

# Grace's Q Series

## Why Do We Exist?

Matthew 28:18-20

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- November 3, 2019

You picked an amazing, a very good Sunday to come here today. We're going to talk about Grace Covenant Church. We've talked about her past these last two Sundays and now we're going to talk about her future, the future of Grace Covenant Church and what our plans are.

It says in the Bible that there is nothing comparable to the Church. There is no thing in all of creation that is like the bride of Christ – nothing on planet earth, nothing that you could ever relate to in the context of wonder or beauty or brilliance or power or love, and certainly potential. Oh, the potential of the Church.

When you are part of the Church, you are part of where the Holy Spirit does His work. When we're united as a church to have a common goal that is way bigger than anyone's individual goal, to do the will of God, to help change the world, to bring His gospel into people's lives, there is nothing like that. There is no thing that has ever been experienced like the Church. And we're here to talk about that.

### **The Purpose of the Church**

What's the purpose of the Church? What's the purpose of Grace Covenant Church? This is the purpose of Grace: to glorify God by guiding people to become like Christ in all of life. This is our vision statement or our purpose statement. I don't know what any of those words really mean – I always get them mixed up. But this is our direction. It has been for the last fifty years, some version of this. It is today and it will be in our future. It is the beacon that we draw our steering to. It is the north star by which we've made all of our decisions.

To glorify God – that means to give honor or attribute value, weight, to His majesty. And how do you do that? Every decision that you make, in the context of obedience, glorifies Him. The greatest expression of glorification is just to obey Him, because it's a fulfillment of the

prayer “on earth as it is in heaven” – in my life as it will be in heaven. That’s how I show glory to God.

**Matthew 28:18-20**

**Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**

And so, Jesus tells us how a church can obey Him, how we can obey Him. Well, He says so. It’s one of the last things He says. In the Book of Matthew, it says this: “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of this age.’”

Now this paragraph here, these few sentences, are called The Great Commission. And if you look at it carefully, you’ll see the context is that after Jesus has been raised from the dead – in other words, He has obeyed the Father to its completion, to become like man to the point of death, even death on a cross. And in His conquest of death and the grave here, He has been given all authority on heaven and earth. Here’s what He says: *All authority has been given to me. Here’s what you are to do. Obey this. Make disciples. Go ... baptize ...teach ... make disciples.* That’s how you glorify God – make disciples.

What is a disciple? So, the people who heard this the first time knew what a disciple was in their culture. Even now the word “disciple” is getting back in vogue. It means to be a follower of someone and in many ways take on that person’s attributes, his mannerisms. But it’s bigger and deeper than that. It’s values, it’s worldview; sometimes you even take on the way they speak. So, there are two occasions where people are accused of being followers of Jesus, and the evidence is *You kind of talk like Him. You sound like that man from Galilee.*

*Yeah, because we’re His disciples. It happens that way.*

So, a disciple is this: to become like Christ. That’s what it means.

**A disciple is who Jesus would be if He were you.**

**--- Dallas Willard**

Dallas Willard, a rather famous philosopher and pastor, but also a teacher at USC, described it this way. He said, “A disciple is who Jesus would be if He were you.” Isn’t that clever? A disciple is who Jesus would be if He were you. The point is it’s the way we were meant to be. We were meant to be like Jesus in His Adam-ness.

When we talk about being a disciple, we’re just going back to our original design. We weren’t designed to live in the fear that we live in. It’s not part of the original plan that we would be consumed with ourselves. No. The design, the plan, is to be like Christ in all of life. And what that looks like is enjoying other people, caring about other people, to love well and to be loved, and to know deeply and to be known deeply, to serve others. And if you look at Jesus and His disciples, look how He changed their lives. They were His disciples, they became like Jesus. And so, the way they thought when they started their ministry together, they thought pretty much in a very material way. They had to learn that we live in two realms. And through their experience with Jesus, they started thinking spiritually and then physically, not just physically. He affected the way they felt about things. Mostly they were somewhat consumed about whatever drama or turmoil they were in. And they learned through spending time with Jesus to focus on the presence of God in those moments. They were with God in those times of turmoil. And not just their thinking or their feeling, but in their actions as well. He takes these rather common, cowardly men, and they become famously courageous. All but one die as martyrs, and happily so, because they were disciples of Jesus Christ.

So, when you ask the question about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, you say, “What would Jesus be like if He were me? What if He had my job – how would He would do that job? What if He had my personality type, if He had my family background and situation, if He lived where I live, if He had the amount of money that I have and my income flow, what would He do with that? If He had the history and the baggage in His life that I have in mine, what would He do with that? Become like Christ. What would Christ be like if He were me? That’s the point.

## Be a Disciple: Become Like Christ in All of Life

Now that's what it means to be a disciple – to become like Christ. But we've added, in recent years, to become like Christ *in all of life*. Become like Christ in all of life. And we felt like we needed to add that because it's very easy, for various reasons, to compartmentalize our lives, sometimes in the context of the hat that we're wearing. You can find a person that is like Christ at work and they're polite and they're caring and those sorts of things. But when they get home, they're ogres, they're mean-spirited, they're dominating, or whatever it might be, not like Christ in the home. Or sometimes it's just the reverse; they're very nice at home, but at work -- *Well, you've got to do what you've got to do*. No, it's like Christ in all of life.

Sometimes we break up our soul. The soul is intellect, emotion, and will. And sometimes, especially in a Bible church like ours, some people say, *Oh, I'm going to be like Christ in the way I think*. And we're famous for our study habits and our Bible knowledge and all sorts of things. But the soul includes emotions and volition as well. So, sometimes what it means to become like Christ in all of life means to resuscitate or enjoy how the Lord might feel about a situation and learn how to do that and how to moderate that. Sometimes we can become like Christ in how we think or feel, but we still have to do those things that Jesus would do. So, sometimes when we say "Become like Christ in all of life" we mean intellect, emotion, and will.

Sometimes when we talk about how to become like Christ in all of life, it's because in the seasons of life we may need to make some alterations. Let's just pretend that there are seven seasons in life – that's been a theory. Sometimes you can excel in a particular area of your life when you are a lot like Christ, as a single person, or maybe when you were in college or a young adult. Wow. And then with each season there comes new opportunities for challenge and opportunities to be afraid or to be regretful in your life choices. And so, you have to learn how to become like Christ in that next stage. So sometimes you can be a lot like Christ in your singleness, but maybe not in being single longer than you thought you would be, or maybe even being single again.

So, we don't want people to be involved in a spiritual life that keeps looking back at the glory days when they were really walking with God, but rather, a constant revitalization and living in the moment of becoming like Christ in that place. Become like Christ in all of life.

Just in summary, this is who you were meant to be. For no other reason – listen, we’re Americans, we’re pragmatists – this is how life works, to be like Christ in all of life. Do you want to be a good wife? Be like Christ in being a wife. Do you want to be a good dad? *I want to be a great dad, I do.* Well, the answer is to become like Christ in your parenting. Do you want to be a good boss? Here’s how to be an excellent boss: become like Christ in the way that you manage the people and how you run your business. That’s the way we were designed, that’s the way things work, that’s how the whole universe rolls.

So, become like Christ in all of life. It’s simple – it’s just not easy. And what we try to do here at Grace is we try to collectively say, *Let’s do this together. Let’s just work through this together, shall we? Let’s all become like Christ in all of our lives.*

So, let me just put this on the screen so we can make sure we understand it. Here’s what a disciple is – to become like Christ in all of life. Let’s all just say that together so we all know it. Ready? Disciple: Become like Christ in all of life.

## **The Vision of Grace Covenant Church**

So, when we talk about the vision of Grace, we say that it kind of applies itself in two ways. One, we want to become like Christ. I want to become like Christ in all of life, in every aspect and compartment and season of my life. And then, I want to make disciples. I want to guide other people to become like Christ in all of life. It’s like life is a terrible storm at sea and there are riptides. And so, how do I survive that? I become a strong swimmer. And not only am I going to become a strong swimmer, I’m going to help other people and guide other people to become strong swimmers. See how that works?

So, it might be that part of becoming like Christ is learning how to overcome an addiction. And I’m not going to leave it there – I’m going to go and help other people and guide other people in overcoming addiction. That’s what we do at Grace. That’s our big idea, that’s our goalpost, that’s how we keep score in a lot of different ways. That’s what we’re hoping to do here.

## **How Do We Go About Doing That?**

How do we do that? How do we implement this ambition to become like Christ in all of life, to make disciples? Well, at Grace, it’s a little bit different. Actually, it’s radically different

from some churches. But this is where we put our emphasis: that **every believer is a minister**. When we talk about coming a disciple, the responsibility is on all of us. So, when Jesus was giving this command, the Great Commission, to go and make disciples, He wasn't talking to just those twelve guys like they were special or they were priests. He was talking to all followers of Jesus Christ.

So, I'm not up here as a priest with a special anointing. That's not it at all. We are all priests. We are all part of this fellowship of ministry. And that's why at Grace we say this quite often. And you know how it ends – "I'm just a pastor, but you're the ... ministers." That's right. We're all ministers. We're all doing this ministry of becoming like Christ and helping other people become like Christ. And so, at this church, what we're focusing on, if you watch us and study what we try to do here, is we are developing and empowering and releasing the members to do the ministry. That's what we do. The ministry power is in you, in this church, on this campus, and out there. We try to train and encourage you, and give you life skills to do ministry. On Sunday morning? Absolutely, but the other six days of the week for sure. That's the goal.

### **Ephesians 4:11-13**

**The gifts He gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,<sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry ...<sup>13</sup> of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.**

In the Book of Acts there are forty miracles that take place. Thirty-nine of them take place outside of church. I bet thirty-nine out of forty opportunities available to you are not on this campus, so that's how we do this. This value that we have comes from the New Testament teaching. There's a book called Ephesians and it's about how to do church. And this was one of the primary passages that got Grace started in the first place. And we're still going to follow that. Watch this – this is Jesus. "The gifts" – of the Spirit – "He gave were that some of you would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry." Who's doing the ministry? The saints, everyone, all followers of Jesus Christ. That's why the day I became a pastor I became a player coach, not just a player. I became a coach, too, to train the lay people to do the ministry.

And then watch this. I'm just adding this, but the next couple of verses later, to what end, to what purpose? Look what it says: "... of the knowledge of the Son of God, to bring everyone to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." That looks a lot like Christ in all of life, doesn't it?

So, you can see in this passage in Ephesians that every believer is a minister for the purpose of guiding people to become like Christ in all of life. There it is in three sentences in the Book of Ephesians, chapter 4. That's the goal – that's how we do it.

And so, at Grace, we do this. We empower, we equip, and we get our ministry ideas from you guys. Many of the great ministries here at Grace Covenant Church were from regular ministers saying, *Hey, let's try to do this*. And do you know why a lot of the great ministry ideas have come from you guys? Because that's where the ministry is. Thirty-nine out of forty are outside these walls. And so, we're looking for opportunities to help.

### **Adopt, Adapt, Bless**

I want you to know this is almost behind the scenes a little bit, but at Grace when someone comes to us and says, *Hey, I have this great opportunity for ministry*, and we run it through the grid. If you look at the way our church is structured, you'll see the consequence of that. But it goes like this. We adopt a ministry or we adapt to a ministry, or we bless a ministry. Adopt, adapt, or bless.

In the context of adopting a ministry, we find a ministry that's greatly needed and we say, *Okay, we're going to throw as many resources as we possibly can*. And at Grace, resources mean people, even employees and buildings and free rent and all that other stuff, and sometimes even buildings themselves.

For one of those ministries, we realized that we needed a caring ministry, one that included Celebrate Recovery. We found a good ministry that's called Celebrate Recovery and we said, *Boom, we're going to adopt this*. And we rearranged staff positions and we rented a facility and arranged child care. We have free rent, there's no rent there, free childcare – we want to make this thing sing. We adopted that.

Actually, our children's ministry and our youth ministry are ministries where we said, *Our parents need help raising their children. They're responsible to God*. We built two buildings. Millions and millions of dollars have been given to those two ministries, the children

and youth. The largest number of personnel that are hired staff, the highest number of pastors involved, are in those two ministries. We just adopted those.

On the other extreme – there’s adopt over here, adapt in the middle, and then bless – there are some ministries that don’t need a lot of our attention and resources. What used to be called Moms in Touch, I think it’s called Moms in Prayer now, some women found out about a ministry where we can be praying for our children and our teachers and the administration. *Man, we just want to bless you. How do we help you? We just want to bless you. We’ll pray for you, and if there’s any advice that you need, I don’t think you do, but go. Go get them.*

There’s adopt and there’s bless, and then in the middle there’s adapt. And adapt is where we send some resources, limited, but we send some resources to those ministries. We give strategic support and some advice. But the lay person is doing the ministry because it’s their ministry. And so, again, this is a little bit unusual. A lot of churches don’t do this. And this is kind of our value. I stole it from a church that stole it from a hardware store, but it goes like this: you can do it, and we can help. We’re Grace Depot – that’s us. And so, this is the adapt part. You can do it and we can help. That’s what we do here. And so, a lot of churches don’t do this. They’re just going to do whatever they’re going to do. They don’t follow the lead from every believer is a minister. But we understand that you are the primary person and the best person to raise your children. So, you can do that and we can help. And we provide resources at our adult communities and resource tables, and some of our pastors are experts in this area.

You can train people to learn how to start a business in the Congo, Africa. Greg Herring did that. It was a ministry that he had. We said, “You can do it and we can help.” We tried to help in every way we could.

You want to figure out a way to serve your neighborhood? You can do that, we can help. Maybe we can point you to resources that are available to you.

Do you want to learn how to share Jesus Christ at work in a way that makes it easy to hear? You can do it. We can help.

One of our lay people came to us almost twenty-five years ago and said, “We’ve got to do something about the poor in Austin, the people that are uneducated, the people that are unfortunate.” We said, “You can do it, Tim Pinson, and we can help.” And Mission Possible started, one of the largest, most influential, successful ministries east of the freeway. Just a



minister, just guys doing ministry, us trying to adopt or adapt. That's what we do here at Grace. We've been doing it, we continue to do it. Look at yourself in that context.

### **Application: Three Types of Loves/Relationships**

Now I want to change the subject a little bit. Today I want to talk about, in the context of applying this to our life, I want us to look at this. When we say to become like Christ in all of life, I'd like to talk about the subject of relationships. Become like Christ in all of life in our relationships. This is that section that might be a compartment. And the reason I say this is because when you look at the life of Jesus, which is what we're supposed to be doing, if you look at His life in the context of relationships, you can see that He had intentional application towards three types of people, or three relationships. In other words, He has three loves. And based on those relationships, He gives time and attention to those. And if we're going to become like Christ in all of life, we need to become like Christ in all of life in the context of relational values. He had these three great loves, we need to have all three of these great loves in the same proportion that He had.

So, here's the application – I'm going to tell you ahead of time. Score yourself on this. I'm going to give you three types of relationships that Jesus had. Are you like Christ in this part of your life? This is like the balanced relational life. I'm overemphasizing here. The balanced physical life is pretty simple. It's not easy, but you eat right, you sleep right, you exercise right. Point: these words demonstrate relational balance – up, in, out – those three types of relationships.

### **UP to the Father**

Up to the Father. If you read through the biographies by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you're going to see Jesus pulling off and away from the crowd and His followers, going off by Himself, usually up to a mountain top, and having intimacy with His Father. That's where He's being fueled and getting direction and getting nurtured. Up with the Father – that's where worship takes place. That's where He finds Himself in His first love.

How are you doing? Do you have experiences like that? It should be on a daily basis – worship, prayer, where you talk and you listen to the Spirit of God in your life, where you study

the Bible so that you might know who God is and what He's done. How's that? How's your up relationship?

### **IN to Believers**

The next one, He goes in. He comes down off the mountain and He invests into His followers. He disciples. He's investing purposefully to the people that have already made a commitment to Him, to the men and women in His inner circle, those people who were His. And He spends more than fifty percent of His time with those men and women. That's what He does. He has up relationships and then He goes in, because He knows that's what matters, that's where longevity happens, that's for a point and for a purpose.

How about you? Are you involved in a group of Christians, brothers and sisters, where you can learn and you can teach? Where you can mentor and be mentored? It's a vital aspect of a balanced relational life.

### **OUT to the World**

There's up, there's in, and finally, there's out. After He had spent time with the Father, after He invests in His disciples, then they go out into the world and bring salvation to sin. They bring healing to injury. They bring honor to shame. And He does this on purpose with His friends. He does this in the context of individual sin and collective, societal, sin. He brings this redemption.

What about you? Do you have a place of ministry? Do you have a place where there are people that don't know the Lord and maybe you are there for a purpose? You might have that place. Do you see that that's the reason that you're there? That God has put you there for that very purpose?

### **Summary**

Let me just summarize. In the life of Jesus Christ, this is how He was relationally balanced. Up, in, and out. This is the balance of the Christian life. It has always been the balance of the Christian life. If you want to become like Christ in all of life, you have to have this balance. It is so easy for us to gravitate towards one area, maybe be okay in another area, and completely ignore a third.

You can see this in family style, in kind of a family philosophy. Sometimes we just fall into it because we don't like our backhand, so we spend our whole tennis game running around our background because we're uncomfortable here. You see some people doing this. They're going to private school their kids – that's a good thing, don't get me wrong, a Christian school. And then they involve themselves in some hobbies or sports – let's make sure that's all Christian, the whole league is Christian and all the kids are Christians. And then we never miss youth group. I'm not against that either. Never miss those church events, either. But if that's the diet, it's out of balance, friends. And when this child turns eighteen, it's not uncommon for them to say one of two things. One is I'm done. I think I've hit my life quota for all of this stuff. Or two, they're too weak to live outside the bubble. They either get sick of the bubble or they're too weak to live outside of the bubble. That's because they don't have a healthy balance in this.

There's another extreme where *I'm going to public school my kid, get them exposed to all that kind of stuff, he needs to learn how to take that stuff. And then I'll put him on a sports team where no one uses the Lord's name except in vain, and then, yeah, we'll get around to the youth group.* What? Don't neglect this thing. And then when they turn eighteen, they think, *Who's the Lord anyway?*

So, here's the thing. Out of balance is out of balance and that's just all there is to it. And so, we've got to play in an area where we're not comfortable. And let me tell you, when you're in an area that you're not good at, you're going to lose. Get used to losing. It's okay to lose. And so, some of you define yourself in secular circumstances and pick a hobby where you can know other people outside of the church. And make some mistakes. It's okay. That's how you grow. For some of you, church is kind of awkward to you. That's where you're nervous. That's where you're not so good. That's okay, too. Just do it and learn how to do it. You'll get better at it. But don't be afraid of failing. Because this balance of relationship is everywhere in the Bible. It's everywhere in the Church – up, in, and out.

Before I went to graduate school, I worked in what I would consider one of the best youth ministries in the entirety of North America. As a matter of fact, that youth pastor became the head youth pastor for the Southern Baptist Convention. A lot of our youth ministry is based on that youth ministry. His youth ministry was called THEEE Youth Ministry. And by *THEEE*, he meant this: T-H-E-E-E. Exaltation – that's a word for church worship, edification, another

church word for relating to other believers, and evangelism. He knew this: a healthy youth group includes all three e's. So, up, in, and out.

In seminary --- I would go to graduate school and I would take a class on the Church. It's called ecclesiology. And we have one paper to write and it's worth fifty percent of our grade, and the theme is the purpose of the Church. How is the local church supposed to work? And after extensive research, I think everyone in the class came up with these three things: up, in, and out.

Surf a bunch of web pages of various churches and you're going to find that they're going to use different, clever words, but they're going to talk about worship, they're going to talk about discipleship, and they're going to talk about evangelism, because that's what it looks like. It's the healthy balance. It always is. So, it is for a youth group, so it is for a church, so it is for an individual.

So, here it is – challenge time. What's your next step? What's your backhand? What do you need to work on? What areas of growth do you need the most? In the context of what we're talking about here in this relational balance, why don't you join us? Why don't we all get in on this together and say, *Look, we're going to try and do all three of these and do it well. You can help me in your area of strength and I can help you in my area of strength.*

In the context of application number one, up, here's an easy win. Come to church every Sunday. Make Sunday worship, where we worship and we pray and we learn, make that a priority. Live your life around that day. Don't let other things chase it out or contaminate it. If this is your weak area and you come here and you don't feel all that comfortable, I understand that. You think it's kind of boring here sometimes or sometimes you're kind of offended? Me too. And I'm the one saying this stuff. I'm bored. I'm offended, okay? So, yeah, okay, so you just tap and then you come back the next time. That's what you do. Easy win.

How about in? Are you invested in communities that are giving and that you're getting from? Again, an easy win here would be to join one of our communities, our adult communities, or one of our courses, or one of our midweek studies. Or even better, you could join our children's ministry and be a mentor where you're the one doing the giving. But you have to find yourself going up, but also in towards others.

And then last, that's the challenge – you need to one more, you know, a +One at Grace? Last is out. What's your relationship like facing out? Do you have a ministry? Do you have people that you love, that you know and you love that aren't churchgoers? Go there. Go there

and fail. Go there and try it out. You can do this, and we can help. Go and find that place. A lot of us have that place but we don't have the eyes for it. Just pray on the way to that gym or that workplace or wherever it might be. That's your place in the world. That's why God put you here. In His foreknowledge, in His sovereignty, He placed you there for that very purpose.

## Conclusion

The Church is God's plan A. And there is no plan B. I've read the Book of Revelation. Have you? Church ... Jesus comes back. That's it. It's on us. And if you want to pray for the world, here's how to strategically pray for the world according to the Bible: pray for the Church. Because when the bride of Christ is healthy, when she is balanced, when she is being a disciple and making disciples, the world is better for it. Because it is through the Church that the Spirit of God will be working to change lives, institutions, and the world itself. That's how it works. That's what the owner's manual says. Be the Church. Be a disciple. Help guide other people into discipleship.

Let me tell you a fun story. I want to tell you this story because this is how we keep score here at Grace. This is how we keep score. This is what we celebrate. Every believer is a minister. One of the ladies in our church felt like the Lord had put her in her neighborhood for a divine purpose and she wanted to get to know other ladies in her neighborhood. So, she talked a friend across the street and they talked and they said, "Why don't we do a Bible study for our neighborhood?" And so, they prayed about it and they said, "Let's do that." They informed the women around and they had their first Bible study and there were twenty women that showed up. Twenty women. That was twenty years ago. And now there are seventy-five women and maybe hundreds that have come through the study. And it's not one Bible study any more – it's five different locations. And it's not one neighborhood, it's all over the northwest Austin area. And here's the beauty of it. It was her ministry. You can do it, we can help. And it's been a great way of touching souls in neighborhoods where people just pull up in their cars and then drop their garage doors and you don't even know them. She wanted to do something about that. And a lot of ladies that attend this study don't go to churches that study the Bible. They don't go to churches that help one another to become like Christ in all of life. And through the influence of that, who knows? She'll find out when she gets to heaven.

But here's the point. Every believer is a minister. And when we see with our eyes that Jesus placed us here for this time and this place, we can see the ministry that's all around us; a ministry that we become like Christ in all of life and we guide other people to become like Christ in all of life. That is what the Church is all about.

I want to tell you more about it next week. But today we'll end with a word of prayer.

*Lord, we are so grateful that we can be the Church, that we get to live here and now. I would not be a very good Jew, and so I get to be Irish and one of Yours. And I don't have to do what Jewish people had to do, because this Church is the way, the Church. You've handed it off to the Church and we are that Church. Lord, I'd ask that we would become a church that sees the fullness of all You have for us, all that You've ever intended for us, and we would do those things; that we would think Your thoughts about our lives and the lives around us, that we would feel Your passions, and we would do Your will. Lord, help Grace become all that You would ever hope for her to be, and help us hear that, that we might understand it and be fulfilling that. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*