

Defining Church Part 2

I. REVIEW FROM LAST WEEK

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

- A. Our working definition for a local church is: Committed friendships pursuing God and pursuing a mission together.
- B. **Committed friendships** – (*stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, together*) A church includes a group of people that are standing fast, committed, and purposeful in their relationships with one another. These relationships provide the foundation for the next two aspects of church, pursuing God and pursuing a mission, to take place.
- C. Commitment to one another in a church means:
 - 1. Being intentional and purposeful to cultivate spiritual relationships with one another. God calls people to local churches to intentionally pursue relationships with the people of that church; we are to be aimed at each other.
 - 2. Being committed to accept and embrace each other in the progressive stages of our relationships with God. We all are in different places spiritually. In humility we speak love, call each other higher, and be forgiving when others sin or hurt us.
 - 3. Being committed to relating to one another within the biblical definitions of love (Colossians 3:12-14; Ephesians 4:1-3). We go to the Bible to determine how to love well.
 - 4. Being committed to resolve conflicts and disagreements with one another in love without the fear of people leaving relationships.
- D. **Pursuing God together** –(*striving together for the faith*) Each of us desire to pursue God in the First Commandment. We will hit a ceiling in our personal spiritual life if we pursue God alone, but can go much further in Him when we are intentionally connected to a body of believers. God ordained the local church to be the primary context for each member’s spiritual growth. (Ephesians 4) We are together in order to serve each other in pursuing our destinies in God. There is a consistent call for the church in the New Testament to edify and encourage each other, to be inward focused in order to grow closer to God, and to grow in unity together. This is the pattern of the NT church and the desire of God for His people to be connected to a body, to pursue God with others. God is our life source, but the church is to be a secondary life source, a safe hub for our personal growth in God, where we can find friends/comradery in the faith, and be encouraged to walk in our callings. The church is where each part of the body is loved and built up in the faith.
- E. **Pursuing a mission together** – (*striving together for the faith of the gospel*) God invites specific people to come together to form church families in order to advance His kingdom in a specific way. We believe every church has a specific assignment from the Lord to accomplish and that God brings people with the right spiritual DNA and gift mix to pursue that assignment together.

- F. **Encounter Church's 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 city and nation. We want personal devotion and corporate intercessory prayer to be the center of our church life from which relationships, discipleship, and outreach flow out.
- G. Encounter Church has a membership commitment process because we see membership as an invitation to a formal outward commitment of an inward commitment 1) to God, 2) to the people here (leaders and peers) and 3) to our prayer room mission. We have seen membership commitments to be a beautiful trust-building foundation that doesn't bind someone to stay here, but does bind them to walk out relational/communication values we see in the Bible.
- H. Our personal covenant with God and our corporate commitment to one another create our culture and our community. As members, we join together for God's glory and our mutual benefit; we share the responsibilities and rewards of all that God will accomplish through us as a church.
- I. Six things that are helpful to know about committing to Encounter. Our:
 - 1. Relational Expectations
 - 2. Focus on Children
 - 3. Focus on Prayer/Prayer Room Involvement
 - 4. Expectation to Serve
 - 5. Connections are built by doing what our church does
 - 6. Discipleship/Prayer Culture

II. SIX THINGS- WHAT DOES CHURCH CULTURE LOOK LIKE PRACTICALLY AND WHY?

“Then those who gladly received his [Peter’s] word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:41-47

Communicating Culture- Church is more than a Sunday morning service. We see from the NT that church is a corporate expression of a believer's lifestyle intimately connected with each other. Our perspective is that we think maximum connectedness can happen for each person as we do the things below together, fully engaged.

- A. **#1-Sunday Service** and **#2-Small Groups-** *“They continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship”- Acts 2:42*

Doctrine- teaching about Christ and **Fellowship-** communion, sharing, joint participation, intimacy

- 1. **#1- Sunday Service - Corporate pre-service prayer-** intercession unites us to pursue God's heart together, prepares our hearts for the service, trains us to flow in the Spirit, strengthens each other in prayer, grows us in prayer and tongues, grows us in unity and in engaging the Holy Spirit.

2. **Corporate worship time-** One mouth one mind glorifying Jesus, engaging in loving Him together. (Romans 15:6) Jesus loves corporate worship and dwells in the praises of His people.
 3. **The hearing of the teaching of the Word-** where we receive proclamations of truth from the Word, unity around the person of Jesus, teaching on the church's vision, listening and learning from the pastors/leaders, discussion around the Word, encouraged to respond with what you feel the Holy Spirit highlighting.
 4. Corporate ministry to the body as a whole- member to member ministry. Cultivating servant heartedness- Serving on Sunday services, initiating where you see lack. Giving financially- tithing to support the church and its mission.
 5. **#2- Small Groups-** Growth by the discussion of Sunday's teaching-a place to grow deeper around the Word. Stewarding what God is saying to each of us personally and what God is saying to the leaders. The purpose of small group is to each come prepared to speak about the Word, to each engage in the Word/teachings.
 6. Deeper connection with each other/get to know people's stories
 7. Ministry to each other- vulnerability and openness
 8. Comradery in the faith, encouraging, locking arms with each other, fighting for each other to pursue each other's destinies, accountability in weaknesses/sins
- B. **#3- Corporate participation in the church's mission-** (Acts 2:42, 46- *"they continued steadfastly ... in prayers So continuing daily with one accord in the temple..."*)
1. An unceasing steadfastness in personal prayer, and in corporate prayer (They daily went up to the temple to pray together!) and in walking in the power of God.
 2. It is our mission as a church to participate in the prayer room by praying for the Church, for revival and another Great Awakening in our city and our nation.
 3. Corporate intercession/participation in the Prayer Room brings purpose to your life, acknowledgement that you are connected to a storyline bigger than your circumstances.
 4. Having a corporate prayer intentional focus includes: tithing as that is financing the prayer room, committing to come pray, leading in the prayer room by praying, singing, playing during the week and pre-service prayer on Sundays and discipling others in the place of prayer.
- C. **#4- Friendship/Fellowship** (Acts 2:42- *"continuing steadfastly... in fellowship, the breaking of bread..."* and Acts 2:46- *"continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God..."*)
1. Emphasis on continuing! They did church things together AND met up outside of the church things :)

2. True fellowship is if our relationships are centered around the Word and corporate and personal prayer. We need to learn how to have spiritual relationships with godly values like encouraging and uplifting clean speech,
 3. Intentional life overlap- meals, hangouts, having fun
 4. We can become like family- with a godly depending on others for life needs (birthdays, trials, moving, babies, deaths, etc)
- D. **#5- Discipleship-** (Acts 2:41- *“that day about 3,000 souls were added to them”*, 1 Cor 11:1- *“Follow my example as I follow Christ.”*)
1. Leading believers (new and not new) into a deeper relationship with Jesus by continuing steadfastly in teachings, fellowship, breaking of bread and in prayers.
 2. Submitting to one another in the fear of the Lord (Eph 5:21) Older to the younger, peer to peer, younger to older.
 3. Being disciplined- Going deeper, humility, letting yourself be lead, and growing personally in God because of intentional pursuit of Him, getting rid of sin/lie patterns
 4. Discipling: learning how to lead in humility and in the context of prayer, showing people Christ and the way to transformation through prayer.
 5. Turning our hearts toward the children and teaching/being an example to the children
- E. **#6-Bringing People into the family** (Acts 2:47- *“and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”*)
1. Outreach is connected to Discipleship.
 2. The Lord added to the church because of the unity of the believers, and His power being released through them. The believers were all in with helping new believers walk into a lifestyle of prayer and discipleship.