

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS

We, the members of Grace Fellowship Church, recognize the responsibility of every believer to study and interpret God's Word as a personal discipline. However, we also recognize that well-intentioned people sometimes disagree concerning matters of biblical interpretation and theology. In light of these realities, we concur with the well-known mantra of the church, "In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity."

For the purposes of promoting unity in the church body and protecting the church from doctrinal error, we, the members of Grace Fellowship Church, have chosen to adopt two doctrinal statements. The "Statement of Essential Beliefs" reflects the essential doctrinal truths that unify this body and serves as a test for membership. The "Statement of Biblical Doctrine" more thoroughly declares our doctrinal convictions. We will preach, teach, and counsel on the basis of these doctrinal convictions.

### A. The Statement of Essential Beliefs

1. The Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are true, authoritative, and sufficient (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
2. There is only one true God, Creator of heaven and earth, who eternally exists in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6; Isaiah 46:9-10; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Genesis 1:26; Psalm 45:6-7; Psalm 110:1; Matthew 3:13-17; Matthew 28:17-20; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6).
3. All things exist by the will of God and for the glory of God (Psalm 148; Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 61:3; Romans 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Ephesians 1:3-14).
4. All humanity, Christ excluded, is sinful by both birth and action and thus falls short of the glory of God, and the just penalty for that sin is physical and spiritual death (Genesis 2:15-17, 3:19, 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 5:8-12-21, 6:23, 7:18; Ephesians 2:1-3).
5. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin, and is both truly God and truly human (Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:52; John 1:1-4, 14; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3).
6. Jesus Christ died as the sacrificial substitute to pay the penalty for sin (John 1:29; 10:1-18; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4, 3:13; 1 Peter 3:18).

7. Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will one day physically return (Matthew 28:1–20; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–53; 1 Corinthians 15:12–34; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7).
8. Only through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ and repentance from sin, and not by any work or effort of man, can one be reconciled to God and experience His life, love, glory, and joy (John 3:18, 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:21–26; 1 Timothy 2:5–6).
9. Christians are expected to continually put sin to death and to walk in the Spirit, attempting to obey all that Christ has commanded us (Matthew 28:18–20; Romans 5:1–14; Galatians 5:15–26; 1 John 1:5–10).
10. Jesus Christ will return to usher in the fullness of God’s kingdom on earth. There will be a future physical resurrection of the dead. Only those who turn from sin and to Jesus in faith and repentance will be raised to eternal reward. Those who do not turn from sin and to Jesus will be raised to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:31–46; John 5:28–29; Acts 24:15).

## B. Statement of Doctrinal Beliefs

### 1. The Scriptures

*We believe that God has revealed Himself with authority and without error in the Bible.*

The Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, is the written Word of God. Though penned by men, the Scriptures are both verbally and fully inspired by God and are, thus, free of error in their original manuscripts. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide of all Christian life, practice, and doctrine; the true center of Christian union; and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. They are totally sufficient and must not be added to, superseded, or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation or worldly wisdom.

The Bible was written with clarity in order that ordinary believers might understand and submit to it. Each book of the Bible is to be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord who speaks through it in living power. The Bible is divinely intended to lead us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives.

*Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1–2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7–10; 119:11, 89, 105, 140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1–32; Matthew 5:17–18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44–46; John 5:39; 16:13–15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25–26; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; Hebrews 1:1–2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19–21.*

## 2. The Triune God

*We believe in one triune God who is the source of every good and perfect thing.*

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being. He is eternal, almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, and perfect in holiness, truth, and love. He is eternally holy, separate from His creation. He is the creator, redeemer, preserver, and ruler of the universe. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

In the unity of the Godhead, there are three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; co-existent, co-equal, and co-eternal. The Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father. Yet each is truly deity. One God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the foundation of Christian faith and life.

## 3. God the Father

God the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth. By His word and for His glory, He freely and supernaturally created the world out of nothing. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He is faithful to every promise and works all things together for good to those who love Him. He rules over all and, together with the Son and the Spirit, is the only Sovereign.

His fatherhood refers both to His relationship within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men, but He is a spiritual Father only to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Father is the architect of salvation, choosing His people before the foundation of the world. In His unfathomable grace, He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, for mankind's redemption, to the praise of His glory.

*Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2–3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1–3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9–11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6–13; 17:1–8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14–15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:1–11; 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.*

## 4. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God, begotten not made. He is the visible image of God. He is the agent through whom God created the world, so that everything was created by Him and for Him and is continually held together by His power. The Son is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. In Him all of the promises, types, and shadows of the Old Testament are fulfilled.

In His incarnation, the eternally existing second person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity. While never ceasing to be what he was (God), He became what he was not (human), and so became truly God and truly man. The

incarnation of the Son occurred as Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. The purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom.

Jesus Christ is the only Savior for the sins of the world. Salvation was achieved through His sinless life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection. Through living a perfect life and dying in our place, the just for the unjust, Christ absorbed our punishment, appeased the wrath of God against us, vindicated the righteousness of God in our justification, and removed the condemnation of the law against us. Faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ is the only way that man's sin can be forgiven and atoned for, and is the only path to reconciliation between God and man.

Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God. He continues to rule as the head of the church and the one mediator between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission.

*Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 4:12; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.*

## 5. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has always been at work in the world, sharing in the work of creation, awakening faith in the remnant of God's people, performing signs and wonders, giving triumphs in battle, empowering the preaching of prophets, and inspiring the writing of Scripture. Yet, when Christ had made atonement for sin, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, He inaugurated a new era of the Spirit. The newness of this era is marked by the unprecedented mission of the Spirit to glorify the crucified and risen Christ.

The work of the Spirit is necessary for conversion and growth in the Christian life. It is by the Spirit that the world is convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Spirit empowers Christians to preach of the gospel and enables hearers to see Christ and believe. The Spirit enlightens Christians to meet Christ in the Scriptures and empowers them to mortify sin in their bodies. The Spirit baptizes believers into Christ's church, and through His gifts He enables the believer to serve and build up the church. The Spirit seals the believer into the body of Christ and acts as the believer's guarantee of the promised inheritance that is to come.

Christians are called to walk by the Holy Spirit, keep in step with the Spirit, and to be filled by the Spirit. These metaphors indicate our responsibility to submit to the Spirit and to cooperate with his work to transform us by the renewing of our minds. Evidence of a proper relationship with the Holy Spirit is marked by fruits of character and godliness including; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

*Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:14, 38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17, 39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11, 14-16, 26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6, 5:16-26; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.*

## 6. Man

*We believe that all men are created in the image of God, but that sin has left us broken and in need of redemption.*

God made humanity—male and female—in His own image. Set apart as His image bearers, every human being is sacred and valuable. All men and all women, bearing the image of God, are meant to represent God in His creation by caring for, managing, and governing over it. Mankind, as originally created, was morally upright and capable of freely choosing to obey God and enjoying fellowship with Him.

Through the temptation of Satan, Adam and Eve transgressed the command of God and fell from their original holiness and righteousness. Adam's fall became the fall of all his posterity, in such a way that corruption, guilt, death, and condemnation belong properly to every person. All persons are by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan and unable to know or delight in God. Further, as a just response to human sin, God has subjected all of creation to futility so that the entire human family is made liable to untold miseries of sickness, decay, calamity, and loss. This present suffering gives testimony to the exceedingly great evil of mankind and forecasts, looks forward to the complete and final judgment which is to come, and calls all mankind toward repentance.

*Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3:1-24; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 2:4; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18, 29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.*

## 7. Salvation

*We believe that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.*

Salvation refers to man's escape from both the power and penalty of our sins and is secured only through the work of God, without the contribution of any human effort or righteousness. We believe that, because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless born again; that salvation is only by grace through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ; and that all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ through faith are declared righteous by God and become children of God.

Salvation, in its broadest sense, encompasses the five saving acts of God: election, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

- A. Election is the sovereign choice of God to regenerate, justify, sanctify, and glorify a people unto Himself. Before the foundation of the world, God elected His people and set His affection and grace upon them, predestining His people for adoption. The work of election is a free and sovereign choice of God, not a response to any work or effort of man, so that no one may boast. God's election is consistent with the free agency and responsibility of man.
- B. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace by which the Holy Spirit imparts a new nature and a new spiritual life making the person a new creation in Christ. The mind is given a holy disposition and a new desire to serve God, the dominion of sin is broken, and the heart is transformed from a love of sin and self to a love of holiness and God. Regeneration is wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of God's gracious work of regeneration.
- C. Justification is God's gracious declaration of righteousness for all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us. Through this great exchange God is enabled to be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- D. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.
- E. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed. It is the privilege of all believers to rest and rejoice in the assurance of this future salvation based on the certain promises of God's Word and the insurmountable sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice.

*Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20;*

15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17–20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22–25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8–22; 4:11–16; Philippians 2:12–13; Colossians 1:9–22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11–14; Hebrews 2:1–3; 5:8–9; 9:24–28; 11:1–12:8,14; James 2:14–26; 1 Peter 1:2–23; 1 John 1:6–2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1–22:5.

## 8. The Church

*We believe that the church is the body of Christ gathered to do His will and praise His name.*

Jesus has created one universal Church, composed of all those, in every time and place, who are chosen in Christ and united to Him through faith by the Spirit in one Body, with Christ Himself as the all-supplying, all-sustaining, all-supreme, and all-authoritative Head. We believe that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God in the everlasting and ever-increasing gladness of worship.

It is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches in which believers agree together to hear the Word of God proclaimed, to engage in corporate worship, to practice the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, to build each other's faith through the manifold ministries of love, to hold each other accountable in the obedience of faith through biblical discipline, and to engage in local and world evangelization. Christ is the head of the church, but has vested leadership of local church bodies to elders and deacons.

The church is a body made up of Christians, regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit. The church is a body in which each member should find a suitable ministry for the Spirit's gifts; it is the household of God in which the Spirit dwells; it is the pillar and bulwark of God's truth in a truth-denying world; and it is a city set on a hill so that men may see the light of its good deeds and give glory to the Father in heaven.

*Matthew 16:15–19; 18:15–20; Acts 2:41–42,47; 5:11–14; 6:3–6; 13:1–3; 14:23,27; 15:1–30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4–5; 7:17; 9:13–14; 12; Ephesians 1:22–23; 2:19–22; 3:8–11,21; 5:22–32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9–14; 3:1–15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39–40; 1 Peter 5:1–4; Revelation 2–3; 21:2–3.*

## 9. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

*We believe that all Christians are called to remember the gospel through the physical actions of baptism and partaking in the Lord's Supper.*

Christian baptism is the symbolic washing of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience that visually and symbolically demonstrates the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior; the believer's death to sin and burial of the old life; spiritual washing by the blood of Christ; filling with the Holy Spirit; and resurrection to walk in the newness of life in Christ Jesus.

The Lord's Supper, or Communion, is an act whereby believers symbolize the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood on our behalf, and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. Christians are to come to the table with an attitude of faith and self-examination, in order to remember and proclaim the death of Christ, to receive spiritual nourishment for our souls, and to signify our unity with other members of Christ's body.

*Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.*

## 10. Last Things

*We believe that Jesus Christ is returning to the world in the future to judge the living and the dead.*

When Christians die, they are made perfect in holiness and are taken consciously into the presence of Christ, which is more glorious and more satisfying than any experience on earth.

The consummation of all things includes the future, physical, visible, personal, and glorious return of Jesus Christ; the resurrection of the dead and the glorification of those alive in Christ; the judgment of the just and the unjust; and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the consummation, Satan, with his hosts and all those outside Christ, is finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment. The righteous, in glorious bodies, will live and reign with Him forever, serving Him and giving Him unending praise and glory. Then the eager expectation of creation will be fulfilled, and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God, who makes all things new.

*Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff. 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.*

## 8. Stewardship and Giving

*We believe that Christians are to steward God's gracious gifts through generous giving.*

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute to the local church cheerfully, regularly,



proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

*Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30–32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8–12; Matthew 6:1–4, 19–21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14–29; Luke 12:16–21, 42; 16:1–13; Acts 2:44–47; 5:1–11; 17:24–25; 20:35; Romans 6:6–22; 12:1–2; 1 Corinthians 4:1–2; 6:19–20; 12; 16:1–4; 2 Corinthians 8–9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10–19; 1 Peter 1:18–19.*

## 9. Marriage and Family

*We believe that marriage is designed by God to reflect His relationship with the Church.*

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image, yet they are designed to perform unique roles within the union of marriage. The unique roles of husband and wife are designed to model the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Children are to honor and obey their parents.

*Genesis 1:26–28; 2:15–25; 3:1–20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26–28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1–8; 127; 128; 139:13–16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15–20; 6:20–22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6, 15; 23:13–14; 24:3; 29:15, 17; 31:10–31; Ecclesiastes 4:9–12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14–16; Matthew 5:31–32; 18:2–5; 19:3–9; Mark 10:6–12; Romans 1:18–32; 1 Corinthians 7:1–16; Ephesians 5:21–33; 6:1–4; Colossians 3:18–21; 1 Timothy 5:8, 14; 2 Timothy 1:3–5; Titus 2:3–5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1–7.*