

God's people throughout history have always benefitted from periods of evaluation in a desire for revival and for greater effectiveness in advancing the Kingdom of Christ. After 43 years of God's blessed attention to Grace Bible Church, we embarked on a fresh period of Repentance and Renewal. During 43 years a church will accumulate 'lumps under its rug'. Those lumps will continually cause a church to 'trip up' and hinder a church from accomplishing its best for the Lord.

During September and October 2020, under a theme of Repentance & Renewal, we learned and practiced forgiveness, grace, and reconciliation. Over several months, Interim Pastor Dave Groleau met with dozens among the GBC family to listen and learn. On September 27th, 107 adults participated in a 'Journey Wall' to better understand the historical DNA that has shaped our culture. October 11th, 48 met to share what they felt were pattern problems that should be addressed.

The compilation below is by our Interim Senior Pastor as his insights for this congregation at this time.

I. Roots: We have often overlooked the historical backdrop of Grace Bible Church which creates a DNA strand that affects our church today.

1. We have not reflected enough upon the healthy blessings of the past (e.g. Bible teaching, Sacrificial serving and giving, Missions and Evangelism, a binding Vision that created unity).

We here and now renounce this shortcoming.

We will, by the grace of God, determine to remember God's blessings, and recall the selfless works of those who have gone before us. We have done nothing to inherit those blessings, and in remembering, we choose to follow in their faithfulness.

2. We have largely ignored the consequences of problems, both organizational and relational. We have preferred to move forward fairly quickly, rather than take careful measure of the toll those problems will have at a later point upon the whole of the church body.

We here and now renounce this shortcoming.

We will, by the grace of God, determine to periodically evaluate and discern if unhealthy issues from past days are infecting or hampering ministry life in these days. We will make appropriate corrections when necessary and not sweep them under the rug.

II. Organization: We have often overlooked the ways in which growth and change directly affect communal church life and our personal well-being. Growing from a house-church to nearing 400 is certainly cause for thanksgiving. Our managerial structures have not adequately changed to keep pace with numerical change.

1. This failure has had a negative influence on systems of church governance, resulting in lack of clarity on the authority and role of a Senior Pastor, Staff, and Elders; as well as upon the parameters for Ministry groups to function freely.

We here and now renounce this shortcoming.

We will, by the grace of God, regularly evaluate and adjust our organizational and structural systems so as to keep in alignment with the size and scope of the numbers of people that God allows for us to serve.

2. This failure has had a negative impact on our methods of Communication. Information flow is radically different in a church of 120 than a church over 300. Technology is in constant change. Objective communication patterns have contributed to subjective personal hurts.

We here and now renounce this shortcoming.

We will, by the grace of God, continue to monitor and improve our Communication systems, taking into considering both the technological side and the relationship side.

- III. Trust: We have often overlooked the reality that trust is both conferred (granted in obedience to Scripture) and earned (evidence of competence and of genuine heart).

In addition, violations of trust from some leaders in our past have exponentially complicated our ability to practice mutual trust.

1. This failure of mutual trust has resulted in underlying attitudes of skepticism, suspicion, judgementalism, withholding of genuine relational partnership with each other. Rather than celebrate giftedness and calling, there is a cautious 'measuring' that hangs in the air.

We here and now renounce this shortcoming.

We will, by the grace of God, repent of these attitudes by choosing forgiveness, attempting reconciliation, and working toward fresh pathways to relational health.

2. This failure has caused us at times to forget that trust is a two way street. That is, a congregation is asked to obediently follow its Elders, and the Elders are asked to delegate actionable ministry to its members.

We here and now renounce this shortcoming.

We will, by the grace of God, prayerfully risk authoritative decision making to those whom God has called and gifted for particular roles within the body. The membership will pray for, respect, and support its leaders. The leaders will pray for ministry servants, encouraging and equipping them to flourish according to God's design.

- IV. Vision: Vision is an agreed upon picture of where we believe God is taking us as we seek to fulfill our Mission. (Mission is purpose; what we are about. It rarely changes. Vision must remain current and fluid).

An agreed upon Vision that is strongly anchored in Mission will become one of the most unifying and motivating factors for a church. Tracing our history, we accomplished some amazing goals

because we shared that Vision. At other times we either lived off old vision, had no vision, or attempted to live out someone else's vision. Those were not relationally successful times.

We here and now renounce this shortcoming.

We will, by the grace of God, prayerfully continually seek to determine where God wants us to go and to become in days ahead.

We will expect our Senior Pastor and Elders to lead this endeavor, listening both to God and to the body of believers, bringing us all along on this agreed upon journey together.

- V. Attitude: Just as our behaviors will always eventually give evidence of our true beliefs, so our demeanor in relationships will always eventually give evidence of our true heart.

Our biblical convictions proclaim a servant spirit, treating others as we would want to be treated, an overflow of grace, kindness and understanding. Our attitudes have proven that we have sometimes lived out the exact opposite of those qualities.

Our hard-hearted attitudes are revealed by weak or non-existent conflict resolution. We have become peace 'at any cost' keepers, rather than biblical peace makers.

We here and now renounce any hard-hearted attitudes.

We will, by the grace of God, learn to anticipate the best in others, cease judging motives, make every effort to restore and maintain unity, and consciously look to our own heart attitudes. We will consider differences among us that are matters of opinions and styles to be a strength. We will ask God to give us hearts that care enough to confess, and care enough to confront. We will try to see other and love each other as the Lord Himself does.

- VI. Spiritual Warfare: While Scripture is blatantly clear on the teaching of demonic hosts poised against us, we have largely marginalized the reality of unseen forces that are seeking our ruin.

We here and now, renounce our fear of, and apathy toward, engaging in spiritual warfare.

We will, by the grace of God, stand confidently on the authority of God's holy word, trust fearlessly on the position we've been given as Holy Spirit filled children of God, and rebuke satanic forces that are doomed by God to eternal lakes of fire.

We now, in the Name of Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God, whose blood has covered our sin, whose Spirit now indwells us, in the Name of the One majestically seated at the right hand of the Father, In Jesus' Name we rebuke you satan, and all demonic spirits that are targeted against us. You have no right or rule over us. Leave us. We belong to Jesus. We will follow the Lord Jesus Christ. We will become all that He wants us to be. We will do all that he wants us to do. We will glorify Jesus now, by our lives. And until He calls us home we will serve for the benefit of those who will follow after us. By His grace we have inherited an eternal Kingdom. To God be the glory. Amen.

