

## GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH DISTINCTIVES

Not all churches are the same. And we at Grace Baptist Church do not pretend to be better or more Biblical than other churches. But we are constantly striving to be absolutely Biblical in everything we do. We believe the Scripture is our only standard for being a true church. That is why we are constantly looking back to the Scriptures, because we know that we are weak and need Him more than we need our own opinions.

Our greatest passion is to continually keep Christ first in everything (Colossians 1:18). But, like the Apostle Paul, we know that we “have not already obtained this goal nor have we already become perfect, but we do press on so that we may lay hold of Christ because He has first laid hold of us” (Philippians 3:12).

The following distinctives both define who Grace Baptist church is and how we strive to function as a church. These distinctives do not cover 100% of all that we believe, yet they chain us to our goal of being Glory of God focused, Christ Exalting, and Bible Saturated in all that we do:

### 1. Glory of God Focused

The glory of God is EVERYTHING! The centerpiece of the universe for time and eternity is for God to be seen and praised for His matchless perfections! If we are to teach the Scriptures then we must teach that God will be glorified whether we choose to honor Him or not. For all eternity, those in hell will bring Him glory as they suffer eternal wrath under His perfect justice (Revelation 15:1-4). Those in heaven will bring Him glory as they inherit paradise as trophies of perfect grace. Every individual Christian and every local church family must have a continual, intentional, and passionate focus on the glory of God! (1 Corinthians 10:31, Ephesians 3:21)

### 2. Christ-Centered

God is most glorified through the Person and work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. By His unrivaled character and work (merit), He has redeemed for Himself a people (the Church). As His church, we strive above all things to know Him, love Him, praise Him, and serve Him. It is by His grace, through His power, and for His glory that we exist (Romans 11:36). It is our goal to keep Him the honored center of all that we say and do!” He must come to have first place in everything!” (Colossians 1:18).

### 3. Bible Saturated/Thoroughly Biblical

It is our desire to be thoroughly biblical in the totality of our lives. Our purpose, our methods, and our goals must be from sound, biblical teaching. We reject the modern concept that biblical goals can be achieved by man-centered, man-empowered methods. Our theology must dictate our methodology (Acts 5:29).

### 4. Expository Bible Preaching

The hub of the wheel of God’s church is the preaching of the Word of God in the power of the Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-4:2). The preacher must strive to be thoroughly biblical. He must avoid the temptation of misusing Scripture to support a man-centered or culturally relevant message. The biblical text should be preached exegetically in its historical and grammatical context, giving application for today’s world. The pulpit is indispensable to the church’s growth in knowledge, holiness, and love. It cannot and should not be replaced or diminished.

## 5. Biblical Worship Music

The music department strives to lead the church family to glorify God and to edify one another through singing and musical instruments (Psalms 150:4; Isaiah 38:20), ministering with spiritual passion and doctrinal integrity, while maintaining high standards of musical excellence. All of our music is meant to reinforce the faith through song and to express congregational praise and worship to Christ, our Audience (2 Samuel 22:50; 1 Chronicles 16:23; Psalms 7:17).

## 6. Biblical Conversion and Assurance

A biblical understanding of regeneration and conversion has been lost by the modern church. Salvation requires hearing the Gospel accompanied by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:1-8; Ephesians 2:5). This supernatural work, called regeneration, produces repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:20-21). The truly saved person perseveres in faithfulness (Philippians 1:6; Matthew 7:16-20). This perseverance is the basis of assurance. The man who walks in a continual state of carnality with no divine discipline can have no assurance of sonship (Hebrews 12:8), no matter how adamantly he professes his allegiance to Christ.

## 7. Biblical Evangelism

It is the duty of every believer to evangelize the lost. We adamantly stand against cold, unevangelistic religion on the one hand and "hoop-jumping" easy believism on the other. We are committed to preaching the law to show men their sin and at the same time we are committed to preaching the Gospel to show men their Savior (Romans 1:16). We believe that whoever displays faith in Christ Jesus as their Lord will be saved. At the same time, we recognize that neither repentance nor faith can be produced by manipulating the emotion or coercing the will. They are the direct result of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit alone (John 1:12-13; John 3:5-6; John 6:44; Ephesians 2:1-10).

## 8. Personalized World Missions

The Great Commission is a great command. Personal involvement in world missions is not a suggestion or an option, but it is demanded of every true believer. The entire local church family should be personally and strategically involved in world missions through mobilizing laborers, prayer, and finances all for the purpose of glorifying God among all peoples. We are either called to go down into the well (be a missionary) or to hold the rope for those who are going down (support missionaries). Either way, our dedication must be costly and enduring (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

## 9. Congregational Government

A New Testament church is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers. Church government or leadership is congregational in context. Therefore, the final word in matters pertaining to the congregation must come from the congregation itself. The congregation must be committed to the Lordship of Christ under the full authority of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-17, Acts 6:2-5, I Corinthians 5:4-5, II Corinthians 2:6, II Timothy 3:16-17).

## 10. Deacon Service

According to the teachings of Jesus, the life of every Christian is to be marked by service (Mark 9:35). However, the New Testament also speaks of the specific office of deacon. The word deacon in the New Testament denotes a helper or servant who serves. Before a man may be appointed as a deacon, he must be tested for the qualifications found in I Timothy 3:8-13. The tasks of a deacon are primarily that

of meeting the physical and material needs of individual believers and the congregation as a whole. If the deacon serves faithfully, he obtains for himself a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus (I Timothy 3:13).

#### 11. The Local Congregation

We believe that meaningful and enduring fellowship in a local congregation is absolutely essential to the Christian's life and ministry. Belonging to a local church is not optional for the Christian according to God's Word (Acts 2:38-46; Ephesians 4:11-16). Media ministries can never take the place of the local church and its ministers. We are committed not only to congregate, but to do so for the purpose of encouraging one another and stimulating one another to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25).

#### 12. Every Member Ministry

Every Christian in the local congregation without exception has been given spiritual gifts, which they are commanded to employ for the edification of the entire congregation. The administration of such gifts by every member is necessary for the proper growth and ministry of the church (Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 4:4-7; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

#### 13. Discipleship

The purpose of Grace Baptist Church is to glorify God by obediently making and equipping disciples of Christ, in McNairy County and throughout the world, by the power of the Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). The primary means employed to disciple believers are expository preaching (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Timothy 4:2), Small Group interaction, accountability, and personal one-on-one discipleship.

#### 14. Compassionate Church Discipline

Although church discipline is a thoroughly biblical practice (Matthew 18:15-20) and a foundational doctrine in Baptist history, it is now almost non-existent in many of today's churches. This forgotten and often misunderstood Bible doctrine is still practiced at Grace Baptist Church. We believe that if we truly seek to honor God, and if we truly care for the well-being of His people, we will obey Christ's commands to practice church discipline. When practiced biblically and compassionately (Please download a copy of our church's official policy and steps to biblical church discipline--Steps To Discipline (112)), it is a powerful tool to restore the fallen and to preserve Christ's honor in the church and in the unbelieving world (1 Corinthians 5; Titus 3:8-11).

#### 15. Parent-Driven Children's Ministry

Parents are primarily responsible for the discipleship and discipline of their Children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). The church should not usurp the authority of godly parents, nor assume the responsibilities of parents who are lax in their duties. The church should give itself to teaching the biblical principles of parenthood and to holding parents accountable to carry them out in the context of families. While we have an active program for children, it should be viewed as an extension of the parents' roles, and it is never to replace them (Ephesians 6:1-4).

#### 16. Parent-Driven Youth Ministry

The youth ministry is not designed around the presumed unique needs or desires of young people, but it is centered on God's will for young people as revealed in His Word. Our youth ministry is parent-driven. Our goal is to strengthen parents in their God-called responsibility to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). The so-called "generation gap" and the

“adolescent years” are a result of sin and should not be encouraged by the church or youth ministries. Our youth ministry is not centered on music, drama, comedy, or other entertainments but on the faithful preaching of God’s Word in a Small Group and for the application of Scripture. The small group atmosphere of our youth ministry is effective in meeting personal needs, one-on-one discipleship and accountability. While other activities may be allowed, they must never take the place of or de-emphasize the preaching of the Word or the leadership of fathers in discipling their children.

#### 17. Biblical Courtship

We believe that many of the modern practices of dating have led to untold misery among the people of God. We believe in biblical courtship because it promotes first the parent’s God-given authority over their children until marriage (Genesis 2:24). Most of contemporary dating leads to three unbiblical outcomes: 1) Children undermining their parent’s authority 2) impure thoughts and lifestyles, 3) and finally results in unhealthy marriages. The Bible contains countless Scriptures on the God-ordained responsibility parents have toward their children and the way which people of the opposite sex must behave toward one another outside of marriage (1 Thessalonians 4:2-6; 1 Corinthians 7:9). God’s Word promotes seeking Christ first above all else (Matthew 6:33), honoring parents (Ephesians 6:1-3), waiting on God’s perfect timing (Ecclesiastes 3:11), seeking purity (2 Timothy 2:22), fleeing sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18), and loving our brothers and sisters in Christ sacrificially (John 15:13, 1 Corinthians 13:4-6). Ultimately we teach biblical courtship because we believe that it will better prepare our young people and singles for godly marriages (1 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 5:22-31).  
Download Biblical Courtship Model (108)