

**Grace's Q Series**  
**How Do We Behave?**  
**Acts 2:42, 2 Timothy 3:16-17**  
**Dr. Matt Cassidy --- November 10, 2019**

You are the church. Go and be the church. That's it. That's what we're going to talk about today. The Bible says that there is no thing in all of creation that is like the church. There is not a thing to be compared with in wonder, in beauty, in brilliance, in love, in power. And here it is ... in potential ... like the bride of Jesus Christ. And you and me --- we are part of that bride. We are the Church.

You have to understand the importance of the church to fully grasp how to make sense out of life. In this epic of time, in this season, dispensation --- whatever --- the Church is the means of the Father displaying His glory about His Son to creation. That's our place right now. We need to seize that moment. It's a paradigm. It's a worldview. It's a way of seeing all things -- - the Church.

Now it's hard to see a paradigm. It's hard to appreciate the values of a paradigm. So, I'm going to take a run at this. I'm going to try and help you understand how important this is. Some of you are going to grasp this. Here's what it's like ---- a worldview. Band parents. Are any of you guys band parents? Are any of you guys in band? Anybody know anybody in a band or a band parent? God bless band parents. God help new band parents, because new high school band parents go into it thinking, *All things in moderation*. They're quoting Aristotle's *Ethics* where virtue is the golden mean between the extremes. There is no virtue in high school band. And there's no moderation. None of life makes sense if you are thinking, *It's just band*. You can't say, *It's just band*, and be in band. Because your head will explode because things don't connect. And you'll be trying to figure out in the band culture and band expectations. It will sift you until you are worn down. And then that moment happens when you see an epiphany and you realize, *Wait. Life is band*. And then band is life. And then when band is life, everything starts making sense. It all fits together.

So, the band director says, "Yeah, you're going to need to come back to practice way before school even starts and rearrange years of family traditions and vacation expectations."

And as a band parent, you say, “Okay.” Because band is life. So, they come back and they practice on asphalt in Texas in August. Sure. Band is life. Yeah, it worked out great.

If you were to think, *It’s just band* --- if you were to say those words, *It’s just band* --- I’ll pay you a dollar. It won’t matter --- you’ll never get it. But go up into the stadium seats this weekend on Friday anywhere in Central Texas here and just go up into the stadium seats where the band parents are and say, “It’s just band.” You will never make it to your car. You will need a police escort and you’d better pray that that police officer is not a band parent. Because they’ll never find your body. You can’t say that. That’s not the way it works. Band is life. Friday Night Lights --- it ought to be redone. It’s about band. Because if you ask band parents, they’ll tell you that’s when everyone gathers together --- other people outside the band and their parents --- so they can watch halftime.

And just to show you how important it is --- halftime is more important than those other guys running around between that --- that halftime is just practice for future competitions. And you know this because if a football team were to do so well as to go into the playoffs, too deep into the playoffs in November or December, the band isn’t even there. They’re at the competition. This is a legendary issue between what’s more important --- football or band. There’s a song about it, right? “When the players tried to take the field, the marching band refused to yield ...” That was the day the music died.

See how it all makes sense? If band is life, then all things fit into place.

The Church is like that, but not creepy, okay? It’s not as creepy. And I want you to see, particularly, this church. I’m going to explain a few things today because we’ve been celebrating our fifty years together as a church this month --- this is our anniversary in many respects. And when we’ve talked about the past, that’s fine. We’re going to talk about the future and I want you to see some things today with a worldview.

This is Grace and I’m going to tell you the secret stuff behind the scenes so that you can see that if this is true, then all these other things make sense. This is the worldview of Grace. This is how to connect the dots easily. I’m giving you the answer, in many respects, ahead of time.

Why do we exist? What do we do and how do we do it? So, the reason we exist is to glorify God by guiding people to become like Christ in all of life. Now I’m not going to just inform you of these truths today. I’m going to call to a challenge at the end. I’m going to explain

that life is church and church is life in this era and then I expect you to make a decision at some respects. At this church, are you in? Are you in? At Grace, at this church, this is why we do things: to glorify God by guiding people to become like Christ in all of life, to make disciples. And to glorify God you have to bring Him honor in that way. And we're not doing this because it's our history so much. This is our vision because we're doing what we're told. This is what Jesus told us to do. This is the way we were meant to be. To become like Christ in all of life --- that's our design, is to be like Christ. And if you must know, it's also the only way to make sense out of it. It's the only way that life works.

And so, at Grace we would expect everyone to be a disciple and become like Christ in all of life, and then to guide other people to become like Christ.

So, the "why" is to glorify God in that context, and the "what" we do is reaching up in worship and in towards each other and out towards the world. And so, this is the answer to the question "What are we going to do?" We are a regional church that worships God, that equips disciples for ministry. Every believer is a minister here and takes the good news of Jesus Christ into our community and into the world. That's what we do. That's why we do it, that's what we do.

Now here today I'm going to talk a lot about how we do that. How do we equip all our members to become like Christ in all of life and use that to do ministry in the four corners of the world, in the place of influence? Primarily right here --- today we are going to talk about --- is we are committed to biblical truth. I'm going to look at that phrase in kind of two sections. First, I'm going to talk about being committed to biblical truth and why we're connected to that, why we have that as a conviction. And the second part of our talk together is going to talk about what it means to be committed to that, what it means to be surrendered to biblical truth, to be subservient to serve that, to be in submission to that.

## Committed to Biblical Truth

The first – biblical truth. How did we come to this conviction? So, philosophically speaking, the purpose of life is this: to pursue truth to wherever it leads, no matter the cost. That's the purpose of life, philosophically. To pursue truth, no matter where it leads, whatever the cost. That's what we're to do in life. That's why we're humans, right? Truth --- it doesn't matter what your family said was true. That doesn't make it true. It doesn't mean it's a lie, it just doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what history or tradition says is true. That doesn't affect whether something's true or not. It doesn't matter what your ethnicity is, it's doesn't matter what your geography is. It just doesn't. It is true or it's not true.

So, when we're in this pursuit of truth we want to be unbiased in where we determine and how we determine whether something is true or not. Now in the context of a church, the reason we find ourselves here is because what is the most important truth topic we could ever endeavor into? The truth about God. That's going to be a significant topic. And so, we find ourselves --- how do we know what God is like? We look first, primarily, in nature. We get a general revelation about God in nature and physics and all of creation. And we can come to certain conclusions. And we follow truth wherever it leads, no matter the cost. And when you follow general revelation, when you look at nature, you're going to come to some conclusions that are probably close to what Socrates and Aristotle determined about the nature of God. And they paid a price for that. That's good. They did a good job.

But what about something beyond nature? Has God communicated in a very special way about details of life that we would need to know? Not just about what is right and real and true, but about the nature of God himself? Has God revealed himself in a way so that we might know Him intimately, know what He's like and what is justice and love? Well, He probably has. And you would think He would, because if I created a universe, I would reveal myself to creation. And I'm not very smart. So, of course God would reveal himself. So, we look at books that say, "This book is from God." This book is from God, this book is about God. You look at those books that say they're from God and about God and you say, Okay, which one of those books is the most reasonable? Which book makes the most sense? Which book actually proves it's true and should be trusted? What book, if we opened it and read from cover to cover, could you read

it and then look up and say, “You know what? If this is true, then all of this starts making sense. Now it fits.”

What book would that be? Well, at Grace we would say the Bible is that book. We would say that the Bible is the book that God used to reveal His nature to His creation, that biblical truth --- that’s why we didn’t just put truth, we put biblical truth there --- is the greatest truth available to us today. The Bible is the greatest truth and the clearest truth that is available to us at this point. It is the voice of God about what is right, what is real, what is true, and the nature of God himself. We didn’t come to this conclusion because our parents said so or we’re from North America in the twenty-first century. We came to this conclusion because you would think that book from God about these critical areas and His definition would be reliable. And so, there are manuscripts – this text itself, the Bible texts, are those manuscripts reliable? Oh, you bet they are. I mean, the Old Testament manuscripts --- there are not as many as you would like, but they are nearly perfect in their copying of one another. I mean, to the point where there are so few errors, and you know where they are, that it is beyond human capabilities. And you would stop and think, *Wow, I think there was divine protection in these copies of the Old Testament.* And you would be right in that conclusion.

If you look at the New Testament, the copying of those leaves a little something to be desired because of the circumstances. The number of manuscripts is incomparable to any other piece of literature ever written. There are so many New Testament manuscripts that we absolutely know what the original author meant to the original audience. And because of the reliability of the manuscripts, both Old and New Testament, even an objective third party would look at the Bible and the way it’s been maintained, the script itself, and say, “This is a miracle. This book is not like any other book that’s ever been written.”

Then you look at not just internal manuscripts, but external verifications, external validation. How would we know that the Bible is true? Well, you look at things like history. The Bible very specifically lays out names of places and civilizations and kings and currency. And, by the way, probably the newest hard science in our experience is the science of archaeology. It really is. It’s the new kid on the block. And when archaeology was just a young lad, it was famous for its criticism of the history of the Bible. *Oh, there’s no place like that. There’s no guy named Joshua or David.* Well, archaeology as a science has kind of grown up a little bit. And now he goes to the Bible to find out what’s historically true. He goes to the Bible and says, *Okay,*

*there's a Joshua. He probably built an altar somewhere. Let's find out in the Bible where to dig.* And they did. And they found it. Because the historicity of the Bible is not challenged like it used to be.

But the external validation of a book written by a divine being is no more prevalent than in prophecies and prophecies fulfilled. This is just God showing off. In the Bible you'll see God declaring something that happened in history and it will talk about it coming into fruition to the date, to the name of the person. You can set your clock to these prophecies and you have to conclude this, that the God who sent this revelation to man had not just foreknowledge. He didn't just know what was going to happen; He caused, He sovereignly oversaw that history. He is overseeing the past, the present, and the future. Why did God put prophecy and the fulfillment of prophecy in the Bible? So that you and I would know that this book, the Bible, is from Him. You need to know that this book is the clearest expression --- the Bible is the clearest expression of truth that we have available to us today. And we will follow that truth, no matter where it goes, no matter what the cost. That's how we came to that conclusion.

## **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

**All Scripture is inspired (God-breathed) and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

And that's why Paul writes this to his young pastor Timothy. He says this: "All Scripture is inspired (God-breathed) by God and is useful for teaching and rebuking and correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

The word "inspired" there --- most of your translations will say "inspired." But literally, the NIV says it, it means "God-breathed." The Bible is a book from God Almighty --- God Almighty. It even has all the authority of God in it. It is from Him. The Bible has a nickname. We call it the Word of God because it is.

The Bible is different in kind, not in degree, from all pieces of literature, sculpture, literature, music ... any expression of human creativity. The Bible is over here and everything else is over there. How dare anything else say, *This is from the Creator. This is from God.*

The Bible is not a collection of sages trying to give advice. It's a miracle. It's not from here. It's from heaven. It lasts into eternity. That's why we say that we are committed to biblical truth.

### **Submission to Biblical Truth**

Now we're going to follow that, whatever the cost, wherever its destination. And when we say it has authority over us, it means we're in submission to it. It is up here and it defines for us what is right and real and true. It tells us the way life is, what God is like. It's not just a useful tool so that maybe you could work your kids into some kind of subjection or something. But what the Bible says, is. It doesn't matter what fifty-one percent of the people say, it doesn't matter what the culture around us concludes. It doesn't matter is the truth that we find ourselves in is comfortable or uncomfortable. It has supremacy over the laws of the country that we submit to up until it conflicts with the laws of God.

We don't agree to disagree with what the Bible says. We just do what we're told. Because it has authority over us. We are in submission to it. Our submission to the Bible is actually an expression of our discipleship. Become like Christ in all of life --- Jesus was in submission to the Bible. Jesus was God and you would think that He would authority over the book He wrote. But He says this in Matthew chapter 5: "Don't think that I have come here to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. And I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter nor the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished."

Submission means it's true. We must be wrong. And after we listen up and look at a passage of Scripture or a doctrine or whatever it might be, when we work that and we find what that meaning is, here's what submission to that truth means. It means if I think different, I have to change the way I think to what the Bible says is right, real, or true about the nature of God.

If I have a feeling that it doesn't seem to be appropriate for the circumstances, according to the Bible, my feelings are wrong. If the Bible says that I ought to be doing something and I'm not, I need to change what I'm doing.

Listen, this has great effect in our everyday lives. And you need to understand, because of its profound, a priority power over us, it defines all things around us, even our circumstances.

I was in a hospital visitation a couple of years ago. And a person was there long enough to be in a consequence of their illness --- really sick. And when I went and talked to her, she said, "I'm so tired. God is not near and He does not love me and I just feel so distant and I don't know what to do."

And I thought, "Well, what's true? I know you're sick and all, but what's been promised? Because what's been promised is that He would never leave you, He would never forsake you. The Bible says that He loves you and He can't not love you. So, I don't care how you feel. He can't be distant. I don't care if it's not working for you right now, that you don't feel like He's loving you, because those things don't matter. Get your feelings in the trunk where they belong and enjoy this moment. Ask this question: In light of God's presence and His certain love, how would that affect your disposition in light of you being in the hospital right now? See?"

I didn't say any of that. I was thinking those things. That's not very pastoral of me. But look how it changes the perspective, because what is right and real and true has been altered by circumstances in this poor soul's life. You know what you can say in that? *Jesus loves you, this I know. Come on ... because the Bible tells me so.*

*You're right. You're right --- the Bible says it's true. And so, I am loved and He is present.*

See? It defines all things around you, all of our ethics, all of our values. The Bible says this is the parameters of your entertainment and I stay within those parameters. This is the definition of what a man is and what a woman is. This is how to parent. We should just obey that. This is how to do marriage. We should just go along with that. This is what you should do with your money. Do it ... just do it.

Here's where we stiff-arm God. A lot of times when we think we're in submission to the Word of God or that we're in submission to God, we're in agreement with what He says here and we do it, or we're in agreement with what He says here and we do it, we're in disagreement here, so we don't do it. Those other three submissions weren't submissions. We were just kind of



going in the same direction. You really know it's submission when He says one thing and you think, feel, or want to do something else, and you change. You change, you alter, because He's the definition, through His Word, through that book, of what is right and real and true.

You have to pick an authority. You have to pick an authority, and then that authority rules you. At Grace, we've chosen this: that the Bible is a gift from God that explains to us all crucial issues of ethics, of definitions, of terms, of the nature of God. And I want you to know --- I've been speaking so confidently and so declaratively, but we don't necessarily have to like where these truths lead or how much they cost. I don't. There are so many of these areas of the Bible that I don't like, I don't like where they lead, and I don't like how much they cost. But I'm going to go there and I'm going to pay the toll. In areas that are certain --- not ambiguous, not where we get to negotiate, because He allows that --- but in these areas that are clear and we don't like those --- I don't know about you, I'm sure you feel this way too --- but my soul mourns. Doesn't yours? Right? Don't you grieve? If this is true and this is the ethic, then the consequence on that person is ... oh, dear God. Really? For life? In my prayer life I go to God and say, "Look around. It's 2019. In America so much has changed." And some of these situations --- because some things change over time and some things don't, but most of what I'm talking about in my soul. And I hear, "Matt, it doesn't matter. It's not a cultural ethic. It's not a historic-tied-to-time ethic. These are definitions of what is and what is right and wrong that precede creation, that are part of creation, and that will go on into eternity." This is the way things are, and there's a cost, and I get it. It transcends us.

And so, submission means this. When the Bible says to do something and we don't want to do it because we don't need to do it and we don't deserve to do it and no one else is doing it, we do it anyway.

When the Bible says don't do something and we want to do it anyway, we need to do it anyway, it would feel good to do it anyway and everybody else is doing it --- if it says don't do it, we don't do it. Because it has authority over us.

And by the way, I'm just going to move to --- this is how I live with this. This is how I express a lot of my faith today, honestly, the faith of the assurance of things hoped for and the assurance of things not seen. I go like this: "God, I don't like where this truth is leading and I don't like the cost. Intellectually, this does not make sense to me. But I'm going to trust that You

know so much more; that the depth of Your wisdom is so much more profound than mine, and I don't have all the information. And so, it's the reasonable thing."

And when my heart grieves for people in my own life when I have to make choices, I think about things and how much it costs and my emotions are stirred, I think, "God this does not appear to be loving. But by faith You love every person more than I could ever hope to or want to. And You would not withhold good things and You would not grant us things that would destroy us, so this must be the most loving ethic." Consequence. Truth.

And there are times that I just don't want to do things and obedience doesn't look like the right way. And I don't have to know. I just have to do. And so, I will. Because when you do something you don't want to do, that's a great expression to the glory of God. We talk about the glory of God. The glory of God is expressed in obedience when you don't want to, you don't feel like it, and it doesn't make sense. And life is about the glory of God, not about the glory of me. And so, I submit to the power and the authority of the Bible when I do what the Bible says, no matter where it goes, no matter what it costs.

But I just want you to hear at least my point of view, and I think I represent other people in this church and the leadership of this church. We don't like a lot of those places and we don't like a lot of the pain it causes. We did not write this book, but we are following this book. And it hurts. It hurts friends of mine. But the Bible is true. And if the Bible is true, then this church makes sense --- the way we do things and why we do things. The Bible is God's revelation to us. And we submit to that.

But I want to tell you something more about the Bible --- not just about its authority. The Bible transforms us. The Bible is the primary means that the Father has left for the Spirit to use to make us like Jesus Christ. The Bible is the primary means that the Father has chosen for the Spirit to use to make us like Jesus Christ.

Look at this passage. I mean, I just touched on the one word "God-breathed." Look at what the rest of it says: "All of scripture is God-breathed and it is useful." Look how it's useful for stuff. "For teaching and rebuking and correcting and training in righteousness so that a servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Wow. The Bible has so much power and potential for transformation. It says the Bible teaches --- it's a teaching book. It's the answer key. You know on the back of the math book where all the answers are? That's the Bible. Now you can piddle around --- I don't know about you, but I'm running out of time here --- I

don't have time to experiment with how to do family. I'm just going to go to the answer key. I don't know how to do marriage. I'm going to go to the answer key. You want to know what success is in business? You want to check with the guy down the street or Forbes magazine? I've got a better answer --- it's in the Bible. Let the Bible define what success is. Let it teach you. So, read the Bible.

It says it's good for rebuking. That means it corrects you, like mid-course. That happened to me yesterday. I'm driving around and a Bible verse hits me right in the soul and says, *Yeah, you're doing this wrong*. It convicts you of lies. You're believing a lie. So, don't just read it. Study it.

What else does it say? It's good for correcting. Correcting, the word, actually means "restored to its original design." That's what life is about --- restoring us to our original design. So, I don't know about you --- anybody here with a bent frame? Out of alignment? Want to get back? Life has beaten you or battered you like you weren't supposed to be? The Bible says if you would not just read it and study it, but memorize it, it will bring you back to top dead center.

It goes on. It says it's a training book for training in righteousness. I love this word because it's the word that used for training children, like a parent to kids. And I've had to parent myself. I wasn't really parented --- I was housed, growing up. And so, I have to reparent myself. And do you know what I'm using? The answer key. I'm going to the Bible. It's going to define what's right and real and true and what a father looks like and what a mother really is. It can do that. So, I meditate on it. I don't just memorize it. I meditate on it.

Scripture is good for all training in righteousness so that we can --- look what it says --- "so that the servant might be adequate and equipped for every good work." Adequate and equipped for every good work --- sounds a little like becoming like Christ in all of life. Yep. It does, it sounds a lot like that. That's what we do here. That's us.

So, if somebody asks you, "What kind of church is Grace Covenant Church?", this is what you tell them. "We're a Bible church." That's what we do. That all makes sense. So, we don't teach systems of theology or theories of theology as authoritative here. We just don't. We don't think that church history or even the reformers are authoritative. I think those things sometimes get lucky and spill their way into illuminating some truth for us, but the truth is in the Bible, and so we're going to keep teaching that. Okay?

So, if you look at our children's ministry --- [applause from congregation} --- thanks. It has the power to transform. Our children's ministry, oh yeah, we're going to teach those kids to memorize passages. They might not understand what they mean. That's okay. Just get them in your head, you know? Because in our student ministry, now that they're thinking more clearly and deeper, they can understand deeper things and we're going to teach them not information, but knowledge and wisdom. We're going to start exploring what a biblical worldview is. We're going to teach them to think biblically and philosophically. They get to experience, literally experience, camps and epics so that they can experience the Bible. Our adult ministry is about teaching the Bible so we can apply the Bible for life skills.

The Bible is the means that the Father has chosen for the Spirit to use to help us to become like Christ in all of life. This church started in a Bible study that soon became a thing called Walk Thru the Bible. And we're going to do the Walk Thru the Bible again. On January 12, as a church, we're going to do the Old Testament Walk Thru the Bible, just like the good old days. And then in 2020, we're spending the whole year as the Year of the Bible. We felt like so many people have come here from outside the church and from churches that didn't teach the Bible, so what do you say that we raise the tide of the whole church? Let's see what the big picture of the sovereignty of God looks like. So that's where it is. That's what we're going to do next year in 2020. I can't wait. That's who we are.

### Application

Here's how to apply this today. If you showed up thinking, What? What's the Bible? How do I start? --- here's a great way to start. Want to read your Bible, study it, meditate on it, memorize it, what do you do? Here's a great start. There are thirty-one chapters in the Book of Proverbs. It's an Old Testament book just about in the middle. Read a chapter a day. That's a good way to start reading your Bible. Pick one verse that day and see if you can memorize that verse. If you want to graduate the varsity level stuff, read the book of James every day for a month. It's going to hit a low spot, but boy, after about the twentieth time, you start getting it, like, James is in your head now. Read it every day, maybe twice a day, for thirty days. You want to go real? Memorize the Book of Romans chapter 8 and maybe chapter 5, or both. Read, memorize, meditate.

Here we go. Here's why Grace Covenant Church exists. So, we glorify God by guiding people to become like Christ in all of life. And here's what we do. We worship God in every way we can. We invest in ministries of equipping people to become like Christ to become ministers out there. And we try to spread the good news of Jesus Christ in those places of influence that we have and all over the world. And the foundation for how we get that done is the Bible. We are committed to biblical truth. It defines us. We don't define it. It says what is right and real and true and the nature of God and what He's done. And that's how we do things. And if you see that, then all of this is going to make sense. So, who's in? Who wants to be part of the Church? Who wants to be part of this church? Let me see your hands. There you go.

Let me pray.

*Lord, when You taught us to pray about Thy kingdom come and Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, I see now that You're talking about the Church. Until we see You and until the final days of justice are fulfilled, the Church is to reign on earth and we would in heaven. And so, Lord, I'd ask that You would stir our hearts again; that You would build Your church anew; that You would give her power like You haven't done in centuries. And I'd ask that You would start here in my life.*

*We don't want to waste our lives, Lord. We want to make them count. We want to make marks that last and we know that happens when we serve Your bride. We are Your church. So we pray that You would revive the earth through the Church; that Your building of the kingdom on this planet and this time is through her and that darkness would fear her; that You would show Your mighty hand in the streets and in all the land through the Church on fire, and that people would envy the power of change, the glory of worship, and the beauty of the bride, and come and be part. We pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.*