

INTRODUCTION

1. Today is our 6 year anniversary as a church.
2. On April 7, 2002, 16 people met in my home to begin a new work called Changed By Grace Community Church.
3. As we reflect today on what God has done in these last six years, I want to zoom in on who we are as a church.
4. Our name states that we are Changed By Grace Community Church.
5. Each of those terms conveys a truth identifying who we are as the Church of Jesus Christ.
6. First we have been *Changed*.
7. At salvation Jesus totally and completely transformed our lives.
8. He forever changed us.
9. We are no longer the same person we used to be.
10. **Titus 3:3-6 (NASB)** ³For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, ⁵He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom

He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

11. In the words of **Colossians 1:13-14 (NASB)** ¹³ For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
12. Jesus saved us.
13. He rescued us.
14. He transferred us out of the kingdom of darkness and into His kingdom.
15. **2 Corinthians 5:17** says He has made us a “new creature.”
16. How did He do this?
17. Was it through something we did?
18. We already heard what Paul said in Titus 3:5.
19. He said it was “not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness.”
20. According to **Ephesians 2:8** it was “*By Grace*...through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God.”
21. No person is justified by the works of the law.
22. Paul said we were “justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24).

23. He says in **Romans 3:28 (NASB)** ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.
24. God, through Christ, *changed us by grace*.
25. We are *Changed By Grace*.
26. That's what we preach!
27. We do not preach ourselves.
28. We preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
29. And it's through His sacrifice that God granted to each one of us His grace.
30. What is grace?
31. Grace is something we cannot earn or deserve.
32. It is therefore a gift from a generous and gracious God.
33. Paul told the Ephesians in **Ephesians 2:11-13 (NASB)** ¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is performed in the flesh by human hands—* ¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

34. He told Israel in **Deuteronomy 7:7-8 (NASB)** ⁷ "The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
35. God has *changed us by His grace* "because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-7).
36. Not only are we ***Changed By Grace*** but we are also a ***community***.
37. We, as Acts 2:44 says, have "all things in common."
38. We are a fellowship, a community of people called the ***Church***—a ***community*** called out from the world, sin and Satan to proclaim the praises of His salvation.
39. I hope if you have been here for any length of time you realize who we are as a church and that as a church we exist for the purpose of glorifying God, maturing the believer, and leading everyone to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

40. A few years ago I shared with you that every church has a foundation.
41. For some it is “wood, hay, and straw” (1 Corinthians 3:12).
42. For others it is “gold, silver, [and] precious stones” (1 Corinthians 3:12).
43. How do we know if we’re building on the right foundation?
44. What have we been doing for the last 6 years in laying and building on this foundation because once the walls go up you cannot see the foundation any longer.
45. So how deep is our foundation?
46. Is it secure and strong for times of attack from the enemy?
47. Can it weather the storm and keep the rest of the edifice from collapse?
48. These are the questions I want us to consider this morning as we examine our foundation.
49. Every now and then we need to examine our foundation for any cracks in the structure.
50. So let’s do that now.
51. What should be at the foundation of Changed By Grace Community Church?
52. The first is *a high view of God*.

I. A High View of God

Our thought must constantly be elevated to a lofty view of God because:

A. God Must Be Glorified In All That We Do

1. In the little things of our life as well as the big

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NASB) ³¹ Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

2. In everything we do

1 Corinthians 6:20 (NASB) ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

In order for us to glorify God in the little things as well as the big or in everything we do, we must perceive ourselves as “an institution for the glory of God” (MacArthur).

That means...

B. God Must Be Taken Seriously

1. There must be a fear of the Lord in our attitude

a) **Proverbs 8:13 (NASB)** ¹³ "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate.

b) **Proverbs 16:6 (NASB)** ⁶ By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, And by the fear of the Lord one keeps away from evil.

2. We need to see God as He is revealed in His Word

In order to do that...

a) We must think biblically

Romans 12:2 (NASB) ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

b) We must talk biblically

Colossians 4:6 (NASB) ⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

c) We must act biblically

Ephesians 5:18 (NASB) ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

Thomas Watson writes: “The Spirit stamps the impression of his own sanctity upon the heart, as the seal prints its likeness upon the wax. The Spirit of God in a man perfumes him with holiness, and makes his heart a map of heaven.”

Joel Beeke says, “That believers are called to holiness is indisputably clear. But the cardinal question remains: How does the believer cultivate holiness?”

First he is to “*know and love Scripture*. This is God's primary road to holiness and to spiritual growth—the Spirit as Master Teacher blessing the reading and searching of God's Word.”

If you are going to think, talk, and act biblically then you must cultivate holiness in your life.

We will say more about this later.

The second principle that must be at our foundation as a church is...

II. The Absolute Authority of Scripture

A. God's Word is Being Undermined Today

1. By what is being taught in churches
2. By what is being added to it (visions, revelations, etc.)

Proverbs 30:5-6 (NASB) ⁵Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. ⁶Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

Sure there are cults that do this but what is frightening is the evangelical church is following suite.

To be an institution for the glory of God and one that continually surrenders to the absolute authority of Scripture...

B. God's Word Must Be Upheld

1. It must be our highest priority

- a) Jesus said in **Matthew 4:4 (NASB)** ⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.' "

Do you live your life on "every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God?"

- b) Do you have the commitment to Scripture that Job had when he said in **Job 23:12 (NASB)** ¹² "I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

God's Word must be upheld, it must be surrendered to, it must be our highest priority. Why? Because...

2. It is of great profit in your life

Paul told Timothy in **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB)** ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable

for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

God's Word is "profitable" to make "the man of God...adequate" and "equipped for every good work."

So for the Word to do its work it has to be taught, used when reproofing, correcting, and instructing in righteousness.

God's Word is the greatest necessity of your life because...

3. It is necessary for spiritual growth

Peter said it this way in **1 Peter 2:2 (NASB)** ² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.

Joseph Alleine said, "O ye saints, how you should love the Word, for by this you have been converted.... Tie it about your neck, write it upon your hand, lay it in your bosom. When you go let it lead you, when you sleep let it keep you, when you wake let it talk with you. (Prov. 6:21-22). You that are unconverted, read the Word with diligence; flock to where it is powerfully preached. Pray for the coming of the Spirit in the

Word. Come from your knees to the sermon, and come from the sermon to your knees.”¹

As you can clearly see, what lies at our foundation is not only what has been taught and modeled before you but what you are cultivating in your life.

The third principle that must be at the heart of our foundation as a church is...

III. Sound Doctrine

“If you have a high view of God and are committed to Him, then you must go along with what His Word teaches” (MacArthur).

When we get to Titus chapter 2 in our study of that epistle we will spend a great amount of time of the phrase “sound doctrine.” But let me suffice it to say that “sound doctrine” just means “healthy teaching.”

“Sound” is *hugiaino*, “healthy.”
“Doctrine” is *didaskalia*, “teaching.”

To have “healthy teaching” in our church...

A. We Must Teach Truths that People Can Hold On To

¹I.D.E. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations*, electronic ed. (Simpsonville SC: Christian Classics Foundation, 1996).

“Very few people explain the truths about God, life, death, heaven, hell, man, sin, Christ, angels, the Holy Spirit, the position of the believer, the flesh, or the world” (MacArthur).

But we have sought to speak of those things here because the Bible talks about these issues and because...

1. We are to speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine

Titus 2:1 (NASB) ¹ But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.

2. We are to hold fast the pattern of sound words

2 Timothy 1:13 (NASB) ¹³ Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

If we are going to speak and hold fast to these truth then...

3. We are to declare the whole counsel of God

When Paul was speaking to the elders at Ephesus, he told them in **Acts 20:27 (NASB)** ²⁷ "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

That's my desire here at Changed By Grace!

I don't want to hold back anything that would be beneficial to your spiritual growth.

If we then are to be committed to sound doctrine then...

B. We Must Commit Ourselves to Go Beyond the Superficial in Our Study of God's Word

1. We must be diligent when we present ourselves to God

2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB) ¹⁵ Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2. We must give constant attention to the exposition of God's Word

In other words, we must always be concerned with what it means by what it says!

Paul told Timothy in **1 Timothy 4:13 (NASB)** ¹³ Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.

The words "give attention" (prosecho) means "to pay attention to, give heed to, or follow" (BAGD).

The "reading" (anagnosis) refers to "the public reading of the Scriptures" (Zodhiates).

“Exhortation” (paraklesis) “refers to the act of exhortation. “ It is “encouragement for the purpose of strengthening and establishing the believer in faith” (Zodhiates).

“Teaching” (didaskalia) or as the AV puts it “doctrine” is simply that.

A high view of God, the absolute authority of Scripture, and sound doctrine—this must be at the heart of all we do.

If you want to understand why we do some of the things we do the way we do it, it is because of the foundation we are laying in your life.

When you have a high view of God and are committed to the absolute authority of Scripture and are taught sound doctrine, you will then be committed to this fourth foundational principle...

IV. Personal Holiness

A. We Are Called to Live a Pure Life

God has established this standard in our life because it is His nature.

1 Peter 1:14-16 (NASB) ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

1. Peter says that the basis for his exhortation to holiness is because God Himself is holy and we are to be like God.

Ephesians 5:1 (NASB) ¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

2. God has called us to holiness – it is His will for our lives

1 Thessalonians 4:1-7 (NASB) ¹Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. ²For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of* the Lord Jesus. ³For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶*and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. ⁷For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

With this in mind then...

- B. We Need to Be Careful What We Expose Ourselves To

“It’s impossible to watch some of the films in the theaters and to read trash without paying a price” (MacArthur).

1. 2 Corinthians 7:1 says we are to cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh

You cannot do that if you are exposing yourself to the filthiness of the flesh.

2. 1 John 3:3 says we are to be pure as He is pure - And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

If we are called to live a pure life and therefore need to be careful to what we expose ourselves to...

C. We Must Enforce a Standard of Holiness Among Ourselves

How do you do this?

1. Don’t let sin be named among you

Ephesians 5:3-4 (NASB) ³ But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴ and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

2. Kill sin in your life

Colossians 3:5 (NASB) ⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to

immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

3. Confront sin in others

Matthew 18:15-17 (NASB) ¹⁵ "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ "But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. ¹⁷ "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Don't get mad or become bitter if someone sins against you. Go to them privately and restore them.

A high view of God, the absolute authority of Scripture, sound doctrine, and personal holiness. Notice the last principle that should be at the foundation of Christ's church...

V. Spiritual Authority

This is a huge problem today in the church. We don't understand how God has structured His church. But if we're going to function for His glory and bring honor to His Word, then we must understand that...

- A. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church and He Mediates His Rule Through Godly Men Called Elders

1. Jesus is the head of the church

Colossians 1:18 (NASB) ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

2. He rules His church through godly men called elders

I'm not going to take the time to expound this again since we did that Wednesday night but listen to what Hebrews 13:17 says:

Hebrews 13:17 (NASB) ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

This is the spiritual authority that God has placed in the church

But understand that their authority rests only in God's Word. They are not to micromanage your life. They are to hold you accountable to holiness but ultimately they cannot make you be holy. That's is God's work.

B. This is God's Design for the Church to Function Properly

1. Christ is the head of the church.

2. He mediates His rule through godly men called elders.
3. Deacons come alongside and implement what the elders teach.
4. The congregation submits.

CONCLUSION

1. What conclusions do you come to when you evaluate us as a church?
2. Do you see the commitment that we have to these principles?
3. Do you have a high view of God?
4. Do you submit to the absolute authority of Scripture?
5. Are you feeding on sound doctrine?
6. Are you giving attention to personal holiness?
7. Are you recognizing and submitting to the spiritual authority in your life?
8. If we are going to go forth as a church we must examine where we are and take the next step to becoming what God wants us to be.
9. But before we can do that we must make sure that we are in the family of God.

10. Have you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins?
11. If you haven't, will you come to Him now?
12. Let's pray for what we have heard today and for the food we are about to eat as we share together in a celebration of our 6 year anniversary.