

# ***DEFINING CHURCH***

## ***CHURCH VISION SERIES (7/18/21)***

***27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. (Philippians 1:27)***

### **I. DEFINING CHURCH**

- A. Defining purpose is necessary because you can't do something with excellence if you can't define what you are doing and where you are going. We can't do church life well if we don't know God's vision for our church. *Where do you fit at Encounter Church, and what is one area you want to grow in as a part of this church?*
- B. My working definition for any local church is: ***Committed friendships pursuing God and a mission together.***
- C. The Philippian church was called to pursue all three of these church dimensions.
- D. ***Committed friendships*** – The God ordained context for spiritual growth is a group of people that is committed and purposeful in their relationships with one another. Our relationships with one another provide the foundation for the next two aspects of church to take place.
- E. ***Pursuing God together*** – The purpose of church relationships (mentor or peer related) is to help each other grow in our relationships with God. We serve each other's eternal destinies in God.
- F. ***Pursuing a mission together*** – God calls specific people together to form church families that grow up together and to advance His kingdom in a specific way. I believe every church has a specific assignment from the Lord and that God brings people with the right spiritual DNA and gift mix to pursue that assignment.
- G. I encourage people to pick their home church based on a church's mission, spiritual DNA, leadership team, and people (friendships/mentors). What mission has God put in your heart? What spiritual DNA do you have? Can you follow the leadership team's values and lifestyle? Do you want to have deep relationships with the people of the church?

### **II. COMMITTED FRIENDSHIPS**

- A. Paul exhorted the Philippian church to stand fast in unity (one spirit and one mind), which means they were called to pursue unity in relationship, revelation, and vision. Unity includes deep friendships, the knowledge of God (Eph. 4:13), and commitment to an assignment.

- B. Our relationships with one another provide the foundation for the next two aspects of church to take place.
- C. God has a supernatural vision for unity within individual churches that we need to pray and reach for long-term (John 17:24; Ephesians 4:3).
- D. God calls people to local churches for them to intentionally pursue relationships with the people of that church. If you're being disciplined, discipling others, and pursuing peer friendships within the same group, you'll be more fully known.
- E. Commitment to one another in a church means:
  1. Being intentional and purposeful to cultivate spiritual relationships with one another. I place a high priority on pursuing friendships within whatever church I'm a part of because that's who is committed to me and that's who is running with me in my spiritual life.
  2. Being committed to accept and embrace each other in the progressive stages of our relationships with God.
  3. Being committed to relating to one another within the biblical definitions of love (Colossians 3:12-14; Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 2:1-14).
  4. Being committed to resolve conflicts and disagreements with one another in love without the fear of people leaving relationships.
- F. Commitment produces trust and transparency over time. These are critical to growing in authentic relationships.
- G. Committed relationships are the only context for hosting the corporate presence of God.

***“In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place for God in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:21-22)***

***“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5)***

### **III. PURSUING GOD TOGETHER**

- A. The primary focus in our church relationships and the primary call as the church is to help each other grow in God. We're together in order to help each other pursue our destinies in God. The expansion of God's kingdom more naturally happens after we pour into each other.

***11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the***

**edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (Ephesians 4:11-13)**

**16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:16)**

**“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another just as you also are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 4:11)**

- B. Everything accelerates in our spiritual lives when we invite others to help us grow in God. The Holy Spirit reveals things to us directly and other times He partners with other believers to help us. Many times God uses other people in my life to speak to me the things I’ve been hearing from Him but haven’t wanted to fully hear or address. We must be open to receiving teaching, having our blind spots pointed out, having others help us out of lies and sin patterns, and having others remind us of our God given promises and call us higher.
- C. Being known in one community long-term allows others to better see our giftings, callings, prophetic promises and sin/lie patterns. It’s a powerful reality for the same group of people to see our weaknesses and our callings and at the same time let them help us get breakthrough in both realms. The deeper we go with one another in relationship the more we’ll rub each other’s areas of brokenness, which more fully brings them to light in order for us to deal with them. My dad has told me for years that we all have bruises (past hurts, lies, sins) and when we’re around people long enough those bruises get bumped and freshly exposed in order to be fully healed.
- D. Ways we help each other pursue God:
1. We edify each other (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 12, 26; Romans 14:19).
  2. We pray for each other (Colossians 4:2-3, 12; 2 Corinthians 1:10-11, 7:6; Ephesians 6:18-19; Philippians 1:19; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Thessalonians 3:10).
  3. We refresh each other (2 Corinthians 7:13).
  4. We bear each other’s burdens and help where needed (Galatians 6:2, 10; Philippians 2:4).
  5. We stir each other up to love and obey God (Hebrews 10:24-25).
  6. We study the bible together (Acts 2:42; Colossians 3:16).
  7. We share our revelation with each other and experience revelation together (Ephesians 3:17-18; 1 Corinthians 14:25-31; Acts 11:2-18, 15:1-19).
  8. We disciple each other (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 4:16).
  9. We comfort each other (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Colossians 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:14).
  10. We correct each other (Galatians 2:11; 2 Timothy 4:2).
  11. We warn each other (1 Thessalonians 5:14).
  12. We challenge each other (1 Thessalonians 2:10-12).
  13. We rescue each other from deception (2 Timothy 2:24-26).
  14. We restore each other after falling into sin (Galatians 6:1-2).
  15. We flee sin together (2 Timothy 2:22).

16. We sing prophetically over each other (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19).
17. We release God's power over each other's lives (1 Corinthians 12:7; Romans 1:11; Ephesians 4:29; James 5:15-16).
18. We remind each other of God's promises in our lives (1 Timothy 1:18; 2 Timothy 1:6).
19. We provide financially for each other (Acts 2:42-43; 2 Corinthians 8:14).
20. We rejoice together and we weep together (Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Hebrews 13:3).

#### IV. PURSUING A MISSION TOGETHER

- A. Church families are called by God to pursue a specific mission/assignment together. I believe every church has a unique mission from God within the larger biblical mission of the Great Commission that every church fulfills.
- B. Individual churches are referred to as the body of Christ, the church of a city is the body of Christ, and the global church is the body of Christ to indicate that the church is active in expanding God's kingdom in specific ways (1 Corinthians 12:12-28; Ephesians 4:13-16).
- C. The church is ordained by God to demonstrate God's power in the spiritual and earthly realms.

***“To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ephesians 3:10-11)***

- D. The first church in Jerusalem had a mission from God. Their mission was fulfilled because they had unity in relationship, pursued God together and established prayer in their church culture (Acts 1:14; 2:1).

***“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)***

- E. Our mission is to build a 24/7 prayer room that cultivates an atmosphere of intimacy and encounter with God and labors in prayer for a Great Awakening in our nation. We want personal prayer and corporate prayer to be the center of our church life from which discipleship and outreach flow out.
- F. We need your help in financing the prayer room, leading in the prayer room, and discipling others in the place of prayer.
- G. The Moravian Community – A town of a few hundred believers pursued deep relationships with one another in an intentional way, started a 24/7 prayer meeting that went over 100 years and out of that launched the modern day missions movement to the nations of the earth.