



GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

HOUSTON

Partnership Handbook

PARTNERSHIP WITH GBC

Dear Friend,

We are grateful for your interest in becoming a partner with Grace Bible Church. Our hope is that partnership with GBC would be an opportunity for followers of Christ to walk alongside one another as we collectively pursue the glory of God. Also, we pray that partnership will provide a means to receive care in community and to mature spiritually through instruction and accountability.

We hope this booklet and our partnership process would serve to sharpen your faith and deepen your commitment to the mission of God.

WHO WE ARE

Why We Exist

Grace Bible Church exists to glorify God by making disciples who transform the world. This statement helps define and direct all of our ministry efforts.

Our primary purpose as a church is to glorify God, and the means through which we attempt to accomplish this purpose is discipleship. Discipleship is an intentional and relational process by which God equips and mobilizes people to His Kingdom work. As we engage in discipleship, our hope is to make more disciples of Jesus. A disciple is someone intentionally becoming more like Jesus in character, conduct, and priorities.

What We Do

GBC has a very simple ministry model. Our hope for people who call GBC their church home is that they would glorify God in all aspects of their lives. To that end, we ask all partners to worship regularly, to live in accountable community, and to give their lives as an offering of service.

How We Are Structured

GBC is an elder-led church. These men are responsible for pastoral care, protection of doctrine, and the vision and direction of the church. All of our elders are participants in our Small Group Ministry and are actively engaged in disciple-making relationships. Our church staff, under the authority of the Senior Pastor, is responsible for implementing GBC's disciple-making vision.

What We Believe

GBC is a member of the Evangelical Free Church of America denomination. The EFCA is an association of autonomous churches united around ten theological convictions. More information about our doctrinal statement and the EFCA can be found on the EFCA website (www.efca.org).

PARTNERSHIP

What Is Partnership?

The concept of partnership finds its roots in Philippians, where Paul thanks the church in Philippi for its "partnership in the gospel" (Phil. 1:5). Like the Apostle Paul, when we use the word partnership, we indicate a common vision and a shared responsibility.

Ultimately, this common vision and shared responsibility for the work of ministry grows out of a belief in the "priesthood of believers." This Christian doctrine is articulated frequently in the New Testament and is especially clear in I Peter 2:4-12. When Peter calls his fellow Christians a "royal priesthood" and a "holy nation," he is hoping to remind the people of Israel's priesthood during the days of the Old Testament. During that time, the priests were the only ones who had direct access to God, and, therefore, they were seen as the only people who actively did the work of ministry. However, when Christ came, He made a way for all who believe in Him to have access to the Father. In this sense, all Christians act as priests and share responsibility for the work of ministry.

What Does Partnership Look Like at GBC?

Partners affirm that:

- **GBC is their church home.** Partners agree with the overall vision and doctrine of the church. As part of this, they acknowledge that participation in worship, small groups, and service is important for their own spiritual growth and for the health of GBC as a whole.

- **They are willing to live under the authority of the elders.** Partners acknowledge that the Lord has established both the institution of the church and the authority of collective elders to oversee the church. Therefore, partners willingly submit to the elders' God-given authority (Heb. 13:16-18).

Just as importantly, the elders have a responsibility in partnership. They are committed to:

- **Equipping partners for the work of ministry.** As part of this, the elders are committed to ensuring that partners grow and mature as disciples as they participate in the life of the church.
- **Caring pastorally for partners.** The elders are committed to helping people during various times of need.
- **Because of love for God and His people, the elders are committed to calling partners in known and objective sin back into right relationship with God and the church.** This desire for restored relationship can, when deemed necessary, take place in the process of church discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5). In all cases, loving restoration should always be the principal motivator (Gal. 6:1-10).

PARTNERSHIP COVENANT

The partnership covenant is a biblical way of defining the expectations and responsibilities that we believe God has for His people at GBC. In making this covenant, Partners are formally committing to the truth of the gospel, to the spiritual health and mission of GBC, and to the care, accountability, discipline, and direction of its leaders, who will give account to Jesus for their work (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; I Cor. 5:11-13).

Partnership Commitments

Partners with GBC commit to living lives shaped by the gospel of Jesus Christ. The foundational assumptions of this commitment are:

You are committing to living life as a disciple of Jesus:

- I am a follower of Jesus who trusts in Christ alone to save me from sin and reconcile me with God (Rom. 3:21-24). I am willing to obey Jesus and am seeking His ongoing transformation of my life (Heb. 12:14; Phil. 2:12-13).
- I will seek to live in obedience to the teachings of Scripture and pursue growth in Christian maturity through regular corporate worship, intimate and accountable community, service, and submission to godly leadership (Jn. 14:21; I Pet. 2:2; Matt. 22:37-38).

You are committing to the community of GBC:

- I agree to faithfully develop disciple-making relationships inside and outside the church (Matt. 28:18-20).

- I will use my time, gifts, and resources to promote the spiritual health and well being of the church. I understand this will involve knowing and being known by others, giving generously to support the needs and mission of the church, serving in practical ways, speaking the truth in love, receiving help, resolving conflict, and praying for others (Eph. 4:1-16; Rom. 12:3-21).
- I agree to prioritize intentional and accountable community for the purpose of edifying my brothers and sisters in Christ while also protecting myself against my proclivity toward sin (Heb. 10:24-25).
- I agree not to be divisive toward the church's teaching. I will submit to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Heb. 13:17; Eph. 4:1-3).

Pastoral Commitments

The Bible teaches that elders and pastors are stewards who will have to “give an account” for those whom God has entrusted to their care (Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28). We take this responsibility very seriously. By becoming a partner, you are placing yourself under the pastoral care and oversight of the elders whom the Holy Spirit has raised up for GBC.

Serving under Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, our elders and pastors make the following commitments to you:

- We commit ourselves to lovingly care for you by seeking your growth in Christ and providing an example for you to follow (Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-3).

- We commit to provide teaching, preaching, and counsel from Scripture (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-4:2) and to guard sound doctrine (2 Tim. 2:24-25; Titus 1:9).
- We commit to helping you in times of need (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; Jas. 2:14-17).
- We commit that your leaders will meet the criteria assigned to them in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9).
- We commit to exercise church discipline when necessary (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1).
- We commit to help you become equipped to serve Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).
- We commit to seek God's will for our church community as we study Scripture and follow the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-5).