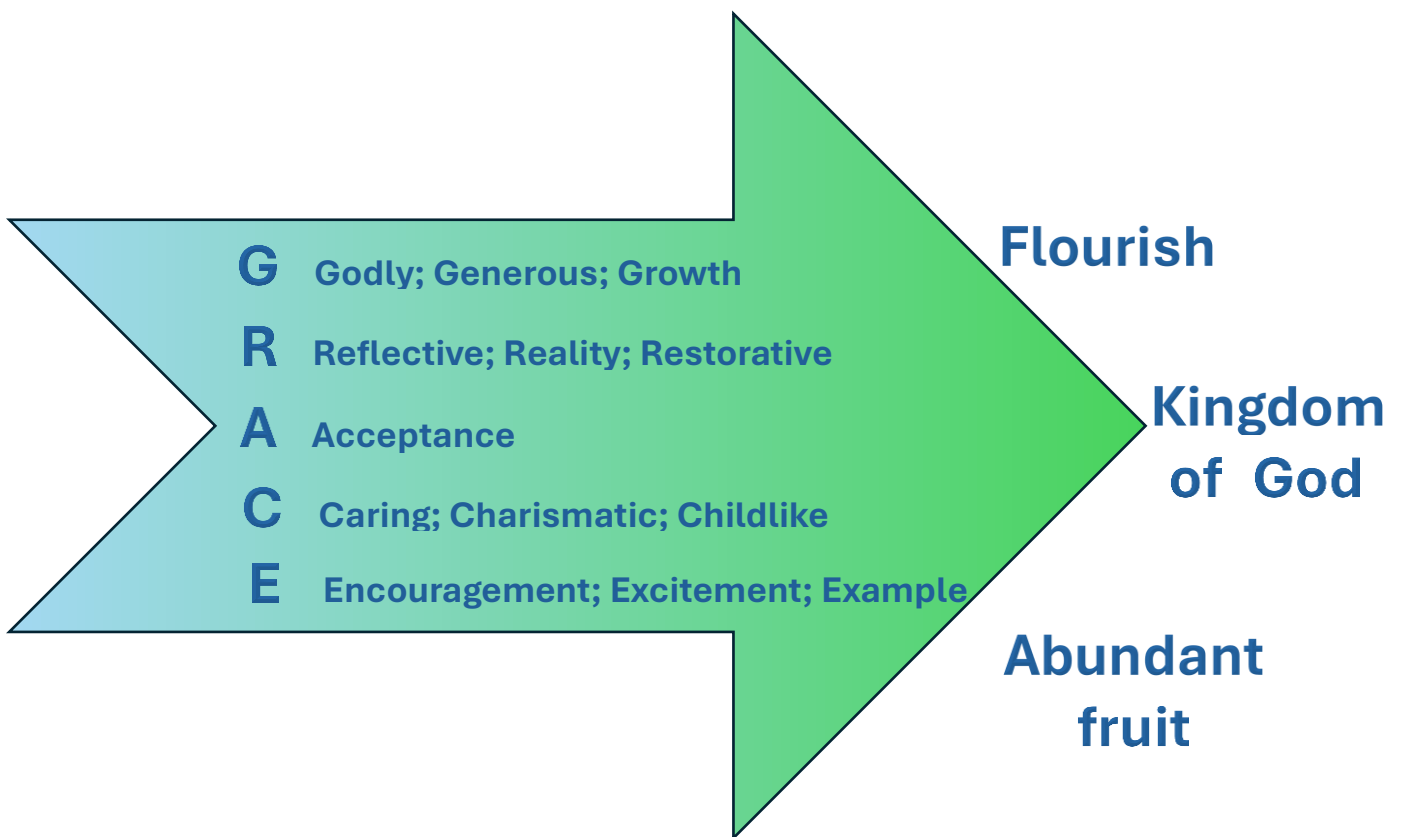


# Our Culture of: G.R.A.C.E

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*We seek to be a 'Culture of Grace' community with foundational values and beliefs, which determine why we do what we do, our priorities, how we spend our time and how we relate.*

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## Five things to emulate around the letters G.R.A.C.E

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### Godly

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- Having his heart of love for people, and the world. Jesus shows us the Father, so we are Godly when we follow Jesus.
- It means having God's agenda – doing what he wants in the ways he wants things done - seeking his kingdom.
- Jesus is the plumb line against which we evaluate everything: Ask, “Is this loving like Jesus loves?”

### Generous

- Having a spirit of generosity – focus on giving rather than getting.
- It means:
  - Giving of ourselves rather than holding back.
  - Putting ourselves out for others. We love, worship, and serve generously, extravagantly and passionately, rather than half-hearted or superficially.
  - We are generous in hospitality; we are welcoming, helping people belong and be-long.

### Growth

- We are continually developing.
- We have not 'arrived'! We are on a journey, in process, being transformed from glory to glory.
- It is important to be facing in the right direction and willing to move; flexible, open rather than rigid, conclusive or dogmatic.
- The focus is on learning rather than teaching – there is always more to learn.

## Reflective

- We think about, consider, ponder (as Mary did).
- We reflect on the Bible. Being “Biblically faithful” means we take the Bible seriously rather than literally. Consider context – literary, cultural, genre.
- We study in the light of the whole of scripture, not selectively. This leads to a better interpretation.
- We reflect on issues: wrestle with difficult issues like suffering, healing, unanswered prayer and death.
- We are able to hold different truths in tension – sovereignty/free will; healing/suffering.
- We are transformed by the renewing of our minds and develop a true faith which comes from hearing the word of God for a specific situation rather than believing in a formula.
- We want to avoid presumption or assumption which come from our own limited thinking.
- We each take responsibility for reflecting rather than just relying on what we are taught or told.

## Reality

- People are able to be authentic, truly themselves.
- They are able to trust because they are with ‘safe’ people and in a ‘safe’ place.
- There is no ‘should/ought’, so I can be real about where I am, what I feel, what I’m doing, free from censure, blame, shame or condemnation. “Love is only real when people are free to choose.”
- It means also that we deal with real and relevant issues.

## Restorative

- One where broken and damaged people can be healed and set free, relationships can be restored and reconciled - relationship with God, others, self, creation.
  - We are all in the process of being restored to who/what we're meant to be, leading to a strong sense of our unique identity. We can experience 'Shalom' = well-being; completeness; wholeness.
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G.R.A.C.E

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## Acceptance

- Everybody and anybody is unconditionally accepted in the way Jesus accepted: there is no separation between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' - everyone is included.
  - We are not judgemental: People are not defined by labels, or by negative [what they are not].
  - People are accepted just where they are – even if unable to change. We are accepted when we fail, mess up, are struggling, doubting – we stand with and for one another.
  - There are no comparisons. All are equal and valued as people made in image of God and we see God qualities in every human being.
  - We focus on heart, roots, causes, rather than symptoms, recognizing there are always reasons underneath.
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G.R.A.C.E

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## Caring/Compassionate

- We care about what is going on in the world, and we care for people – appropriately.
- Everyone is pastored [helped to grow], not just those who are needy.
- We care for the whole person: body, soul and spirit.

## Charismatic Culture is:

- We are open to, led by, in step with, and controlled by the Holy Spirit. We hear God individually and together.

- We are open to the prophetic and know how to handle what God says and take appropriate action in response.
- We are developing both the character of Jesus, fruits of the Spirit, and the conduct of Jesus, gifts of the Spirit, and encourage the ministry of all believers.

## **Child-like** Culture is:

- It does not = 'childish': Mark 10 "Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."
- We enter the Kingdom of God continuously: we are saved -> we're being saved -> we will be saved.
- We want to have the characteristics of children: accepting; soft hearts; open spirits; flexible; no mind sets; adventurous; inquisitive; little – ask for help; like stories – identify; learn at a deep level of heart; immediate and spontaneous; transparent. We want and need to keep communication clear and simple.

## **G.R.A.C.E**

### **Encouragement** Culture is:

- Wanting the best for people; being positive seeing what's good; glass  $\frac{1}{2}$  full rather than  $\frac{1}{2}$  empty; and having a 'can do' attitude.
- We commit to accountable relationships.

### **Excitement** Culture is:

- Allowing ourselves to be stimulated and stirred rather than passive observers.
- We have an expectation that we will encounter God all the time; everywhere; individually and when together.
- We want a freshness of faith and a present tense testimony. We want to regularly experience the manifest presence of God.
- We do not want to be religious and bound by rules.

### **Example** Culture is:

- We want to be a positive example so when people see us, they see God. "By this will all men know that you are my disciples if you have love for one

another.” Our lives to be living testimonies of grace, where we have integrity and there is no conflict between what we say and how we behave.

- We ‘protect’ our reputation by “doing right and being seen to be right.”
- We desire and hope that people will be curious and attracted to Jesus and the church and want to join and be involved. 1 Thess’ 1:7-8 the Christians “became a model to all believers.” “The Lord’s message rang out from you.”

Will we be this kind of community? **THE ANSWER LIES IN THE SOIL!**

As we own rather than just assent to this culture as individuals, we benefit from the community that results. We grow and flourish and we contribute so that everyone else benefits from the community – they grow and flourish too.

We’d love GBC to be like seaside rock – wherever you cut it the same words appear.

Wherever people experience us they experience **G.R.A.C.E.**

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