

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

# UNITY IN LIFE AND WORSHIP

**Long ago**, in New Testament Bible times, any given city usually had only one church. If you lived in Jerusalem, or Ephesus, or Colossae, there was generally only one church where Christians met. These churches were usually small and most often met in homes of believers. If there were disagreements among Christians over teaching or lifestyle, they had to work it out between themselves. (We see evidences of these differences and how they worked them out in the New Testament books of Corinthians, Romans, and Galatians, for example.)

*Fast forward ...*

**Today**, any given city in the United States might include several different churches. Because of the sheer number of believers, it is not surprising that they meet in smaller groups. However, most of these churches also distinguish themselves from other churches by specific beliefs and doctrines which they hold. The sign on the front of the church usually gives some indication of the group’s beliefs or the particular “branch” of Christianity that they belong to. All too often, those distinctions damage the unity Jesus prayed would be true of those who would become His disciples after His death and resurrection (see Jesus’ prayer in John 17).

**Grace Bible Church** is not ecumenical, but operates more like a “community” church, where evangelical Christians who differ on some beliefs and doctrines meet together to worship God and fellowship with each other. We identify ourselves unashamedly with the orthodox, fundamental beliefs of Christian faith. Those are represented in the illustration below as the “**TRUNK**” of the church tree. At the same time, we welcome Christians who have different beliefs from each other on what we believe are the “peripheral” matters of faith and doctrine. Those differences are represented in the illustration below as the “**BRANCHES**” of the church tree. Grace Bible Church cannot be identified as a “reformed” congregation, or a “dispensational” congregation, or a “holiness” congregation. Rather, we are a Christian congregation which welcomes all who are Christian believers, regardless of the particular “stripe” of Christian doctrine they profess. We don’t seek to change each other’s beliefs, but to learn from each other and grow in our own faith and understanding of the Scriptures, resting in the “**ROOT**” of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

