

## Moving One Step Closer - From the Pastor's Heart

Recently Pastor Jason shared a message clarifying Grace's direction - *One Step Closer*. What it means and the hope behind the vision.

Grace seeks to recapture the heart and passion of the early church and live out God's call in our world (contemporary culture). The modern church seems less about passion and more about rules and regulations, labeling and defining people by placing them in neat little boxes, "seeker" or "believer," and tailoring a message to that group.

Citing Matthew 5:13 - Jason shared that in many ways the American church seems to have lost its saltiness - the reason that compels us to attend. Non-Christians don't see the difference between their lives and ours - same divorce rate, debt, and family issues. There is a disconnect between what Jesus called us to do and what we're experiencing in reality.

GCR staff has come to realize that defining Grace as either a seeker or believer church is too limiting. It's like saying "He's a dad" but ignoring the fact that he's also a husband, a pastor, a friend, a neighbor. The two categories (seeker, believer) may sound nice, but they are restrictive.

Grace wants to be a *people-sensitive* church. Not focusing on just one group, but intentionally meeting each person where he/she is and intentionally energizing each of us to move *One Step Closer*. Grace wants to be a place where it is more about the process of going deeper with God, helping each of us to see what one step closer might look like for ourselves.

Matthew 22:34 says, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... Love your neighbor as yourself."*

At Grace, *One Step Closer* means growing to love Jesus and love people in an ever-increasing manner. Making the commitment to not just be about "getting saved" but about FULL discipleship. Not just getting across the line, but being people continually in the process of allowing God's spirit to change us from the inside out (transforming). Moving constantly *One Step Closer* to loving Jesus and loving people, the way Jesus intended.

### *How does this impact Sunday gatherings?*

We want to worship *authentically*. Right now many Christians struggle to really worship God because they are often caught up giving attention and focus to lesser things. We want to shift our thinking and compel others to worship through our example. To achieve that we need to use

language that real people use - *avoiding exclusive "Christian" code*. We want to demonstrate that *we live in the same real world* that everyone else does - that's why we use videos and cultural elements in our messages. Everyday we are hit with the world's value system, if we acknowledge that and move forward, our message increases its impact. *"You've heard it said, but I tell you...."* We want to send the message that there's more to life than what you know... sharing *what it means to live life in the kingdom* and not settling.

Because not everyone is impacted by the same things on Sundays, we are offering both classic and contemporary styles of services.

And finally, we need to be a Church that *extends Grace*. GCR will continue to reach out globally, but also locally - in our community, our neighborhoods, our friends, and our workplace. If you have people in your life who you wonder what they might be like if they could move just one step closer, reach out to them. Invest relationally with others. Grace seeks to help each of us move, to go the

distance and to discover Jesus' intention for the church.

Greater things are still to be done!