

## Core Part 2: Guiding Principles that Make Us Distinct!

### Week 2: We Inspire through Grace

I. Last week we started a new sermon series called Core 2: Guiding Principles that Make Us Distinct! The reason it's "Core part 2" is that we did part one back in the summer of 2021 where we preached through 5 out of the 10 core value statements. Those sermons are available to watch online if you missed them. They are worth the time! We are now taking the time to dig into the last 5 values.

A. Carlton Deal helped us kick off our series last week. Didn't he do a tremendous job of explaining our core value statement "We export the best!"? He's a living example of this value! If you missed it, I encourage you to go back and give it a listen. The essence of that value is "MISSION;" specifically being "sent" on mission. Jesus was all about developing leaders of character that could then go fulfill the Great Commission: "GO make disciples of all nations." Carlton reminded us that Jesus' Call to us is a "both and" - "come follow me" and "Go make" - spinning in and spinning out. God is always calling us in and then sending or "exporting" us to something specific.

II. Today we are going to dive into our next Core Value statement: "We inspire through Grace" and I also want to give a little more context for the series as a whole. So let's zoom out for just a minute.

A. Why in the world are we doing a whole series on our Core Values? First of all, we have a mixed audience. Some of you have been around Tab for years (or decades!), but others are brand new to Tab. For some, this is their very first time attending a Tab service (WELCOME if that's you!). One of the huge blessings of the past year is that we have seen so many guests and newcomers, even in spite of the pandemic! Praise God! We do not want to take it for granted that everyone who walks through our doors automatically knows and understands the DNA of Tab Church. At Tab, we believe that God has given us a DISTINCT Vision and Mission. It's not necessarily better than the church down the street but it is "unique" and "specific". Here's the bottom line: if we don't know the target, we WILL NOT hit it. The vision, mission and values give us a distinct target to hit. We considered calling the series "common ground." I like that title because it paints the image of us all having a common goal, a common perspective and heading in a common direction. God's word says:

Proverbs 29:18 [Slide]: Without revelation the people will perish, but the one who follows divine revelation will be happy.

1. Through His Word, God has given us REVELATION or vision which is outside of ourselves and serves as the standard by which we are to live our lives. That's why each of our 10 core value statements is anchored in a scripture. Actually, one of our Core Values is: We Bend to the Book! We bend our lives to it, not the other way around! Some use God's word to "justify" their choices or behavior. At Tab, we want our lives to fit into God's Word; to testify to the Book!
2. And for those that have been around Tab for a while, it's super easy to get complacent when you've been a part of something for a long time. Right!? That's very normal. We can forget why we exist and what we are chasing after as a church family. We go through the motions. I would suggest that "our calendars reflect our values." A good friend used to say, "If it's not on your calendar, it probably ain't gonna happen!" That's why we are doing this series. We are being intentional and putting it on the "preaching calendar" to talk about our vision, mission and core values. But here is the thing, "talk is cheap" as they say. Our sincere hope is that as we put these values front and center for a few weeks that we will all "practice what we preach" and live these values out in the world around us.
3. Not only has God given us distinct values as a church family but he has put each and every one of us in a distinct place, unique to you...and only you - a neighborhood, a school, a job, family, friends, etc. You will often hear me say we are "a Family on Mission" - a critical part of that mission is to boldly live out our distinct values in the distinct place or context God has given each of us.

B. So as a quick review for all of us, what is our Vision and Mission?

1. Our vision seeks to answer the question: why we exist?

[Slide]: Tab Vision: We exist to help the 1.7 million people in Hampton Roads discover their story in the context of God's global purpose.

The great commission in Matthew 28 says "Go make disciples of all nations." Some of us might be called into the local workplace and some might be called to South Africa, but we're all called to discover (and help others to discover) their story and how it fits into God's heart for the world.

2. If Vision answers, "Why we exist", then Our mission statement seeks to answer the question: what are we doing?

[Slide]: Tab Mission: Pushing through boundaries to share God's story from Norfolk to the nations!

There are boundaries all around us - a perceived boundary between your driveway and that of your neighbor, the boundary of an unreached people group across the globe, or social and cultural boundaries that often divide and isolate us. We don't want to be a church that JUST has a vision for making disciples, we want to actually do it! We want to be a church that is actively pushing through boundaries to engage the people around us with the Gospel. That starts right here in Norfolk and radiates out to every tribe, tongue, and NATION. From Norfolk to the Nations!

3. So that's the why and the what. Our 10 core value statements answer the question: "how are we going to do it?" How do we carry ourselves as we live out the vision and mission in our communities?

[Slide - list]: 1-We bend to the book (Ephesians 2:20); 2-We reflect the reality of heaven (Revelation 5:9); 3-We are fueled by faith (Ephesians 3:20-21); 4-We play the bench (1 Timothy 4:12); 5-We clear the path to Jesus (Acts 15:19); 6-We do life together (Acts 2:42-47); 7-We notice the unnoticeable (Matthew 25:40); 8-We inspire through grace (Ephesians 2:8); 9-We export the best (Acts 13:2); 10-We go all out (Colossians 3:23)

- C. The Vision, Mission and Core Values give us a common language that defines what makes Tab Church distinct. Language is one of the primary things that defines culture. Having a common language around our values, vision, and mission is essential! Culture is simply the prevailing customs, traditions, and values that define a group of people. Here is the stark reality folks! Culture is inevitable! The question is: What kind of culture will we have here at Tab? Will it be intentional or accidental? Well, that's why we are doing this series. We want to be super intentional about these things. Our hope is that you will be inspired to dig in and know this stuff. Discuss it with your family and friends over the coming weeks and determine how to live and walk it out in your context.

If you go to:

[Slide]: [tabchurch.org](http://tabchurch.org)

and scroll down on the homepage you can view the vision, mission, and core values in more detail.

### III. So...here's the Core Value we'll discuss today:

- A. [Slide]: We Inspire through Grace - Ephesians 2:8

Many hear this value statement and immediately latch on to the word "grace." That's not necessarily a bad thing. Grace is obviously a huge part of this value, but it would be easy to breeze past the actual "operative" word in this value statement. That word is "Inspiration." The real essence of this value statement is that we want our culture at Tab to be one of "inspiration." What is inspiration you ask? It's actually kind of an abstract concept. Most definitions use the word to define itself (I think that's called a circular definition). But I love this definition that I found on Dictionary.com

1. [Slide]: Inspiration: a divine influence directly & immediately exerted upon the mind or soul.

It's the idea of something outside of ourselves (divine) having such a strong impact or influence on us that it triggers an immediate response, action, or a change of direction. In line with that definition, we want Tab to be a place where people are profoundly influenced to take action and make a difference in the world around them. I would suggest that complacency and apathy are the opposite of inspiration (or at the very least in conflict with it). We do not want to be an apathetic or complacent group of people. We want to INSPIRE, and we believe Grace is the most effective way to do just that. Is Tab a place of INSPIRATION?

a. The world in which we live has become a smaller place in some ways because of technology. We have more access to each other than at any other point in human history, but we have never been more divided or isolated from people and relationships. As my friend Nigel Anderson (aka Legin) often says "we go to our corners." It's comfortable and "safe" there. All you have to do is turn on the TV or hop on social media to see why our world is becoming so divided. It's often negative news, or fake news, or arguing to prove who is right and who is wrong. While this can be discouraging, I would also suggest it creates an amazing OPPORTUNITY. Our culture today is lacking and starving for inspiration.

2. We will unpack Grace more in just a minute, but a simple definition of Grace is

[Slide]: Grace: getting something we don't deserve

When grace, in the biblical sense, is practiced there is nothing more inspirational. I would say getting something you don't deserve or merit is pretty inspirational! Grace becomes the primary mechanism for inspiration here at Tab. We "inspire through grace!" There was a time in my life where I may not have fully agreed with this statement. That was primarily because I did not understand grace. To understand grace is to experience grace; to be the recipient of it! Grace is one of those concepts that you cannot simply intellectualize. It must be experienced to know it to the fullest. I had not fully ACCEPTED God's grace simply because I did not realize the depth of my problem! If we do not realize how totally "depraved" and broken we really are, we cannot AND will not fully appreciate what God gave us in Jesus Christ - the free gift.

a. I do not need to tell anyone tuning in today that the world is a broken place! I would assert that is primarily because it is quickly becoming more and more secular and unchurched. For the past 30 years, America has rapidly become a post Christian nation. As Christianity and the church have lost their place in society, it's really not surprising that grace is less and less prevalent. Grace is really not a secular concept folks! Sure, the secular world uses the word, but they have cheapened and "dumbed" it down to mean "take it easy on me." "Let me do what I want." "Eliminate the consequences." That's not grace dear friends! As a result, I would argue that the world has become a less inspirational and colder place. If we want to bring inspiration back to our world, we must lead with GRACE!

3. [Slide]: Nothing is more inspirational than God's grace!

Here is our anchor verse for this Core Value:

Ephesians 2:8-9 [Slide]: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not by works so that no one can boast.

The apostle Paul wrote Ephesians to the Christians living in Ephesus while he was imprisoned in Rome. The letter was later broken down into six chapters. The first three chapters focus on defining God's grace and the last three focus on how believers are to respond to that grace.

As a whole, they paint a picture of God's plan for redeeming humanity from its sinful state.

If you want to study biblical grace the book of Ephesians is the best place to start.

a. These 2 verses summarize the main point of the whole gospel. We are sinners who need a Savior and can only be saved by God's grace. We put our faith in Jesus who died on the cross to pay for our sins and we are brought into relationship with our Creator God.

(1) We immediately see in these verses that biblical grace is a gift!

[Slide]: Grace is a free gift!

Do we really realize the gift you have been given!? It is not from within oneself. It is about receiving something from God. It is outside of ourselves so that we cannot take credit for it or brag.

(2) These verses paint a clear picture of biblical grace:

[Slide]: unmerited favor from God

4. Now we can't talk about grace and not mention mercy. They are 2 sides of the same coin. If grace is getting something you do not deserve, then Mercy is not getting something you do deserve, like a punishment or fine.

[Slide]: Mercy: not getting something you deserve; like a punishment

a. One often flows from or to the other. For example, out of God's mercy He sent his son to die on the cross. That is mercy because we were the ones that deserved death on a cross, not Christ. He was innocent! We were the guilty ones! As a result of that mercy on the cross, the penalty for sin has been fully paid. When we put our faith in Jesus we have a restored relationship with God, which is grace or receiving something we did not deserve. Make sense?

b. But wait...there's more! As Christ followers, not only do we "not get what we do deserve" (mercy) and "get something we don't deserve" (grace), but God also has a heart to "give us what we do deserve." That's the idea of JUSTICE! Making things right, "just treatment, and equitableness."

[Slide]: Justice: getting what we deserve

5. So where in the world does this "AMAZING" grace, mercy and justice come from? God's Agape love! Agape love is unconditional and self-sacrificing love. Unlike "Eros" love (erotic or sexual love) and "Phileo" love (friendship love), "Agape" is other focused and has NO end or conditions.

This is the only fount from which biblical grace, mercy and justice can flow.

All 3 of these concepts are overlapping and linked together in God's agape love!

a. Are you starting to see the connection? Without Agape love there is no true grace, mercy and justice, and without those things inspiration fades and becomes cheap. The world becomes a ruthless, judgmental, lonely, and scary place. Sound familiar? Those adjectives greatly describe our world today. But wait, there is good news! We are called as Christians to be a "light", a city on a hill. As Romans tells us, "We do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world."

We are called out to be different - that is why we want to "inspire through grace."

It is so counter cultural to the world we live in today, but we hope it is second nature here at Tab.

B. So how do we "inspire through grace?" I will tell you from my own experience the very first thing we must do is experience God's grace in our own life. Once that truly happens, giving grace to others becomes much easier and natural. I often say, "you cannot transmit something you do not have." If you want to give grace to others, you MUST first receive it and know it in a real way. When we realize the depth of our own sin and brokenness, and our endless need for GRACE, we almost want to give it away!

1. The scary thing is that we are all transmitting something. The real question is "What are you transmitting?" Is it judgment, anger, hate, fear, depression (and the list goes on), or is it love without conditions and GRACE? Study God's word and examine your heart. Ask God to show you the depths of your own sin and brokenness. Not to condemn or to judge you, but so that you begin to understand the depths of God's grace for you. Consider meditating on Psalm 139: 23-24 - "Search me Oh God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

• [Slide]: Grace is the door to "the way everlasting!"

a. Grace will be deposited in you and more naturally flow from you. This is not an overnight process or a one-and-done. It takes time folks...but the good news is that "He will not leave us nor forsake us" and there is "no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus." THOSE 2 PROMISES OF SCRIPTURE ARE GRACE! God's grace is a bottomless well! One baby step is all it takes to get started!

2. Sometimes to best understand something it's helpful to consider what it is not. What Grace is not:

• [Slide]: Grace is NOT cheap!

a. In the book "the Cost of Discipleship" Dietrich Bonhoeffer (German Theologian from the early 1900's) has the following quote and I cannot put it any better: "Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace. Cheap grace means grace sold on the market... Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system.... Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner.... Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline.... Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field...

b. Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door on which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace

because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the ONLY TRUE life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son.... Above all it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us.

Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.

- c. We cheapen grace when we only extend it to someone we like or to someone we think deserves it. It is much harder and more costly to give grace to someone we do not like; to our ENEMY; to our PERSECUTOR; to someone we absolutely "can't stand." Biblical Grace is costly, IT IS NOT CHEAP!

- [Slide]: Grace is NOT weak!

- a. Often, the world looks at Christians and says we are weak. They see grace as weakness. "Turning the other cheek" and giving 2nd, 3rd, and 4th chances is not weakness my friends! I would argue it is actually strength! It takes a lot more strength to resist our fleshly emotions and cravings rather than give into them. True grace requires REAL strength. Biblical Grace is not weak!

- [Slide]: Grace is NOT an excuse to sin

- a. Some abuse grace. Grace is not a license to sin all the more. God's word speaks directly to this. Romans 6:1-2: "What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means, we are those that have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? We do not live as the world does." So, Grace does not mean we can abuse God's love and just sin all the more. GRACE MEANS WE ARE FREE FROM SIN, NOT FREE TO SIN! II Corinthians 5:17 says that "all who are in Christ Jesus are a new creation, the old is gone and the new has come!" Grace allows us to walk in our new identity with freedom!

- [Slide]: Grace is NOT separate from truth

- a. We live in a day and age where truth is relative. #SPEAK-YOUR-TRUTH was a big thing on social media a few years ago. I don't want to belittle anyone's experiences, but individual experiences do not necessarily equal truth. It may be your experience but that does not make it true. It may make it hurtful or painful or real, but not necessarily true. It has often been said that "your perception is your reality" but that perception may not be true or the whole truth. As Christians, we believe in a higher power, and we look to His word for truth. That is what we call Absolute - Absolute Truth.

The world looks within themselves; that's why everything is so relative.

There is only 1 God folks - and it ain't me and it ain't you!

- b. Grace and truth are 2 sides of the same coin. They are not mutually exclusive. They actually coexist in harmony. Think about it for a second. ABSOLUTE TRUTH is a form of grace! Remember, by our definition, grace is getting something we do not deserve. So...receiving truth outside ourselves, that brings us into right relationship with God, is GRACE! The reverse is also true. GRACE is one of God's most absolute truths. In the context of a sinful and broken world, we cannot earn our way to God. Thank God for His Grace!

- c. Grace and Truth ALWAYS work together. You may ask "how is that possible"? Jesus was the master of calibrating truth and grace. He is our example. Think of it as oars on a boat. If you only use one oar, you go in circles in one direction. It's only when you use both oars (simultaneously or one in succession of the other) that you make forward motion - grace and truth; grace and truth; grace and truth, and so on...

John 1:14 says "the glory of the one and only son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

- d. Jesus is full of grace and truth, because he came from the Father, who is the source of grace and truth!

C. Here is an acronym to help you remember the main characteristics of biblical grace.

[Slide]: G-R-A-C-E

1. [Slide]: G = Generosity

Our God is generous and has given generously to us through the gift of His son, Jesus, so we should be generous with others. Grace is a gift that is meant to be passed on and given out freely!

2. [Slide]: R = Righteousness

We have been made righteous by the gift of God, NOT by our own merit. As our passage in Ephesians 2:9 reminds us, we did not earn our righteousness!

3. [Slide]: A = Action

Grace INSPIRES US TO ACTION. We are to be an agent for change in the world around us. Inspiration and grace are the best agents for change. Grace is not lazy, complacent, or apathetic. Inspire others!

4. [Slide]: C = Compassion

Just as God has compassion for us, we have compassion and empathy for others. We see ourselves in others. We hurt when others hurt or are in need!

5. [Slide]: E = Everyone

Grace is an “all-skate.” Everyone has been created in the Imago Dei (the image of God) with value, dignity, and worth. We all need to receive grace and to give grace. Will we give grace to others in the same measure in which it has been given to us?

D. As we conclude , consider this powerful quote from Jerry Bridges in his book “Transforming Grace”:

“Living by Grace instead of by works means you are free from the performance treadmill. It means God has already given you an “A” when deserved an “F”. He has already given you a full day’s pay when you only worked one hour. It means you do not have to perform certain spiritual disciplines or check boxes to earn God’s approval. Jesus Christ has already done that for you! You are fully loved and accepted by God solely through the merit of Jesus. Nothing you ever do (or don’t do) will cause Him to love you any more or any less.”

1. That sounds like a pretty amazing and inspirational way to live life! So, Tab Church...do we believe it?

Is that how we are going to live and interact with each other as a church family (and the world around us) or do we want to live on the “performance treadmill”?

LET’S INSPIRE THROUGH GRACE!! The same grace that God has given to us!

E. I want to give us space to hear from God. Consider these 2 questions:

1. [Slide]: Where do you need to receive grace in your life today?

Maybe you are here today and you’ve never received biblical grace; you have not received the gift of salvation. If that is you, then we are so glad you are here. There is space to receive that Grace for the first time. You cannot give something to someone else that you yourself have not received. I encourage you to respond to His invitation, if you hear Him calling to you. Grace is a free gift.

Or maybe you have accepted Christ or have been a Christ follower for years, but have lost sight of the grace that saved you. Maybe it’s a relationship or a struggle with a particular sin or addiction. Let God’s grace flood into your hearts, minds and souls and INSPIRE a change of direction in your life. You are a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come! It’s not about behavior modification. It’s simply about being INSPIRED by the grace you have already been given.

2. [Slide]: Where are you inspired to show grace to someone else?

As we more fully understand and receive God’s grace, is there someone in your life that needs your grace today? Is there someone that you have been withholding grace from? We are designed to be conduits of God’s grace to each other. As we experience grace for ourselves, we can now pass it along, to our neighbor, our co-worker, our classmate, and family. Is there a particular name the Holy Spirit is putting on your heart or mind? What is one thing you can you do to show them God’s grace?