

# **RIVER CITY GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH**

## **“A VISION OF GRACE”**

### **Introduction:**

Clarifying the vision of River City Grace Community Church is important for at least two reasons. First, a clear, biblical vision of ministry allows us to continually ask and answer the question of “why do we do what we do.” An understanding of our vision provides the framework by which we can evaluate any event, activity, curriculum, program or ministry venture. Secondly, a clear understanding of our vision in terms of the purpose, objectives and priorities that God calls us to is absolutely necessary if the members of the church are to be like-minded and unified in the pursuit of the same. As the body of Christ, we receive our identity and direction from Christ our Head. We must, therefore, be clear in understanding what His will is for His church. Only then, can we be whole-hearted and diligent in following hard after His will, both individually and corporately. As Paul exhorts believers in Phil. 1:27:

***“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel...” (NASB)***

The following Vision Statement represents our understanding of the heart of God for His church as revealed in His Word. Every attempt has been made to see the details of this statement flow out of the truth of God’s Word. Because we are committed to pursuing a biblical vision of ministry, any part of this Vision Statement is subject to change as our understanding of God’s Word increases. We strongly affirm Holy Scripture as our final authority in all matters of life and ministry, not this Vision Statement.

A word of definition is necessary. The theme of this Vision Statement, indeed the theme of God in Scripture, revolves around the expression of His grace and truth in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The essence of this grace and truth is understood as ***His undeserved mercy towards sinners*** (Rom. 5:15-21; Eph. 2:8-9) and ***His enabling power for believers*** (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Tit. 2:11-14). Understanding this two-fold dynamic of the grace of God in Christ is central in understanding “A Vision of Grace.”

Approved by the Elders of River City Grace Community Church  
January, 2001

## Our Purpose:

We exist with a passion... **“to see God exalted as His grace and truth in Jesus Christ abounds in and overflows to more and more people.”**

**“To see God exalted...”** (Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Chr. 29:10-13; Ps. 96; Rev. 4:8-11)

**“...as His grace and truth in Jesus Christ...”** (Jn. 1:14-17; Eph. 2:4-7; Col. 1:15-20)

**“...abounds in...”** (Rom. 5:20; 2 Cor. 9:8)

**“...and overflows to...”** (2 Cor. 9:8; Jn. 7:37-39; 2 Cor. 8:1-7)

**“...more and more people.”** (2 Cor. 4:15; Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Col. 1:3-6)

**Exemplified By:** Eph. 1:3-14; 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:12-17

## Our Broad Objectives:

Because of Our Purpose, we desire and labor...

**1. To see God so work in the lives of unbelievers that they would become OBSERVERS of His grace and truth in Jesus Christ.** (Mt. 5:13-16; Phil 2:14-16; Col. 4:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:14-16)

→ Our desire is to see the grace of God active in Touching and Arousing the Curiosity of unbelievers.

→ This could be accomplished through:

- Believers embracing a missionary mindset as “salt and light” in the world, living a distinctively godly lifestyle.
- Believers initiating relationships with unbelievers in their “sphere of influence”, having unbelievers into their homes, etc.,
- Individual and group evangelistic praying.
- Inviting unbelievers to activities and events with believers.
- Seizing “divine appointments” that God designs between believers and unbelievers.
- Etc., etc., etc.

→ Our desire would be to hear unbelievers asking such questions as: What is the meaning of life? What is truth? Why are these Christians so different? Where does their hope come from? Etc.

**2. To see God so work in the lives of unbelievers that they would become RECEIVERS of His grace and truth in Jesus Christ.** (John 1:12; 3:36; Eph. 2:1-9; 1 Thess. 1:2-9; 1 Tim. 2:3-4)

→ Our desire is to see the grace of God active in Convicting and Saving those who are perishing.

→ This could be accomplished through:

- Evangelistic Bible Studies (i.e. Discovering God).
- Individual and group evangelistic praying.
- Special outreach events sponsored by the church (Easter, Christmas, Vacation Bible School, nursing homes, schools, neighborhoods, etc.).
- Seizing “divine appointments” that God designs between believers and unbelievers.
- Local, national, and international outreach initiatives – ever increasing.
- Etc., etc., etc.

→ Our desire would be to hear unbelievers asking such questions as: Who is Jesus Christ? How can I be born again? What must I do to be saved? Etc.

**3. To see God so work in the lives of believers that they would become lifelong STUDENTS of His grace and truth in Jesus Christ. (Mt. 11:28-30; Rom. 12:1-2; Titus 2:11-14; 2 Pet. 3:17-18)**

→ Our desire is to see the grace of God active in Teaching and Transforming those who are saved.

→ This could be accomplished through:

- Initial follow-up of new believers with “Basic Beliefs”, “Foundations of the Faith”, etc.
- Intentional discipleship ministry to people at all ages and stages of life.
- Encouraging personal commitment to Bible reading, study, memory and application, (as a result of “longing for the pure milk of the word” – 1 Pet. 2:1-3).
- ABFs, Small Groups, Commitment To Grow (CtG) Groups, One-on-One mentoring, etc.
- Special seminars, conferences, retreats and classes.
- Bible Institute and Seminary level training.
- Ongoing cultivation of each believer’s: 1) heart for God, 2) love for others, 3) burden for the lost, and 4) vision for their lives.
- Etc., etc., etc.

→ Our desire would be to hear believers asking such questions as: What does it mean to grow as a Christian, and how do I do so? What does it mean to walk with God? What does it mean to belong to the Body of Christ, the Church? What habits need to be cultivated in my life to grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ? How do I develop a lifelong pattern of growing in Christ? What means has God given by which I might grow? Etc.

**4. To see God so work in the lives of believers that they would become increasingly fruitful MINISTERS of His grace and in Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 4:10-11; Rom. 12:3-8; 2 Cor. 9:8; Eph. 4:11-12)**

- Our desire is to see the grace of God active in Equipping and Empowering believers for greater and greater impact.
- This could be accomplished through:
  - Intentional training in theological knowledge, character development, and ministry skill to people in all ages and stages of life.
  - Special seminars, conferences, retreats and classes focused specifically on developing ministry skills.
  - Identification and cultivation of spiritual gifts for every believer.
  - Strategic ministry opportunities that will sharpen the skills and stretch the faith of believers.
  - Etc., etc., etc.
- Our desire would be to hear believers asking such questions as: In what ways has God gifted me, and how can I use these gifts to minister in His body? What is the nature of leadership in the church? What areas of ministry am I particularly burdened for? How have I seen God use me in other people's lives? Etc.

**5. To see God so work in the lives of believers and whole churches that they would become powerful EXTENDERS of His grace and truth in Jesus Christ. (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 13:2; 2 Cor. 4:15; 1 Thess. 1:8)**

- Our desire to see the grace of God active in Expanding and Multiplying the Kingdom of God into a dark and dying world.
- This could be accomplished through:
  - Much prayer with fasting.
  - The intentional, Spirit-directed proclamation and penetration of the Gospel to specific people groups in specific places.
  - The ongoing planting of new churches.
  - Etc., etc., etc.
- Our desire would be to hear believers and churches asking such questions as: How does God want me/us to be specifically involved in the work of the Great Commission? To which primary mission field is God calling me/us? What is God's plan for His church? Where do I/we fit in? Etc.

**Our Core Priorities:**

In light of Our Purpose and Our Broad Objectives, by God's grace we will give ourselves wholeheartedly to the following priorities:

**I. Exaltation**

- **Expository Preaching (2 Tim. 3:16-4:5; Ps. 19:7-10; Acts 20:27; Rom. 10:14-17)**

- **Authentic Worship** (Jn. 4:24; Rom. 12:1-2; Ps. 96; 145; 150)
- **Constant Prayer** (Phil. 4:4-7; Ps. 105: 3-4; Mt. 6:5-15; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; Heb. 4:14-16)
- **Faith-Driven Obedience** (Heb. 11:6; Jn. 14:21; Jms. 2:14-26)

## 2. Equipping

- **Systematic, Comprehensive Teaching** (Eph. 4:11-12; Mt. 28:20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- **Godly Modeling** (Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Pet. 5:3)
- **Leadership Development** (2 Tim. 2:2; Mt. 9:38; 28:19-20; 1 Tim. 3:1)

## 3. Encouragement

- **Biblical Shepherding** (1 Pet. 5:1-3; Mt. 9:36-38; Acts 14:21-22; 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:14)
- **Agape Fellowship** (Jn. 13:34,35; Heb. 10:23-25; Rom. 12:9-16; 1 Cor. 13:1-8; Phil. 2:1-11)
- **Gracious Confrontation** (Pr. 27:6; Mt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1-2; Jms. 5:19-20)

## 4. Evangelism

- **Pure Motivation** (2 Cor. 5:9-15; Ps. 145:1-7; Mt. 9:36-38; 1 Thess. 2:4)
- **Ambassador Mindset** (2 Cor. 5:18-21; Phil. 3:19-20; Col. 4:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:15)
- **Worldwide Perspective** (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8, 17:24-28)

**NOTE:** All four of these priorities are exemplified in the early church as seen in the book of Acts, particularly in 2:42-47 and 4:32-35.

## Where We Go From Here:

This framework is meant to be the grid through which we make all the day-to-day decisions, with the leading of the Holy Spirit, regarding the ministry. From here, we can evaluate whether a curriculum, ministry, or activity advances or detracts from our ultimate vision. The specific details of each ministry venture will be worked out through the Spirit-led passions of God's people as we obediently walk the life of faith, abiding in Him (John 15:5). *(Note: This paragraph was taken from the Vision Statement of Grace Church Richfield in Richfield, MN.)*

## Your Personal Involvement:

If this vision is to be powerful, real and effective for God's glory, it must be owned and internalized by all who would desire to share in it. Therefore, **every aspect** of this vision must be purposefully considered and seriously prayed through. God forbid that this vision would be neglected and become nothing more than some nice thoughts written on paper. To the contrary, **this vision must**

**represent the very heartbeat and mindset of our lives**, that for which we will live and die until we are in the presence of Jesus Christ.

If God is leading us individually and as a church to share in His vision for our lives, then we must consecrate ourselves fully to Him. This is the essence of Paul's appeal in Rom. 12:1-2:

***“ I URGE you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (NASB)***

Likewise, Joshua prepared the people in Josh. 3:5 to follow God's vision for their lives as He led them into the Promised Land by calling on them to...

***“Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” (NASB)***

This concept of “consecration” refers to “*spiritual purification, the intentional act of turning the heart to God, in faith and trust in His promise and in willing obedience to His commands*” (Keil-Delitzsch, page 41). It is the idea of responding to God's mercy and grace with a **daily commitment** to “...lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and run with endurance the race that is set before us...” (Heb. 12:1). To consecrate yourself, means to die daily to yourself that you might live for God.

May God bless and direct you as you prayerfully consider His vision for you and His church. May you, in view of God's great grace in Jesus Christ, give yourself fully and completely to His will for your life. We are eager to see how He desires to use you as we share in this “Vision of Grace.”

## ***Webster's definitions...***

- **Vision** = the mode of seeing or conceiving; unusual discernment or foresight.
- **Mission** = a specific task with which a person or a group is charged.
- **Purpose** = something set up as an object or end to be attained.
- **Objectives** = something toward which effort is directed; an aim or end of action.
- **Priorities** = the quality or state of being prior.