

The Church

Introduction

I. "It's not about you."

–Rick Warren

II. "God is not just saving individuals and preparing them for heaven; rather, he is creating a people among whom he can live and who in their life together will reproduce God's life and character."

--Gordon Fee

The Passages: Our Statement of Faith

Point 12. We believe the Church consists of all who were chosen before the foundation of the world and who, in the course of time, put their faith in Jesus Christ. The purpose of the Church is to give God the worship and praise He deserves, to build up every believer to spiritual maturity, and to make disciples of every nation, through word and deed serving as ambassadors for Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of the church, his body, and he provides and gifts leaders for the equipping of his body for works of service.

Point 13. We believe that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to every believer to be used for building up the Body of Christ. Therefore, all believers are ministers for Christ by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts are to be exercised according to biblical guidelines.

Point 14. We believe in the existence of Satan who attempts to defeat Christians through deception, temptation, and accusation. By the power of God believers can resist Satan's schemes by applying biblical truth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Point 15. We believe all Christians should order their lives according to biblical priorities, among which are these:

- a. Cultivating their personal fellowship with God through Christian practices such as Bible reading and reflection, prayer, and obedience.
- b. Expressing love to fellow believers by the commitment of time, effort, ability, and resources.
- c. Loving and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with non-believers in both word and deed.

Point 16. We believe Christ has commissioned His Church to observe the baptism of believers and the Lord's Supper until He returns.

I. The Nature of the Church

- A. Chosen by God, purchased by the blood of God's Son, filled with God's Spirit
- B. The Family of God (Eph 2:19)
- C. The Bride and Body of Christ (Titus 2:14-15; 1 Cor 12:27; Rev 19:6-8)
- D. The Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:19-22)

II. The Purpose of the Church

A. "To Give God the worship and praise he deserves" (1 Pt 2:9-10; Ro 12:1-2)

1. Does God exist for the church or does the church exist for God?
 - a. It's easy to think God exists for us (to fill in that spiritual component in our lives)
example: pie graph
 - b. But the truth is we exist for God (Eph 3:9-11; Exodus 32:11-14)

c. Example: Sunday morning is a “worship service.” Therefore, the primary question is not whether we were pleased with what happened but whether God was pleased with what happened.

B. “To build up every believer to spiritual maturity” (Eph 4:11-16; Ro 12:4-8; Ph 2:1-11)

1. Ephesians 4:4-16

a. Purpose of church (v. 13, 15): to grow up into him who is the head

b. Structure of church

.1 Christ is the head

.2 Christ gifts leaders to equip the members of the body to serve

.3 The body builds itself up as each member does his/her ministry

2. Romans 12:4-8

Using our spiritual gifts for the sake of the body

3. Does the church exist for me, or do I exist for the church?

a. Easy to think the church exists for me

b. But I exist for the church in order to build it up through service

Question: Why has God brought me to this community?

What gift does He want to give the community through me?

C. “To make disciples of every nation through word and deed” (Mt 28:18-20)

1. 1. Does the world exist for the church, or does the church exist for the world?

a. Easy to think the world exists for us to provide us with fun, pleasure, success, etc

b. But we ultimately exist for the world: to be a blessing, to be salt and light

2. We fulfill our role in the world by providing a distinct alternative to the world

a. Salt and light taste and look different: Mt 5:13-16

b. Our love for each other should distinguish us: Jn 13:34-35

“we should be living lives that demand an explanation”

3. We fulfill our role by loving, sharing, and serving the world (Ro 10:14-15; Lk 10:25-37)

III. The Practices of the Church

A. Baptism (Mt 28:18; Acts 2:37-38)

B. The Lord’s Supper (Mt 26:26-29; 1 Cor 11:23-26)

IV. The Enemy of the Church

A. Satan’s strategy: deception, temptation, and accusation (Gen 3:1-6; 1 Pt 5:8; Rev 12:10)

B. Our response: standing firm in the faith (1 Jn 4:4; Mt 4:1-11; 1 Pt 5:9; Eph 6:10-18)

V. How Should We Respond?

A. Our relationship with God

B. Our relationship with one another

C. Our relationship with the world

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. How did you connect with the “Pie graph” shown representing how people think about living a “fulfilled life?” Do you agree that many people approach life that way? Do you think there’s any problem with approaching life that way?
3. “The Sunday morning worship service is ultimately for God, not for us.” How would internalizing that statement change the way you personally approach Sunday mornings at Grace?
4. How would you personally answer this question: “Why has God given you to this Grace community? What gift does God want to give this community through you that he can’t give through someone else?”
5. It was argued on Sunday that our lives should offer a distinct alternative to the world: “we should be living lives that demand an explanation.” In your mind, what is the primary way the church has fallen short of this? What is one area in your own life that you feel you’ve fallen short of this that you’d like to grow in?
6. Do you agree that Grace needs to grow in this area of reaching out to the larger community in more intentional ways? Why or why not? If so, what next steps do you think Grace should take to grow in this area?