

FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINES

Doctrine is what we believe about the things God has revealed concerning His people, His plan, and His world. Our doctrinal convictions help us understand the overarching storyline of the Bible—creation, fall, redemption, and consummation—and keep it from becoming mere history. In this way, doctrines provide meaning for the present and hope for the future. These doctrines are not meant to be an end in themselves; these beliefs, revealed to us by God through His holy Scriptures, should lead into the praise of God and the practice of godliness.

At Grace Church, we distinguish doctrines in two categories: Foundational Doctrines and Structural Doctrines. Foundational Doctrines are what we consider to be the nonnegotiable, basic tenets of Christian doctrine. We believe that these Foundational Doctrines are so fundamental to the Christian faith that disagreement with them would constitute something other than Orthodox Christianity. Structural Doctrines are also doctrines we consider to be extremely important (as they help to define who we are as a church), yet we acknowledge that there is some room for disagreement among committed believers over these important issues.

To be a member at Grace Church, a believer's complete agreement with our Foundational Doctrines is required, while their complete agreement with our Structural Doctrines is not required. We have diversity within our church body concerning Structural Doctrines, but we are thoroughly committed to maintaining the unity of the church despite disagreements on those issues. More important than our agreement on every Structural Doctrine is our responsibility and desire to maintain a spirit of unity and keep divisiveness from disrupting our fellowship. The following comprise our Foundational Doctrines:

God

There is one true God (YHWH) who always was, who presently is, and who forever will be. He is knowable only because He has revealed Himself to mankind in a way that is comprehensible for our limited capacities. Both His written revelation (Holy Scripture) and His general

revelation (creation) tell us of His eternal power, invisible attributes, and unfailing love. He is eternal, self-existent, immutable (unchanging), all-powerful, and perfect. He exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three persons are of the same essence. They are in unity with one another in their true essence, and yet they are each distinct in personality and role. They are co-eternal in being and nature, and they are co-equal in power and worth. They exist together in perfect and unbroken fellowship as one essential being (Deuteronomy 6:4,13; Matthew 4:10; Hebrews 1:1-2; Romans 1; Colossians 1; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is the eternal only begotten son of God. He is fully man and fully God. Jesus was the agent of creation and the creator of all things. He was before all things and holds all things together. He is the visible image of the invisible God, who became like man in every respect except for sin. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a perfect, obedient life and died on a cross as the penal substitute for mankind. Absorbing the complete righteous wrath of the Father towards sin, He simultaneously upheld God's justice and love. Through His death, man can be freed of guilt and reconciled to God. After being dead and buried for three days, Jesus' body was physically raised from the grave, overcoming death and its power. Through His resurrection, Jesus validated His deity, His life, and His mission. He ascended and now sits at the right hand of the Father and serves as the perfect mediator between God and man (John 1; Ephesians 1; Colossians 1; Hebrews 1; Romans 5:8; 8:32; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Philippians 2:5-8).

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is co-equal with the Father and Son for all eternity. He is a helper, adviser, strengthener, encourager, ally, and advocate. He is a person, distinct from the Father and Son. He enlightens, regenerates, indwells, baptizes, seals, empowers, transforms, and gifts all believers in Christ at the point of faith in Christ. He helps believers understand, interpret, and apply God's Word to their lives. He is the proxy on earth for the resurrected and ascended Jesus

Christ. He is the seal and the down payment for the believer's future inheritance. He indwells believers, convicts them of sin, and enables them to be conformed to the image of Christ (Matthew 28:19; John 3:3-7; John 16:7-15; Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:9, 15-17; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16-17; 12:13; Ephesians 1:13-18; 4:30; 5:18; Colossians 3:14; Galatians 5:16).

The Scriptures

The Scriptures (39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament) are the inspired Word of God. In their original form they are without error in all they proclaim. They are completely sufficient and authoritative because of the Spirit who breathed them out and because of the true story they tell. They are to be read, studied, proclaimed, and applied by the Church as a foundation and guide in all of life. They are the canon "rule" by which all theology, wisdom, mission, and vision should be measured (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Psalm 33:6; Psalm 119; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 1 Timothy 5:18).

Man

God made humans, both male and female, in His own image with the purpose of glorifying Himself through enjoyment and fellowship with man. Tempted by Satan, man rebelled against God and fell from his sinless state. Being severed from the Creator and subject to His divine wrath, man finds himself depraved and utterly hopeless with no remedy to help himself. The depravity of man finds every human alienated, from his God and from his fellow man, and unable to be restored to his original state without a divinely initiated, radical intervention by the Triune God (Romans 2:2-3, 5; Ephesians 2:8-9; Genesis 1:27; 9:6; Romans 3:23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1).

Salvation

Salvation is the free gift of God, by grace alone and through faith alone in the person of Jesus Christ and His work on behalf of mankind. Man's response to God is founded in the eternal working of the triune God who predestined, called, justified and glorified all believers. All who believe are declared righteous in Christ, completely forgiven of the debt of their sin, adopted as children of God, and made co-heirs with Christ for all eternity. Biblical faith is marked by repentance and a changed life. Union with God initiates a reorientation of one's affections away from self and toward God and others (Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 5:15; 6:23; 8:30-31; Hebrews 9:15-20; Galatians 3:15-4:7).

Male and Female as Image Bearers and the Implications for Marriage

God creates each person as male or female, as two distinct, complementary genders who together reflect the image and nature of God (Genesis 1:26-27). These distinctions are divinely inspired and are essential to fully understanding the nature of God. However, we are fully fallen - physically, emotionally, and psychologically - and this brokenness can affect our personal understanding and expression of gender.

But by God's sovereignty and through His grace, gender is also being redeemed from the pathway of self-determined expression to God's intended design of male and female as image bearers. We believe that this redemptive process is full of hope and healing. Conversely, disagreement with one's biological sex or God's boundaries for sexual expression leads to spiritual confusion and emotional chaos (Romans 1:26-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

We believe that marriage is originally and continues to be defined by God in Scripture as the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive, covenant commitment for a lifetime (Gen. 2:18-25). Furthermore, it is God alone who has ultimate authority to prescribe and describe the marital relationship (Matt. 19:1-9, Mark 10:1-12).

It is through this marital union that God provides a framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual delight according to Biblical standards, the means for procreation, and the foundation for raising godly children. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman in the sacred context of marriage (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4; Malachi 2:15). Sexual immorality, defined by any sexual activity outside the boundaries of this relationship, is clearly and expressly prohibited by the Lord (Matthew 15:19, 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 13:4).

Ultimately, this marital covenant is a representation of Christ's relationship with His church. As such, the husband and wife, though equal in value and worth before God, have been entrusted with complementary roles within the marital relationship. A husband has been entrusted with the responsibility to lead his wife and to love her sacrificially—giving himself up for her, just as Christ loved and sacrificed Himself for the church. A wife is to respect her husband, to be his helper, and to submit herself graciously to the leadership of her husband, just as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ (Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19).

GraceChurch

COVENANT AGREEMENT

FAITH I have, by faith, received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and will strive toward Biblical life change, including the confession and repentance of sin in my life.

DOCTRINE I have read, believe, and accept the Foundational Doctrines of Grace Church.

As a member of Grace Church, I covenant to:

UNITY Guard my tongue from destructive criticism and gossip, submit to the discipline of the church elders and appointed leaders, and work for the good of all members.

PARTICIPATION Regularly participate in the life of Grace Church by attending weekly worship services, engage in Biblical community, and serve those within and outside the church.

SUPPORT Faithfully steward my resources by supporting and investing in my church financially in a sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary manner.

DISCIPLESHIP Take ownership of my spiritual growth as a disciple by upholding the core values of the church, thus being an example and representative to others.

Grace Church Core Values:



BIBLICALLY ORIENTED

Conforming your life to Biblical truth



MINISTRY FOCUSED

Utilizing your gifts and abilities to serve others



PRAYERFULLY DEPENDENT

Pursuing an intimate and dependent relationship with God



CULTURALLY ENGAGED

Creating opportunities to communicate the message of salvation



RELATIONALLY CONNECTED

Developing relationships of encouragement and accountability



COURAGEOUSLY GENEROUS

Managing, not owning, the resources God has given you

- ☐ I have read and agree with the Foundational Doctrines.
☐ I agree to put myself under the care and leadership of Grace Church.

- ☐ I agree that I am in good standing with other church bodies I may be coming from. I will seek the counsel of the church staff with any related concerns.

PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE