

## Why We're Here and Where We're Going

What is our purpose in life as individuals and as a church? Stated as simply as possible: we help people FIND and FOLLOW Jesus. Discover how to do that in your own life, and hear about how God is calling Grace Bible Church to do that in our community and our world.

### We live in a time of **CONSTANT CRISIS**

- ALWAYS "Breaking News"

### The danger: all of these crises can so easily distract us from what matters most

- It's not that these current events don't matter or that we should ignore them... we shouldn't
- But we must not forget: there is only one hope for this world
  - o it's not politics, technology, medicine, education, economics, or social change...
- **The only hope for this world is the church of Jesus Christ**
- That's what I want to talk about this morning – remember why we're here

### What is our purpose in life as individuals and as a church?

- **We have a history at GBC of trying to answer in a catchy way people will remember**
- **Started 12 years ago with the 6 C's**
  - o communion, community, commission, content, character, and competence
  - o Too complex! I can't remember that list and I work here!!
- **Boiled it down to 5: help people develop character, vision, skills, relationships, knowledge**
  - o arranged them around a compass with character at the center... still too complex!
- **Reduced to 4: help people connect, grow, serve, and multiply**
  - o Much better... but I still had to look it up this week when working on this sermon!

**Time to reduce it all the way to just one phrase we can all remember... one phrase to rule them all...**

### Our purpose in life? We help people FIND and FOLLOW Jesus

- That's it – that's the goal of life for us as individuals and for our church
- Many other things we do as followers of Jesus: worship, prayer, Bible study, service...
- But we can do all of those things better in heaven
- Only reason God left us here: To help people find and follow Jesus

### Let me explain this statement

- **We're not trying to find Jesus because Jesus is lost – we're the ones who are lost**
  - o Read Eph 2:1-3 – this is true of all humans from birth with exception of Jesus
  - o Result: Rom 3:23
  - o Obama quoted Nelson Mandela on Twitter this week – most "likes" of any tweet ever  
*"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love. For love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."* —Nelson Mandela
  - o How desperately I wish that was true... but hasn't been since the Garden
  - o So what happened in Charlottesville should grieve us but not surprise us
    - That's what humans do by nature
    - Don't have to be taught how to be selfish, prideful, unloving, deceitful, greedy
  - o It's LOVE – genuine selfless love that's unnatural to the human heart
  - o That's why racism can't be fixed by education alone
    - we don't have an information problem, we have a heart problem – we love sin

- We are lost in sin and need to be saved from our hatred, selfishness, pride
- **The good news: Jesus will save all who come to Him**
  - Read Luke 19:10 – that’s us
  - How? Read 1 Peter 3:18
    - He died in our place so we could be forgiven and restored to God
    - “By His wounds we are healed”
    - Then He rose from the dead conquering sin, death, Satan
  - **What must we now do to have this salvation? Just BELIEVE! Read John 3:16**
    - “Whoever believes”
    - Moral people & immoral; Republicans & democrats; rich & poor; gay & straight
    - He is Savior for all who will say, “Yes, I believe...”
  - Jesus wants to be found by all people so He can save all people
  - Read 1 Tim 2:3-4 – God wants all people to come to know Jesus...
- And He wants to use us to help people find and follow Jesus

### How can YOU help people find and follow Jesus?

#### 1) PRAY

- Read 2 Cor 4:3-4 - Only God can open their eyes to see truth of the gospel
- So make 3 lists and pray for those far from Jesus...
  - “Where you LIVE” – family members and neighbors
  - “Where you WORK/STUDY” – coworkers, classmates, professors
  - “Where you PLAY” – people you share a hobby or sport with
- Rotate through these lists – praying for each person at least once a week.
  - that God would make them curious about Jesus & soften their hearts
- You may be the only person on earth praying for that person by name!

#### 2) TALK about Jesus

- The gospel is a message... not a feeling or experience
  - must be heard and believed if it’s going to be effective in a person’s life
- So we must share that message – tell the story
- Church-wide goal: **initiate spiritual conversations with at least 2 people far from Jesus**
  - Hope is to present the gospel but you may not get there
  - “spiritual conversations” – goal = begin talking about spiritually significant things
- Examples:
  - **I and a friend met a guy in an airport a few months ago...**
    - My friend asked, “What’s your tattoo mean?”
    - Guy was happy to answer because usually when people put big tattoo on their arm... they want you to notice!
    - About his son... opened conversation about our hopes for our kids – led to gospel
  - **This week I got in a Facebook conversation about Charlottesville**
    - Could have been contentious debate; instead opportunity to share Jesus
    - When in political/social debate: just be honest about belief that Jesus is only real solution
- **Best piece of advice I’ve heard for initiating spiritual conversations: BE FASCINATED!**
  - Be genuinely interested in other person’s family, story, hopes, concerns
  - Ask lots of questions and really listen
  - You’ll be surprised to see them open doors to talk about spiritual things

#### 3) LOVE like Jesus

- Your words have power when they’re backed up by actions
- Read Matt 5:16 – our good deeds can draw people to God
- That’s especially important in the post-Christian society we are entering

- Most non-Christians in our town have already heard about Jesus and attended a church
- Feel like they understand Christianity and just don't want anything to do with it
- Words alone are unlikely to change their minds
- What can change their mind: seeing the radical love of Jesus in action!
  - They need to be shocked by the radical selflessness of God's people
  - Show them selflessness and sacrifice that defies explanation
  - They'll have no choice but to reconsider what we say about Jesus

#### 4) TRAIN others to follow Jesus

- Read Matt 28:19-20
- In the Christian life finding Jesus is just the beginning!
  - God wants us to learn to follow Jesus in every area of life
- We call that **DISCIPLESHIP** – becoming a follower of Jesus
  - Not just for the 12 guys who literally followed Him – for all believers
- That takes training – more mature followers training less mature followers
- **That's why our church is so committed to welcoming college students**
  - Gives us an opportunity to train up the next generation of Christ followers
  - Adults: I know you're about to be annoyed by the flood of students... I am too
  - Can't find parking at Target... twice as long to get home... no Torchy's till next summer!
  - Know what? It's worth it!
  - Because these college students are the tip of the spear
  - They are the future leaders who will reach this world for Christ
  - We get the privilege of investing in their lives while the cement's still wet!
  - I don't many people who live in College Station for the scenery or the weather!
  - We're here because of University and the chance to impact 1000's of students for Jesus
- **So... who are you going to TRAIN this year?**
  - If you're a parent it should include your children
  - But can your circle expand a bit to welcome a college student into your home
    - Train them to follow Jesus in the next stage of their life
  - College students... can your circle expand to include an incoming freshman?
    - Train them how to follow Jesus in college

#### How can we as a church help people find and follow Jesus?

- We mean all of Grace Bible Church not just the Southwood campus
- **Interesting fact: Our church began in 1965 as a result of a church split!**
  - Issue: Was it acceptable to use real wine in communion or use juice?
  - We use juice... so we must have been on the juice side, right?
  - Wrong! We use juice because it's more practical, not because we believe we have to
  - We were on the side that argued for GRACE and against legalism
  - We don't believe God's approval of us is based on whether we abstain from alcohol
- **That's why we're called "GRACE Bible Church" – we are all about GRACE**
  - That's what unites all of our church campuses
- **Our church grew through that message of Grace... and it continues to grow.**
  - 1995 we moved into the current Anderson church campus... and it filled up
  - 2008 we expanded to this Southwood church campus... and it filled up
  - 2 years ago we launched the Creekside church campus
- **Because we believe that God is calling our church to PLANT CHURCHES**
  - That's what it looks like for GBC to help people find and follow Jesus
  - We need to plant more churches in this town, country, around the world

- **First step: We need to build a home for Creekside**
  - o Have bought land near William D Fitch and Rock Prairie intersection
  - o In the beginning of the design phase – working with an architect
  - o **Before we can build we need to pay off the rest of the SW debt**
    - \$3.5M 9 years ago... now \$1M
    - Let's pay it off this fall if we can so that Grace can move forward
- **Second step: Prepare for campuses 4 & 5**
  - o Don't know when, where, or who
  - o Just know town is growing rapidly and we need to keep planting
- **Third step: Prepare to plant nationally and internationally**
  - o Sent so many missionaries over years – now we want to do more: plant churches
- **Throughout all these steps: Partner with other churches and ministries to plant churches**
  - o You'll see GBC doing more with churches and pastors in our community and country to plant more churches
- **What can you do to participate in this church-wide mission?**
  - o Pray – any push forward of the Kingdom will encounter satanic attack
  - o Give – all of this will require sacrificial giving
  - o Consider going – to Creekside, to a new campus, or to a new city or nation

**We've covered a LOT of ground this morning – so summarize**

**One goal for your time on this earth: Help people find and follow Jesus**

- To that end: initiate spiritual conversations with at least two people who are far from Jesus

**Best way to prepare for those conversations and hold yourself accountable: join a SMALL GROUP**

- We all need a small group of believers who really know us, encourage us, hold us accountable
  - o where we learn to follow Jesus and help others follow Jesus
- **So we want to help you GET CONNECTED to a small group**
  - o **Bible Study – Men's, women's, coed, college Bible studies**
    - Most will be studying Hebrews this semester
    - Excited – designed to prepare you to have these spiritual conversations
  - o **Home church**
    - Small groups that meet in people's homes – open to everyone college and up
    - Variety of times, days, parts of town – variety of things they'll study
  - o **Sunday Morning Groups**
    - Lifebuilders & Homebuilders
  - o **Marriage Ministries**
    - For those engaged, newly married, or wanting to deepen their marriage
- **Awaken**
  - o 9-week Perspectives class on missions
  - o Help you discover God's plan for the world and how you can be involved