

BEHIND THE SCENES

WHY WE DO SOME OF THE THINGS WE DO



**THIS SECTION IS SIMPLY TO GIVE YOU A GLIMPSE INTO
THE “WHY” OF CERTAIN AREAS OF GRACEPOINT.**

WHY WE HAVE A PRO-KID ATTITUDE:

At GracePoint we want to create contagious environments. The weekend service is designed specifically for adults and students, teaching on topics that are relevant to their lives. Likewise, the Adventure Land environments are designed with kids specifically in mind. It is our desire that kids would want to come to Adventure Land, bring their friends and take the message into their everyday life. Because of this concept, we do not allow children between the ages of 3 months old and 5th grade to attend the adult service.

Our Pro-Kid Attitude is not a rule against children being in an adult service; rather it is policy valuing the importance of kids knowing Jesus is their friend and He can relate to their everyday world.

There are three primary reasons for this policy:

Content. As stated, the adult service is designed with adult content. While there are teachings that relate to anyone, we do address things in an adult service that would not be relevant or appropriate for a child. We often talk about what the Bible has to say about adult related topics such as sex, parenting, cultural issues, and finances. While important for adults, kids would feel this is over their head and irrelevant to their lives. It is of great importance that children not think that God or church is over their head or irrelevant. The content of the kids' environments is geared towards a child's learning level, with specific lessons they can apply in their lives.

Distractions. We want everyone in the adult service to be able to focus on the message and participate in worship. The focus of *1 Corinthians 14* is maintaining a sense of order in a public worship service. If a child attends an adult service with their parent, that parent will have to devote some of their attention on entertaining their child while simultaneously trying to listen to the message. That is not ideal for anyone involved, the child, the parent or the distracted adult sitting behind them. If a parent is unsure of where they are leaving their kids, they may acquire a guest badge at the check-in area and be an observer in the kids' environments that day.

Appropriate Environments. Kids are wired to move and interact with their environment; therefore, Adventure Land environments are designed to help kids learn about Jesus through interaction. If a child grew up only attending a service where they were forced to sit still and the content was irrelevant to their life, then that child may grow up bitter towards the church. Allowing a child to interact in an environment designed for them, with age-appropriate content and fun, they could be dragging their parents to church, which is a win for all!

WHY WE MAKE A BIG DEAL ABOUT FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

People attend church for the first time for a variety of reasons. They may have relocated from another city, been hurt in a prior church, or reached a crisis point in their life and want to give God a try. Most people attend GracePoint because someone invited them.

Think about the person that has done the inviting. There are people that have been praying and inviting for months, and this Sunday will be the day that their friend, neighbor or co-worker comes to church. Imagine how exciting and nervous they will feel...will their friend have a good time? Will they like the service? Will they connect with anyone?

Think about the guest. You can only imagine the thoughts going through a first time visitors mind. They finally make the decision that today is the day they are going to visit GracePoint. They have been wondering for weeks if they should try it. They were invited by friends or maybe saw the signs. Today is the day. They wake up and rush around with the kids to get ready. They drive to GP, park their car and that is when the fear of the unknown sets in. How do we calm those fears?

Greeters are crucial in the connection process, because they are the first impression. It's teamwork in action. Someone has prayed and invited. When that person comes to GracePoint, it's like they tag you on the shoulder. You now have an incredible opportunity to continue what has been started.

We must have greeters with authentic, genuine smiles and a welcoming spirits. *We want to roll out the red carpet for our guests.*

So often we get caught up with our own friends or church business that we forget the importance of greeting, welcoming and getting to know people that we have never met. How can we ensure that visitors will be greeted? Allow God to work through you. Greet each and everyone like a first time guest.

We intentionally think through some specific areas:

1. Pay attention to your physical environments:

- overall layout and feel of areas
- landscaping
- lighting
- color
- signage
- texture of surfaces
- focal points and directional signs
- music/ambient noise
- smells
- furniture
- floor plan

2. Pay attention to your volunteers:

- Where are they?
- How easily identifiable are they?
- What do they have permission to do and say?
- Are they sensitive to guests?
- Do they know how to spot a first-time guest?
- What are they wearing?

3. Pay attention to your systems.

Systems are how you do things or how you ask people to do things. In churches, systems are things like . . . how someone registers for an event, how a new volunteer signs up to serve, how someone signs up for online-giving, how parents enroll their children into Adventure Land, how someone joins a community group, etc. Make sure your systems are...

- clear – This is what I do.
- easy – This is simple to do.
- results – This gets me where I want to go.

We have the opportunity every week to be a place for people to connect to their Heavenly Father who made them and loves them unconditionally! We get one shot to make a great first impression. We may not get next Sunday to fix what you didn't do this Sunday. The stakes are too high not to go all out to make a first impression.

If we have succeeded in this, by the time Ben comes out to speak, the guests hearts have not been distracted by chaos and confusion coming in, but rather pleasant experiences that have softened their hearts and have allowed their ears to remain open to hear what God is telling them. The result of the work of "first impressions", when done well, is an important factor in the total impact of GracePoint.

WHY WE PLAY CERTAIN BACKGROUND MUSIC ON SUNDAYS: **Pre/Post-Service Playlist Philosophy**

When people walk into our church, whether it's their very first experience or they are regular attenders, we want them to walk into an environment that feels welcoming and where they feel comfortable. We work extremely hard to create contagious environments and we believe having music playing before the service creates a contagious environment. Every weekend service involves music playing before and after the service through an iPod. We refer to the music before the service as "pre-service" music, and the music after the service as "post-service" music. This music is not considered to be a part of the worship experience, but it is important to preparing the people for the service as they walk in, and enabling them to reflect on their God experience as they leave.

At GracePoint, we prepare "pre-service" and "post-service" music that is welcoming and comfortable to people as they arrive and/or leave, relevant to the majority of people who attend, and inspirational, as well as, uplifting for people to enjoy.

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC:

- 1. Welcoming and Comfortable.** When people walk into a large room with music playing at a level where they can't hear someone else's conversation, but they can have a conversation with someone standing two feet away enables people to feel comfortable. We play music before the service to prepare people for the service. Since the majority of our services begin with us corporately worshipping together we want to prepare people for that. People are ready to engage in singing after they've had fun and when they feel comfortable. We will use music before the service to help start that experience.
- 2. Relevant.** In order to ensure people feel welcome and comfortable as they wait for the service to begin we will play music that is relevant to the current culture. This means we will play secular music and Christian music. The majority of people who walk into church listen to some type of music whether it is worship music, rock n' roll, hip-hop, etc...so, we will create a playlist that involves music from different genres or styles. We will use "non-Christian" music in our pre-service playlist. We do not believe this is a bad thing, and we want to use music that is current to the people attending. One of our core values is "lost people matter to God". An unchurched person attending our church for the first time probably has never listened to Christian music, and we do not want to surround them with an environment that is totally new to them.

The focus is to set a specific environment, not to mandate rules. When creating the pre-service playlist, we follow, but are not confined, to these guidelines:

- The pre-service playlist should consist of no less than 12 songs and no more than 15 songs
- 25% current top 40 pop songs
- 25% current top 40 rock songs
- 15% current top 40 country songs
- 15% current top 40 Christian song, possibly songs we intend to teach in the coming month
- 20% classic pop, rock, country, or Christian songs

POST-SERVICE MUSIC:

3. Inspirational and Uplifting. As the worship service progresses the focus becomes less man centered and more God centered. As we dismiss people, again, we want to play music so people feel comfortable, but moreover, we choose to play music that is inspirational and uplifting so people can continue to reflect on what God spoke to them throughout the service. This music will always be “worship” music in order to help people to continue to meditate and reflect on God.

When creating the post-service playlist, we follow, but are not confined, to these guidelines:

- The post-service playlist should consist of no less than 3 songs and no more than 5 songs.
- The songs should be meditative or moderate worship or Christian songs, potentially new songs we hope to teach in the coming months.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO IN WORSHIP AND MUSIC:

Every weekend service includes 15-20 minutes of corporate singing led by the GP band. All throughout the Bible we see that music is used in many ways to respond to God for the many things He has done for His people. We believe worship matters. We believe worship matters to God because ultimately He is the One worthy of all our worship, and it matters to us because worshiping God is the reason for which we were created.

At GracePoint, we plan a worship music experience that is focused on magnifying the greatness of God in Jesus Christ - depending on the Holy Spirit to do what only He can do. We simply want to be prepared on our end and let God do His thing. In our worship time we do this by skillfully combining Scripture with music to motivate the people of the church to respond to God through singing.

1. Magnifying the Greatness of God. Many times we seem to forget how “big” God is, and that the only way to God is through Jesus. Part of the role of the worship music experience is to remind the people of what God has done, and what He is doing. David writes in Psalm 145:3, *“Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.”* David’s starting point in worship begins with thinking about, magnifying, and responding to the greatness of God.

We try to follow this example by beginning our worship set with upbeat, celebratory songs that express the greatness of God. For example, we will sing songs such as “Rise and Sing” by Steve Fee which invite the people to sing out in response to what God has done for us by sending His son to receive our punishment, therefore, creating a way to the Father through Jesus. These songs also help to draw attention to the need of God in our lives.

We will also sing songs like “God Is Able” by Hillsong which is based on all sorts of Scriptures. These upbeat songs excite people and stir up emotions of love for a God who is worthy of our praise. Bob Kauflin writes, “While it’s simplistic to say that worship is love, it’s a fact that what we love most will determine what we genuinely worship.” We want to stir up and encourage emotions for our God.

2. Planning and the Holy Spirit. We plan our services months in advance. We do so in order to provide the best worship experience for our people. We do not neglect the Holy Spirit by planning in advance. We know God sent his Spirit to help us, and through personal and group prayer we rely on the Spirit to help guide us in our planning process (Ephesians 6:18, Romans 8:26). Also, during a specific weekend we may choose to replace a song or not play a song based on our feelings of what God is saying to us through his Spirit. We are constantly relying on the Holy Spirit to speak to us and we are not locked in to songs since they are already planned for a service.

3. Skillfully. At GracePoint we strive for excellence in order to offer to God our best. During the music portion of our worship service we want to create a distraction free environment in order for people to respond to God without noticing mistakes on the part of the band. We do not want to hinder people from engaging with God. *Therefore, we believe skill matters to God, and it matters to us.* We will only use skilled musicians who excel at their talent. We believe God applauds skill and uses it for His glory. In *1 Chronicles 15:22* David chose Kenaniah to lead singing he did so because “he was skillful at it”. Also, David writes in *Psalms 33:3* that musicians are to “play skillfully on their strings”. And, in the New Testament Paul refers to himself as “a skilled master builder”. With our musicians we believe that our skills are a gift from God that are to be developed and used for His Glory (*1 Corinthians 4:7*).

Musicians who are skilled at their talent are able to focus more so on God during the worship set because they know their instrument well, plus, they are able to serve the church by offering their talents to enable the people of the church to worship through singing.

4. Combining Scripture with Music. The songs we choose are a mix of songs that are inspired by the Word of God (the Bible) and inspired by personal reflections on God through the Holy Spirit.

A lot of the worship songs we cover are based off of passages of Scripture, but also there are songs we sing that are Word-centered. We seek to play songs that have theologically rich and biblically faithful lyrics. We believe that the time spent singing songs is just as important in conveying God’s message as it is for Ben when he is speaking. For example, a modern hymn we’ve used before is “In Christ Alone”. It is a perfect example of a song based on the Word of God. It basically presents the Gospel through song.

*“In Christ alone who took on flesh,
fullness of God in helpless babe,
this gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross, as Jesus died,
the wrath of God was satisfied”*

*“Then bursting forth in glorious day,
up from the grave he rose, again.
And as He stands in victory,
sin’s curse has lost its grip on me
for I am His and He is mine
I’m bought with the precious blood of Christ.”*

5. Motivating the church. Through our corporate time of worshiping with song we believe it's our responsibility to motivate the people gathered as the church to respond to God with singing. We believe it's our responsibility to lead people in celebration of what God has done and is doing, and in response to what Jesus did through his death and resurrection...*and the fact that He is alive today!*

6. Secular Music. From time to time we choose to open a service with a secular song. We do this partly because we want to make bold moves. And, we will open with a secular song because it relates to the message of the day. Also, we choose to play a secular song before or after Ben's message. We do this because we believe that we can leverage a song used for earthly reasons and relate it back to the message and our Heavenly Father. For example, for a sermon series on forgiveness called "F-BOMB" we played John Mayer's song "Say". We do not believe this hinders the message, but yet it leverages something created for man and uses it for God.

7. OUR PREFERENCES.

- We prefer upbeat and celebration over slow and somber. There is nothing wrong with those kind of songs but they should be reserved for special moments and not fill the majority of the worship time.
- We prefer to end the service with something loud and memorable. Whether it be a song or other performance element, we prefer people leaving on a high note.
- We prefer to open the service with a super high energy song or a popular cover tune. We have found a guest is more likely to be more comfortable and receptive to the message after hearing a popular song.
- We prefer to program with the unchurched in mind.
- We prefer to filter the lyrics and song choices through the eyes and ears of unchurched men. If a line or phrase is confusing or "Christianese," it should be explained.
- We prefer the music styles within the rock genre and prefer the audio level to be loud. When we choose to sing familiar hymns, they should also resemble this style and genre.
- We prefer a mix of songs that people will sing and enjoy with only one new or newer tune each week.
- We prefer to plan all spoken elements during the music set and do not like long spoken transitions. Short intros or verses quoted are great but should be rehearsed and planned ahead of time.

- We prefer the worship leader to work on transitions as much as on the songs themselves. Transitions make a worship set clean and more professional.
- We prefer to connect all of our elements with the current theme and message but that is not always possible. Some songs are just awesome to sing. The song right before the message and right after the message should fit the best. Other songs may just be great songs. If they all fit the theme, it is a big win but an un-singable song that fits the theme will not fulfill our bigger purpose.

WHY WE “HUDDLE UP” BEFORE CHURCH STARTS:

It's not easy to get people to show up for meetings before service starts. Even though they are important and this is where we communicate tremendous value. By not being there volunteers miss out on the valuable information.

Every weekend volunteers show up early at church, ready to lead and ready to serve. Since they are already there, that's the perfect time to communicate vision and deliver quick bursts of training. Our new time for this is called “THE HUDDLE”.

There's a time and a place for extended training, but this is a chance to capitalize on the weekend, when people are already planning to show up. We want to piggyback on their presence and carve out a few moments to provide weekly training.

This is our new volunteer huddle. It's a 10-15 minute “meeting” that happens before every service. We will have to work hard to remind people to get there on time, but a meeting before a “shift” is easier to make than a night of training on a stand-alone time. Our Volunteer Huddle before each service will be an effective way to engage our volunteers.

We will walk volunteers through the following information.

Vision. Every week, remind volunteers why they are serving. Share a win, tell a story, or explain the vision of GP. It's important to continually remind people of the why behind the what. Because we need to always remind those in ministry of what God is doing here in this place through them, vision has to be constantly poured out. This may look different each week. Vision is as simple as sharing a story of life change, number of salvations from the week before, or a scripture reference. No matter what the vision, we want our leaders to make it personal.

Information. This is the details for the day that the team may need to know. Equip teams to serve with excellence. You will share upcoming opportunity announcements and any changes with the team. This is also the time to throw back out reminders for serving on the team like arriving on time, always have attention on guests, dress appropriately, etc. Share important information with the team – from things they need to know for that day to mini-training modules. Talk to your kids leaders about the bathroom policy. Talk to greeters about how to deal with disruptive guests. Each week, pick a different topic and explain it.

Prayer. Spend a few minutes praying for the morning. Pray for the other volunteers. Pray for Ben's message and the worship team. Occasionally, ask people if they have special concerns and pray for each other. You can use this time to encourage everyone to stay in the word daily and be prayed-up before they come in to serve.

WHEN THEY SAY SUNDAYS AREN'T DEEP ENOUGH:

People always have feedback. EVERYONE has an opinion about how we should do church. 95% of the time it's positive. Occasionally our "churched friends" *will say the sermons aren't deep enough*. Here's how we typically respond when people say that the teaching isn't deep enough for them. Keep in mind that this complaint is fairly rare.

Here's Ben's typical email response to this issue:

Thanks for your feedback about the teaching style at GracePoint. I really appreciate your comment and wanted to take a quick moment to answer your concerns.

We didn't begin GracePoint because Christians couldn't find a great church to attend. There are some GREAT churches in our area led by some GREAT pastors. Instead, we wanted to start a church determined to reach the 75% of the population who did not go to church anywhere. That single decision really affects much of what we do.

In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul writes that his goal was to preach the gospel "not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power." For me, preaching isn't about how smart I am or how much I know, it's about connecting people with the Gospel of Jesus.

I love the quote by Vernon McGee. He said, "Jesus didn't say, 'Feed my giraffes.' He said, 'Feed my sheep.' Put the hay on the lower shelf so God's sheep can get to it." Every week, I prepare messages knowing that there are Christians and non-Christians from all walks of life in the service. I heard someone once say that great teachers take complex material and make it simple, while bad teachers take simple ideas and make them complex. I don't always succeed, but I'm trying to be in that first list.

Simple sermons aren't the same things as simplistic sermons. We want to connect with people, making a deep truth understandable to those who haven't grown up in church and those who don't have religious education. Love God and love others – what some have called the great commandments – are really quite simple. It's following them that's tough.

I've been a Christian for more than 20 years, and I've learned so much about the Bible. I love theology – the study of God and I love discussing the deeper truths of Christianity. I love reading books, taking classes and listening to sermons that deepen my faith and feed my soul. We live in a day and age where this information is readily available.

I remember learning as a kid that Jesus loved me. And like Paul challenged his readers, I've moved on from milk and learned to feed myself with the meat of God's Word. But I've never graduated from the deep truth that Jesus loves me and Jesus chose me. I say all of that to say this: We design our church services at GracePoint to be the front door to our church. It's a broad environment designed to help people take steps in their faith – it's not designed to be the end-all and only source of teaching in your life.

On the weekend, we're teaching Christians and non-Christians – young, old and everywhere in between, to take simple steps to follow Jesus. We have other environments designed to help you go "deeper" in your faith. There are Community Groups that study the Bible – some go verse by verse. In the future we hope to offer classes on subjects like theology, church history, and books of the Bible. I hope that our Community Groups might interest you.

I'd be happy to connect you with someone who can get you more information on groups, classes, or service opportunities. I'm also attaching a list of recommended sermons, books and resources that will help you grow in your faith.

Finally, there are several great churches in our area with preachers who teach verse by verse through books of the Bible. I have the honor of calling several of them my friends and would be happy to recommend a church that might be more in line with your style. At any rate, I'm happy to call you a brother (or sister) in Christ.

Sincerely,

Ben

TWO EASY WAYS TO GET CONNECTED AT GRACEPOINT:

If you attend the weekend worship service, you're going to have the opportunity to worship God and learn something from His Word. But you're probably not going to get to know too many people just sitting in chairs, and you're really not going to be able to put feet to your faith. Likewise, if you're only attending a service, you're missing out on a ton of what God has for you. Church is so much more than a church service. If you want to get the most out of GracePoint and also give back, you need to get connected. There are a couple of great ways you can do that:

1. TEAMS. Volunteer teams are really the heartbeat of GracePoint. These volunteer teams make things happen every single weekend. When you're a part of a team, you play a vital role in creating environments where unchurch people can love church and simply put, you are helping people to go from where they are to where God wants them to be. You'll connect with a team leader who will care about you, pray for you, and "pastor" you. There are so many ways to volunteer at GP. Every area is listed on our website. We hope you go check it out and that you'll choose to jump in on what God is doing at GracePoint.

2. GROUPS. Community Groups at GracePoint happen nearly everyday of the week, and they are a great place to make friends and study the Bible at the same time. Groups are for everyone - men, women, married couples, divorcees, singles, middle schoolers, and high schoolers and they are the place where real life-change happens. We host new Community Groups every Spring and every Fall. They last around ten weeks and you can sign-up online or at the Green Room at GP on Sundays.

***NEW CLASSES STARTING THIS SPRING:** *If you want to learn more about Christianity, faith, or the Bible, then a class might be the thing for you. These "classes" are led by a qualified person who will serve as your guide. You could take a class on Introduction to the New Testament, Theology, Financial Help 101 or Parenting. These new classes are starting up Spring 2013 so just watch the website for more information. If you have questions, you can send them to office@valpograce.com.*

WHY WE PLAN 12 WEEKS AHEAD FOR SERMON SERIES:

The Holy Spirit can work in advance, and He can work on the spur of the moment. The book of Proverbs is filled with advice about planning ahead, as well as trusting in the Lord, knowing that nothing can thwart his plans. Proverbs 20:18 encourages us to make plans and seek advice, while Proverbs 19:21 says that no matter our plans, the purposes of the Lord will stand. There is a healthy tension between planning ahead and trusting the Lord. Perhaps the cliché advice to *“plan like it depends on you and pray like it depends on God”* is appropriate here.

Because we try to integrate songs, sets and other thematic elements, there is a value in having message content created sooner rather than later. Effective sermon planning can lead to more effective service planning.

As a pastor, one of my most important tasks is hearing from God. This includes hearing from God about sermon topics, sermon series and message content. Furthermore, we cannot simply teach on what people want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3), but we must teach what they need to hear. I also spend time in personal prayer and thought, asking the question, “What does God want us to teach this next year?” Every year a small group of people goes away on a sermon planning retreat. We use the results from this time and our own ideas to generate a teaching calendar for the following year.

This teaching calendar is a guide, and it is adjusted during the year based on the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the needs of the congregation. The teaching calendar should at a minimum reflect:

- At least one particular book study
- A relationship series – marriage, parenting, dating, etc.
- A financial or giving series
- Summer Series - “At The Movies”
- One VISION series in September - based on the GP anniversary date

Sermon planning should also consider seasons and seasons of growth. Spring is a growth season, while things remain alive but dormant in the winter. And different seasons evoke different feelings. Summer is laid back. Fall is for football. In the same way, our church has seasons. Two of our prime growth seasons are the first of the year (January) and back to school (August to Labor Day).

We should also consider how series work together. For example, before a key invite series which may be built around a felt need and combined with heavy advertising, it is helpful to do a series on purpose or the value of inviting. We should follow a series that attracts a lot of guests with a series on spiritual growth.

During the sermon planning retreat, we put each series on the calendar, noting key days like Easter and key GracePoint events like Baptism and Christmas Service. We finish with some brainstorming on specific topics for each series.

12 WEEKS OUT	11 WEEKS OUT	10 WEEKS OUT	9 WEEKS OUT	8 WEEKS OUT	7 WEEKS OUT
"big picture" no limits brainstorm meeting with creatives	sit on ideas	research cost and feasibility of all projects, elements, and ideas	make sure budgets can be met for upcoming series	all design, service, and other creative elements finalized	all video storyboards due
series title concepts & outlines from Ben	teaching calendar checked and updated		teaching calendar checked and updated	videos ideas finalized, scheduled, and storyboarded	video shoots and editing begins
all ideas documented and distributed				materials needed for creative elements ordered based on budget	teaching calendar checked and updated
video project ideas communicated to video team				song and service order plans are discussed	
graphic concepts communicated to design team				stage design construction assigned and finalized	
stage communicated to tech team				graphic design needs assigned and finalized	
lighting design concepts communicated to lighting team				lighting design needs assigned and finalized on lighting software	
6 WEEKS OUT	5 WEEKS OUT	4 WEEKS OUT	3 WEEKS OUT	2 WEEKS OUT	7 DAYS OUT
graphic concept 1 st draft due	video 1 st drafts due	all graphic needs submitted	final trailer video due	week 1 welcome video due	set-design ready to go
video bumper 1 st draft due	teaching calendar checked and updated	tech team meeting to review week 1	all videos due	full preview of all videos	computer run-thru of all production elements
worship sets complete and placed on Planning Center		service order is finalized and set in stone	web ads posted	double check & finalize announcements	computer run-thru of all production elements
countdown video 1 st draft due		stage design follow-up	communicate series information to all volunteers	series pre and post service playlist finalized	handouts in seats printed and double-checked for series
		invites / posters ordered	teaching calendar checked and updated	computer elements loaded	
		all volunteers scheduled and notified		bumper due	
		Sunday handouts and questions finalized		countdown video due	
		video 2 nd draft due			

WHAT WE THINK ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP AND VOLUNTEERING:

GracePoint is driven by God, but it's fueled by volunteers. Every weekend, it takes hundreds of people to create environments where we lead people from where they are to where God wants them to be. Our church, like many others, could not function well without volunteers. In fact, we are a volunteer-based organization.

In the year 33 or 34 AD, Jesus looked at his group of close followers and issued a final instruction we now call *The Great Commission*. "Go into all the world," he told this group of people, who as Jews believed the world to be divided into two groups of people – Jews, who were God's chosen people, and Gentiles, who were not. Taking the Gospel to the entire world required a serious commitment and the abandonment of a national prejudice that had existed for centuries.

Considering most people did not travel more than 60 miles from their birthplace in the first century, Jesus' command was at minimal bold and borderline impossible. But they had followed Jesus all over Galilee, including places like Samaria, where they would have never visited on their own.

"Go and make disciples," Jesus commanded them. The word *Christian* hadn't been invented yet, but these men knew the meaning of the word disciple. After all, they were disciples. In their context, a disciple was a student, a protégé, and a follower. The Luke Skywalker to Yoda.

The call to make disciples is a call to reproduce. To take what has been entrusted to you and pass it on to someone else. As you have learned to follow, you teach someone else to follow. Today, the Great Commission compels us to go and make disciples. Not just converts. Not just givers. Not just volunteers. Disciples. Disciple-making is the core responsibility of every Christian. And collectively, it should be the business of the church.

It's not about getting church work out of volunteers or raising money to meet the budget. It's about leading people from where they are to where God wants them to be. It's helping them listen to the voice of God and responding in obedience.

BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST

The church is the body of Christ. And every single person in the church is a part of that body. We have a spiritual obligation to help people discover their gifts and passions and use them.

Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." We are not saved *by* works, but we are saved *for* works. If people are not using their gifts, then they are not truly following Christ. If we are not developing these gifts in people, then we are not

truly making disciples. If people in our church are not using their gifts, then they are not fully engaged in their faith.

The church is the body of Christ, and every part of the body is important. If one part of the body refuses to operate the way it was created, it will affect the rest of the body.

We have three options when it comes to doing things.

- First, we can **do**. When it comes to a lot of tasks, there are things that only we can do. Sermons are going to be written and songs are going to be selected. Making deposits, tracking expenses, communicating with leaders and attending meetings are some of the many tasks that cannot be handed to someone else. Every staff member who is a part of the staff team at GracePoint is there because there are tasks that only they can do.
- Secondly, we can **delegate**. At its core, delegating is a good thing. Since we cannot complete every task in our ministry, we must learn to delegate. The problem with delegation occurs when we relinquish total ownership and ultimate responsibility. A complete hands off approach will result in uncompleted tasks, or a job that doesn't meet expectations. But when someone understands the parameters, the timetable, and the level of expectations, they are a huge asset to the mission of the church.
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we can **develop**. Developing volunteers and leaders and teams is much harder and it takes more time, but it's the best option in many circumstances. Developing takes time, which means that staff members have to be far more organized. The church works best when the leaders partner with the people for the sake of making disciples. Developing people is not a hands-off job.

PAYING STAFF OR DEVELOPING VOLUNTEERS

Scripture teaches that pastors can and should be paid for their service. *1 Timothy 5:17-18* says "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'"

In *1 Corinthians 9:13*, Paul says those that preach the gospel should be supported by those who benefit from it. There is certainly a Biblical precedent for paying ministers of the Gospel and staff members of the church. But for us, the job of those paid professionals is to equip people for the work of the ministry. To develop. To disciple.

The job of a pastor is to equip the people in the church for the work of the ministry. The #1 job of a person on staff at GracePoint is to develop volunteers to lead ministry.

This isn't just a strategy; it's a Biblical mandate. Ephesians 4:12 presents a compulsion to develop others who can do ministry. Our job is to "prepare people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built." If we do not have a prepared people, then that's a reflection on our leadership. We lead ministry by leading people.

We must teach people to discover their spiritual gifts, and use their specific skills and passions to build up the body of Christ. We need to call out gifts in people and show them how they can use those gifts to lead people from where they are to where God wants them to be.

This is discipleship. And this is leadership.

The mechanic should be challenged to use his specialized skills to help single mothers. The teacher should be challenged to use their specialized skills to work with children, or to equip adults to work with children. Graphic designers should be challenged to use their skills to produce graphics that the church can use. Friendly people should be taught how their gift of hospitality can make people feel welcome. We must teach people to "be who they are where they are."

Let's be clear. We do not develop people because we simply need their skills or talents. We develop people because it's an act of discipleship and we must obey God. This is much larger than strategy for getting things done; it's our spiritual responsibility as a pastor and leader.

Developing people is our method for doing ministry. There are other models, but this is ours. Ministry and discipleship happen when we do things *with* people, not just for people. This is our long-term, big picture plan.

There are four important components to developing a ministry around volunteers.

1. IDENTIFY AND INVITE

Coaches call out potential in their players, teach them fundamentals, put them through practice drills and encourage them towards victory. And they do all of this while trying to win each and every game.

In a similar fashion, we are called to develop people's gifts and talents through the process of discipleship, while getting ready for the weekend, which comes around with amazing regularity.

We have people with minor league skills coming to our church. It's our responsibility to turn them into major league players.

"The purpose of leadership is to create more leaders, not more followers."

In order to make this happen, we must devote *significant* time in our schedule to people. Discipleship requires intentional conversations. When we meet with people, we are not just talking to them about what we need from them... we're asking about their relationship with God and others. This is the hard work of discipleship.

While we must devote time to tasks, at least 50% of our time should be devoted to relationships. We must sit down with people and show them how something can be simpler, stronger, or more meaningful. We have to take the time to coach and teach.

There will always be interesting projects that demand our job; but we must not forget the important task of developing and discipling people. Our job is not just to create memorable and meaningful weekend experiences, but to create disciples who understand what it means to follow Christ.

2. TRAIN AND DEVELOP

We need to find a way to train specific skills. This is a long-term process and a long-term solution.

Instead of paying people to run sound, what if we paid them to teach people to run sound? Instead of paying a graphic designer to create a series package, what if we paid that same designer to teach people how to create graphics? What if instead of outsourcing videos to professionals, what if we taught people how to edit video? What if we taught people principles of hospitality? What if we trained people to work with special needs children? Not only would developing these skills help the church reach people, these skills would be useful in people's families or jobs as well.

At any rate, we *must* find a focused, intentional, and time-specific way to develop people's skills and passions.

Paid professionals will always be able to accomplish a specific task with a greater display of excellence. After all, this is why they are professionals. A freelance graphic designer will make a better sermon series graphic than a volunteer in our church who purchased Photoshop Elements. A setup crew comprised of hourly workers will load up the semi-truck faster than a team of volunteers. People with master's degrees in education would make better children's workers.

The results of a paid professional will surpass that of a volunteer 95% of the time. We cannot minimize the role of staff or professionals, but it's treading on dangerous territory when we rely on paid staff to the exclusion of developing people like the church is called to do.

The Bible repeatedly teaches that all Christians are given gifts to build up the body of Christ. Those gifts are to be used in the church. The Bible is clear that all parts of the body are important...not just the highly skilled ones or the paid ones. Scripture neither

teaches nor implies that every time someone uses their spiritual gift they are to be compensated.

We will always have need of the service of professionals, but our default cannot be “hire someone.” It must be “develop someone.” Yes, there will be times when the services of a professional or a consultant are required, but this should be the exception rather than the rule.

To work with volunteers, we will ultimately have to agree on a standard that is somewhere less than perfect but greater than unacceptable. Some have called this “good enough.”

We might have to train volunteers in iMovie and not Final Cut Pro. We might not be able to compete with other mega-churches when it comes to quality. We may have to provide training sessions and have conversations in the evenings or on the weekends when it is convenient for those being developed and less convenient for us.

However, our ultimate goal is not to produce the most excellent product, but to create disciples. It’s a win when someone uses their gifts and talents to build up the body of Christ. When we focus on quality to the exclusion of people, we miss the mark in ministry.

Every ministry area should have regular training built into their systems and schedules. Here are some ideas:

- Take key volunteers to conferences (Adventure Land team attending The Orange Conference or Tech Team attending a Sweetwater Conference).
- Record a monthly leadership podcast with ministry-specific training.
- Record a training video, post it on youtube, and send the link to everyone.
- Do an online chat or conference call.
- Have quarterly vision meetings.
- Utilize childcare to schedule your training meetings - we will help!
- Take your team to another church service, perhaps on a Sunday night. Evaluate what you see and let people suggest ideas for improvement.
- Bring in someone from another church or an expert in a field to talk to all the volunteers on your team. Someone from Chick-Fil-A can help train guest services volunteers or a school principle to talk about elementary child development with city volunteers.

3. ENCOURAGE AND PASTOR

For too long, we’ve celebrated the product while forgetting about the process. In the church, HOW something gets done is important. It’s not just about results.

When we show a video in our church, we must take time to tell our people who made the video. Reminding our church that while we could have spent a lot more money to

make it more excellent, we value people more than excellence. We'd rather help people develop their skills than circumvent the relational aspect and hire something out. We need to celebrate the process and call attention to the steps that all people are taking in discipleship.

Discipleship happens during the process. Here are some ideas:

- Call your volunteers and ask about their lives, families and jobs. Ask them if there is anything you can pray for, and then pray for them.
- Create a Facebook group so people can share prayer requests.
- Invite people over to your house for a cookout.
- Read a book of the Bible together.

4. MEASURE AND EVALUATE

Imagine a coffee shop that never sold a cup of coffee. Imagine a software company that never produced one piece of software. Imagine a bank that never opened any accounts.

Businesses exist to make money in a core field and every business has a bottom line. A business that never produces will not continue to receive funding, and it will eventually go out of business.

The business of the church is disciple-making. The bottom line job for pastors on staff is to make disciples.

Someone in every ministry should be charged with the task of making sure the ministry is effectively accomplishing the mission. This includes tracking data and making system improvements.