



GEORGETOWN CHURCH OF CHRIST

VALUE #1: TRUTH WITH GRACE

"To be a Christ follower is to be faithful amid tension. To stay engaged, to remain hopeful, to love anyway, to walk with integrity, and to bear witness to the love, mercy, and grace of Christ. This is becoming increasingly difficult, but such is our call as followers of Jesus. It's not merely what we believe but also how we engage."

Eugene Cho, *Thou Shalt Not Be a Jerk: A Christian's Guide to Engaging Politics*

Have you ever asked yourself how do we represent Jesus in a post-Christian culture? Let's face it, as the world becomes more politically polarized and relationally divided, Christianity's influence has moved from the center of society to the fringe. Being a Christian in our society, which once was thought as a positive, is looked at as a threat.

I believe what the divided world needs the most in a united church. Regardless of who holds office, our mission as a church never changes. The way that we continue to represent Jesus in the world, is to follow his example and to enter in to the world full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

To be honest, we haven't always done a great job at living within the tension of truth with grace. One of our biggest challenges is to fall to one side or the other, which has led people to rebel from the Christian faith or to believe that everything is relative.

Let's look at problem number one. Truth without grace leads to rebellion. How many of you were raised in really strict religious homes where there was only truth but no grace? These homes tend to develop their kids through rules, not relationships, which causes the kid(s) to eventually rebel.

I see this happen in church as well. The churches I know that are so rigid with all the rules and regulations tend to have a "you are in if you look, act and believe the same way I do and you are out if you don't" type mentality. This leads them to create unrealistic standards, that even their leaders cannot live up to and leave no room for repentance and grace. There are many people that I have talked to that believe they have to be perfect to walk through the doors of our churches, and we must change that perception because it is simply not true.

On the other hand there is problem two. Grace without truth leads to relativism. These are the people who say there is no such thing as absolute truth, doctrine doesn't matter, my truth is my truth and your truth is your truth. These are the people who look to happiness as their ultimate standard and say, "as long as it doesn't hurt anybody it doesn't matter what I do."

The church can fall into this relativistic trap as well. I have seen churches that are so afraid of being looked at as closed-minded or bigoted that they change their theology to fit their cultural beliefs instead of trying to engage culture because of their theological beliefs.

In the Georgetown Church of Christ we are striving to be a church that shares truth with grace. We do this by caring more about the person we are talking to than merely winning an argument or "being right." We are not afraid to call sin, sin, but it is always said in a way in order to win people for the Gospel and not to simply beat them over the head with the truth.

I pray that our church can be a "belong before you believe" place where questions, debate, and doubt are met with compassionate understanding and Biblical truth.

Church Practice

One of the practices I would like to see us adopt to embed truth with grace into our church is to make the commitment to "seek first to understand before being understood."

What this means is, even if you have strong convictions or opinions about something, make it a point to be curious, ask questions, and try to see things from the other person's perspective. It means to when it comes time to speak that you speak the truth in love and make a defense against the issue and not against the person.



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VALUE #2: GIVING WITH JOY

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."
Winston Churchill

We live in a world that is constantly tell us, "Get, get, get. Consume, consume, consume." Everywhere we look we are being told that we don't have enough, that the things we do have are not good enough, and therefore we are not good enough.

We may not say it this way but we can see these tendencies pop up in our life with comments like: the kitchen looks dated, I think it is time for a remodel; or this car has close to 100,000 miles on it, I think it is time to trade it in for something newer and nicer; or this TV is a little small, I think it is time for an upgrade.

Now, am I saying there is anything inherently wrong with updating your kitchen, buying a new car or getting a bigger TV? No. But what I want you to do is to think about your motivations behind some of these decisions. Do you NEED these things or are you simply falling prey to the idols of this world that constantly say, "Buy, buy, buy. Spend, spend, spend?"

The reason I am bringing this up is because it is hard to give with joy when you are up to your eyeballs in debt. I believe one of the main reasons people do not give and give with joy is because they are drowning in debt and living way beyond their means. You are missing out on the blessings of giving because you have been lured in by the instant gratification of getting. Today is the day to break free from those unhealthy financial habits and to learn Godly stewardship practices.

Another reason why I think people find it hard to give with joy is because you have seen this giving message be abused by different churches, ministers, and non-profits. You watch the TV shows and documentaries of the TV evangelists who got rich off the backs of the poor. You have seen the "health and wealth gospel" preachers preach prosperity for those who are generous, only to find that the only one prospering was the preacher. I think God is just as disgusted at this behavior as the rest of us, but this shouldn't be a reason why we can't be generous with what we have.

The third reason I believe we do not give with joy is because many of us live with a scarcity mentality. We believe that there are limited resources and that we need to hoard, save, and protect what we have. While there is nothing wrong with saving for a rainy day and putting some away for retirement, this mindset can become an idol. God has called us to an abundant life and that includes in our finances. We need to have an abundance mentality when it comes to giving and realize that we will never be able to out give God.

In the Georgetown Church of Christ we are striving to be a church that fosters an environment of radical generosity. We believe that when you give you will both be blessed and be a blessing to others. I pray that we will worship God by giving our first and our best, and will trust him to bless the rest.

Church Practice

Another practice I would like us to try out as a community is "intentionally praying before every purchase." As you open your wallet or purse to reach for your cash, credit card, or checkbook, say a prayer asking God to guide your financial decisions.

Through this practice I am praying that we will "put into action the generosity that comes from your faith as you understand and experience all the good things we have in Christ" (Philemon 1:6 NLT).



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VALUE #3: SERVING WITH LOVE

"...serve one another humbly with love." Galatians 5:13

Jesus seemed to always be shocking the world with irrational acts of love. He always seemed to be loving the unlovable and serving those on the margins of society. And while it made the religious mad, it attracted the irreligious to him in droves. Could it be that the way to reach the world for Christ is not found in another program, ministry, or church growth model? Could it be that the key to reaching people with the Gospel is found in learning to love like Jesus?

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. John 13:1-2

According to Luke's Gospel there had been a big argument about who was the greatest among the disciples. We learn from the Gospel of Matthew that Jesus tells them that "The greatest among you will be your servant." Evidently the disciples were not getting the message so Jesus decided to do something to bring the lesson home.

"So [Jesus] got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him." John 13:3-5

It says that Jesus got up, meaning he stopped what he was doing, allowed himself to be inconvenienced, put others first, and washed the disciples feet. Now, this was

a task given to the lowliest of servants to do. But Jesus gladly gets up, puts on a servants apron, grabs a towel and a basin of water, and begins this humiliating task.

Jesus, the son of God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Alpha and Omega, the Prince of Peace, the Light of the World, the Great High Priest, the Lamb of God, the King of Glory; our rock, our redeemer, our righteousness, bent down and lowered himself, and washed the dirty, filthy, stinky feet of his arrogant, ignorant, ungrateful disciples.

Jesus tells us that "he did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Should we as his followers do any different?

In the Georgetown Church of Christ we want to be a community of people who are not afraid to get our hands dirty as we dive into the mess of people's lives. We do not want to be a church of spiritual consumers but spiritual contributors who are willing to serve both in action and in attitude.

Church Practice

Another practice I would like us to try is to simply say yes. We will have our "Say Yes" ministry walk-thru in August and we want you to see the different areas of service and say "Yes!"



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VALUE #4: RELATING WITH DEPTH

"Relational depth often emerges from intentional dialog." Brad Lomenick

Did you know that we as Christians believe our God to be made up of three distinct persons (Father, Son, Spirit) that dwell in perfect harmony with one another. To quote Timothy Keller, "No person in the Trinity insists that the others revolve around him; rather each of them voluntarily circles and orbits around the others." In other words, a self-centered existence is stationary, whereas an others-centered existence is dynamic since this existence requires voluntary movement around others. In this view of the trinity, we see how we are supposed to act.

In our world of utter self-sufficiency, where everything we could possibly want is at our fingertips or just a click away, God made us for more. We are being lulled into this idea by the larger culture that we can have all of our needs met by simply staying inside our homes. We can work from home, get food and groceries delivered to our home, watch any movie we want from the comfort of our home, go to church at home, and have, what we think are, meaningful relationships, by simply clicking a 'like' button on Facebook or a 'heart' button on Instagram. But it seems, as we look at Scripture, God made us not to live in isolation, but he made us for community. Just like the Trinity lives in other-focused harmony, he made his Church to be an embodiment of the same.

You don't have to look at Scripture long before you see the importance that God puts on community. From the very inception of the Church, community played a major role in its ability to take root in society, encourage and disciple people, and to spread throughout the world. Scripture tells us in Acts chapter 2 that they not only met once a week but they met daily. It is only in daily interactions with one another that we can build the type of others-centric community that God wants us to build.

To the apostle Paul, the Church as a body was so much more than an analogy, but a beautiful description of what the Church is. In 1 Corinthians 12:12 it says that, "the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." Yes God made us with individual gifts, roles, and assignments, just like the individual members of the Trinity or Godhead, but as we know to be true, we are stronger together. The unity and diversity within the church enriches the church community, equipping people in the church for righteousness to glorify Christ and to spread the news of His love and salvation that extends to all people.

I believe our Church is taking on the characteristics of the world and has started to simply be echo chambers where people hear what they want to hear and not places where iron sharpens iron. Instead of being a community that has unity in diversity, there are groups that require unity by uniformity.

In the Georgetown Church of Christ, I believe that we can be a church where "liberals" and "conservatives," "Republicans" and "Democrats" can not only sit and worship together in the same room, but be truly brothers and sisters with one another in the name of Jesus Christ. I believe we can be a community that doesn't allow the world to divide us based upon race, political affiliation, opinions, socio-economic status, etc., but we can be a community of people that "consider others better than ourselves" and "look out for the interests of others." We can be a people who do more than say "Hi, how it's going" on Sunday morning but truly relate with depth.

Church Practice

With this practice I want to challenge you to say more than "Hi" on Sunday morning. Find ways to go deeper in your conversations and relationships with one another. Ask the person next to you what their story is. Invite people out to lunch after church or over for dinner during the week. Try to go behind the surface conversations and small talk, and strive to have a deep conversation with another person this week.



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VALUE #5: MENTORING WITH PURPOSE

"When one person mentors, two lives are changed." Kevin Sessums

We are products of the people that we look at as mentors. What is interesting about mentoring is it happens whether we think it is happening or not. Daily we are mentored by the media in how to view a certain situation or idea. We have been mentored by actors and actresses that play characters in the movies because we want to be like them or emulate them in some way. We are mentored by our family. For some of us, we admired our grandfather or grandmother so much that we have tried to model our lives after theirs. Like I said, mentoring happens whether we recognize it or not or whether it is intentional or not. Think back to your top 5 mentoring influences in your life. What do they teach you about yourself?

It is a common fact that Christianity is more caught than taught. We as humans need to see spiritual principles embodied in other people. I think that is one of the reasons that God sent us Jesus. It is one thing to read about the law and to be told how to live, but it is another thing entirely to be shown.

Titus 2:2-6 tells us to "teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled."

This Scripture tells us that it is our spiritual duty and joy to pass on what we have learned to the next generation with older men teaching younger men and older women teaching younger women. This doesn't just take place in a Bible class but is embodied in a mentoring relationship.

In our city there are a slew of churches that cater to certain demographics and generations. There are churches that are made up of retired folks, there are churches that are made up of college students. There are churches that focus on children and there are churches that focus on those that have been divorced, widowed or single. While there is nothing wrong with trying to reach out to a certain audience of people, I believe the power of the Georgetown Church of Christ lies in having a church of people in every age and stage of life, where older are teaching younger. As Proverbs 13:20 says, "He who walks with the wise grows wise" and wisdom is grown through age and experience. While I know it is more comfortable to be around people your own age, it is more impactful for the kingdom to be around people of all ages and stages.

Church Practice:

When you are ready to start mentoring with purpose, as me (Paul) about how to start a DC3 (Discipleship Community of 3), where real mentoring and faith-building can take place.



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VALUE #6: GOING WITH COURAGE

"No one can say: 'Since I'm not called to be a missionary, I do not have to evangelize my friends and neighbors.' There is no difference, in spiritual terms, between a missionary witnessing in his home town and a missionary witnessing in Katmandu, Nepal. We are all called to go—even if it is only to the next room, or the next block." Timothy Keller

Did you know that according to a recent Lifeway Research study that 78% of Christians have never shared their faith with anyone? It goes on to say that 59% of Christians have never even invited a non-Christian to church. Actually, according to a Barna study, 89% of Christians in 1993 agreed that it was the responsibility of every Christian to share their faith, while today only 64% say that it true. That is a 25 point drop. Wow!

Did you know that each of us are called to be missionaries in our own backyards and to live missional lives? Living missionally means to adopt the posture, thinking, behaviors, and practices of a missionary to engage others with the Gospel message.

According to Dave DeVries in his book Missional Transformation,
"the Church is sent by Jesus Christ (Jn. 17:18; 20:21, Lk. 9:2; Matt. 28:19–20; Acts 1:8)
It is sent with the Cross (1 Cor 1:18, Eph 2:16, Col 2:14, 1 Pet 2:24, 2 Cor 5:17–24)
It is sent in Community (Acts 2:42–47; 5:42; Jn. 13:34–35; 1 Jn. 3:16–17)
It is sent to every Culture (John 1:14; Matthew 20:28; Acts 17:22–34; Lk. 5:29)
It is sent for the King and His Kingdom (Matt. 10:7; 25:34; Lk. 4:43; Rev. 11:15–17; Jer. 10:7; Jn. 18:36)."

What this means is that missions is not just a committee or program in your church but it defines the very people of God as sent people. To quote Alan Hirsch from his seminal book *The Forgotten Ways*, "Missional church is a community of God's people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God's mission to the world. In other words, the church's true and authentic organizing principle is mission. When the church is in mission, it is the true church. The church itself is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible. The mission of God flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus. To obstruct this is to block God's purposes in and through his people."

In the Georgetown Church of Christ, our heart's desire is to be a missional church. It is to be a church that lives into the Great Commandment by living out the Great Commission.

Church Practice:

Ask me (Paul) for a "Who is My Neighbor" form and begin getting to know and praying for your non-Christian neighbors.