

# What Does Grace Fellowship Church Believe?

## Distinguishing Between Three Levels of Belief

1. **CONVICTIONS: Core beliefs of the Christian faith that I would die for and break fellowship over**
  - Example: The Deity of Christ – The belief that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human, born of a virgin birth.
2. **PERSUASIONS: Beliefs that I am persuaded about and would argue for; however, I would not die for these issues or break fellowship over them**
  - Example: Different end times views. If we are in agreement that Jesus Christ is coming back, it is okay for us to disagree on the exact details of the end times scenario: pre-tribulation rapture, mid-tribulation rapture, or post-tribulation rapture. I will make a strong case (“debate”) for my view, but I will not die for my view or break fellowship over it.
3. **OPINIONS: Issues that I have an opinion on but would not even argue for.**
  - Example: The opinion that Joseph died when Jesus was a teenager.

## What Does Grace Fellowship Church Believe?

- 1) **CONVICTIONS – Core beliefs of the Christian faith that I would die for and break fellowship over:**
  - Bible.** *The Bible is the fully true Word of God and is authoritative over all we believe and do. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matthew 5:18)*
  - God.** *There is only one true God who exists eternally in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. (Genesis 1:26; Matthew 28:19; John 14:9; Acts 5:4,9; 2 Corinthians 13:14)*
  - Jesus.** *Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human, born of a virgin birth. (John 1:1,14; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-38) He lived a uniquely sinless life. (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22) Jesus Christ died on the cross as our substitute, taking upon himself the penalty for our sins. (Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 3:18; Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21) Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead in a bodily resurrection defeating sin and death. (1 Corinthians 15:3-6; Romans 6:4-9) Jesus Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. (Matthew 24-25; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 19-21)*
  - Salvation.** *A person is rescued from eternal separation from God and saved into everlasting relationship with God as a free gift (by God’s grace) when that person places their faith (trust) in Jesus Christ, believing that his death on the cross was sufficient to pay the penalty for their sin. (Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; Revelation 21:27)*
  - Eternity.** *Heaven and hell are real places. Every person who places trust in Jesus Christ while living will be resurrected to everlasting blessedness and joy in eternal fellowship with God. (1 Corinthians 15:35-57; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 21:1-7; 22:1-5) Conversely, any person who never places trust in Jesus Christ while living will be resurrected to conscious separation from God and eternal punishment. (Matthew 25:41,46; Mark 9:43-48; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10-15; 21:8)*
  - Marriage.** *Marriage is defined in the Bible as a covenant, a sacred bond between one man and one woman instituted by and publicly entered into before God. (Genesis 2:18, 22-24; Mark 10:6-9; 1 Corinthians 7:2; Hebrews 13:4)*
- 2) **PERSUASIONS – Beliefs that I am persuaded about and would argue for; however, I would not die for these issues or break fellowship over them:**
  - End Times View** – *Jesus will rapture His church (believers) before the tribulation period described in Revelation 6-19 (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:1-11; Titus 2:11-14; Revelation 3:10). Jesus will return in a glorious appearing to set up a 1000-year Kingdom before throwing Satan into the lake of fire and ushering in a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 19-22).*

- **Predestination** – All have sinned and cannot save themselves (Romans 3:11-12; 5:12). Jesus died for all (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 2:1). God is wooing all people to Himself (Matthew 23:37; John 1:9; 12:32; 16:8; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 3:20). Before the foundation of the world, God knew ahead of time who would place their faith in His Son Jesus Christ (Romans 4:4-5; 8:29; 1 Peter 1:1-2). God has predetermined that the Church will be saved (corporate election; all election passages use plural pronoun; Ephesians 1:4-5,11; Colossians 3:12). One becomes a part of the Church by placing their faith in Jesus Christ (John 1:12; Romans 10:9).
- **Eternal Security** – God empowers a believer to believe to the end of his or her life (John 10:27-29; Romans 8:28-39; Philippians 1:6; Jude 24).
- **Supernatural Spiritual Gifts** – Supernatural spiritual gifts still exist today. Speaking in tongues is a valid gift for the church today (1 Corinthians 14:39) and should operate under the boundaries of 1 Corinthians 14. One such boundary: Speaking in tongues tends to confuse unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:23) and therefore should be expressed in believers' settings such as prayer groups and personal prayer. Speaking in tongues may accompany being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:6) but is not THE sign that a person has been filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31; 8:17; 9:17-18; Ephesians 5:18).
- **Baptism** – Grace Fellowship UMC offers to those who have placed their faith in Christ any of the 3 modes of water baptism that have been practiced in church history: immersion (Romans 6:3-4), pouring (Acts 2:17-18), and sprinkling (Ezekiel 36:25-27). Grace Fellowship offers either infant dedication (1 Samuel 1:24-28) or infant baptism (Acts 16:15,33; 1 Corinthians 1:16; Luke 18:15-17; Genesis 17:10-14) to parents. We believe that water baptism does not save anyone but rather is an act of obedience (Luke 3:13-17; Acts 2:38-39; Luke 23:39-43). Faith in Jesus Christ is what saves a person (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- **Communion** – Communion is an outward sign or symbol of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). We believe that God is active in the Communion ritual imparting His grace to us. To participate in Communion is more than just a picture—it is to actually participate (commune) with Christ (1 Corinthians 10:14-22). We do not believe that the bread and juice turn literally into the actual flesh and blood of Christ.
- **Spiritual Warfare** – Satan and demons exist. They were defeated through the cross but will not be thrown into the lake of fire until the Second Coming (Revelation 20:10). Believers have authority in Jesus' name over demonic powers. Believers may be oppressed by demons but not possessed (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:15). Prayer is an essential weapon for the church in this ongoing battle (Mark 11:17; Acts 12:5, 12).
- **Women in Ministry** – God has established authority in the home based on gender (Ephesians 5:22-33) but has established authority in the church based on office. God does call and equip women for pastoral ministry offices. (Judges 4:4-9; 1 Samuel 25; 2 Kings 22:14; Esther 4:16; Micah 6:4; Luke 13:13; 24:10; John 4:28-30; Acts 18:18,26; 21:9; Romans 16:1,3,7; 1 Corinthians 1:11; 11:5; Hebrews 11:2,11,13,23, 31,35; 2 John 1).
- **Church Government** – Several different church government configurations can fulfill the Bible's description of church government. Grace Fellowship has chosen to adopt a church government configuration that is staff led, Board governed, congregationally approved, and with denominational oversight.

### 3) OPINIONS – Issues I have an opinion on but would not even argue for

- Joseph died when Jesus was a teenager.
- The ESV translations is best for preaching. The NLT is best for devotional reading.

## Where Grace Fellowship Stands on Some Controversial Issues

1. **Human Sexuality** – God loves all people (John 3:16) and we welcome and want all people to attend Grace Fellowship (Mark 2:17). At the same time, we believe the practice of sexual immorality is a sin. According to the Bible, sexual immorality includes pornographic magazines, internet, books, or movies, strip bars, topless bars, adultery, cell phone sex, homosexuality, bisexuality, bestiality, prostitution, friends with benefits, wife swapping (swinging), incest, rape, pedophilia, or engaging in any sexual activity (petting, oral sex, intercourse) with someone you are not married to (Leviticus 18; 20:13; Exodus 20:14; Genesis 19; Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; 1 Timothy 1:9-11; Jude 7; Romans 1:26-32). After repenting of sin and turning to Christ, any person is encouraged to join Grace Fellowship and become a member. In this case, repentance means to acknowledge sexual sin as sin and to turn away from it and to turn to Jesus. Any person who has turned away from sexual sin in repentance and who is considering leadership at Grace Fellowship is welcomed and encouraged to do so. In keeping with 1 Timothy 3, we would ask such a person to wait for a period of time in order to demonstrate a track record of freedom over their former life of sin. We would ask this of any new believer. We do not believe in the ordaining of persons who are engaging in sexual sin. We do not believe in ceremonies that celebrate same-sex unions.
2. **Abortion** – We believe that the life inside a mother's womb is a real human being (Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:4-5) and, therefore, that abortion is murder and is wrong/sin (Exodus 20:13). We believe that God offers full forgiveness to an abortive mother/father who have turned to Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:13-15; Ephesians 1:7).
3. **Money** – We believe that everything belongs to God (Job 41:11; Haggai 2:8; Psalm 50:10). We believe that all that we have has been given to us by God and that we are merely 4 stewards entrusted with His resources (Matthew 25:14-30). Therefore, we believe that how we use our money (both individually and as a church) matters. As a sign of surrender and worship, we believe that God calls believers to give the first portion of their income back to God (Proverbs 3:9; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; 1 Corinthians 16:2). Although it is not required for our salvation, we believe giving a tithe (10%) of our income to Christ's church is the starting place for believers (Malachi 3:10; Leviticus 27:30; Matthew 23:23). We believe that the Bible discourages debt and holds up the goal of being debt-free (Proverbs 25:28; Ecclesiastes 6:9; Proverbs 6:1-5; Psalm 37:21; Romans 13:8).

The following are 7 reasons why our senior pastor and his wife have practiced tithing for their entire married life:

- (1) Because we see tithing in the Bible.
- (2) Because it acknowledges God's ownership of all that we have.
- (3) Because it is a tangible way of trusting God with our life by trusting Him with our finances.
- (4) Because it is a tangible way of placing Christ as Lord over our finances.
- (5) Because it causes money to lose its grip on us.
- (6) Because we wildly believe in the investment we are making into the Kingdom of God by giving to His church.
- (7) Because all of the years that we have been tithing God has blessed us beyond what we could ever have imagined.