

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT: *He is an amazing gift.*

The story of Jesus begins with John the Baptist proclaiming, “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit...” Jesus promised, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...” The gift of the Holy Spirit to all believers is the wondrous centerpiece of the New Covenant. The Promised Savior has come. He died for our sins to bring forgiveness and eternal life. And, as promised, He has sent His Spirit to empower all who have received Him for new life and supernatural ministry.

Specifically, we believe that the Holy Spirit is fully God, equal with the Father and the Son. The primary ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The Holy Spirit convicts unbelievers of their need for Christ, He gives new birth to believing sinners, and He indwells, sanctifies, leads, teaches, and empowers believers for godly living and service. We believe that the ministry of the Spirit continues to be as tangible and powerful as it was in the early church. We also believe that all the biblical gifts of the Spirit continue to be distributed by the Spirit today; that these gifts are divine provisions central to spiritual growth and effective ministry; and that these gifts are to be eagerly desired, faithfully developed, and lovingly exercised according to biblical guidelines. (John 3:3-8, John 14:15-27, Rom. 8:9-17, Rom. 12:3-8, I Cor. 12-14, Gal. 5:16-26, Eph. 5:18-21)

ABOUT THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT AT GRACE: *Eagerly desire, faithfully shepherd.*

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a precious privilege of every follower of Jesus. Stunningly, according to Jesus, the Spirit’s presence makes it better for us than having Jesus Himself with us! How can that be? The truth is that the Spirit can be with all of us all the time. He is not just with us but in us, and His power is sufficient for godly living and supernatural service. Practically, we have seen that the power of the Spirit can do more in an instant than anything humanly possible; and when we experience His work among us, our faith, worship, and witness all tend to soar. So... at GCC we love the Holy Spirit! We are committed to pursuing His full promised work among us.

At the same time that we desire all the Spirit is willing to do, we recognize the very real danger of error, immaturity and counterfeit. While we are told, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire,” we are also warned to “Test everything.” Historically, the greatest threat to the “Spirit’s fire” has been our immature response to it. The oft repeated pattern of church communities has been to:

- *Desire* the Spirit, then
- *Experience* the Spirit, then
- *Abuse* the Spirit, and then
- *Prohibit* the Spirit.

At Grace, we are determined to break the cycle. We are convinced the best way to protect the Spirit's ministry is to simply "go by the Bible." We are therefore committed to abide by the Scriptures, neither adding to nor subtracting from what they promise and command.

ABOUT SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP: *"All things... decently and in order."*

Like a conductor with an orchestra, someone must have the responsibility and authority to lead all for the good of the whole. Someone must insure that the people use the variety of the Spirit's ministries in ways that honor God, fit together and strengthen the church body. At Grace, we have given this responsibility and authority to our pastors. We ask all to exercise their gifts in love, good order, and in submission to the appointed leaders of our spiritual community.

Below are our guidelines for the use of the Spirit's provisions at Grace.

ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS: *All have some, none are for all.*

- Spiritual gifts are supernatural abilities or capacities given by the Holy Spirit to empower Jesus' followers to serve others.
- The gifts promised in the New Testament continue to be given today.
- Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to each believer as He determines. All have at least one, and no one gift is for all. Some gifts the Spirit gives sovereignly without our involvement, some He gives through others as they pray and impart them to us, and some He gives as we desire and ask.
- Each of us should know, develop and use the gifts we have.
- All should understand, value, and desire the contribution of all the gifts in our church body.
- All should exercise their gifts in love, good order, and in submission to the appointed leaders of their spiritual community.
- While none of us is gifted with all the gifts of the Spirit, we can all experience some measure of what the gifts empower. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit and the privilege of prayer, we are able to hear God's voice (to some degree), receive needed knowledge and wisdom, learn to give generously, see God heal the sick, grow in faith, discern the working of spirits and see God do many wonderful things.

ABOUT SPIRIT BAPTISM & FILLING: *Baptized once, filled repeatedly.*

- We are baptized with/by the Spirit into the body of Christ at conversion.
- We are filled by the Spirit *daily* as we yield to His subtle leading and empowering for godly living (e.g. Eph 5:18) and *occasionally*, when He comes with dramatic power and a variety of wondrous effects (e.g. Act 2).
- We should daily seek to be filled with the Spirit to bear His fruit, and we should desire and value His occasional filling in ourselves and others. Both are wonderful!

ABOUT HEALING: *Often He does, sometimes He doesn't, always He is good.*

- God continues to heal both naturally and supernaturally today.

- If physically pained, we should ask Him for healing.
- God is always good. Whatever we ask in good faith, we can always count on Him to give what we ask or what He knows is better.
- When we ask in good faith, God often does the miraculous--more often than we expect; and sometimes His good is something other than the miracle we want.
- If He doesn't supernaturally heal, we should pursue conventional treatment for ourselves and others.
- At times, suffering is redemptive and does more good to the sufferer and to others than healing or rescue.
- So, we want to ask boldly but avoid:
 - Accusing spirit ("If you'd had more faith...").
 - Devaluing spirit ("There is no good in suffering and God never wants it...").
 - False expectations ("God always heals...").

ABOUT PROPHECY: *Eagerly desire, always test.*

- "Prophecy" is the act of receiving a God-given message and passing it on to men.
- Prophecy is a gift to be eagerly desired both personally and corporately because it has significant potential to edify others.
- The purpose of prophecy is to "strengthen, encourage, and comfort." It should therefore be delivered thoughtfully, with kindness and in as natural a manner as possible.
- Because prophesy is often flawed by our human imperfections, it is always fallible and it should always be delivered with humility (e.g. "I sense God is saying" not "Thus saith the Lord") and a reminder to "test."
- When I receive a prophecy personally, it is my responsibility to value it as a possible message from God; test it against the Scriptures, God's character, wise counsel and providence and, if valid, take it to heart.
- Pastors, ministry leaders and small group leaders are responsible to lead their flocks and to shepherd prophesy in their groups. While it is important that the leaders respect the prophets (i.e. weigh carefully their messages), it is vital that the prophets respect the leaders (let them lead). Final authority regarding the use and testing of prophecy in meetings rests with the pastoral leader.
- In a public setting, prophecy should be written, passed to a presiding pastor, and used as the pastor decides is best for the body as a whole.

ABOUT TONGUES: *Some do, some don't.*

- Tongues can be a powerful connector of a person's spirit to the Holy Spirit. If you have this gift, be grateful and use it considerately.
- Like all other gifts, tongues is not given to all. "Some have it, others don't."
- Tongues is not a sign of greater spiritual power or maturity.
- Tongues is one sign—but not the only sign—of a powerful filling of the Holy Spirit. God does a variety of wonderful things when He powerfully fills His people.
- If private and uninterpreted, speak quietly so as to not distract others.
- If public and for interpretation, clear with host pastor before speaking.

SUMMARY: At GCC, we believe that understanding and experiencing the promised power of the Holy Spirit is essential to fulfilling God's best for our lives and we are committed to pursue His work among us as promised and directed by the Scriptures.

*May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and
the love of God, and
the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.*