

# GFC 2020 Mission Statement

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you have your Bibles, please open to the book of Ephesians, chapter 4. Let me just say a few words before we open the Word of God.

Just to let you guys know, we are obviously doing something a little different. You know we've been in the book of Matthew, working our way through the book of Matthew with expositional sermons. Today is our annual meeting.

Often with the annual meeting, we give somewhat of a brief devotion or message related to the purpose or what we're doing as a church. And you guys know that we've had our elders retreat last month.

One of the things we were trying to do is to establish a functional mission statement for the church. And what I'd like to do, and maybe we can consider this even as part of our annual meeting, but what I'd like to do is present to you that mission statement biblically, us looking at God's Word. What is it that we're seeking to do and what's that going to look like for the church? And that's why we're looking at the book of Ephesians 4. That is also why I'm doing something completely different and have a PowerPoint up behind me. So there will be some slides up behind me that I hope will be helpful.

[ 1 : 32 ] Some of you will be really excited. Don't get your hopes up. This isn't going to happen with normal sermons. Some of you will be really disappointed that I've integrated visual aspects into a sermon. Don't be too disappointed.

This isn't going to happen again. But, all right, this is what we're doing, and I hope it will be a big help to us. So, if you will, look with me at the book of Ephesians 4, and we're looking at verses 10 through 16. Verse 10.

Verse 10.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, and we pray that you would make your word clear. You'd help us understand it. We pray also, as we look at this mission statement, that it would be in accordance with what you would desire for your church.

[ 3 : 27 ] Lord, we pray that you would make that clear. That you would make that clear. Help us to understand it. Help us to own it and live by it. We pray that it would be profitable for years to come in the future. Lord, we acknowledge as well, knowing that this is a little bit different than a normal sermon, that you would, Lord, make your messenger to be comfortable.

That the word would not be hindered by the weakness of man. For that your spirit would attend the preaching of your word, as we expect always, for your glory.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. So, just a question. I don't know if I want you to raise your hand or not, but just to begin our sermon. How many of you know the GFC purpose statement from the Constitution?

Now, when you join the church, you actually have to read it, and it's actually discussed in the new members class, but how many of you know the purpose statement off the top of your head? That's kind of what I figured. This is the GFC Constitution purpose statement.

It's not on there yet, so just wait a second. GFC Constitution, Article 2, purpose. The purpose of the church, as a visible expression of the body of Christ, is to glorify God.

[ 4 : 38 ] To this end, we are committed to the worship of God, the scriptural edification of each member, the preaching of the gospel, and the defense of the faith. Now, we're not denying this is a very good statement.

It's in our Constitution. For us to ever constitutionally change something requires a vote of, I think, two-thirds. We're not arguing to constitutionally change anything. In some ways, this expresses

what we're getting at.

As the elders met for our elders' retreat, we sought to have a functional mission statement derived from a purpose. So if we consider our Constitution's purpose statement, the purpose of the church, as a visible expression of the body of Christ, is to glorify God.

And that's where we wanted to start. That's our purpose. As a church, we exist to glorify God. I know this is groundbreaking. You guys are shocked at what we discovered while we were at our elder retreat. But we, as a church, we exist to glorify God.

That's our purpose. But when we think about our mission, we're asking the question, how do we do that? And our Constitution mentions the worship of God, scriptural edification of each member, the preaching of the gospel, and the defense of the faith, which are all good things.

[ 5 : 41 ] What we wanted to do is put those things or put really what we see in God's word into maybe we could say a functional box that we can use it, that we can remember it, that we would actually know by heart what our mission statement is as a church.

So another subject question that I'd love to raise hands. How many of you have actually already read the back of the bulletin and seen the mission statement? Okay. You guys are welcome to talk to me.

If no one reads the back of the bulletin, we don't have to keep doing the back of the bulletin. But, okay, it's on the back of the bulletin, but this is what we're going for as a church. GFC exists to glorify God by exalting the Lord, equipping the church, and evangelizing the world.

So you see there at the very beginning our purpose. We exist to glorify God. Everything we do exists to glorify God. We as human beings exist to glorify God.

We as a church exist to glorify God. And so that dictates everything we do. But as we look at God's word and we try to establish what are the things that God says as a church we are to do, these are the three that I want us to focus on.

[ 6 : 55 ] And these are the three that we've established for a mission statement, exalting the Lord, equipping the church, and evangelizing the world. And I want to especially thank Jim Costanzo actually developed for us little logos or icons for each one of those so we could just see a picture and remember.

And we'll see later. We can simplify this even to one word per line to help us remember. But for now, those are the three we're looking at. So glorifying God is still the overarching purpose for why we exist.

As I said, as a church and individually as creatures, we exist to glorify God. That's our overarching purpose. And we have rewarded the means that we saw in the Constitution to express them in a way that we think fits with God's word more clearly and also one that will be more memorable, one that we can actually own and use for the future.

And so even as we talk about this, as we go throughout our future ministries in the church, we want to be thinking of what we're doing in terms of one of these three points in our mission statement.

Are we in this trying to exalt the Lord? Are we using, is this a means for us to equip the saints or equip the church? Is this a means for us to evangelize the world? And so those are the things we feel like as a church we want to be striving for.

[ 8 : 12 ] So in this message, I want us to consider each of these three points, exalting the Lord, equipping the church, and evangelizing the world. So we'll start with the first one, exalting the Lord.

Now we think about as a church, how do we exalt the Lord? I think the primary way that we should think about exalting the Lord is through corporate worship. Our worship of God is the primary way, not the exclusive way, but the primary way in which we exalt the Lord.

You may remember we've talked about this before, but we believe worship here at Grace Fellowship Church we believe worship is a response to greatness. Now, I've said this before, but universally this is true.

Right? When you see something great, the natural response is to worship. We may not think of it in terms of worshiping God, but if you see someone perform some great act, something you can't do. Now, you'll remember my illustration when I tell you again.

I'm always impressed when Messi does something I just find impossible. And the response may be one of yelling. It may be one of clapping. It may be some form of praise. But we praise things that are great.

[ 9 : 22 ] The husband, maybe I should do it the other way around because husbands aren't great at this, are we? The wife praises her husband. But the lover expresses their love for the beloved by

praising that person.

And so, worship is a response to greatness. And so, at GFC, we have defined worship as seeing and savoring the character and works of God as revealed in His Word.

That's what we're seeking to do every time we gather together for worship. We want to exalt the greatness of our God. And so, when we think about the first point of our mission statement, it's really expressing something we've already expressed before.

We're here to exalt God, exalt the Lord. And this view of worship directs and shapes every decision we make in terms of the worship service and how the worship service functions.

We believe God has dictated to us how we are to worship Him. We're not free to worship Him any way we want to. I could spend some time going into great detail about this.

[ 10 : 21 ] I don't want to do that today. But if we were to reverse the order of any of these other points, if we were to say that corporate worship is primarily about equipping the saints, then our worship service would look different.

Or we could say our worship service is primarily about evangelizing the world. Our worship service is for unbelievers. Or our worship service is for believers if we're equipping the church. But that's not what worship is about.

What is worship about? It's about God. It's about exalting the Lord. So when we gather together for corporate worship, our primary goal foremost is that we exalt the Lord. It's not that we primarily, in corporate worship, equip the saints or evangelize the world.

Those things will happen secondarily, but we gather together to worship God. And that's what dictates how we worship. We could talk about, but there are ways in which if we prioritize the other things, worship would look different, wouldn't it?

If we thought worship was only for unbelievers, if we thought worship was only for feeding believers, but not for sharing the gospel or not necessarily for God. We've said before, it's not about, you've heard the, ask not how you can serve your country, but how your country, nevermind, how your country can serve you, but how you can serve your country.

[ 11 : 34 ] Yeah, butcher that. The same could be true for, we could say for worship. Worship isn't primarily about our receiving, but our giving to God the praise that's through his name. And so we've seen that even in our worship leaders.

I hope you've seen this. Our worship leaders are leading worship with the goal of pointing you quickly to an attribute or work of God that the natural response of seeing that is, if we see it and we savor it, our natural response is worship.

And so if we want to get the church to praise God, to worship God, we believe what we need to do is show you from God's word how great God is. And the natural response is, you can't help but praise God.

And so that's really what we're striving at in worship. And so as we think about that, what we're talking about is not necessarily anything that we're not doing. Exalting the Lord is something we've striven for in our worship.

And so we gather to worship primarily to exalt the Lord. Our coercion worship also serves to equip the church and evangelize the world. Those are secondary. Those do happen though.

[ 12 : 40 ] Think, for example, of God's word saying, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your heart to God.

And so when we gather together for corporate worship, as we interact with each other, we're to be teaching and admonishing one another. Positively and negatively almost, correcting, admonishing. Those things are going to be happening. And those things even happen when we sing hymns.

We're singing hymns not to one another. We sing hymns to God. But inevitably, as we sing our hymns to God, there's conviction, there's teaching going on in the hearts of each and every one of us.

There ought to be. And so there is a, maybe we can think of a horizontal level to our worship, but that's always secondarily. And then also we could say there's evangelism happening in the corporate worship of God.

It happens in what we read in God's Word. It happens in what we sing about God, that the Gospel's being presented. It better be happening in the preaching of the Word of God, that Christ is being presented to us and the Gospel's clearly presented.

[ 13 : 44 ] But I think we also have to understand that evangelism also happens in personal conversation that goes on after corporate worship. Our response to worship.

We leave here, we continue to discuss the Gospel. We explain to the kids the sermon. We discuss it with our wife at home. We tell people, maybe even in the community or at work, about what we've learned about God.

But there's a continuation of the evangelism going on. But primarily, worship exists to exalt the Lord. And that's really what we want to see and see happening.

Now, I spent a little time on this, but I want to say, I believe that this is an area in which GFC has thrived for years. If we were to ask people in the community, what defines GFC?

What characterizes GFC? My guess is, it'd be something along the lines of holding to God's Word, the authority of Scripture, the preaching, or the faithful preaching of the Word of God. Those are kind of the things that would be tied in with this first point of exalting the Lord that I think we've done really well at.

[ 14 : 45 ] And in some ways, I want to acknowledge maybe my own deficiencies and fears, but coming in as a new pastor to a church that's had a pastor for so long, one of my goals from the very beginning was continuity.

Let's not wreck the ship. Let's not make shipwreck of this whole thing. Let's just keep things going the way they have been going. And obviously, things have changed in the life of the church, but I've tried to just keep faithfully preaching the Word of God.

And one thing we've acknowledged over time is our church needs to have more to it than just the faithful preaching of the Word of God. That is the essential part that God has dictated we must do. But there must be more to us than simply exalting the Lord or our corporate worship.

And so what are the other areas that we want to focus in? And that's really what we're getting at with these other points. These are the things that we've identified that we want to see happening in the life of the church.

And so the second point and where I want to spend a little bit more time is on equipping the church. And that really ties in with our passage that we read from Ephesians 4, 10 through 16.

[ 15 : 51 ] This passage, if you're looking there in your Bibles, you see in verse 10, excuse me, let's look at verse 11. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers.

Now, we could spend some time looking at each of these offices. That's not my intention. Suffice it now to say that the offices of apostle and prophet, we believe, have ceased. There's not continuing revelation.

And the apostles were the ones who specifically knew the Lord and was a single generation that was not passed on. There weren't people, look, I know, I've seen billboards recently that say, apostle, so-and-so, husband and wife team, apostles.

The term apostles in church history was used for the first generation of disciples who knew the Lord. With Paul then being included in that and I think somewhat taking the place of Judas, although Matthias was nominated.

See, I said I wasn't talking about it. I got in big detail. But we believe those offices ceased.

Evangelists might be one that we would send out to share the gospel. But in particular, as we think of these others, shepherds and teachers, I think shepherds is a word that's used interchangeably in the Bible for elder.

[ 17 : 01 ] Teachers might include those who go even beyond that. We can think of our Sunday school teachers or other opportunities like growth groups where people would teach in the church. But we think of those who are teaching us. Why are they giving to the church?

And what's the answer to the reason for which they're given? Well, it says that they have been given to the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry. So as we consider as a church, what is the role of our elders and those who teach our people?

Their role is to equip the saints. Now, we specifically chose for our phrase equipping the church because we worried that saints might be pretty confusing in a Catholic town. Right?

We're not equipping those who have died who have been saint or whatever happens to become a saint. We understand saints in God's word means holy ones, agios, those who are holy, those who have been set apart by God.

It's interchangeably for Christians. And so we're using church with a capital C here that the role of the elders and teachers is to equip the church, the Christians for the work of ministry. [18:06] We send beds to the question, what's the work of ministry? Well, it's defined here in verse 12. I think we have almost a parallelism to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ.

The work of ministry of God's people. And this includes lay people. Christians, your work of ministry is to build up the body of Christ, to build up the church.

The role of the elders is to equip you to be able to do that. And I think we're acknowledging in elders, we haven't maybe been doing a great job of that other than teaching you through the preaching and through the Sunday school, maybe growth groups.

But we want to be more intentional in equipping the saints so that, or equipping the church so that you guys will do that work of ministry. Building up the body of Christ. And again, the body of Christ really just means the church, right?

Those who are Christians. And it goes on in verse 13 and says, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Let me just ask, at what point will we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God?

[19:15] There's a way, and ultimately that doesn't happen until we're glorified, does it? But the role of the church, the role of individual Christians is to be investing in one another to move each other in that direction.

To help one another, to better attain unity of the faith, to better know the Lord. And I think that's an experiential knowledge. So, unity within the church, but also through experience, we know, not that we have an academic knowledge of Christ or of God, but that we relationally know God.

And so, your goal as a Christian is to help other Christians to relationally know God. I think that's a big task, and I think that's one we haven't emphasized enough and we want to see.

And it goes on in verse 13. The second part of verse 13 says, to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Now, mature manhood doesn't mean when you reach 18 or 21. It's not voting age or drinking age. When he says mature manhood, he's obviously speaking of a spiritual term here. Until we reach spiritual maturity. So, you know your work with other Christians is done when that other Christian has reached spiritual maturity.

[20:35] When does a Christian reach spiritual maturity? Again, I think it's ultimately not to the glorified. And so, I think what Paul's calling us to do is say, Christians are to be investing in one another and pushing each other toward maturity.

Moving each other toward maturity up until the point that they reach full maturity. Or, if you're not sure what the mature manhood means, it says, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

The measure of the stature which almost speaks of height. Again, we're thinking manhood, someone growing when they reach mature manhood. Here's the stature we're seeking to attain. The fullness of Christ.

So, who do we know? Maybe that's not the way of asking it, but, who reaches the fullness of Christ? Well, I prayed for the church in light of the fact that Pastor Hendricks has passed away who's an associate member of Reformed Baptist Network.

there's a saint who loved the Lord who now has reached the fullness of Christ in mature manhood. But I think the point is we're to keep pushing each other in sanctification.

[21:44] We're to help each other. We're to seek to bring each other along to be more and more and more and more like Christ until we're fully like Christ. Which isn't going to happen until we die.

And so the work's not done, ever. We're always to be helping each other. That includes me as your pastor. That includes elders. So our role is to equip you that you might be pushing us to mature more in Christ.

To reach the fullness of Christ because we're not there yet. Paul says not as though I've already attained this but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. And I think that's too what we want to be doing.

And then in verse 14 we read really dealing with the idea of protection. It says so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine by human cunning by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

So when we're immature Christians what happens is we're easily deceived by false teaching. And so if we consider God's word cumulatively we think of the role of elders.

[ 22 : 47 ] Elders are given the specific task of shepherding the flock which includes protecting them from false teachers. So the elders are given a specific role of protecting the flock from false teachers.

We're to identify when a false teacher comes into the church we're to identify them and to protect you from them to call out false teaching. But what's the role of the member? What's the role of the normal Christian in the church?

To help one other grow so that you're not persuaded by false teaching. So you're not deceived by false teaching. So you're not constantly being you picture this picture a boat and there's hurricane maybe but you picture the waves.

I'm one who has motion sickness. Without drama I'm done for. Right? So any of you experience this you know what I'm talking about. You're out on the boat and the boat's back and forth. It's saying an immature Christian is just like this.

They push one way and then picture the grandfather the pendulum swings all the way to the other side and now they believe this. Oh and then someone says oh and now they're over here. That's not what we want. We want to help each other to be firmly grounded in truth.

[ 23 : 51 ] And my concern is that it's easy for us to think about this being solely the role of the pastor and elders. And what we want you to see is that's not how we see it. Our job is to equip you to be able to help one another.

And we want to be more intentional in seeing that happen. And it says in verse 15, speaking the truth in love. Well I think speaking the truth in love actually requires interaction with one another. It requires us talking to each other and knowing what's going on in people's lives and being willing to have spiritual conversation with one another. And that means we can't sneak into the church lane and sneak out early.

Part of our worship isn't just what happens that other people are giving to us. This isn't a concert. It's our interaction with each other is an essential part of what we're doing when we gather together as a church. If you're not speaking the truth in love to someone you're not doing what God's called you to as a Christian.

God's called us to be speaking the truth in love which again means we have to know each other. We have to be willing to enter spiritual conversations. We have to sometimes get beyond weather and politics or right now maybe the coronavirus.

[ 25 : 04 ] We have to talk about something else of lasting value. None of those three are. And so we want to get deeper with each other and have these kind of conversations which would mean I think speaking the truth in love would imply edification, building each other up, that you're conformed to the image of Christ.

But it also will include loving correction. There will be times we have to rebuke one another. We do that in love not to put one another down, not to exalt ourselves, but there's loving correction that's necessary.

And then look at verse 15. We were just looking at rather speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. Now individually this is true, cumulatively this may be true when you think of Christ as the head of the church.

But he's saying the desire is that each Christian will be growing in sanctification, being more and more conformed to the image of Christ, and that as we do that in each other's lives, together as a church, we're growing into Christ who is the head of the church.

Which almost implies the opposite is true. If we're not investing in each other, then we're not growing into Christ who is our head and we're not having the unification that he spoke of earlier. But as a body, there's sanctification going on in conformity to the image of Christ.

[ 26 : 28 ] And then in verse 16, that the body may grow and build itself up in love. Now this happens when every part of the body, the church functions together. You see in verse 16, the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped when each part is working properly.

So now Paul's going back to what he said in 1 Corinthians about this body analogy that the church, each one of us has different roles to play. We're not all eyeballs, we're not all ears, we all have different roles to play in the body.

And he says when each part is fletching properly, then we're all growing and being conformed into the image of Christ. And so again, this implies that each of us has a role to play.

There's not one of us to use recent terminology, none of us has a non-essential job in the life of the church. We're all essential workers in the life of the church. If we're not all working, then the church is not growing the way it needs to grow.

And so the church then is equipped, look at the same word used in verse 16, by every joint with which it is equipped. So the body, the church is equipped with the saints who are being equipped by the elders to grow.

[ 27 : 43 ] And so we have that equipped being used again. So the church is equipped by individual members being equipped. And that results in it building itself up. Now, there's some of us reform types that maybe chafe at the idea of building itself up.

But the way God builds his church is by letting the church build itself up. The way God builds his church is by the church investing in each other, maybe I should say Christians investing in other Christians.

And in the process, the inevitable result is they build each other up. The church is being built, it builds itself up by investing in each other. That's God's appointed means for building his church up. So if we're not doing that, if we're solely depending upon maybe the preaching or something else, then we're not doing what we need to to build the church up. Or maybe I could say we ought not be surprised if we don't see the church being built up.

So there's a phrase that we want to kind of get through and one that we may use in the future to help us to understand that, and that's really just helping each other move to the right.

[ 28 : 49 ] Now I know the timing of that is very poor considering the political situation. I'm not talking about politics and moving to the right. If you can imagine, and it's easy to imagine because we've got the picture behind you.

So if you look here and you think of on this side over here, we'll call it the left side, even though I'm not directly looking that way, on the left side we have the point of salvation when we become a Christian.

If we think about our life moving as a timeline to the right, the rest of our lives should be a journey of sanctification. You see the arrow moving to the right. We're being sanctified. We're being conformed more and more to the image of Christ until one day we're glorified.

We're perfectly conformed to the image of Christ. But this is a journey we're all in, and if we wanted to make it more accurate perhaps, we could have made it like a plane moving upward. Not an airplane, but you understand a plane mathematically.

We could have it moving upward and to the right. But that just complicates things and we don't want to say upward and to the right. So if we just picture a timeline of your life, you become a Christian, and the goal throughout the Christian life is to be more and more conformed to the image of Christ.

[ 29 : 51 ] And what we want you to see is that in our second point, the mission of our church, we want to be helping each other move to the right. We want to help each other be more like Christ. We want to help each other with sanctification.

That's what God's called us to do as a church. So we see that in verse 13b, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

That symbol on the right side, the glory there, that's what we're talking about. There's mature manhood. That's the fullness of Christ. And so each of us has a part to play in helping each other grow in sanctification.

We want to equip you to be able to do that work in each other. We'll talk more about how that's going to happen, but for now, just know that that's what we're driving for. And so if we were to use a broad terminology, we might call all of this discipleship.

A major point in terms of our second point of the mission statement is to say, discipleship has to be happening in the church. We need to be investing in one another. We need to be equipped to invest in one another and helping each other to grow to be more like Christ.

[ 30 : 58 ] Christ. Now, this may, maybe you're able to read that, maybe not, but let me just throw that up there. What I'm saying is not unique to Ephesians 4.

It's really everything we might see encompassed in the one another statements. And I just, from the internet, pulled a sampling of the one another statements that we see in God's word. Not all of them, but just, I even selectively chose a few of them.

But we have, for example, love one another. And that's used more than 16 times in God's word. Be devoted to one another. Build up one another. Admonish one another.

Serve one another. Bear one another's burdens. Forgive one another. Submit to one another. Look to the interests of one another. Teach one another.

Comfort one another. Encourage one another. Adort one another. Stir up, which really is provoke or stimulate one another, to love and good works. Show hospitality to one another.

[ 31 : 55 ] Employ the gifts that God has given us for benefit of one another. And pray for one another. Now, there's 17 of them there, and that's a small sampling of God's word. But what we see throughout this is universally God has commanded us to do things in the life of other Christians.

And God calls us to invest in other Christians in ways that's going to help them to be more and more like Christ. And that's really what we want to push in terms of the mission statement of the church. Our second point is that we might equip the church to do this, to invest in one another, to see each other grow, to be more like Christ.

Thirdly, and I'll spend a little less time here, but evangelizing the world. We read earlier, if you want to just briefly look there with me, let's turn to Matthew 28.

Now, you guys know where I'm at in Matthew, it won't be long. I don't want to guess because then you'll call me out if I don't make it, but sometime early to mid next year, we'll be in Matthew 28.

And so we're headed this direction, and we read this earlier in our worship service. But let's just look at the Great Commission for a second. Matthew 28, let's start at verse 16.

[ 33 : 14 ] Now, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and earth and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

So we see in this that we're talking about exalting the Lord, and we see in this passage, Jesus is exalted by God the Father. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Jesus is headed at this point to sit at the right hand of the Father, and all authority on heaven and earth has been given to him. What does he do with that authority? Well, even before I say that, let me say, he's exalted by the Father.

He's also exalted by those who are there. It says, and they worshipped him. Some doubted, but those who saw him, they worshipped him. This goes back to our first point of when we see Christ, when we see God the Father for who he is, our response is one of worship.

[ 34 : 22 ] And so they worship him. And so Jesus now with this authority, he says, he gives that great commission. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Well, a disciple, if you're not familiar with the Greek, a disciple literally means learner or follower.

So someone who's following someone to learn. And so when he says, go and make disciples, he's saying, go and make followers of whom? Of Christ. Go and make followers of Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to make someone a follower of Jesus Christ? What else might we call that?

What's happening in that person's life? It's salvation. When an unbeliever becomes a disciple, he's saved.

And so implied in this is we've got to present the gospel. We've got to share the gospel with people so that they might become disciples who formerly were not disciples. So make those who are not disciples to be disciples.

That then is why they are baptized, baptizing them in the name of the Father. Because what do we do with disciples? When someone comes into the Lord, they're baptized. And so go make disciples, baptizing them.

[ 35 : 31 ] And so again, we get this idea that Jesus is specifically commanding to make disciples of whom? All the nations. So we're commanded by God to take the gospel to all the nations, which broadly speaking, we might just call missions.

One focus of our church, one aspect, one mission of our church has to be missions. Not because we think it's good and we picked out a few, but because this is what God's commanded us to do. God has called us to go and make disciples of all the nations.

That's why we would say evangelizing the world, because he's called us to all nations. That means no people group is excluded. And the work is not done until every tribe and tongue and nation is heard and some from each of these people groups have believed.

Habakkuk 2.14 says, For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Now, what does that look like in a church? How are we going to do that? Well, for years we had Shepherding the Heart Ministries and that ministry continues, though not necessarily under the umbrella of the church, but we're blessed to have Ted and Margie going and teaching people about how to parent.

[ 36 : 41 ] And in the process, the gospel is presented and that's really a way that we have functioned in spreading God's word to really the ends of the earth as they've traveled all over the world. But there are probably more ways that we could think of that maybe are closer to home or maybe different ways that we haven't thought of.

Our nursing home ministry is one way that we're spreading the gospel. Our food distribution is one way we're meeting physical needs, but also a means by which we're sharing the gospel with people. The Reformed Baptist Network, as we participate in this association of churches, one purpose, one of the primary purposes for our association is the sending of missionaries to foreign countries and the health in planning churches here in the United States.

We have short-term missions. For years, we did trips to Jamaica. We were supposed to go to the Dominican Republic this year. We hope that that may be an ongoing trip in the future that we can go and help with the work in the Dominican Republic.

But participating in short-term missions, I think we have to have a vision for sending missionaries from our own church. We want to be pushing that. We want to be encouraging that.

We want to have a vision for that, that we send men and women out from our church to share the gospel really to the ends of the earth. That means we have to plan for it. That means we have to train people for that.

[ 37 : 59 ] That also means we really have to change our church culture where we have a vision for that. We're always thinking about that. And even as I think about that, we want to expect that to happen. And we want to encourage it to happen.

And I'm thinking of sending missionaries out, but a related one that we have to keep in mind is the idea of church planting locally. We want to be a church that plants churches. I think that's part of what evangelizing the world looks like.

And so we want to be positively even now thinking about where's the next location that GFC is going to plant a church? Where are people coming from? Where do we see a need?

Let's go ahead and start a Bible study. Let's start working in that direction to plant churches in those areas. There's ways in which personally I have I went to Zambia and helped train ministers there. That's part of how we're functioning to do that. It may be visiting missionaries on the field and coming back and bringing reports about that. It may be bringing Mark Chansky, the coordinator for Reformed Baptist Network in to tell us about a trip that he took to visit one of our missionaries and getting updates from them.

[ 39 : 04 ] It's praying for our missionaries. I think one of the most important aspects is personal evangelism. Now, when we think of missions, I think we almost always think of foreign missions.

I've included planting churches. I've included even our nursing home ministry and food distribution. But I want to encourage that what we're saying in our mission statement is we have to have a vision for every Christian to want to and be participating in sharing the gospel with others.

I know that sounds intimidating. Let's go back to what we saw in Ephesians 4. Equipping the saints for the work of ministry. So part of the responsibility that falls on the elders is that we need to be equipping you to do that.

Now, this isn't me trying to get out of it, but let me say at the very least, you ought to be able to do what the woman at the well did. You remember that account in John. John 4, 28 through 30.

So the woman left her water jar and went away into the town and said to the people, come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ? They went out of the town and were coming to him.

[ 40 : 10 ] So here's a very effective form of personal evangelism. She says, come and see what I've seen. You tell me if you think this is the Christ. Now, the simplest way possible, I think this is just simply saying, come to church with me.

I have seen Christ revealed in his word at church. You come and tell me if that's what you see. Just come and see. I think it can be as simple as that. I think in many times it needs to be more elaborate, but we want to equip you for more elaborate.

But for now, let's just say there's not one of us who can't say to someone, come see Christ as we gather together for worship and as his word is preached. And so that ought to be a part of what we're seeking to do.

And then even as we think of Matthew 28, verse 20, it says, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you. Now, make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them to do all that I commanded you.

What is teaching them to do all that I commanded you? See how well you've tied this all together. It's point two of our mission statement, isn't it? Equipping the saints for the work of ministry. So as we think about that, then we could possibly argue that all this falls really under two categories.

[ 41 : 26 ] Worship is our exaltation and the discipleship is equipping and evangelizing. These are both forms of discipleship. We bring people to know the Lord and then we bring them further along to the right to be more and more conformed to the image of Christ.

What we as your elders are seeing from God's word is this is what God has called his church to do. This is what he's called us to be about doing. Equipping and evangelizing and exalting. So just a few words then in application.

We want to disciple people by sharing the gospel and seeing unbelievers become followers or disciples of Christ. And then we disciple them also by investing in the lives of others to see them move to the right and be more and more conformed to the image of Christ.

I don't know how much that's happening in our church, but this is something we want to see happening where we could go to any one of you and say, who are you meeting with? Who are you investing in?

Who are you helping to move to the right? And you'll know what we're talking about, how it fits in terms of our mission statement. And you'll be thinking about who can I invest in? Who's investing in me? Maybe this looks like we get into groups of three or four in some kind of accountability groups.

[ 42 : 37 ] We read God's word. We encourage one another and we're helping each other deal with the struggles of life and the temptations to sin. But again, just in summary, this is a mission statement that we want to present to you.

Grace Fellowship Church exists to glorify God by exalting the Lord, equipping the church, and evangelizing the world. Now, one question we want to answer and it's essential that we understand is why.

Why are we doing this? And this goes back to what I said at the beginning, but the church is called to glorify God. We exist to glorify God. And we have a responsibility as a church to say, how are we to do that?

How has God told us we're to do it? What is God's word said that the church should be doing? And what we have come to the conclusion of is these are the biblical ways that God has laid out that his church ought to be going about glorifying him.

So our purpose is to glorify God. The why is because we're to glorify God. The means by which we do that are really the three points that we've talked about in our mission statement.

[ 43 : 42 ] So God's glory then is foremost in the purpose of the church. Apart from God's glory, there's no reason for the church to exist. We exist for his glory. Mark Devers says it this way.

The proper ends for a local congregation's life and actions are the worship of God, the edification of the church, and the evangelization of the world. These three purposes in turn serve the glory of God.

And so these, I mean, what he said are really what we've already said with exalting, equipping, and evangelizing. These three things serve our means or serve as our means to glorify God.

So again, we can summarize and if we want to summarize maybe in the shortest, quickest way and the way I hope that we'll remember and function for, function under is we exist to exalt, to equip, and to evangelize or just exalt, equip, evangelize with these logos.

Now, I know the sermon is a little different than what we normally see. But my hope is that God will use this in extraordinary ways in your life and in the life of this church to help us to be better at glorifying God as a church and as individuals as part of Grace Fellowship Church.

[ 44 : 58 ] Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word and how it's instructed us and how, Lord, we know that the journey has not been easy for us to consider your

word and to try to apply it and to, Lord, settle on the ways in which you would desire us to be glorifying you as a church.

And Lord, we pray that what we've seen from your word would be consistent with what you would desire, what you believe, what you teach us to do, and that we would be faithful to your word that you might be glorified in Grace Fellowship Church.

And Lord, we know that for most of the congregation, this is new. We pray that you would help them to receive it. Lord, that you would help us to live by it. For we long to see you glorified here at Grace Fellowship Church.

We pray this all in Christ's name. Amen.