

**Our Distinctive DNA – Part II**  
Our Mission Statement

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**Review:**

If you wanted to know what type of car I drive, and I responded to you by saying, “It has four tires, a steering wheel and an engine,” that would be accurate and important information. It would confirm for you that I drive a car and not a bicycle or a skateboard. But in terms of helping you to identify what type of car it is – the information only goes so far...

That description is a little bit like our purposes – If someone asks you about Lake Cities Community Church and you tell them that we worship God – we share the Gospel, help people to grow spiritually and love one another – that is accurate and important information. It certainly confirms that we are an orthodox Christian church – not a civic club, not a small business. But for someone who wants to know what type of church we are – they will want more information.

At this point I hope you will turn to our mission statement. This morning we are continuing our series on Divine Directions, and will finish looking at our mission statement which reads:

*“Our mission is to glorify the Triune God through the richness of historic Christian worship as we grow together in faith and share God’s grace with others; anchoring all things in the truth of God’s Word.”*

You will recall that our mission statement have five parts: (1) to glorify the Triune god, (2) through the richness of historic Christian worship, (3) as we grow together in faith, (4) and share God’s grace with others (5) anchoring all things in the truth of God’s Word.

Last week we looked at the first two phrases – the first of which is the importance of glorifying God in all things, and how easy it would be to listen to that *sticky sweet evil voice* beckoning us to become a human-centered organization. No – we must glorify God - shine the light upon him and not on ourselves. We also examined the particular distinctive of historical Christian worship – as one way we can glorify God. We recognizing that God has been at work building His

church for 2,000 years – and this magnifies Him and humbles us. Unfortunately as evangelicals, we know very little of church history, and our church desires to reconnect historically and we believe that enriches our worship time together.

This morning we turn our attention to the remaining three parts of our mission statement – (3) growing together in faith, (4) sharing God’s grace with others, and (5) anchoring all things in the truth of God’s word. Let’s look at the third phrase – growing together in faith.

### **Growing Together in Faith**

At the end of the year, I was helping my 3<sup>rd</sup> grade daughter Taylor learn about pronouns. We were looking at sentences in a workbook and identifying and underlining the pronouns. Not the most exciting homework to be sure. In fact, once Taylor started falling asleep and I said – Taylor! – quick - name two pronouns: She was startled and said, “Who, me?” I said, “Excellent! Good job!”

No - that didn’t really happen (the joke – I did help her with pronoun homework), but I thought a joke would help because pronouns are not very exciting - really. In the world of grammar and writing, pronouns are like dry toast. But, in the study of the Bible, at times, our friend the pronoun can be highly important. According to my very exciting Greek Syntax textbook there are 16,500 pronouns in the New Testament.

Hold onto this idea as we consider the third phrase in our mission statement: “*As we grow together in faith.*” What is the emphasis this phrase? First, it talks about *growing* – a reference to our second purpose as a church. We know something about that, because we have studied growing spiritually a few weeks ago. Second, it states that we desire to grow in our *faith*. We have not talked much about faith, yet. We will hear more about faith in a few weeks.

But what is really being emphasized here and what I want us to focus on is the idea of community – “**We grow together** in faith.” *We not me*. Together not alone or individually. [Swiss](#)

psychologist Paul Tournier said, “There are two things we cannot do alone, one is to be married and the other is to be a Christian.” (Philip Yancey, *Church? Why Bother?* p.37)

Now – I want you to think again about those pronouns as you turn to our first text this morning - [1Cor. 3:16](#) “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” Who is this verse talking about? Most would answer – about ME – I am a temple of God – the Spirit lives in me. But not so fast – the pronouns take center stage – and there are three of them in this verse – and the question is, “Are the pronouns singular or plural?” Is it about ME or WE? Granted sometimes it is hard to tell in the English version, but in the Greek it is clear – all here are plural! A Texas International Version of the Bible would help us: “Do y’all not know that y’all are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in y’all?” You see Paul is not talking about you as an individual but us – as a church – We together are the new temple of God – The Spirit my friends is here in this place. The focus is not *Me but We* – not on you, but y’all! Don’t think about you and the Spirit working together in your private prayer closet – think about the community- the church!

One commentator notes: “Paul challenges the church with the fact that they together (note the plural constructions) are the spiritual temple of God, because the Spirit of God dwells in them.” W. Harold Mare, EBC, 1 Cor. And so Paul challenges us this morning as to our identity – we are to grow together in faith. We are a community church in the biblical sense of that word.

Tuck away these “Greek fun facts” regarding pronouns – the Greek singular pronoun “you” occurs 1,067 times in 709 verses in the NT. On the other hand, the plural pronoun “you” occurs 1,840 times in 1,343 verses. When you are reading in the NT, chances are almost twice as good that when you read about “you” in the NT it is a corporate focus

What does this mean in terms of application? It means we need you to be part of us, part of us. It means that if you are looking for a church in which to come and as a church sit in the back and

be alone, this is probably not the church for you. It means that we must be welcoming to those God brings to us – we must be a church that excels at integrating new people into the community. We want to be a church that compels people to be involved with the group. It means that we will seek to do things together, as a team, rather than having Lone Rangers set off to ministry. It means that you and I are interrelated. We need one another. We are dependent. As you grow - I grow. As you struggle - I will struggle. When you rejoice – I will rejoice with you, and when you weep – I will weep with you. That is what it means to grow together in faith.

### **Share God’s grace with others.**

Now if we are going to be close like that – in an intimate community – we better know how to get along and the next phrase of our mission statement is of utmost importance. Look at it -- ...and share God’s grace with others...

At first blush, in this phrase we hear an echo of our fourth purpose to share the gospel with the world. This was intentional, but those who worked on the mission statement will recall that the intent was to have a distinctive that was broader, in terms of grace – not just sharing the grace of the gospel, but sharing grace with one another. I invite you to turn to Colossians 4:6 for the type of grace I am speaking about this morning. Paul says:

**Col. 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.**

Paul is talking here about the importance of how we communicate to one another – our speech – that our words are chosen carefully and used gracefully. The definition of grace in this context is. “Attractiveness that invites a favorable reaction, *graciousness*.” (BDAG Greek Lexicon, 1079). Throughout the pages of the New Testament we are instructed to be careful in our speech –

that we would have speech that is helpful for the building up of the body – speech that is gracious, even when difficult messages need to be communicated.

I don't have to tell you that not all churches and certainly not all individuals have graciousness as part of their DNA. To gather together in the intimacy of Christian community with ungracious people may be the most difficult things in the world. An Arabic proverb says, "The tongue is the neck's enemy." How true, James chapter 3 says that no one can tame the tongue – it is full of poison and a restless evil!

Because of this danger – and by way of encouragement, I want to commend you. I think that gracious speech and graceful actions have been characteristic of our church these past months. For example, one week we had not wine for communion and another week not enough communion cups. But no one pointed fingers – not one got mad - everyone was quick to understand I heard grace. Also, we have had to make several important and difficult decisions where we did not have unanimity of opinion – yet we had unity of heart and gracious conversation and interaction between people with differing points of view. I don't think I am wearing rose colored glasses. Often the pastor will be the first person to feel the barbs of ungrace and we have very much be characterized by grace – to God's glory.

As we move toward formalizing membership, we are going to ask you to read and agree to a document called Relational Commitments. It is almost ready for your review – the Elder's have reviewed the document and a few ministry leaders within our church and studying it. This set of commitments is intended to unpack this distinctive of being graceful toward one another, to formalize it – outlining how we will handle disagreement and conflict and church discipline. I look forward to you reading this, and I am optimistic for us that as we grow and move forward, we can continue to be a graceful church.

## **Anchored in God's Word.**

The mission statement starts large – *God's glory* (what is bigger than that?) and then narrows down to talk about glorifying god through historical Christian worship – growing together in faith, sharing grace with each other. Now, in the final fifth phrase - it gets big again. A summary statement - Anchoring all things in the truth of God's word.”

Last summer we visited the Library of Congress – 27 million books. Do you think they would be so bold to state whether one book is their best? One piece of literature states, “Can any one book be singled out as the most treasured of the 27 million books in the Library of Congress? That honor belongs to the Gutenberg Bible.” (*The Library of Congress*, Allan Fowler, p.3). Printed 560 years ago by the inventor of the printing press – one of only a few copies in the world.

We value the Bible, that ancient book, that important book, that book that has shaped history more than all the kings and wars of history combined – that book of books – we value the Bible because we believe in its inspiration, inerrancy and authority. Please turn to our last text – 2 Tim 3:16. It reads, **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” 2 Tim 3:16**

Remember second Timothy is a pastoral letter – it is from Paul to young Timothy in Ephesus – telling him how to order and organize the church. He is saying “You want to teach people – help them to grow?” Great – Bible can do that. “Do you want to help people to live together in community to obey God?” Super – the Bible can do that – reproofing – correction – training in right living. Like an anchor – the Word of God holds us where we need to be and keep us from drifting into error. What a treasure we have been entrusted with. We will spend much more time in future messages and classes talking about the Bible and its importance to us as a community of faith, but let me end with this story about the Bible that inspired me this week.

Booker T. Washington was the most important African American leader in our country at the turn of the century. His focus was on bringing education to freed African American slaves. For example, he founded Tuskegee University in Alabama.

Shortly after slavery was abolished, Washington described the immense desire of African Americans to go to school - which had previously been kept from them. Listen to his words and what the people wanted to read: "As fast as any kind of teachers could be secured they were, because not only were the day-schools filled but night-schools as well. The great ambition of the older people was to try to learn to read the Bible before they died. With this end in view, men and women who were fifty or seventy-five years old would often be found in the night-school – and Sunday-schools were formed soon after freedom." (*Up From Slavery*, Booker T. Washington, p.20-21).

We talked on Wednesday night how in most of America Sunday Schools came as a result of evangelistic efforts – in the African American community they rose because finally after years of hearing the Bible with their ears, they were able to read it with their own eyes – and they had to set up Sunday Schools to accommodate all those who desired to read and study and learn the Bible.

I share that because we are so spoiled, we so much take the Scripture for granted. In terms of application, I desire for everyone, from our children to the adults to be trained in how to be a serious student of the Bible – I want every family to have the proper Bible study tools - concordances, dictionaries, atlases, Bible software – we plan to put together recommended lists of such tools for you. Why? Because as we know the Bible better - we are able to know the *God of the Bible*. That is the goal - to know Him. And He has revealed himself here – in the Word.

**Conclusion:**

May our DNA hold the distinction of community – togetherness, and that of sharing grace with one another. May we be series students of the Bible so that we would know Him and love Him.

Do you remember the elevator from last week? When you find yourself on the elevator and you only have 30 seconds to share with the person next to you about this new church - I hope you will remember the five phrases of our mission statement – That we are a church that seeks to glorify God – through historic Christian worship, as we grow together in faith – and share God’s grace with others – anchoring all things in the truth of God’s word. With that DNA we will worship God. With that DNA we will grow spiritually. With that DNA we will love one another. With that DNA we will share the Gospel with a hurting world. To His glory. Amen.