

STANDING  
FIRM  
*IN*  
PRAYER



*A TIME FOR  
DISCERNMENT*





## AN INTRODUCTION

BE JOYFUL IN HOPE, PATIENT IN AFFLICTION,  
FAITHFUL IN PRAYER.  
- ROMANS 12:12

Grace Church is on a journey of discernment to find the next Lead Pastor of the church.

The elders, search team, and staff want this to be a prayerful process for the Grace Church Family. It's our hope that these scriptures and this time of prayer will encourage the right next steps for our search team and our ability, as a family, to discern the right candidate for Grace Church.

As the search team enters its next round of interviews with potential candidates and gets closer to making its recommendations to the elders, we want to support their efforts with prayer and equip ourselves as Grace family to listen to God's voice.

This booklet is meant to be catalyst for prayer. You are not limited by these verses or suggestions for prayer. The Lord may lead you in different directions - feel free to follow His leading! The important thing is that we are all praying for the Lord to lead us in this process.

### **A prayer for us to begin:**

Lord, may we find joyful hope and confidence as we look to You for the next lead pastor of Grace Church. You have led this church for nearly 70 years - and our humble hope is that You will continue to do so for years to come. We want to pray faithfully and listen closely to the Holy Spirit leading us in these days to come. Amen.



## Day 1

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. - Matthew 6:9-13*

The Lord sent the prophet Samuel to anoint Israel's next king. Samuel saw many potential candidates that he thought would be good for the role, but the Lord had him keep looking until he came to David. It's easy to have our own conception of what the new pastor should look like, sound like, and how he should lead. Today's scriptures remind us that while our opinions are helpful, they are not the final authority. Our prayer is that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. After all, Jesus is the head of the church. His desire for our next pastor is the one worth listening to.

Today, we pray for help in putting our own conceptions aside and seeking the Lord's direction for the one who will be our next pastor.

- Ask God to show you any preconceived expectations of what the new pastor would be like and to let them go, asking God to help you to be open-minded to His choice.
- Pray that God would be moving in the family of the new pastor and that he and his family would be a great fit, see their place here and be ready to come.
- Thank God that He knows just what our church needs, that He is in the work of providing and has a blessing in store for us.



## Day 2

*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.  
- Philippians 1:9-10*

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. - James 1:5*

The apostle Paul's prayer modeled for us a way to pray as we seek the Lord's direction. We can pray for knowledge, insight, and discernment. Discernment is the process of making careful distinctions in our thinking about truth.

The apostle puts these qualities of wisdom and discernment in the context of "having our love abound more and more." Discernment is not just an intellectual exercise. Scripture says that perfect love drives away fear. We pray that when it is time for us to get to know and vote on the new pastor, we will be spiritually prepared and confident in the Lord's leading. The promise in the book of James reminds us that God will generously give us wisdom if we ask Him for it. The good news is that this promise applies to all situations we face!

Today, we pray for wisdom and insight for all those involved in the pastoral search process – especially the search team and the elders.

- Ask the Lord to give them insight as they meet and interview the different candidates.
- Ask the Lord to give them the ability to discern between great candidates and the one the Lord is preparing for Grace Church.
- Ask the Lord to help all of us to have our love abound more and more during this process.



## Day 3

*I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. - Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)*

The Lord reveals His will to people who are ready to do what He reveals. That's why the apostle reminds us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. We are to sacrifice our will, our desires and replace them with His.

The Lord recognizes that it is no easy task, so He tells us how to get to that place. We have been stuck in a worldly way of thinking about things. The way to free ourselves from that is to let the Word of God transform our hearts and minds. This renewing of the way we think and act helps us recognize what Jesus wants us to do in the situations we face and the decisions we make.

This transformation takes practice and lots of time in Scripture and prayer. The result is better ability to discern God's will.

Today we pray that we, as individuals, will submit ourselves to God's to what God requires.

- Ask the Lord if there is an area in your life that you need to turn over to Him.
- Ask for the Holy Spirit's power to help you continue to become more like Jesus.
- Ask the Lord to continue building your discernment of what is good, acceptable, and perfect.



## Day 4

*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy. - Colossians 1:15-18*

We sometimes fall into the trap of believing that God will only lead a church when it has all the pastors and elders in place. That's not true. Even in a "transition" time, Jesus is still the head of the body, the church. Ministry still goes on. The Word of God is being preached. Baptisms and communion are being observed. Believers gather in homes for worship, Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. Grace Church is still the church!

Maybe you are sensing the Lord moving you to some kind of greater participation. Is the Lord speaking to you about your role in the church? Is it a step of growth through a class or connect group? Is it in serving? God is leading and will show you your next step!

As we wait for the Lord to bring our new lead pastor, we also pray about our role within the church.

- Give thanks for how the Lord is working in our church family.
- Ask the Lord to show you your next step in growth or ministry.
- Pray for the Lord to help us all understand how we can use our gifts and abilities in the body of Christ.



## Day 5

*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His Kingdom: preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*  
- 1 Timothy 4:1-2

The apostle's words to his disciple, Timothy, ring true. There are times when we feel prepared for what God asks us to do. At other times, we feel unprepared and caught off guard by what we are asked to do. Those times are what the apostle refers to as "out of season."

During this transition, our church staff has had to continue their ministry "out of season." Responsibilities have increased, ministries have continued, and new people have come to Grace Church. They've had to work on their spiritual and emotional health while moving forward in the midst of the uncertainty of knowing who their new leader would be.

Today, we pray for our staff to continue to find their security and confidence in Jesus as they continue their ministries.

- Pray for the spiritual and physical health of our staff team.
- Pray for growing trust, confidence, and unity within the staff team.
- Pray for staff to have deep and consistent times alone with the Lord to renew themselves and their visions.



## Day 6

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*  
- *Philippians 4:6-7*

Today, we pray for the new pastor and his family. Imagine starting at a new place. Naturally, there are some exciting emotions that come with a new start and new opportunities.

There are also concerns. They will leave behind friends and familiar routines. They might wonder how long it will take to make new friends and feel comfortable in their new community and church. With every change comes excitement and a sense of loss. We want to pray for everyone in the family to feel confident that God is leading them and trust the Lord to provide for their every need.

Pray for the new pastor and his family.

- Ask the Lord for a clear sense of His guidance as they go through the search process.
- Pray for good communication within the family as they process what the change will mean for each member.
- Pray for Grace Family to be a welcoming community – supportive and encouraging – as they come and we get to know each other.



## Day 7

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances. - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17*

*I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth. - Isaiah 62:6-7*

Consistency in prayer is a theme in Scripture. The apostle Paul wrote that we should "pray without ceasing."

The prophet Isaiah wrote of those appointed by God to intercede for Jerusalem while the people were in exile. Their ministry was to continually praying that God would re-establish Jerusalem. They were to "take no rest nor give God rest;" their prayers were to be constant.

Now is the time for the people of Grace Church to be consistent in praying for our search team, our elders and the next pastor and his family. God will show us the way. Let's pray that we will all recognize it and follow it.

- Ask God to make praying a joyful experience – not a burden.
- Pray for strength and endurance to our search team, elders and staff as they seek God's direction.
- Pray that God would keep prayers for our new pastor as part of our daily routines.



## Day 8

*Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my Savior, and my hope is in You all day long. - Psalm 25:4-5*

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. - Proverbs 3:5-6*

There is a difference between good decision-making and seeking the Lord, although sometimes the difference is subtle. God gave us good minds and expects us to use them. But God also knows us well enough to know that we can prioritize our minds over listening to His Spirit. We are to learn God's ways so that we will trust in the Lord to lead us.

Our own understanding (or rationalization) may lead us away from the Lord. Obedience (submitting to the Lord) always leads us back to Him. A trusting heart, submitted to the Lord's ways, will find the Lord's direction.

- Ask God to make His path clear to Grace family.
- Pray that we not "lean on our own understanding." We want the Lord to direct our steps.
- Pray for any blind spots in our process to be revealed.



## Day 9

*And He came out and went, as was His custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed Him. And when He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done." And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and He said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation." - Luke 22:39-46*

Spiritual life writers sometimes comment on the "prayer of indifference." This does not mean that we do not care or that we are apathetic. It's a prayer that seeks what God wants no matter what it costs us personally.

Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is a good example of this kind of praying. Jesus asked for something specific. Jesus was also willing to submit His desires to the greater will of God the Father. Our prayers for the new pastor must be this kind of prayer. We are trusting God to bring the right person for the church – not just the right person for me personally. Our own sense of entitlement isn't really important. God's will is what matters.

Today, we pray that we, as a church, are united in seeking God's direction.

- Thank God that He knows what is best for Grace Church and this next season of ministry.
- Ask that when the time comes, our Grace Family will have confidence that God has led us.
- Pray for God to give that same confidence to the new pastor and his family.



## Day 10

*When the spirit of truth comes He will guide you into all truth.  
- John 16:13*

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. - Philippians 4:8*

We don't have to worry or be in a hurry when it comes to the Lord leading the right pastor to Grace Church. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would lead us into the truth. We are called to believe His promise and to wait with non-anxious hearts.

The apostle Paul, who knew his share of difficult times and periods of waiting, wrote about how to wait patiently without worry. He wrote that we should pray and fill our minds with "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – anything is excellent or praiseworthy." Then, the peace of God will guard our hearts and our minds.

If you find yourself being anxious, think about what kinds of thoughts fill your mind. How do they stack up with this biblical test from Philippians 4? Are they true? Noble? Right? Etc.

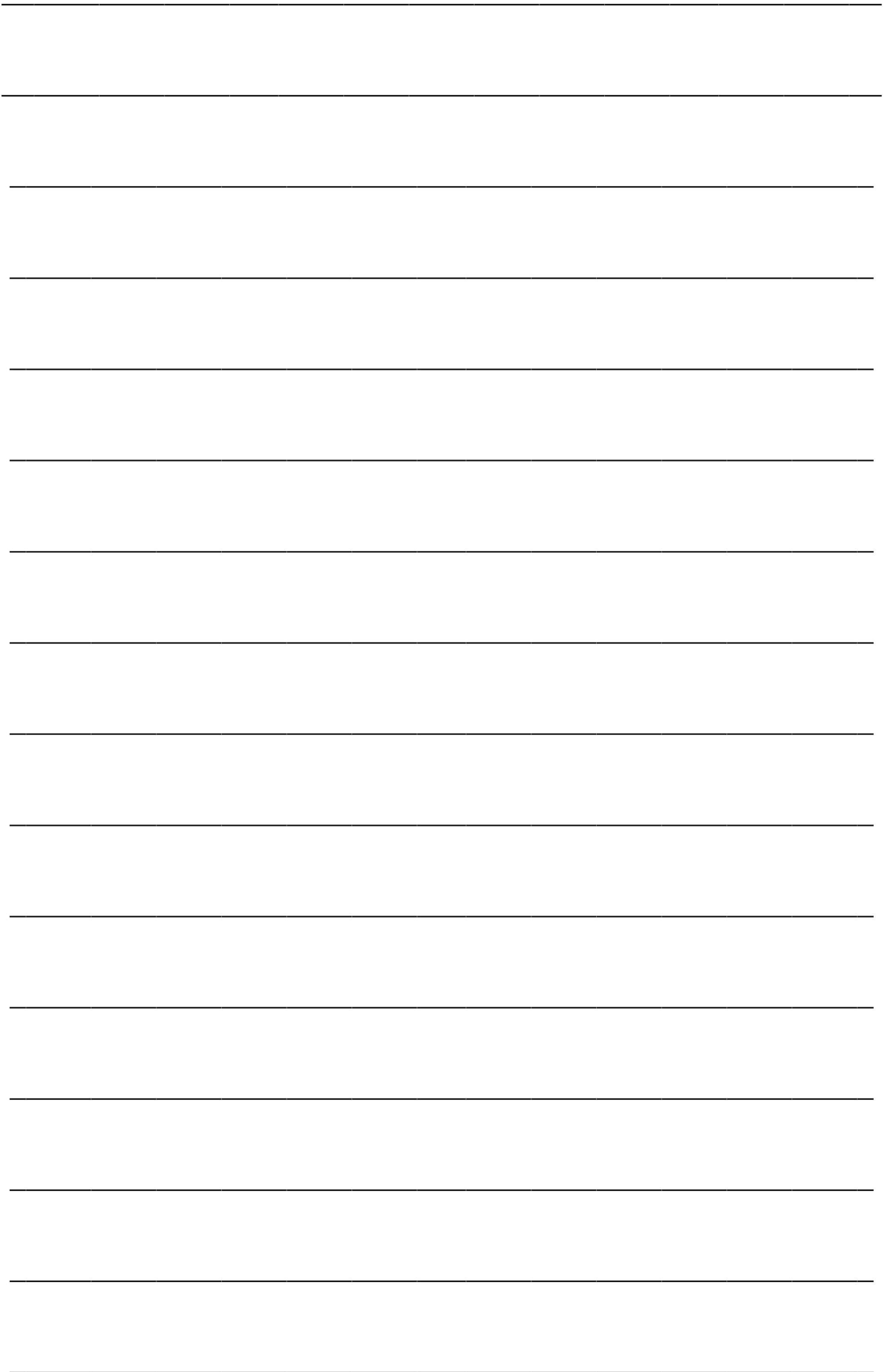
- Ask God to give you peace about the process and timing of our new pastor.
- Ask for the kind of thoughts that will lead to peace in our hearts and minds.
- Rest in the comfort of God's promises.



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