him that's the motive that we want to have in this loving the Lord we must also do this in obedience to

God's word we want to be people who are taking God seriously when God tells us what to live by who to honor in all of that so doing all to the greater glory of God is our primary mandate is we do all of that for the love of the Lord and obedience to his word and finally we must do this in loving service to one another we honor each other when we're seeking to love Jesus well and reach out to each other in that same love to love one another with the same love with which he loves us that's what we're doing we're trying to replicate that in each other's lives now again I want you to remember I am saying all of this not because I don't think you know this I'm not saying this to chastise you or anything like that nothing's happened this week that lit a fire under me and now I'm coming and that's not that's not who we are I'm just simply coming up here and reminding us of what is primary and what we're trying to all adhere to what we're all being called to as we are

[ 15 : 40 ] Grace Church Williamsburg souls representing this local assembly in the community of Williamsburg now to help keep us focused on these primary tasks that I've listed up here here at Grace we hold then to three what I'll call biblical mandates in setting a course for the life and work that we do together here in this ministry these then are our primary if you want to say it this way because some of you as visitors may be thinking I wonder what the non-negotiables are in this church family I wonder what the pastors hold to as non-negotiables what are the hills to dine on for these folks well these then are representative of our primary non-negotiables these are the core principles of our life together as a church family now there are others I'm going to zero in on these three and then I'm going to take one of them pick it out and highlight it for you to give you an example this morning these mandates as we understand and practice them help us show love to Christ to God the

Father the Holy Spirit again let me say that these principles are important to us because they are the ways that we organize ourselves to show love to God to be obedient to his word to show love for the Lord to show service to each other that's what these accomplish for us the first one is this and they're not anything earth shattering or perhaps you haven't seen before to exalt Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of his people that's where we begin we want to exalt Jesus then we want to edify and equip each other for ministry for service and then finally we want to evangelize the unsaved and we want to be part this is our prayer we want to be a part of planting other churches some of you don't probably don't know this about us but we have a heart to see God expand our ministry in such a way that if God wants to make us 500 strong fine that's up to the Lord the breadth of this thing is up to the Lord we try to keep it as deep as we can we deep dive into the heart of Jesus and then we trust

God to give whatever he wants in the way of blessing to expand who we are and what we do okay but as we expand if God wants to make us 500 strong that's fine but we're not looking to be a mega church Greg and I have in mind that we'll get to a certain number and we want to reproduce who you are in another community we want to help plant a church we want to help another community have a grace church Williamsburg an extension of ourselves that's our vision that's our hope that's our prayer some of you may be part of that work we may ask 10 families to unite with some of the people in that community that we've identified who want something like this and they're traveling in from all that distance away to be part and we say you know let's just go to that community and let's get a work started there and we'll become the mothership as it were to help them get off the ground we'll help them get a pastor and we'll help them establish themselves in the way that we have over the last six years see what I mean and we'll reproduce ourselves there and God willing we'll be able to do that again now look that may not happen under our tenure all right

I you know I can't whether I'm here two more months or 20 years that may not happen in our in our tenure but but we're praying that way we're aiming that way whoever we hand the baton off to next in the way of the pastors for this church they will understand that's our heart and that's the vision this church was established on and if they can't get in on that they won't be pastor we'll say hey come to the party let's just keep doing it the way we've been doing it kind of thing these three mandates that I have up here on the screen then they translate into what we would call distinctives for ministry what are our distinctives what sets us apart so what I'm going to share with you this morning is just a little bit of a deeper dive into how we as a church family pursue exalting God and honoring and following Jesus Christ so we're going to really hit that first one some of the second one will come into play as well but I'm going to really hit that first one today another time maybe we can take the other two apart in some other messages and the reason is because everything else that we do in service to

Jesus and each other is based on glorifying God we start there we ask the question does this honor please and glorify Jesus as we do this ministry together and if we say no we don't do it we ask that on the front end you with me we ask that on the front end and if it's not going to be the best we can do in honoring and exalting Jesus if we can come up with something else that will do that better we go with the better because there's lots of good stuff if a ministry in our church outgrows its usefulness in those ways and we come up with something else that's needed in that regard then we move on to that you see what I'm saying we are not traditionalists we're not married to a program we're not loyal to we've never done it that way before in the way in the way of innovation all we're trying to do is be faithful not clever not cute faithful so as our church grows and as it begins to change in different ways we ask as shepherds what does that look like in the way of shepherding now in this season of our church's life you see that's how it works just a little bit of insight into how simple it is behind the scenes very simple isn't it bro very simple very straightforward now I'm going to zero in on explain then two two major theological or biblical distinctives of our church and some non-negotiables that we hold as we strive to follow this so if you take this first one

[ 21 : 58 ] I'm going to pull it out over here to the side and I'm going to talk about two primary theological categories that reflect on that first point and under those two categories I'm going to talk about how we do that what kinds of things do we do in these two categories to honor this first one particularly okay that's where we're headed I hope that makes sense to you if it doesn't you can raise your hand and I'll take another shot at it and we'll be here till about one all right no how will here's the question how will we act faithfully to fulfill this mandate of love because that's what it is we're trying to love and honor and glorify God we're trying to exalt him as a church family how will we act faithfully to fulfill that the first then the first primary way that we are seeking to do that in terms of an overarching construct is by a high view of God we are cultivating in our church family a high view of God all of our ministries seek to reflect a high view of God's sovereignty his control his lordship over his church

Greg and I are not the bosses of Grace Church we're the under shepherds of the great high shepherd Jesus this is his church you're his people we are your friends we are part of this congregation as I mention a high view of God I'm talking about God Christ and the Holy Spirit the triune God so anytime we're using that terminology if we don't specifically say God the Father we're talking about God as God the Father God the Son and God the Holy Spirit we don't put emphases on any of the one or over the other it's a triune God that we're worshiping the Trinity John MacArthur I think you see the quote up here yes God is it do I have that up here where did that come from hold on oh I didn't I didn't do that one that's on me let me read this quote to you God

I have so many marks all over this page you wouldn't believe it God is listen God is the source God is the sustainer and the rightful end of everything that exists let me say it again God is the source the sustainer and the rightful end of everything that exists in other words we exist for him and that's what this particular verse says look at that for us there is but one God the father from whom are all things and notice we exist for him one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things and we exist through him so we are for God and we exist through God we understand that we want to honor that we want to sing to that truth pray to that truth live for that truth minister in that truth exist in that truth we see our life together as an issue of the aim of our hearts we are going to give precedence to we are going to give preference to we are going to give power to that which is most important in our heart in any given moment we want to help you nurture and cultivate pleasing

Jesus as that highest motivation in any given situation or moment of your life what will most please and honor the Lord in this moment in my life in Colossians we've been instructed by the apostle Paul to make our devotion to Jesus Christ our all sufficient savior the aim of our life I'll take you to Colossians first in chapter three now I have a whole series of sermons on this chapter on our website because I went through the entire book of Colossians verse by verse but I want to just highlight a couple of things here for you if you'll just look at Colossians three one through four you get an idea of this high view of God Paul is even speaking in language that elevates or exalts the place of Jesus Christ with God the Father therefore or since you have been raised up with

Christ that is you have been spiritually born again in him as if you have been resurrected keep seeking the things where above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God now verse one is very clear you're either seeking the things above where Jesus is that is you're seeking to exalt and please Jesus above all things in your life or you're not verse two set your mind on the things above not on the things that are on earth so in verse two you are either heavenly minded about life or you're not you're either looking at life spiritually or you're not he doesn't want you to be bogged down with interpreting the things of life from a man's wisdom point of view from an earthly point of view he wants you to take a God view of the issues of life a heavenly perspective on what's coming at you for you verse three for you have died and your life your identity is hidden with

[ 28 : 09 ] Christ in God in other words you verse three you are so identified with Jesus in your salvation that it is as if you are already in heaven with him because as far as Jesus is concerned that's where you exist you would have no spiritual life apart from him and so as far as God is concerned you exist in heaven in his son that is so complete that he can say something miraculous in verse four that is such a truism about you as a saved person that verse four comes into play now when Christ who is our life is revealed then you also will be revealed with him in glory how about that when Jesus comes back and is revealed to the world for who he is we will be revealed with him and in him and the world will see we have life in him he is our life he is bringing us to himself because he is our life ah and so we are we are admonished and encouraged and built up keep yourself seeking things above where your

Lord is set your mind on the things above where your Lord is not the things on earth don't let yourself be defined by the things on earth now look that passage helps you and I zero in on what is meant by a high view of God it instructs us to seek and to set our minds on Jesus it instructs us to live to Christ's honor in every aspect of life look folks that is not for the super religious that's for people who've been saved born again everyday Christians living your life going to work being married changing diapers whatever season you're so Colossians 3 helps us see how much this Christ honoring life is in this is in direct opposition to the focus and perspectives and values and solutions of human wisdom we don't want to get caught in the trap of human wisdom we're not simply or even primarily religious people you heard me preach about this last

Sunday we are not primarily religious people what are we Jeff we are paramourntly disciples or followers of Jesus we are not as concerned about religion as we are about the person of Christ Lord my religion is built on my personal relationship with you anything about my life that expresses a religious tone is tuned to you so I and that's Jesus that's Jesus is it in harmony with Christ if not if it's if it's disharmonious then you know what I do I say that needs to be brought into line here or gotten rid of altogether this is how we're encouraging each other to live the main problem the Colossians just to give you a little context here the main problem the

Colossians were facing was listen now they were trying to add man made ideas man made philosophies teachings traditions to their lives and to their approach to church life and Paul recognized it Paul knew it it had been reported to him this was going on and Paul wrote to them and gives them this extremely poignant deep deep theology about the personhood of Jesus Christ in these first two chapters of Colossians and then he comes to chapter three and he says now we're going to bring all that home I'm going to tell you what that looks like in church life here's what that looks like for you as a person and for your involvement in church life stop trying to live a Jesus plus life where it's I'll just add Jesus to this I'll Christianize this and then that way I can justify continuing to do it we don't live

Jesus plus lives we live lives to honor him and whenever anything comes up against the way of dishonoring Jesus boy we go right after that in our hearts and our lives people people here in our community people in the everyday course of your life and the world in general around us they would never have us do life and church together the way God prescribes they wouldn't and if they were to come in here today in a state of unbelief they would not get what we're doing they would be like where's the fog machines we don't have any of those oh really where's the lights where's all the jokes where's the entertainment aren't you going to juggle while you preach that'd be cool I'd come back if you do that where's all that well perhaps why don't we do that kind of stuff here you guys sing songs that are pretty basic and it's all about

[ 33 : 46 ] God when you sing and the focus is on Jesus and not us I mean I didn't hear anything in there about how great I am and how beautiful I am what a princess I am yeah I know I didn't hear anything in there about my fifis and how wonderful my fifis can be with God no what's that all about my felt needs my felt needs what's that all about now look I'm not I'm not dissing off on what other people do I'm saying here at grace it's very straightforward for us we're not adopting the ideas philosophies teachings and traditions of what unbelievers and man's wisdom dictate to us why would I want to go out there and ask unbelievers what church should be like if I want those people out there to understand the love of Christ then let me go out there and love them let me bring them the gospel and help share with them the forgiveness that is found in Jesus Christ and invite them to come here and hear more about him and tell them when you come here you're going to hear all about

Jesus Christ you're going to hear all about following God in a faithful life of denying yourself and taking up his cross and following him that's what you're going to hear week in and week out to do life to do church man's way would mean putting the focus and emphasis on what our society aims at and values in life things like our felt needs things like being happy where's the happy where's the joke I'm not happy I'm not leaving here feeling good things like being safe having our share of the American dream things like that we're not promoting or preaching that kind of stuff at grace we want to help you become more dependent on God we want to help you become more servant hearted toward each other more heavenly minded and less less and this is hard for Americans to hear less independent in how you live and more

God dependent and church loyal do you hear that God dependent Christ dependent and church loyal for too many Christians church is an afterthought church is an addendum if everything else in my life and in the galaxy aligns properly I'll be at church Sunday anything short of that yeah don't don't look for me folks that's that's that's not a Jesus way of life when you think about the fact that Jesus Christ gave his life for whom the church the most important thing if you want to call it that on the planet to God is the church you Jesus didn't die for an idea or a plan he died for a people and you're that people you are important because

Jesus lives in you now look I'll put this up here too let's see if I'm on track yep we have the choice of being man-centered in our approach to our individual lives and to church life or we can choose to make God and Christ central we have a choice every week so that to quote from Colossians we walk or live in a manner worthy of the Lord to please him in all respects that's our aim a God pleasing life is a Christ exalting high and holy view of God life that's what it is this heavenly minded life lived right now is only possible by God's grace as he works in you to renew your minds now the question comes Jeff God wants to renew my mind yeah look when you get saved you have a whole new process to learn in terms of relating to God relating to yourself relating to others you have a whole new world to learn about in the way of looking at your world and perceiving what

God perceives about it you couldn't do that before you were saved you could read the Bible you could think it was cool history it was a neat set of stories in some places it's pretty weird things like that but you couldn't read God's word and think this is blessing my soul this is instructing my soul in how to honor my God and know my God because this is where he reveals himself to me as his child you couldn't know all that now you do you need to grow in that so that now the way that you look at parenting is not the same way that you looked at it before you were saved the way you look at marriage is no longer the same way that you look at marriage before you were saved marriage takes on a whole new paradigm when you're married in Christ he's the difference maker what you treasured and valued and put priority on before you came to knowledge of Jesus Christ to trust him as your savior those things need to go now you have a whole new set of values and they are the values of

[ 39 : 07 ] Jesus what does Jesus value what pleases him most see that's where you live that's how you breathe you need to grow in that and that's why the church is here that's what the church is I'm going to get to that in just a moment we are seeking to please the Lord well what does the Lord use to help renew our minds in all of that well I'm glad you asked because that brings us to the second one it's a high view of scripture a high view of God and a high view of scripture so the high view of scripture might be labeled our second distinctive our theological distinctive because I'm going to give you other characteristics or distinctives that flow out of these two in just a moment a high view of the Bible you and I cannot have a high view of God apart from a high view of the Bible because the Bible is where God reveals himself to us it's the truth of



God's word his self revelation self revealing and it teaches us the knowledge of God and the ways of God it's as if the Lord says look I'm going to bring you to salvation I'm going to forgive you for all your sins in my son Jesus Christ and create you as a new creature to be rightly related to me and from that moment I'm going to give you a treasure that reveals myself to you and shows you what my priorities are and how you can relate to me and to other people to include people who don't believe in me and hate me I want to show you how to relate to them that's what this book is it's critical it's why I have my Bible open up here and not some other piece of literature it's why we preach verse by verse through the scriptures let me show you a quick passage of scripture here let me take you quickly to this passage it's in

Hebrews so go back toward the back of the Bible a few more books I don't have a slide for this Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12 and you'll see one of the ways that we understand the critical nature work and usefulness of the scripture in helping us to live this Christ exalting life Hebrews 4 12 for the word of God is what living and active what else it is sharper than any two-edged sword because that sword of the word of God pierces as far as the division of your soul your spirit it goes down into the very life the joints and marrow of who you are and it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of your heart that's why because only the word of God can search out what's really going on in your soul reveal that to you and then give you the hope for change all of us need change we all need to grow and it's by the word of God that we do that now I do have this one up here on the screen well maybe

I don't yes there it is sorry I'm getting ahead of myself Romans 15 4 whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction that through perseverance and the encouragement of the what scriptures we might have hope boy take that in what a glorious wonderful example of the value and priority of scripture for Christian living whatever God had written in earlier times for those generations of people was being written for us to instruct us today so that through a persevering spirit through the encouragement of the Bible that God has prepared for us you and I might have a heavenly hope a hope a hope for what change we can change we can grow we can mature we can move forward in our relationship with almighty

God so how will we as grace church strive together to honor and nurture a high view of God and a high view of his word now here is where I take this high view of God and high view of his word and begin to talk to you in a little bit more detail about some things we adopt in the getting involved in helping Christians in our church live out a high view of God and his word is based on surprise God's truth it's all driven and defined by what God has written in the Bible so here's one of these first ministry distinctives that come about as a result of us trying to honor and exalt God through a high view of God and a high view of his word how in our church well the first one that I want to mention to you is something of what I'm doing right now it's expository preaching now some of you have heard this story when

[ 44 : 29 ] I first heard the word expository I thought the guy who said it to me made it up because he's all the time messing with me and he said you made that up and he said no no no dude and he laughed he said no no no that's a real word and I said what is it what does it mean I've never heard of that what kind of preaching is that and he gave me some sermons to listen to by John MacArthur and I went home and listened to him I'm like dude what is this I came in and it must have been the look on the didn't even have my Bible with me because the church I attended you didn't have to have your Bible to go to church you didn't have to have it that'll tell you something so I stopped the tape about five minutes in I said man this dude is all over the Bible this is just his introduction I ran in and got my Bible and came back put it in my lap and spent hours rewinding and listening to those messages expository preaching an expositor labors diligently to do what here it goes now

I'm telling you as plain as I know how to tell people what the Bible says that's very important you say Jeff that is so basic what are you talking about there well here it is we start with the Bible hello we start with the Bible again you notice I'm not reading from the newspaper or the latest philosophical journal or something like that got the Bible open we're talking about scripture because you're God's people and I need to feed you his word this is how I lead you to green pasture and clear water so we start with the word what does the Bible say what does it say no monkeying around let's read it here it is in plain English thank God but then there's another one an expositor also diligently labors to do what to help the people of God understand what it means by what it says right we got to do something with that and then finally to help people God's people obey or you might say apply what it says so we're going to read the

Bible we're going to talk about what it means by what it says and then we're going to try to help you apply which means obey what it says how does this come into my life so that I am reflecting more of the character of Jesus as I obey the scriptures say Jeff doesn't all churches do that I'll let you answer that for yourself now I want to take you to a few passages again very quickly I'll start in the Old Testament give you a couple take you to one in the New Testament and then I'll move on and wrap this up all right Nehemiah chapter 8 now if you go back and you do first and second Samuel first and second Kings first and second Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah so if you go back toward the Old Testament you find Chronicles and all now go the other direction and you'll come to Nehemiah Nehemiah chapter 8 the prophet Nehemiah has a huge task ahead of him and we're picking it up all the way down eight chapters into what he's writing here and I'll begin in verse 1 of chapter 8 of the book of Nehemiah and all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the water gate and they asked

Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses that's the first five books of the Bible our Bible which the Lord had given to Israel then Ezra the priest brought the law the Torah before the assembly of men women and all who could listen with understanding on the first day of the seventh month and what did he do he read from it now listen to this sermon guys he read from it before the square which was in front of the water gate from early morning until midday in the presence of men and women those who could understand and all the people were attentive to the book of the law may I draw your attention to two places in these few verses in verse 2 notice that he says he is reading to this assembly of men and women and all who could do what understand listen with understanding there is your mandate when you come to sit before the word of God and the preaching of the assembly of God's people you have a mandate and responsibility to listen with understanding and you need the Holy Spirit for that don't you but if you stayed up this is very practical pastoral stuff here if you stayed up real late on Saturday night irresponsibly in some way because you weren't kept up

I mean sometimes Suzanne and I came in bleary eyed because we were up with a sick kid all night on Saturday night and I still had to preach or whatever I get that but if you're not taking care of yourself on the weekend on Saturday night so you can show up on Sunday and be alert and listen with understanding that's on you not me don't do that make this a priority let God see that this is a priority in your heart I want to be here I want to serve I want to encourage Nehemiah 8 then notice at the end of verse 3 and all the people were what attentive to the book of the law they were attentive they were alert they were looking they were listening they were paying attention that's how we come that's what we do Bibles opened following along listening attentive trying to understand and grow very basic now notice what he says over in Nehemiah 8 8 they read from the book from the law of God translating to give the sense why so that they understood the reading

[ 50 : 34 ] I'm not up here just giving you facts and figures and trying to wow you with my understanding and insights we're up here unpacking the truth of the word of God to make points because I'm aiming at your heart your mind and trying to help you understand what this means that's expository preaching we are unpacking the sense of the passage to help you better understand what is being written here commanded of you things that you need to address in your life whatever it is we're trying to understand the context and sense of what the author wrote and why now if you turn back one book to Ezra right before Nehemiah and go to chapter seven and again I apologize for just jumping into the middle here but time constraints are on me so Ezra chapter seven you're going to see something very much akin to what we read in Nehemiah for verse 10 for Ezra had set his heart to do what to study the law of the

Lord and to practice it and to teach it to Israel there it is now what you have in that verse is a very plain spoken mandate for pastoral ministry this is the most important aspect of what Greg and I do as shepherds at Grace Church we study the word of God we practice the word of God in our own lives lest we live hypocritically before you and then we teach what we've learned and sought to practice in our lives to you that's it now I have to safeguard that and protect that that's on me now let me say this thank the Lord I have a group of men in this church who love me and respect me and that are my friends and they help protect me and safeguard me and Greg in our in our ministry of doing this how do they do that well I'll tell you when we did this renovation none of these men expected me to be here in all of the hours they were here wielding hammers why because

I'm above that no because they respected what I needed in the way of the time to do what I just read to you and be prepared for Sunday for Wednesday night for the men's breakfast meetings whatever it is I'm asked on called upon to teach and preach and these men because they love the Lord and know the word that's the how they safeguard their pastor they know I need time at home to pray and seek God to do what I do to be prepared like this for you and so these men took care of this and in doing that they love their pastors well and freed us up to stay focused on what we do now that's a priority that we share as a church do you see how that works out as a church it's not just our priority it's the priority of our church Jeff we want you to be prepared like that I have to learn to say no to lots of things good things even that might get in the way of me being ready to stand before Almighty God and say thus saith the Lord or otherwise I tell all these young guys don't get in it don't get in it you need to make that a priority all right go over with me if you will the second Timothy second

Timothy chapter four you are very familiar with this passage you have heard Greg and I teach on this a number of times over our six-year history so we'll just read it second Timothy four verse one Paul is talking to young Timothy his pastoral protege as Timothy ministers as a pastor in Ephesus and Paul comes to this moment in his second letter and he says Timothy look I solemnly charge you I charge you so solemnly that I'm going to charge you in the presence of God looking down on you now and Christ Jesus whom you serve as Lord who is to judge the living and the dead Timothy you better remember that he's going to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing and his kingdom Timothy you need to remember that Jesus is coming back you're going to give an account and by all that is holy in his great kingdom preach the word and and Timothy you better be ready to do that in season and out that means all the time you need to be ready to step forward at any moment and preach the gospel and as you do reprove rebuke exhort with great patience and instruction but do it notice all the way down at the end of verse five fulfill your ministry all the way down at the end of verse five fulfill your ministry and that's how you do it Timothy you preach the word of God now look our pulpit and teaching ministry strive to honor God's word so that we can know God obey God and glorify God through excellent living we want to be holy people now this this is what determines my aim and goal as a pastor teacher it's to make the pulpit ministry the central defining feature of my work as a pastor and the work of our church we do that by preaching the word of God in season and out of season we preach the word with power persuasion and purpose of heart that is single-minded devotion we're not willy-nilly all over the map up here trying to be jokesters and all that kind of stuff no I want to fulfill my ministry before the Lord so I've told you before long before I ascend this pulpit my concern in the sermon that I bring is not that it wows you but that it honors Jesus God are you pleased with this sermon because you preached it originally now I'm just re-preaching it how am I doing Lord that ought to make our knees shake you know one other one here that I'll mention oh those were the verses sorry discipleship in depth we move from expository preaching to discipleship in depth what does it mean well this can take the form of a weekly or a bi-weekly meeting with another believer just you and another believer meeting together and growing in the word together again under the pastoral leadership of your of your pastors right we don't want you just going out and buying any book off the Christian bookshelf misnomer Christian bookshelf and sitting down and reading it let us know let us weigh in we want to keep you away from things that are going to confuse you or not be consistent with the truth maybe you do a small group study you're going through a Christian book or a passage of Scripture or a book of the Scripture maybe something like our ladies studies we have two ladies studies that are going on each month

I think every other week or so they're meeting and the women are given an opportunity to meet either in the evenings or during the afternoon and they get to pick some I think a few of them go to both plus do some other stuff our theology nights or what we call grace gatherings on Wednesday evening look on Wednesday evening we're going through this book right now growing your faith by Jerry Bridges this is a book that's all about what it means for you to grow as a Christian and last Wednesday night when we started back up again after the holidays we dealt with the chapter entitled the pursuit of holiness and we talked for an hour and over an hour and a half or so about what it means for you and I to actively pursue a holy life what does that look like how can you do that how many Christians in here need to hear that now there's some of you that don't right come on now here are the chapters that remain the practice of godliness that might be important how to trust God how to serve God and how to worship God those are the next four chapters that's what we're that's what we do on Wednesday night sometimes we are into in the scripture and we're just doing a passage or a or a book or something like that but we always use these books to drive us into the scripture and it and expose the scripture to you what point is he making in that chapter and how does he use scripture to help you understand how to do that another one we're getting ready to lead our men in what is called a one-to-one Bible reading guys you're going to hear about this when we meet in March the first Saturday in March some of the men we've already tasked to read this book they're going to serve as the leads to help us do this and what we're going to do is every man who regularly visits our church or who are members of our church we're going to ask you to pair up with another guy or two and we're going to ask you to meet on a regular basis to do what to sit down and read the Bible together just read the Bible just read it together brothers read God's Word together if you want to talk about certain aspects of it that's great but all we're asking you do is get together and read the

[ 59 : 59 ] Bible as brothers in Christ that's our men's ministry that's the heart of our men's ministry we got to start somewhere we're doing stuff like this because we're taking a deep dive into discipleship we want to help you learn how to walk with Jesus whatever form it takes it's going to be about the systematic teaching of sound doctrine truth scripture and how it applies to life look I'll say this up here we design our time together around God's Word to emphasize the centrality and sufficiency of his Word to define what we believe and how we live scripture's sufficiency is vital to our life finally worship worship that's another distinctive that comes out of a high view of God and a high view of scripture well how do we understand that it's measured by the Bible it focuses our attention and affections on the majesty of God in Christ so that our overarching aim in our corporate worship is that from start to finish your mind your will your emotions and your desires that is your heart what makes up your personhood will be engaged and directed in your worship of

God in Christ we're not up here entertaining anybody we're not up here trying to draw your attention to human stuff we're saying listen and worship the Lord honor the Lord by the preaching of his Word that's what happens here every single Sunday morning Sinclair Ferguson kind of summed it up Sinclair Ferguson is a guy that we read often and appreciate and here's what he said worship is not something we work up that's why we don't have fog machines and entertainment and clowns and all that kind of stuff come in here it's something that comes down to us and it comes from notice what he says the character of God it is God who gives us the spirit of worship and it is what we know of God that produces this spirit of worship I preached a message from first Thessalonians five titled Christian discipleship the means and end of great commission ministry and I spoke about how our efforts to obey the great commission are connected to how we go about discipleship here at

Grace Church the means of great commission ministry if you go on our website and you click on this sermon and you go to the sermon notes and scroll down to this one you'll see a link there you can click on to get to that sermon if you want to listen to it that's a sermon where I talk more about our evangelistic emphasis here in our church that not emphasis that one today our faithfulness to fulfill the great commission is expressed through our efforts to make mature and multiply disciples in our ministries here that that covers the methods of our of our ministry I'll take you to one last passage and then I'm done and it's in Colossians and it's in chapter one now you know where I'm going for those of you who are members of our church this is Colossians chapter one and we'll read in verse 28 and 29 Paul says we proclaim him

Jesus we admonish every man and teach every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man what complete in Christ for this purpose also I labor striving according to his power which mightily works within me folks notice that passage it's so important we proclaim Jesus we do that admonishing that means warning every man we do that teaching every single person and we do that with the wisdom of God so that purpose we may present every single person here complete in Jesus Christ.

that's why we strive that's why we labor we've adopted Colossians 1 28 and 29 as our scriptural mission statement for moving forward in our plans to shepherd this church family so what is the connection between our shared worship of God and your personal spiritual growth as a Christian again I'll quote from Sinclair Ferguson a Christian's real development in spiritual life will always be revealed by how he or she thinks about God.

[ 64 : 24 ] how much he thinks about him and how highly he thinks about him and then this last statement is gold for worship is essentially the reverse of sin.

your worship is a reversal of sin in your life because you can't worship God with unconfessed hidden sin in your life God won't receive it.

likeness to Christ then is the catalyst for our growth and our witness as we serve one another and reach out to our community. ministry. here's my final slide and then we'll pray.

this is why each Christian is called to minister and our service to one another should be defined by who we are in Christ.

ministry is life to life. so we are called to be ministers. you are a minister because you're a Christian. ministry just means service.

[ 65 : 28 ] and as you serve one another in the Lord Jesus Christ you're fulfilling the great commission. now a quick question. Jeff how do we evangelize unbelievers? how do we reach people who aren't saved?

you reach those people as you love Jesus and take the message of his love into your everyday life. if we have to program that as a church to motivate you to do that. we got something going on that we need to fix.

you need to be doing that in your everyday life with the people you meet. the people you interact with. open your mouth and tell them the truth. love them enough to give them the gospel and share the hope of Christ and the forgiveness of sins he brings.

if you're not doing that don't tell me you love the Lord. folks this is about loving Christ as we share the truth out there. right? we have an army of people in here.

if you'll just go out and evangelize people will get saved. we'll have baptisms and the church will grow. in numbers. that'll happen. put it to the test.

[ 66 : 30 ] and see. you are our program of evangelism. take it to the streets. share the love of Jesus. I love you.

Greg loves you. we love Grace Church. we are excited about what God's doing in our midst. and we want to just remind you of these wonderful and important aspects of being in ministry together.

and I hope that you'll own it. I hope that you'll continue to come here and own this ministry and what we're seeking to be and do in our community. let's pray together. Father God we thank you for the time you've given us this morning to honor you and to remember.

to remember God. those in our midst who are suffering in trial. we're particularly remembering Bob and Camille and their family. and I'm just.

just so committed. Lord. along with Greg. to make sure that our church family. is able to come alongside of them. and encourage and edify and reassure them in the truth.

[ 67 : 38 ] this is. this is times like this God. when our faith. shines. and is put to. the test. and so please. help us as a church family.

to rally together. even if it's just in prayer right now. to live together. lift up this family. and be available to them. thank you for Jesus. and thank you for your truth. and for teaching us the way of your word.

as we seek to honor you. in Jesus name we pray. Amen.