

GRACE CHAPEL MINISTRY GUIDELINES

Our purpose is to present the gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that turns non-Christians into converts, converts into disciples, disciples into mature, fruitful leaders, who will go out into the world and reach others for Christ.

“The Spirit and Character of a Christian Leader”

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. (Hebrews 13:7)

...set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

Augustine (354-430 AD) said, "In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity. In this way, we are seeking to simultaneously heed the Bible's commands to have sound doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16; Titus 1:9, 2:1), to love our Christian brothers and sisters (1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 4:7-21), and to avoid unnecessary divisions (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:10, 12:25; Titus 3:10). Therefore, who we are, and what we believe, influence how we live in the time and place God has placed us.

Ministry team leaders should live a life worthy of imitation by those they lead. This doesn't mean perfection—only Jesus walked without sin. Rather, it means walking in the light, demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit, pursuing holiness, practicing true confession and repentance, and not harboring hidden sin. In short, humbly walking above reproach, with a life that is worthy of respect and imitation.

The requirements of a Deacon found in 1 Timothy 3 form the basis for the character qualifications of a Grace Chapel team leader and ministry overseer. In this we are not saying that every team leader or overseer is an elder or a deacon (although some are), but rather that in a church of our size to provide good care and leadership for our people, teams and groups need to be led by people who are of the same qualities as a deacon:

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NIV)

Deacons likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of by one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served will gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

The following are some highlights and practical implications from this passage.

“Worthy of Respect”

Being worthy of respect is a quality built over time, as others see that we walk with Jesus faithfully and see that our character is being conformed to His. If those among our own community or the respected leaders of the church would question our respectability, then those we would attempt to lead will likely also question it and find it hard to follow. Part of assessing a person as a ministry team leader is talking with others in our

leadership community, family, friends, etc. or anyone else who might be able to speak to the candidates being worthy of respect. In fact, this is one reason why we ask that all team leaders first become known within the community of Grace Chapel as active church members, so that their respectability may be confirmed.

“Sincere”

A ministry team leader must have pure motives. Pure motives would include first and foremost the desire to love God with their whole being and keeping this at the forefront of their motives. What follows from this would be the desire to care for other people, the desire to see others come to know Jesus, the desire to exercise one’s gifts for the benefit of others, and the desire to obey a calling to leadership. Impure motives would include wanting to proudly stand out among others, wanting to be seen as powerful, seeking validation of one’s spiritual growth by taking a leadership post, wanting to gain a following, wanting to gain a platform for influencing with one’s pet doctrines, legitimizing a divisive group of individuals, and wanting to advance any agenda other than the mission that we believe God has given Grace Chapel.

“Not indulging in much wine”

In our culture, addictions are rampant: food, alcohol, bad relationships, sex, drugs, and pleasure of all kinds. Leaders are to demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit to exercise self-control, and walk free of addictions. When it comes to alcohol consumption, the scriptures explicitly teach that being drunk and intoxicated is a sin. At the same time, moderation is a Christian virtue (Phil. 4:5). And that having an occasional glass of wine (or beer) is not considered “sin.” We would stress though that those who partake of an occasional glass of wine (or beer) are encouraged to be very thoughtful of whom they are with and of their surroundings so not to offend or be a source of struggle or confusion to others who have either convictions and a conscience that is different or others who have difficulties with substance abuse. Our focus must always be love and concern for our friends so that we don’t enjoy our freedom at the expense of their faith and conscience (1 Corinthians 8:13) and we never want to be a stumbling block to others in their faith in Jesus (Romans 14:21).

“Not pursuing dishonest gain”

Leaders are to demonstrate right relationships to work and earning money, working hard and being financially content. Their work and business dealings should be fair and honest, confirmed by their employer, employees, colleagues, or customers.

“Keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience”

In a healthy church, those without faith will come to faith in Jesus, those whose faith is weak will be strengthened, and those whose faith is strong will become stronger as it is tested by life and shared with others. It is essential that the leader is growing in faith and practically living life out of deeply held convictions that are rooted in sound biblical doctrine. To some leaders, the thought of having to be the teams or groups resident theologian and Bible knowledge expert is frightening, and even hold’s some back. However, the requirement here is not to excel in head knowledge, but rather to remain grounded in the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, even through the trials of life, and in the face of the various alternative truth claims offered by our culture. The leader must stay in a continual life of repentance and faith in the scriptures to help discern and dispense truth into the lives of the group members. Furthermore, while no team leader can answer every question that arises in their group, a good responsible leader must be willing to search out answers for others, which in turn helps them grow in their own understanding of the deep truths of our Christian faith.

“They must be tested”

Team and ministry leader candidates are tested in part by first proving to be faithful members of our church community (Growing Deep Growing Strong) which include being involved in such things as attending consistently, reading and applying God’s Word, sharing of the financial responsibility of our church through tithes and offerings, serving, participating in the body life of Grace Chapel, and sharing their faith with others. Finally, they are tested by serving as team members or as assistant leaders before assuming leadership roles.

“Their wives”

Grace Chapel’s position is that the Bible does include women in leadership roles in the church. The Greek word for wives is also the same word for women. Both words are a proper translation. Women must meet the same basic character qualifications as the men leaders. We believe in women in ministry. We also adhere strongly to Grace Chapel’s calling to disciple men into biblical manhood, including spiritual leadership of their households and their community. This calling goes out to men in large part through the exemplary living and leading of male role models with the church.

“Not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything”

Although the apostle Paul directs this verse primarily to women leaders and/or wives of men leaders, this verse applies to both men and women leaders. This verse is talking about the use of speech. It warns about sins of the tongue such as gossip, slander, or lying. In addition, spiritual leaders are not prone to emotionalism, which is basing decisions purely off of emotional responses with disregard to Scripture.

“Husband of but one wife”

Again, although this verse applies to both men and women leaders, it is directed to men. This phrase doesn’t just mean simply that a male leader should be legally married to one woman. Literally, the language is “one woman man.” And it speaks to the entirety of a man’s (and woman’s) sexual purity, whether he (or she) is single or married.

In the Bible, the marks of sexual purity for those who are married are oneness and being naked and unashamed. For the unmarried, it is saving oneself until oneness can be enjoyed with a spouse. Unconfessed sexual sin before or during marriage becomes a rift between spouses, threatening their oneness. When we sin sexually, our tendency is to hide in shame, preventing us from remaining naked and unashamed before God and our spouse. Therefore, any sexual activity that is not an expression with one’s spouse is impure and unfit for a “one woman man.” They would include:

- Viewing pornography in any form, including the seeking of sexual stimulation from content that may not be labeled pornographic but which is nonetheless sexually oriented, such as may be found in movies, television, or magazines.
- Any sexual contact (not just intercourse) outside of a married relationship.
- Emotional attachments with others that should be reserved for one’s spouse.

NOTE: It is important to say that we are not talking about being tempted in this area or any other area that we have mentioned. We are all tempted from time to time in different things and in different ways. Even Jesus was tempted.

But if you or your spouse struggle with maintaining sexual purity (or for that matter, any of these other areas that have been mentioned in this document) we want to help you and we invite you into a discipleship process of health and wholeness. Leaders grow in the context of relationships. Before disqualifying yourself from a leadership position, we would encourage you to take the initiative to come in and talk with a pastor so that we can come alongside of you through your particular struggle.

Sometimes gaining victory over a particular issue or weakness is as simple as confessing it with someone else, honestly repenting, and having that person pray with you. Other times, pastoral or professional Christian counseling may be necessary. And sometimes, postponing (not disqualifying) leadership for a season may be necessary as well. The point is that each of us must be open and transparent with each other and refuse to hide in shame and secrecy. We are a grace-based church.

We don't want to prematurely put you in a position of leadership by failing to address these issues. Therefore, handling them upfront gives you the best chance for success in ministry. Throughout a leader's time of leadership, they should maintain an attitude of humble openness and a willingness to be held accountable by their overseers to ongoing sexual purity.

“Must manage his children and household well”

Part of what makes a leader worthy of respect is the management of his or her own household. How can they lead a larger group of people with integrity if they can't manage their own household? This phrase simply means that the presence of the home is inviting, the children love and respect their parents, and financial, spiritual, and emotional needs are being met in the home.

Furthermore, for both men and women leaders, we urge you to be wise about how you commit your time. Loving your spouse and children, managing your household well comes before leading a ministry team. There may be seasons where a team leader should take a break from leading to attend to family matters so that God is glorified and godly living is exemplified.