

BIBLICAL BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A BETTER CHURCH

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QUESTION: What does it mean to be a “better” church and a “better” individual follower of Christ?

ANSWER: God’s word gives us **His desires** for us individually, and collectively as a church family. A partial list includes:

- a) To bring glory to God in all we do (I Cor 10:31; Col 3:17; I Peter 4:11).
- b) To progressively become more like Jesus Christ (Eph 4:13, 15; Romans 8:29).
- c) To make disciples (Mat 28:18-20), and help grow His kingdom (Mat 6:10).
- d) To serve others, and help people live “fuller” lives here on earth – and be well prepared for the eternal life to come (John 10:10; Eph 6:7-8; Gal 6:9-10).
- e) As a church family, we desire to develop a more authentic community, like the early New Testament church described in Acts 2:42-47.

QUESTION: What resources and strategies has God given us to help fulfill His desires for us? ANSWER: Three important ones from God’s word include:

- 1) L_____
- 2) P_____ and F_____
- 3) P_____ with and receive P_____ from God

LOVE

- 1) God wants LOVE to be our **t**____ **p**_____, our **p**____ **i**_____, and the **d**_____ **c**_____ of our lifestyle!

Matthew 22:34-40: “ ... which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied, “**Love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: **Love your neighbor** as yourself. **All** the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commands”.

John 13:34-35: “A new **command** I give you: **Love one another**. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this **all men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another**.”

Ephesians 4:32-5:2: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and **live a life of love**, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God”.

2) **God has taught us how we should love!**

- Parable of the Good Samaritan
- The Golden Rule

THE STORY (PARABLE) OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Cast of Characters:

Robbers

Man (Jew) traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho (a 17 mile trip and a descent of 3300 feet), who was robbed and badly beaten by robbers.

3 Men who had opportunity to help this Jewish man:

- 1) **Jewish Priest** – a professional religious leader
- 2) **Jewish Levite** – a lay religious leader/associate
- 3) **Samaritan** – Samaritans were considered enemies of the Jews; Samaritans and Jews hated each other. Samaritans were considered inferior because they were of mixed Jewish and Gentile descent (racially different). They also had religious and political differences.

READ Luke 10:25-37: The Parable of the Good Samaritan

What can we learn about Biblical love from this story?

Characteristics of Biblical love:

Caring/Compassion

Choice and proactively leaving our comfort zones

Unconditional

Sacrificial

Actions

Meets Needs

I John 3:16-18 “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with **actions** and in truth.

The Golden Rule

Matthew 7:12 “So **in everything, do** to others **what you would have them do to you**, for this sums up the Law and the prophets”. (fyi – shorter version found in Luke 6:31).

The Golden Rule is **inclusive** (“in everything”), **proactive and action oriented** (“do”), **positive** (“do to others what you would have them do to you”), and its **personal** (“you”).

Personal Application: To who and how can I be a Good Samaritan and express the Golden Rule?

[For additional teachings about love, refer to I Corinthians 13:1-8 and I John 4:7-21]

FAITH & PRAYER: OUR ACCESS TO GOD'S POWER

If we have been spiritually born-again, God is our Heavenly Father and we are his dearly loved children (Jn 1:12, 3:16; Rm 8:14-17; Gal 3:26, 4:4-7; Eph 1:3-5, 2:4; I Jn 3:1-2, 16). We have the privilege of bringing our requests to our Father (Phil 4:6-7; Heb 4:14-16). Here are some great Biblical truths about our privilege of praying for good things:

- 1) Jesus said "the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10). Satan wants to destroy your life, BUT God wants you to have a full and spiritually fruitful life. The good news is that God is far stronger than Satan! (I Jn 4:4; Jn 12:31-32; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14-15).
- 2) We miss out on some blessings/miracles because of our lack of faith in God (Mt 13:58). [Faith = "being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" Heb 11:1].
- 3) We miss out on some blessings/miracles because we do not ask (James 4:2).
- 4) We need to have faith in God, and ask Him for miracles and blessings for our church and people we know and ourselves (Mt 7:7-10, 21:22; Mk 11:22-24; Jn 14:12-14, 15:16, 16:23-24).
- 5) We need to remember: **NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD!!**
(Mat 19:23-26; Mark 10:27; Luke 18:27; Luke 1:26-37)
- 6) We need to pray persistently and not give up! (Lk 11:5-10, 18:1-8).
- 7) To summarize: Don't give up on any "impossible" situation, but keep praying, have faith in God, and remember that nothing is impossible for God!

Jesus said if we ask anything in His name, He will do it (Jn 14:13-14, 16:23). What if we don't get everything we ask for? Does the Bible give some conditions to the promise of Jesus? Yes -- our prayers may not be answered because:

- 1) Our request is outside the will of God (I Jn 5:14).
- 2) We have wrong motives (James 4:3; Mat 6:5-6).
- 3) We are not abiding in Christ and His words (Jn 15:7; Ps 37:4).
- 4) We are not bearing spiritual fruit (Jn 15:16).
- 5) We do not keep His commands and do what pleases Him (I Jn 3:21-22).
- 6) We have unconfessed and cherished sin in our life (Ps 32:1-5, 66:18; Is 59:1-2).

- 7) We have an unforgiving spirit (Mk 11:25).
- 8) We lack faith (James 1:6; Mt 21:21-22; Mk 11:22-24; Hebrews 11:6).
- 9) We lack persistence (Lk 11:5-10, 18:1-8).
- 10) A husband's prayers can be hindered due to lack of respect for his wife (I Pet 3:7).
- 11) We are disobedient (Prov 28:9)
- 12) We are hypocritical and/or insincere (Is 29:13; Mal 1:6-9; Mat 6:5-6).

PARTNERSHIP WITH AND POWER FROM GOD

We have the privilege to partner with and appropriate power from God!

Philippians 4:13 **"I can do everything through Jesus who gives me strength"**.

Acts 1:8 "... But you will receive **power** when the **Holy Spirit** comes on you..."

Eph 3:20 "Now to Him (God the Father) who is able to do immeasurably more that all we ask or imagine, according to **His power that is a work within us**".

MY PERSONAL PRAYER REQUEST LIST

My Name: _____

Because nothing is impossible with God, and Jesus told us to have faith and ask Him for good gifts, I am praying for the following requests:

I. People I know that need Jesus as Savior

II. Goals and needs of Gracepointe church (and other churches I know of)

III. Requests of Others

IV. Personal Requests