

GRACE FELLOWSHIP'S DOCTRINE OF THE ORDINANCES

We believe that the two ordinances of the Church are the Lord's Supper and Baptism. By the term ordinance we mean that they are used as symbols of the grace God has extended to us through Jesus Christ, not as a means of receiving grace from God. Although these two ordinances do not convey grace into the life of the participant, we do believe that both ordinances are very important in the life of the believer. Jesus Christ commanded that the church perform both of these symbols, and it is the purpose of this statement to defend and define the practice of these ordinances at Grace Fellowship Church.

I. DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM:

A. Statement of Belief:

“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 things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20) It is clear by this statement that the Lord Jesus intended the disciples to take the gospel to every nation, baptize those who believe in His name, and make disciples out of every one who was redeemed. This passage is a clear command from the Lord to His followers. The word rendered in this passage baptizing is simply a transliteration of the Greek word “baptizo” which means: to dip, to immerse, submerge, and then emerge; “to dip” is the verb baptizo. We find that the early believers were baptized upon their personal profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. One example of believer's baptism is found in Acts 8:35-36, 38, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, ‘Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?’ And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.” From the teaching of Scripture we interpret and hold to the practice of believer's baptism by immersion at Grace Fellowship Church. It is important to add at this point that we in no way believe that this issue should be used to divide the body of Christ. It is our desire to seek fellowship with all Bible believing, Christ honoring, Grace oriented churches.

B. Definition:

Baptism is the New Testament symbol of the salvation of an individual. It is an ordinance of the New Testament church. This ordinance is reserved for those who wish to make a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and it is correctly administered by immersion into water.

C. Guidelines for Baptism at Grace Fellowship Church:

1. Baptism is to be administered to individuals who are publicly declaring faith in Jesus Christ.
2. The mode of baptism is water baptism by immersion.
3. Baptism should be practiced in the fellowship of the local church. Only in extreme circumstances should a baptism be done outside of a called meeting of the church body.
4. An approved leader should perform Baptism.
5. The mentoring process should be followed for all people desiring to be baptized.
6. Baptism does not equal local church membership.
7. Baptism is not a means of receiving salvation.

D. Steps Leading Up to the Baptism Service:

1. A personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
2. The candidate or guardian of the candidate notifies the Elders of their conversion and their desire to be baptized.
3. The candidate completes the mentoring process.
4. The candidate is questioned and approved for baptism by the Baptism Team.
5. The candidate is baptized at a regular worship service in the presence of the church body.

E. Minimum Age for Believer's Baptism:

At Grace Fellowship it is the belief of the leadership that children under the age of 11 should be encouraged to wait to be baptized. There are many reasons for this stance. First, the Bible never gives evidence of children being baptized. Second, it is clear that baptism is for those who have clearly believed in Christ and are prepared to live in faith. Third, when children are baptized at a young age they often struggle with doubting their salvation. We believe that this is because many of them are not truly saved. Others cannot remember the act of baptism and this causes them to doubt. Finally, Grace Fellowship believes that the public profession should be made when the person is ready to live out their faith publicly. For these reasons and more we encourage baptism at a more mature age. A parent may request that their child be baptized before age 11, with the understanding that the baptism procedure must still be carried out prior to baptism (process is described latter in this article). It is important to note that we are not saying that a child must be 11 years old to become a Christian. Baptism is not equal to salvation. There is no question that a child much younger than 11 can be saved.

F. Mentoring Process for Baptism Candidates:

If the father is present in the home and is a professing believer, we encourage him to assume the role of mentor. In some cases parents have expressed a desire to be "co-mentors, but we would still emphasize the father's unique role and responsibility. If the father is clearly not a believer, is absent from the home, or is unwilling to be involved,

we encourage the mother, a grandparent, or another mature believer to assume the mentor role. Single mothers of sons often see this as an opportunity to connect their son with a godly man, which may establish an ongoing relationship that will benefit the son and support the mother in her parenting role.

In some situations the father may profess to be a believer but their may be doubts about his ability to do the job. The father may be spiritually weak and immature. Or he may be struggling with his faith or be harboring unconfessed sin. Such men may feel threatened by this process. These situations should not prevent encouraging a man to assume responsibility for the spiritual care of his children. Often this process confronts such a man with his spiritual need. It may motivate him to take some positive steps toward growth or he may not follow through with this process. Such situations should be monitored alertly and follow-up applied appropriately. If the man is unable to guide the child through this process with integrity, the preparation process may be suspended and work with the father until he is ready. This helps fathers see the impact that his spiritual condition has on his children. We also pray earnestly that God will use the situation to motivate the man to grow.

We recommend that mentors have at least six separate, one-on-one sessions with their candidate. The Mentors Guide suggests for how to structure the sessions. Three or four weeks into this period the mentors should be contacted to see how they are doing and to remind them of upcoming dates.

At the end of the mentor sessions a mentor and candidate group session is held. It is during this meeting that each candidate shares their personal testimony, and the candidate is also asked to give the meaning and significance of baptism to the group. The leader of the session also takes time to talk with the candidates about church membership.

After both the candidate and the mentor indicate the candidate's readiness to move ahead with baptism, the candidate is interviewed. The Baptism Team, comprised of an elder, an adult teacher, and an older youth who has been baptized, make up the interview panel. During this interview the candidate again gives his testimony and responds to informal questions concerning his faith. When the Baptism Team recommends the candidate for baptism, a baptism service is scheduled. This service usually includes worship, candidate(s) testimonies, a pastoral message to the candidates, the baptism(s), and time for family and friends to pray for him.

G. Steps in the Mentor Process for Children:

1. **Letter of Invitation** (mailed to parents of prospective baptism candidates at the beginning of each baptism preparation cycle)
2. **Response Card** (Included with the letter of invitation. To be completed by parents and returned to the church for tracking purposes.)

3. **Mentor Orientation Session** (This is a meeting of parents/mentors who have indicated they desire to begin the process. Candidates are not to attend this meeting.)
4. **Follow-up Letter to Mentors** (For those who, after the Mentor Orientation Session, have decided to move ahead with the individual session with their candidate. Mailed three weeks before the Mentor/Candidate Group Session.)
5. **Mentor/Candidate Session** (Described earlier in this paper.)
6. **Candidate Response Form and Mentor Response Form** (Enclosed with the Follow-Up Letter to Mentors. Candidates and mentors who will be continuing with the preparation process will complete and turn in the forms at the end of the Mentor/Candidate Group Session. Those who decide to wait complete and return the Mentor form to the church for tracking purposes.)
7. **Baptism Team Interview** (Described earlier in this paper.)
8. **Baptism Service** (This is for all those who successfully complete the baptism mentor process.)

H. Steps in the Mentor Process for Youth and Adults:

1. **Announcing of Intention** (Each individual should notify the leadership of the church of their desire to be baptized.)
2. **Pairing of Mentor and Mentoree** (The leadership will team the candidate with a mature believer for the process of preparing them for baptism.)
3. **Follow-up Session**
4. **Baptism Service**

I. Summary Philosophy of Baptism:

It is our hope that everyone who reads this article understands the serious nature of baptism. We believe that it is our responsibility to enter into the baptism process with careful investigation and examination. It is not our goal to discourage anyone who truly believes in Christ from baptism, but it is our hope that giving baptism such a weighty significance in our church will discourage nonbelievers from taking part in this holy ordinance and increase its meaning for believers. May God bless this church with many believers to baptize for His glory!

II. DOCTRINE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER:

A. Statement of Belief:

We believe that the Lord Jesus Himself implemented the Lord's Supper as an ordinance of the Church at the Passover preceding His crucifixion. Matthew records the event in Matthew 26:26-29 when he writes, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day

when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." With these words the Supper was started as a symbol of the great sacrifice given by Christ for the salvation of the Church. Luke records the event with these words, "And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.' (Luke 22:19-20)" Because we were commanded to observe this ordinance in remembrance of Jesus and His sacrifice, it is necessary for Grace Fellowship to define and observe the Supper in accordance Scripture and give guidelines for the implementation of the doctrine in our local congregation.

B. Definition:

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the church that is to be carried out by the Elders of the church on a regular basis, assisted by others as they see fit. The elements to be used in the Supper are bread and fruit of the vine. Everyone who is in faith and fellowship with the Lord Jesus shall be given the invitation to participate in this service.

C. Guidelines for the Lord's Supper:

1. The Supper shall be offered on a regular basis at a worship service of the church (Luke 22:19-20).
2. The Supper shall be open to all believers who are in good standing with the Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 11:23-26).
3. No one who is under active church discipline shall be allowed to partake in the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:27-29)
4. The elements of the Supper shall always be bread (leavened or unleavened) and fruit of the vine (grape juice or wine) (Matthew 26:26-29).
5. The church may also wish to participate in church discipline, foot washing or other worship activity as deemed necessary during the Lord's Supper.

D. Purpose of the Lord's Supper:

1. The Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the death of Jesus Christ in obedience to the Father and for the redemption of the Church (I Corinthians 11:26).
2. The Lord's Supper is an opportunity for confession, repentance, and revival among the people of God (I Corinthians 11:27-34).
3. The Lord's Supper is an opportunity to worship the Lord for His great sacrifice on our behalf (Matthew 26:26-29).
4. To anticipate His return and continue our participation in this ordinance until we share it anew with our Lord in His coming Kingdom (Matthew 26:29)