

Core Values

Grace Baptist Church



Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law - Proverbs 29:18. This is one of the most often misused verses in the Bible. Many use it to promote the secular business practice of “casting a vision” for people to rally around. While there is nothing wrong with setting goals as it can be very helpful, this is not what the passage is talking about. One must understand the role of prophet in Biblical times to properly exegete this text. The prophet represented God to the people and they did so by relaying visions or words from God. In essence this passage is saying, “Where the word of God is not heard, the people will follow sinful desires, but God approves those who remain faithful to His word.”

The goal for the strategy team was simply to hear from the membership, then prayerfully search the Scripture in order to clearly identify our purpose in being gathered as the Body of Christ. Our prayer is that by presenting these clearly defined core values that align with Scripture that we can begin moving forward with clear purpose in order to glorify God through our holy worship.

Discovery:

Results from membership questionnaire.

Towards the end of November 2021 a questionnaire was sent out to our active membership. The goal of this was to hear from our people as to what their perception of Grace's purpose is in Seneca County. Of the forty that were sent out, nine were filled out and submitted. Many who did not submit one shared that they simply didn't know where to start, which is indicative of what we are seeing over the past years. Many have found themselves struggling with the events of the past two years, growing frustrated, and even somewhat defeated as so much has changed and so many have moved away, passed away, or continued to shelter in place.

The team worked with what we had in order to establish a baseline. From there we searched the Bible to see where there was agreement and to discover how the Word instructs us according to the Church. Below are the results from the questionnaire:

1. What would you say are the five core values of GBC? (All submitted answers grouped and summarized for ease of sharing)

1. The Word of God; Love of God; Gospel Proclamation; Mission Minded (local, state, national, world); Prayer; Stewardship; Character of membership; Unity love and respect of membership; Family; Service to God; Gathering (enthusiastic about fellowship); Christ Centered

2. In your estimation, why does GBC exist?

1. Carry out the Great Commission; To equip the saints (preach, teach, develop, encourage the body); Missionary; to Love God; Promote truth of God's Word; Provide a place for hope and healing

3. What way(s) is GBC reaching Seneca County?

1. Bible is being preached; VBS, Fall Fest, Game Nights, Cookie trays, holiday meals; Prayer Chain; Building open for worship, Facebook online streaming services; Funerals; Making food for sick, shut-ins, and funeral dinners

2. (Member identified barriers). We are just another church; Many in community are scared of church or feel it is unimportant; Not seeing growth/fruit from things we are doing; Lack of people participating (same

folks doing majority of the work); Lack of understanding in church body of how to do this well

4. What would you say is the vision, direction of GBC?
 1. “I don’t know” (five people responded this way); To be a witness to the community; to Grow in Christ; We need to stop being content with status quo and be challenged by what it actually means to be the church
5. Things to add, remove, or change to accomplish our vision and align with our core values?
 1. Better means of communication; More servant leadership from church members so that we can better equip members and reach nonbelievers; More involvement with community (parades, markets, etc); Community Outreach Committee; More flexible approach to structure of the church (rewrite constitution); Willingness to set aside any/all traditions; Printed weekly prayer requests; Point person for contacting any member who misses services
6. Other concerns/barriers identified by members”
 1. Some things are being accomplished as individuals and not the church; We need to see our lack so that we will see our need and seek God in prayer; Goal should not be to just provide a comfort zone on Sunday Mornings; Our love and excitement for God should show in our worship, but it isn’t (Ps. 149:1-5); Caring about the unsaved, about the community; Showing more acceptance and love when visitors come into the church, a warm, loving, supportive atmosphere.

The next step in the process was to search the Bible, in particular the New Testament for details about early church gatherings. We focused on the book of Acts because that is where the church was berthed. We retook the questionnaire but did so as though we were members of the first church in the New Testament. Upon so doing we discovered that the first church could be said to have three core values; 1) the apostle’s teaching, 2) gathering together, and 3) prayer. The key word in the passage and what ultimately drove the body was the word “devotion”. The first church was devoted to the Word of God and everything flowed out from that.

One can look throughout the Bible and not find explicit details concerning the gatherings of the local bodies and how they gathered. This is because there is creativity in how we express holy worship, but it must begin with devotion to the Word of God. So, while our core values do not have to perfectly mirror those

found in the early church, they do serve as a scriptural example to help inform us as we seek to glorify God in our gatherings.

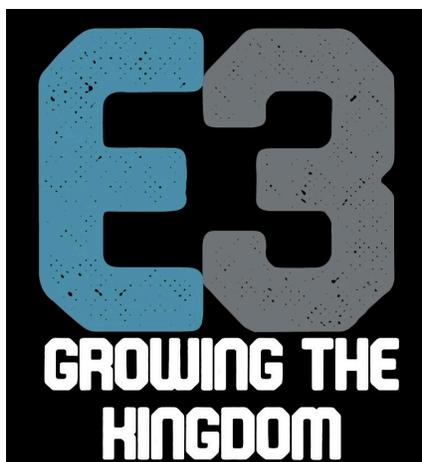
What are Core Values?

What they are and why they matter

Aubrey Malphurs, in his book *Strategic Planning: A new model for church and ministry leaders*, defines core values as “the constant, passionate, biblical core beliefs that drive the ministry.” These are the things that we rally around, things that we come back to, things that help focus our decision making and our planing. These values help us answer the question “Why are we doing _____”.

It is far too common a practice for churches to function without clearly defined core values. You will sometimes hear, “We have the Bible and that’s all we need”, and while that is true it doesn’t indicate that the local gathering is functioning according to the Bible. These values are to be derived from the Bible. This means that core values are how we are applying the Bible to the decision making process of the body based on our understanding of the Bible. They serve to tether us to the Word and prevent us from making “knee jerk” reactions or falling into tradition based motives. They keep us always reforming, always coming back to the Word so that our worship is holy and acceptable to God.

To this end, the strategy team examined the collected data from our local body, compared it with the early church, and discussed what is the clearest Biblical understanding of how we should “do church” and came up with three core values to help direct the Grace family. One might say these are the Pillars of Grace. These core values will provide GBC with a means to evaluate what is already in place, determining the functionality of it, as well as providing a means to establish new worship expressions.



Proposed GBC Core Values

Equip the Body (Acts 2:42-47)

- * Services built around instruction in the Word
- * Membership taught to study the Bible in their homes
- * Resource library stocked and maintained to enable independent study
- * Identify, train, and empower Elder candidates
- * Establish community groups that meet in homes
- * Offer periodic Lay Institute classes
- * Keep membership informed of quality conferences (online and in-person)
- * Provide opportunities for called men to preach/teach

Encourage Families (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

- * Provide resources for establishing and maintaining in-home family worship
- * Offer classes that help prepare you for stages of life (singleness, pre-marital classes, marriage enrichment, parenting, financial planning, etc.)
- * Annual GBC men's and women's retreats (not association or state retreats; focused time to build up the local body)
- * Plan regular events to increase the community life of the church
- * Establish accountability groups (2-3 who meet regularly to encourage and challenge each other)
- * Train membership to assist struggling families or individuals during services (i.e. sit with single mom who is struggling with her children, sit with recently widowed individual, etc.)
- * Provide resources for during services to assist families with children, resources that teach children to engage with services not be entertained through the services

Engage the Community (Matthew 28:19-20)

- * Establish a greeter ministry that welcomes everyone into our gatherings
- * Schedule regular bridging events (block parties, Summer Nights, etc.)
- * Establish a focused, gospel-centered outreach into the community (foster care ministry for example)
- * Design all outreach events around disciple-making, gospel presenting efforts (shift in focus from trying to numerically grow the church to proclaiming the kingdom is at hand, Matthew 4:17)

Other Recommendations to Consider

While talking through the core values and how we can begin implementing them we discussed various other aspects of church life resulting in the following. Some things are actionable right away while others are conversations that should be had.

Recommendations to help us Equip the Body:

- * Offer times in the services for the membership to share how God is working in their lives
- * Offer evangelism training classes that utilize different approaches to sharing your faith
- * Services on Sundays built around prayer
- * Establish a membership covenant and have an annual service where the membership “renews” their commitment to the work of the local body (make this a time for membership to commit to scheduled events; teaching, VBS worker, nursery, etc.)

Recommendations to help us Encourage Families:

- * Find ways to get people talking with each other
- * Include things such as Ice Breakers at pot lucks
- * Host/support local home school co-op or groups

Recommendations to help us Engage the Community:

- * We need to simplify for a time
 - * Strengthen our core group (active attenders)
 - * Reach out to those who have stopped coming inviting them back
- * Possibly join Chamber of Commerce
- * Start a Trail Life Troop
- * Change our name
 - * There is a great deal of confusion within Tiffin resulting from there being two Grace Churches. Changing our name would eliminate the confusion while giving us the chance to reintroduce ourselves to Tiffin
 - * Could consider identifying ourselves as _____ Community/Family Church (many in our fellowship do not have a Baptist background)
- * Updating our facilities:
 - * Painting the sanctuary, removing/replacing existing banners, adding signage to welcome center
- * Greeters wearing name badges
- * Redesign bulletin, Facebook, and Website to communicate Core Values

There has also been discussions pertaining to creating a new picture database of membership, involving our children more in Sunday services, adding variety to the music style without compromising on theological truth, and identifying barriers that might keep people from visiting. We must keep in mind when talking about removing barriers that we will not compromise on sound doctrine, but there are logistical things that we can consider adjusting to help people. Kevin DeYoung once said, "What you win them with is what you win them to." We don't want to do whatever it takes to get people in, we must hold to our core values. However, there are things such as the confusion over our name, music, service times, or physical issues (i.e. hearing issues, seats with armrest, etc.) that can be addressed.

As we prayerfully consider the future of Grace Baptist, may we do so through the lens of seeking to glorify God and ensuring that to the best of our understanding that we remain devoted to the Word of God.