

gracechurch

New Life, New Community, New Purpose
Building new lives and new communities in the Gospel

The lessons which follow are designed for your use while listening to the CD's entitled "Discovering Grace." We suggest you note observations, questions, and suggestions in the margins as you listen. There are many quotations included. These are food for thought.

We ask that you listen to and read the materials in these groupings as we will meet after each section to discuss:

Lessons 1-2

Lessons 3-5

Lessons 6-8

gracechurch

10966 Via Frontera San Diego, CA 92127

858.676.1670 ph. 858.676,1671 f.

www.gracechurchsd.org

info@gracechurchsd.org

LESSON ONE

GRACE CHURCH: OUR STORY

Do you not know... what God's estimate of the gospel is? Do you not know that it has been the chief subject of His thoughts and acts from all eternity? He looks on it as the grandest of all His works.

-Charles Spurgeon

Jesus Christ is the gospel. The good news is revealed in his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the gospel, his resurrection is the power of the gospel, and his ascension is the glory of the gospel. . . . There is no other name by which men must be saved. At the heart of all sound doctrine is the cross of Jesus Christ and the infinite privilege that redeemed sinners have of glorifying God because of what he has accomplished. Therefore, we want all that takes place in our hearts, churches and ministries to proceed from and be related to the cross

“The Gospel” from The Statement of Faith of Sovereign Grace Ministries

Everyone longs to be part of a story that “matters” – no one wants an empty life. The good news is that there is a story that begins before the cosmos began and will go on when Jesus makes all things new. It is a story that includes followers of Jesus and local churches. God tells us that angels are watching us as the story unfolds. Grace Church is part of that story. We want you to know our story and how we fit into God’s Eternal Story of forming His very own people.

A. Introduction: Grace Church, Our Story

- Grace Church is part of a family of churches known as Sovereign Grace Ministries. www.sovereigngraceministries.org We work together as a family.
- For FAQ’s about Sovereign Grace Ministries, see <http://www.sovereigngraceministries.org/about/faq.html>
- We are committed to the mission and message of the Gospel in all we do.
 - We believe that the local church is where Jesus is at work in our day, and that planting local churches is the mission of the Gospel.
 - We are a granddaughter church and we hope to have babies of our own.

Values and structure of Grace Church

- (1) Grace church is committed to _____. We believe that the Gospel is central to all we do.
- (2) Grace church believes that _____ are places of deep life change through mutual ministry and the work of the Spirit through all the members. Churches are called to multiply themselves.
- (3) Grace church believes that the primary means of ministry for the Spirit _____.

(4) Grace church believes in _____ by the pastors.

(5) We describe this commitment to the Gospel as:

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But where are we theologically?

- If you wish to use labels we would describe ourselves as

Gospel centered, Essentially Reformed, with a significant charismatic dimension.

This means:

- (1) The True God
- (2) Humanity
- (3) God's choice and action to save his people
- (4) Jesus' death and resurrection
- (5) The work of the Spirit
- (6) Our certainty and expectation.
- (7) God is at work

That is our simple story, but we are part of something much greater – eternal in endurance and global in scope.

B. Grace Church: The Real Story

- All agree, life in itself has _____
- All agree, the world is _____
- All agree, we need a reason for hope – a story that gives meaning.

Human beings need to organize the sensations amid which we pass our days – pain, desire, pleasure, fear – into a story. When that story leads somewhere and helps us navigate through life to its inevitable death, it gives us hope. We must imagine some end to life that transcends our own tiny allotment of days if we are to escape the lurking suspicion that all our getting and spending amounts to nothing more than fidgeting while we wait for death."

-Andrew Delbanco, secular historian and sociologist, NYU.

- The Gospel story is the true story, competes with all other stories

C. The Story of the Bible: Our Beginning, our Fall, God's Promise

The Story begins with the true God – the cosmos has a personal beginning. We are not “blobs” of evolved matter.

- One true God (Gen 1:1)
- Humanity is unique (Gen 1:26)
- The first man (Gen 3; Rom 5:12-19)
- The Creator made a promise (Gen 3:15)
- He expanded on the promise (Gen 12:1-3; 2 Samuel 7; Psalm 72)
- *New people, New creation.* This is the vision of the prophets:

D. The Story of the Bible: The Promise fulfilled

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
-Matthew 1:1

(1) Jesus Christ is the Good News. The whole New Testament is a large, clear, flashing arrow – pointing at Jesus – saying “This is the One.”

... who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Titus 2:14

⁹ *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

1 Peter 2:9

- Jesus, in his death and resurrection, turns back the just judgment of God against our sin. (Rom 3:24-26)
- Jesus, in his death and resurrection, purchases the new people of God, made up of people from every nation. (Eph 2:14-17; Tit 2:11-14)
- Jesus, in his death and resurrection, is the final message from God, the final and complete sacrifice. (Heb 1:1-3)
- When Jesus died, he put to death the old world; when he rose, he began the new creation. We are in the last chapter of history and the first chapter of the new story. (Rom 13:11-14)

(2) After completing his work, he is exalted over all and pours out his Spirit to accomplish all that he died for, thus forming the Church.

*Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. **John 16:7***

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

Acts 2:16-18

⁴ *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior . . .*

Titus 3:4-6

- i. The Spirit of God persuades of sin. (John 16:8)
- ii. The Spirit of God re-creates us and calls us. (John 3)
- iii. The Spirit of God resides in us. (1 Cor 6:18-20)
- iv. The Spirit of God places us in the church. (1 Cor 12:12-13)
- v. The Spirit of God resides in local churches. (1 Cor 3:16-17)
- vi. The Spirit of God builds up the church through the gifts and service of its members. (Eph 4:14-16; 1 Cor 12:7)

(3) Jesus Christ returns, bringing the consummation of his work, the judgment of the old, and the fullness of the new creation. (Col 3:1-4)

He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth. . . . He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church.

Eph 1:9-10, 21-22 The Message

The meaning of the Gospel:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures that he was buried that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures

I Corinthians 15:1-4

SUMMARY

The Story: *A world ravaged by sin, made new in Christ*
The Purpose of the Story: *A people for His Glory* (not about us)
Scandals of the Story: *The cross and the local church* (not impressive)

The church, according to the Scripture, is not a religious club, a voluntary association of like-minded Christians who cultivate friendship and engage in joint projects. It is rather the institution of Christ and of the Spirit, formed by his power and governed by his Word.

— Edmund P. Clowney (Professor, Westminster Seminary)

A man can no more possess a private religion than he can possess a private sun and moon.

-G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

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