

Grace to Follow Jesus

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 January 2025

Preacher: Jesse Kincer

[0 : 0 0] All right, good to see you. If you've got a Bible, go ahead and turn to John chapter 1, and we're going to start from verse 35 today. It's going to be a fun morning. We're continuing our series, Grace Upon Grace, and hang in there towards the end, and after we do communion and the response song, we're going to have some important announcements of stuff that just keeping you in the loop on the transition as we go to Autonomous that you won't want to miss.

So yeah, just wait till then. And in the meantime, if you could not think about that, and really pay attention to the sermon, that would be awesome.

All right. So Grace Upon Grace, we're really looking and uncovering what Jesus puts on offer to us, what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, to see Him and know Him, how He came and He showed God to us, not just showed Him to us, but He gave us an example of what life as it should be looks like.

And then last week, we saw the implications went a little bit further, just to see Jesus as one thing, but it demands a response. We need to believe in Him and know Him, but we also have to receive Him, and not how we want Him to be.

We got to receive Him as He is and respond to Him in that way. But that also has implications and further demands, because Jesus just doesn't say, know who I am, and you are my disciples.

[1 : 2 0] He says, follow me, and so that's what we're going to look at today. We're going to look at what it means to follow Him. So John chapter 1, verses 35 to 42, it says this, the next day, John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, behold, the Lamb of God.

And the two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, what are you seeking? And they said to Him, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying?

He said to them, come and you will see. So they came and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. And one of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, we have found the Messiah, which means Christ. He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, you are Simon, the son of John.

You shall be called Cephas, which means Peter. This is God's word. So I love this little story, and I love how wonderfully odd this begins, because when you look at it, what you're seeing is, you have John the Baptist, right?

[2 : 3 8] And he's been saying a lot of things about Jesus. And one of the things is that someone greater than me, John the Baptist, is coming. You guys think what I'm doing is amazing, baptizing people in the Jordan and preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins?

But somebody else is coming that's even greater than me. And now Jesus walks by, and He says, behold the Lamb of God. And two of John's disciples look at this and consider this, and they hear, and they turn, and they turn into Jesus stalkers, right?

That's how this whole thing begins. At some point, these guys are following Jesus, and finally Jesus turns around and says something to the effect of, can I help you? Right?

But He doesn't say that. He actually says a very probing, meaningful question. He says to them, what are you seeking? Speaking, which to be honest is better than what I would have done in Jesus's position.

I would have been thinking, man, do I tase these guys, or do I mace them? Like, what do I do? But He's Jesus. He knows what's going on, and He knows how to respond best. And look at the question, man.

[3 : 42] Jesus asks the best questions, doesn't He? And He still does. And following Jesus begins this way. It begins with the most important question of your life.

What are you seeking? And that should stop us in our tracks. That should stop anyone in their tracks. Years ago, we were, years ago, I'm talking like I'm in my mid-20s here.

We were, yeah. Thank you for that. So years ago, we're, you know, newly married and swimming at our apartment pool with some friends, and this friend had a three-year-old daughter, and we're swimming around, and there's other people in the pool swimming around, and she just asked this total stranger, this adult lady, she looks at her and says, what's your life about?

And maybe this lady had been reading John 1 that day. I don't know, but she, this young girl, sorry, but she asked that, like, Jesus question. What are you seeking?

That's kind of what's behind that, right? And maybe it was the fact that the question came from a toddler or just the depth of the question itself, but you could tell it was probably the first time that young lady had pondered something that deep, something that existential.

[5 : 01] And yet, I would say this. It's probably the thing that we should be pondering the most. You know, we go through life with all kinds of messages and marketing flying at us, telling at us what we should want out of life, what the good life is.

In a very real way, we need that help. We need people to help us out with that. If you were to say, like, well, maybe the best way to, like, figure this out is to detach myself from all the messaging and marketing thing, and you could do that.

You can go be a desert hermit, living by yourself, off the grid. And if you pondered that question, you might come up with some ideas. You might come up with answers, and I bet you they'd be a lot different from the other desert hermits that tried that as well.

What are you seeking? What do you want out of life? What is life as it should be? And these two stalkers had the wisdom, some wisdom. I mean, some sketch and some creepiness to you, but definitely they had wisdom.

And here's why. They knew the answer was outside of them. The answer to that question, what are you seeking? They did not know how to answer that. And so when Jesus asks them that, they don't respond with, well, this is kind of what we're seeking, Jesus.

[6 : 13] They say one word. They begin with one word, rabbi. And Jesus doesn't rebuke them. He doesn't say, man, you guys, I just got baptized by John.

Like God spoke over me. He opened up the heavens like the spirit descended on me as a dove, and it thundered from heaven, and the voice said, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

I might be a little bit more than a rabbi, right? Catch a wake up, dudes. Like Jesus doesn't do that. They say rabbi, and he says, yeah, come and join me. And here's the point.

Following Jesus is an invitation to be his disciple. Discipleship is a relational reality. And to be a disciple means you and I.

What we need to do when we hear that word, that idea of rabbi to student, we need to step in and understand in that context, in Jesus's day, when they were so comfortable with rabbi discipleship words, we need to understand what that meant.

[7 : 13] Because Jesus was very comfortable about using that to describe the people that followed him. And Jesus picked that word in that context for a reason. He calls his followers disciples.

And yes, we're God's sons and daughters, bought with a price, sent a tone for because of Jesus's sacrifice. But we are also students with a master teacher. The rabbi student relationship of Jesus's day, it was a big commitment.

It was life together, not like Sunday school together. To be a disciple was to be an ardent student of a rabbi's teaching. It was to, it involved like stepping in and following them in such a way that you were with them and watching them and observing their life, not just their teaching, but their life as well.

It was a mentorship into that rabbi's way of life. It was imitation. To follow a rabbi was commonly referred to as taking your yoke, their yoke upon you.

That's what, so if you were, if you were a student of Nicodemus, what you would say is, I have taken Nicodemus's yoke upon me, his teachings and his way of life upon me.

[8 : 25] Think about what they're saying. Two oxen get yoked together, but when two oxen are yoked together, there's always a lead oxen, and there's always an oxen that follows with.

And yet they were, they go together. Yoked they are. And these two men, they go to Jesus, and they, and Jesus asks him that question, what do you seek?

What do you want out of life? And their answer is, to be yoked to you, to come under your teachings, your interpretation of Torah, God's law, and not just under them, but to learn about them, to learn what you think about them, to, to know your teachings, to integrate them into our life.

With one word, they implied all that, and not only that, but also to follow Jesus's way of life and how he kept the Jewish religion, how he would practice faithfulness to the commandments of God.

They were interested to know how Jesus prayed, and how often he prayed, and where he would go to pray, and, and, and also the type of people that Jesus would go to. That's a lot of implication in one word.

[9 : 32] But that is what being a disciple of Jesus is. It is being yoked to him, and not to anybody else. And that's why John, these two disciples, that's why they had to tell John, see you later, buddy.

Great guy, just not Jesus. So these guys put themselves out there with Jesus, saying to him, Rabbi, right? That's a big commitment. They're saying to him, hey, Jesus, as far as it's concerned, we're all in with following you, right?

Think about, remember, bacon and eggs, right? We are the pig and not the chicken. We are all in on this. So naturally, as total strangers, and in, in accordance with stalker fashion, they ask Jesus, where are you staying?

They don't want to lose their rabbi. They want to know where he is at. They're just like, we just found the guy that we want to be yoked to and follow. We don't want to lose you. Where are you at? And how does Jesus respond? Come and you will see.

Important implication here. Following Jesus, being a disciple, is a commitment to go where Jesus is. Now, in this scenario, Jesus invites them into the quiet, intimate space of a home.

[10 : 42] And I want to say this. That is an important context for disciples of Jesus. Some call it quiet times with the Lord. Some call them devotions. Some call it agony. Yeah, you guys are catching on.

Now, I would say, man, I get that. I get the difficulty of that thing of just like, man, quiet times, regular quiet times, regular devotion time. Those are hard things to do. But also, I want to say this.

If you stick with it, eventually, that is going to turn into the best part of your day. The quiet, intimate place with Jesus, where you get to abide with him, where you get to sit at his feet and enjoy him, is so important for disciples of Jesus.

And I would say this. We need to make them anchor points in our schedules. It's one of those things that, speaking for myself, I need daily. And if I don't do it daily, I get scratchy.

I get meaner. I get selfisher. My English suffers. All that. Disciples, what they do. Disciples go to the spaces where their rabbi can be found, where their rabbi says, here is where you can find me.

[11 : 50] Here is where you get to spend time with me. You get to sit in my feet. And so what are the places where Jesus makes himself available for us to meet with him? Well, it's places like prayer.

It's being in Scripture, in the Bible. It's singing worship songs. You could do that in your kitchen or in your living room or at home or even here.

It's doing those things. And it's other spiritual disciplines like silence and solitude and fasting and Scripture meditation and all that stuff. Confession and repentance.

Those are great spiritual disciplines that we can think about where Jesus says, as you do those things, that's where I am. These are the places where we get to be with our rabbi.

Where we learn his heart for us. Where we step into and begin to know him and his teachings. His yoke. His light and easy yoke. We get to learn his love for us.

[12 : 47] We get to understand what it means to be in relationship with God. In short, we get to grow in the knowledge and grace of God. It is not a dutiful demand that is just dead for us.

It is grace upon grace that Jesus is offering to us to follow him in this way. And you know what? As we do that, you know what happens? It starts to change us. As we follow him in these ways.

As we begin to put in those anchor points in our lives and build our lives around those anchor points and do them faithfully. It begins to change who we are. It's like leaven in dough. The knowledge and grace of God permeates our hearts.

And begins to fill it more and more and more. And so, our faith in God rises. The character of God in us rises. Our love for God rises. And God's love in us, we're more aware of it.

And that rises too. Like leavened dough, we begin to swell with the fullness of Jesus. That's what happens. It grows and grows and grows. And while all that is happening in those sacred places, something else is going on at the same time.

[13 : 53] Jesus loves us so much that he reveals those parts of our hearts that don't want his rabbi yoke. That don't want to necessarily follow him.

Or places where we might just be totally ignorant about the things of Jesus. Or places where we just might be in a rut and really kind of stuck in our old ways. And he speaks to those places.

And he corrects them. And he rebukes them. And he refines them in his loving, gracious way that he knows how to do. But as we listen and we yield to those things and respond to them.

And let go of them for more of his grace and his goodness. Man, we step into freedom. We step into lightness. We step into joy. And I just want to say this. In those moments where, man, you just come and you're just like, oh man, God is calling me out right now.

That hurts a little bit. I'll admit it. It hurts me a little bit. Whenever we take a hit of our pride, we're going to feel a little sting. I never like being told that I'm wrong.

[14 : 57] You can ask my wife. But we need those moments. We need Jesus to be doing that. That's part of our rabbi's light and easy yoke that we get to take on for ourselves.

The more faithful we are to go where Jesus is, the more we are going to become like him. That's why the quiet, intimate place is so important for you and me to participate in.

And I want to encourage you. Like this year, like if you like take some initiative, make some anchor points in your calendar. Like, man, go home after the sermon today and do that.

Where are some places in my calendar that can say like, you know what? Right here, man, I can like cut some things out and jettison some things that aren't like, you know, they're not absolutely beneficial to my life.

But I'm going to make that an anchor point in my schedule. I'm going to build my life around that. It's like building your life on the rock. I'm going to make sure at minimum I'm getting like five, ten, twenty, thirty minutes.

[15 : 55] I don't know what it is for you, what time you got, but you do. And you can say like, you know what? I'm going to put that in there. I'm going to make that a routine. Build your life around those moments, not the other way around.

And following Jesus as a disciple, taking his yoke upon you, it means joining him where he is, but also it's doing what he does. Following Jesus is an invitation to participate in what Jesus is already doing.

The reason Jesus said yes to Andrew and the other guy is because he was doing what he came to do. He came to bring God near to us, to reveal the very nature of God to us, to show us God's love.

But Jesus came to seek and save the lost, to reconcile men to God and to restore that relationship. He came to make disciples. So he's doing what he is doing.

He's doing what he came to do. And that mission didn't stop when Jesus went to heaven. He just gave it to his disciples. He passed it on to them. He said, the work that I began, you guys get to continue until I decide that the work is done and I return.

[17 : 01] And I say, good job, we're done. And new heavens and new earth, and we get to rule and reign and enjoy him in his fullness forever. So until that time, what does it mean to follow Jesus into what he is already doing?

What does that mean for you and me? Well, part of that is displaying God to others. And Elliot's going to bring that word next week and talk about that next week. It means seeking the lost to share the good news of Jesus with them.

It means participating in making disciples. Now, if that sounds exciting and intimidating all at the same time, and by that, I mean you really feel more intimidation than excitement, you're in good company.

But here's the good news for you and me. Jesus knew how difficult and how hopeless we would be at this. And yet he still calls us to do it. But you know what he does?

He gives us everything that we need to accomplish, what he gives to us to do, and what he's on about. He sends us the helper, the helper that he promised, the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit who comes and fills us and leads and guides us and strengthens us.

[18 : 09] He is the very presence of God that fills us, and he empowers us to follow Jesus and to do the works that Jesus created for us and calls us to participate in him with.

We can do this. Friends, we can do this as disciples of Jesus. We can make disciples not because we have a lot of vitamin B complex coursing through our veins.

We can because we got the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that anointed Jesus at his baptism. The same Holy Spirit that Luke's gospel said that Jesus started out his ministry on earth full of.

The same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, as the Apostle Paul said. That same Spirit is at work in us right now if you are a disciple of Jesus.

And I don't know why I'm talking like this. What I mean, we got all the power we need to do the things that Jesus did and the things that Jesus is doing and calls us to participate with him.

[19 : 11] How do we learn the best way to do them? Following Jesus means following others who are ahead of us. That's a little pro tip.

The best thing about discipleship is that you don't have to figure it out all over again. People have been doing this successfully for 2,000 years now.

Jesus, he called disciples, he mentored them, he showed them what's up, he showed them how to be like him and his teachings and how he lived and what he did.

And then they in turn mentored others, right? They made disciples who in turn mentored others. Do you see where I'm going with this? Raise your hand if this is true for you.

How many in this room experienced their most fruitful years of growth as a disciple of Jesus being actively mentored by somebody? That's me.

[20 : 10] Okay. Just keep your hand up. All right. Keep your hand up. You can look around the room. Now add to that, how many of us had a season of like really amazing spiritual growth in our lives as we had great peer friendships or spiritual friendships that helped us grow?

Okay. Look around the room. Raise those hands high. Look around the room. Okay. Get in the picture. We can't do discipleship alone. It's impossible.

We learn from others. My mentor was Nick Saltus. Like 2003 to 2008, that guy was a big voice in my life and a big presence in my life.

My little peer group of spiritual friends. And at that same time was Mark Tapping and Sasha Dare of Anessian. There were others involved during those years for sure, but those guys played the biggest part.

They were the most faithful presence. Nick and Karin, Nick, his wife Karin. They continually opened their lives in their home to a young prodigal who had wandered back into the fold, not knowing heads from tails of what it means to follow Jesus.

[21 : 15] Nick taught me my love for Scripture. That every word in it meant something. It was precious. It was good. And mine it for all it's worth. He taught me about spiritual leadership.

He saw gifts in me that I couldn't see. He saw a calling that I didn't know. He saw that potential and he called that out in me. He disciplined me toward them. He taught me and challenged me and loved me and listened and all at the same time.

He was a father in the faith. He taught me and loved me and loved me and loved me and loved me and loved me and loved me. And that requires us to be a little bit humble and also to be committed to seeking out that kind of relationship, that kind of person.

I want to say this. Do you have a spiritual father or mother in your life? Now, let me say this. The longer that you follow Jesus, you grow immaturity and you grow gray hairs.

That spiritual father and mother thing, it's harder to find. But I think that's for a reason. It's the natural way of life that teaches us kind of the spiritual realities as well. At some point, you and I, we tip into being spiritual fathers and mothers ourselves along the way.

[22 : 27] And we have to realize that there is a season that we step into that's a reality for us that we need to take hold of, that God has on offer for us. Now, here's the thing.

We need to be careful that discipleship doesn't turn into quarantining off into like stage of life silos. And that is really popular in the American church.

Let me find the group of people that is most like me, that I have most in common with, and I'm going to do life together with just them. Now, let me say this. It is important to have spiritual friendships.

It is important to have peers that know the kind of things that you are going through, that understand your stage of life, that can help you through them. That, I'm not saying that's worthless.

That is just as important. But discipleship is also following others who are ahead of you, which means if we are the one that is ahead, we need to be pulling people, getting into people's lives to give them an example to follow, to mentor them, and to help them.

[23 : 34] As the Apostle Paul's words were, follow me as I follow Christ. Discipleship is imitation. Now, having said that, while it's important to have someone to follow and someone to disciple, like I said, it's also important to have those peers to walk with as well, those who walk alongside us.

Disciples need friends as well as fathers and mothers. Disciples need friends as well as fathers and mothers.

I mean, two of John's disciples followed Jesus together. I love how that starts out. It wasn't just one. It was two going together. Now, one of them was Andrew. And he went and he grabbed his brother to join him.

Who are you grabbing? Who's your spiritual friends? Who's your squad of peers? And what are you doing together to follow Jesus, to stir one another up in that endeavor?

Now, if you've been listening to this and you're just like, man, just I'm already set. Well, good on you. And if you don't, man, we would like to help you get started. I would like to help you get started.

[25 : 06] And if you don't know where to begin, send me an email and let's start the conversation. Let's get going on this. There's the email right up there. Like, you're out of excuses now. I want to say this.

By the end of a sermon like this, it is easy to walk away with the sense of like, okay, there's a lot of things I got to do to follow Jesus. Got to do this. Got to have this. Got to bing, bing. I got to have this relationship, that relationship.

And probably all the overachievers, type A personalities are going to go home, spreadsheet this thing out, map out their spiritual growth process for the next 80 years.

And that's all fine. But if that's not you, and I'm guessing that's probably most of us in the room, if you're trying to figure out how to implement all of this, don't begin with everything.

Start in the same place that Andrew did. Figure out where Jesus makes himself available and just go there. That is always the right answer.

[26 : 08] That is always the right step to take in following Jesus. That is the overarching discipleship principle that undergirds everything that a disciple is meant to do.

So if you don't have a devotional life yet, we have something called seeing Jesus together, which takes place on the first Saturday of every month, 9 a.m.

We do it right over there. I love to do that. I love to go there. And it's a great next step. If that's you and you're looking how to kickstart a devotional life, come and join us. We're going to be there February 1st.

It's in a couple of weeks. Or if you don't have those kind of peer-to-peer relationships or a mentoring relationship, and you're just like, how do I even go about seeking those out?

Well, go to where people are. Get into a community group. Go to where the disciples already are. It's like community groups are like eHarmony, but for discipleship.

[27 : 11] Maybe not. But you get the point, right? I think you all get the point. Those are important things. And if you're not in one, like, hey, we're going to send out an email this week if there's any spots available.

And if you get that email and you're thinking, like, man, this is something I need to get involved in, you can sign up and we'll try to get you into one if there's any spots available in them. Now, if you can't tell, for us as a church, this is one of our biggest passions, life together in Jesus.

It is one of our biggest passions. But there's a lot of opportunity for growth in it as well, for all of us together. And that life in Him, and the reason we want to hold it out to you, and the reason we want to encourage you and provoke you into these things is that life in Him is so good.

It is so full of grace. It is so freeing, so liberating, so life-giving for us when you do these things. And not just for us, for others around us. We are passionate because we have tasted and seen and experienced what Jesus can do through these types of relationships and following Him.

And when you've done that, when you've seen what it means and how important that is, you want it for others as well. Having said all that, hear me clearly. God calls you to this in love.

[28 : 38] He calls you to that relationship of following Him in love. And here's the thing. Satan will take that same invitation, and he will attempt to turn it into condemnation.

Hear me. See the privilege. Reject the condemnation. A devotional life is not a heaven or hell issue.

It is a fullness of life issue. It will bring you further into life as it should be. Now, you can go away today, ignore everything I said, do very little following or mentoring or life together stuff.

And you know what? God is going to still love you as much as He loves the disciple who keeps the most devoted devotion ever devoted. But I will say this.

You will miss out on an incredible life. I don't want to guilt you into anything. I just don't want you to live in ignorance. And I'm on board with those stalkers in this passage that we just read.

[29 : 44] I think Andrew got it honest. Once you've seen Jesus and spent time with Him, you want that for everyone else. You want to run to your brother Simon and say, we found Him.

Come and see. Join in the discipleship invitation to take Jesus' rabbi yoke upon you. We have the privilege, not the condemnation, we have the privilege to do this together.

To follow Jesus together. To discover the fullness of what it means to know Him and be with Him. And that fullness of life that He has on offer to us.

It is grace upon grace. As the band comes up and we respond today. In a moment, we're going to take communion. And I want to say to you in the room, if you're here and not yet a follower of Jesus, before you come to the table, come and see that Jesus is Lord and Savior.

Come and see Him for who He truly is. And don't come to the table because taking communion cannot save you. You've got to come to Him, to the one who can save you. And the response to Him and knowing Him as Lord and Savior is, Lord, you are who you are.

[30 : 56] I do believe and I confess that I am a sinner in need of salvation. You pray that prayer and you will be saved. And He is calling you into a life of following Him together with us.

And maybe not with us. Maybe wherever He takes you and lands you with the people of God. And in a moment, there's going to be a prayer for you to pray to respond to that. If you're already a follower of Jesus, I want to say to us in the room, how is God calling us to respond today?

What does that look like for you and me? As we come to the table, we are coming around the signs and symbols of Jesus. His life and death and resurrection.

His body and through His sacrifice, He made a new body, a new people. And us coming around the table together reminds us of something. Like, yes, Jesus calls us to Himself.

But in calling us to Himself, we look around and we start to see, oh, there's other people that are coming to this same bread to partake of the same cup. We get to do life together.

[32 : 06] That's what communion reminds us of. With Jesus at the center. So what's your next step? What is Jesus calling you to today?

Let me pray. And then when you're ready, go to the table near you, bring the bread and cup back. And I would just say, spend time with God, pray to Him. And when you feel like you've sufficiently done business with Him and responded to Him, go ahead and take communion.

Lord, I pray for our time together. Father, this little moment, as we step into a time, either of crossing the line of faith and believing in you for the first time, or coming to the communion table with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

And I pray that you would do an amazing work in us as we do this. We thank you for the privilege that we get to come to you. That we get to do life together and you get to be at the center of it all.

We give you all the honor, all the glory, and all the praise. Amen. God is amazing.

[33 : 12] So, got a bit of announcement. So, this will take a couple of minutes and sit down, just so you know. I think we're now five squats into this service. This is good. This is good. So, kind of what we want to do is keep you up to date on things that are happening in the transition time.

And so, there's a couple of things we're going to get to today, but like a big one is, we're going to announce the church name to you guys right now. So, you ready for it? All right. Okay. It's City Grace.

That's the name of the church. All right. And so, we chose that one because we love the word grace. Grace is one of those things we feel like defined, like God has been doing in us and through us.

When people walk into this, our gatherings for the first time, they use words like, man, this place is so welcoming. It is so friendly. It feels so real, authentic.

Like, God's presence is here. It feels like a place where I can come in and I don't have to have it all together, you know, but it's also a place where God is working in me and changing and transforming and all of that.

[34 : 14] And so, we love that for all those reasons. Grace just felt like a natural, important thing to be a part of the church name. And so, that's, yeah, that's why we chose it.

And grace is this wonderful, it's a powerful word in the Bible and I love it because it's a word picture, that original word in the Greek is a word picture of a dignitary or a ruler extending himself down to his subjects of his own accord and his own free will and to show them favor and to bestow blessing upon them.

And what a great picture of what God is always doing to us, but not only to us, but also through us. And so, that's kind of where the word city comes into play, right? And so, city isn't about like urban vibes versus rural vibes or anything like that.

It's not about population size. It's city, central to city is the idea of community. City defines the place where people live and play and work and shop and go to school.

It's a place where we have commonly shared resources and utilities and protections. It's all those things. And it is, it's a place of diverse demographics, of diverse activities.

[35 : 26] Every city kind of has its own identity and feel and personality to it as well, right? We kind of, we kind of like grow up in places and we take pride in those places that we're from, right?

We're from this place and not that place. And in the Bible, to be outside a city was to be in the place of loneliness and lack. But in the city is where we find community. It's where we find our people.

It's where we have safety and security and provision. It's all of those things. So, we are a church and we want to be a church full of grace, but we want to be a church for our city, to see our city filled with the grace of God.

But as a church, we are also a city within the city, right? We are a community unto ourselves as well. We are a community of grace, a city of grace.

We are set apart, but we're not set apart to like be away from everybody else and say us versus them. Man, God calls us full of grace to be for our city and love it and be a part of what he's doing in his redemptive purposes.

[36 : 29] And then as a city within a city, our own community, this church, we do life together like we just talked about. We also share resources. We also play and work and serve. We do all that together.

That's, and hence, city grace. All right? So, that's, that's an exciting step forward and glad that we can share that with you.

We're kind of in the process, not kind of, we are in the process of getting the logo finalized and as that's happened, we'll be able to present that to you in the next few weeks and so be patient for that and when I say next few weeks, I mean like more than two or three weeks.

Okay. All right. So now I'm being like, what does that mean? All right. And we'll share it on a Sunday and you know, that means that we're going to have to change t-shirts and signage and all those things that'll happen at the right time and so we'll, again, we'll communicate when those things are all happening.

Okay? All right. So a couple more things we just want to briefly touch on because these things are like commonly asked questions we've been hearing and filtering through to us so just want to address them just in case you have the same question but haven't asked the question yet.

[37 : 33] So, the first is about giving. Some of us, some of you are wondering, man, what should I do with my giving? Do I still tithe the same way I have? Do I hold it back and wait for this whole thing to transition over?

And I would say, man, we still have operational costs and we still need tithes and offerings to be coming in in that way so please continue to do that. And you can do that in the same way you've been doing it like whether it's giving online, the digital way, if you do the analog kind of put giving in the box, it's still going to go to the same places it's always going to go to, it's been going to and so it does benefit the operational costs and the things that we do on a day that we need just to keep things going and running and all that.

all right. Now, I would say this, if you are holding on to like a special one-off gift that you've been thinking about, totally get that and you can come talk to me and Elliot about like, about that a little bit more, okay?

So, the next thing and the final thing is regarding community groups and some of you are wondering like, is that going to change? What does that look like? Nothing is changing any way, shape, or form with community groups.

We still firmly believe in small group discipleship and it's pivotal for us in our making of disciples and so, if you're in a community group, stay in it.

[38 : 47] If you're not in one, strongly urge you to try to get into one and again, there'll be an email going out this week if you're not in one. If we have any spots available, you can take advantage of that.

Cool? All right. Those are all the big announcements for today. And why don't you stand with me before you go? I want to send you out and a blessing. And if you're new, a couple things I don't want to forget.

If you're new, you can get information about us back there at our information desk. Lisa's back there. She would love to speak with you and there's some other volunteers back there who'd love to speak with you, answer any questions you have.

If you need prayer for anything, we're going to have folks to the right of the stage that would love to pray with you and like, man, just kind of double tapping on that thing that I mentioned earlier in the service.

Man, if you are really like struggling to figure out how God can turn your ashes into beauty and you just feel like that was for you and you want some prayer for that and you can come to me and I can pray with you, there's going to be folks on the side that would love to pray with you as well.

[39 : 47] Okay. Receive this blessing from God as you go out and into your week this week. Our Lord blesses you and keeps you. His face shines upon you and he is gracious to you.

He lifts up his countenance upon you and sends you in peace. Receive the Father's blessing as you go to be a blessing by making disciples and pushing back darkness all for the sake of the gospel.

Be blessed, He grace. Thank you for coming.