

## **Our Vision (Turning it Inside Out and Upside Down)**

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Matt. 22:37-39

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Mt 28:19-20

### **Multiplying the DNA**

I will talk much about DNA. It will be something I use constantly and refer to in all I do as a Disciple maker. But, just to be clear, it is something I have had to spend extensive time in study to understand. I was never a good student in Science. But have found it necessary for many reasons, I guess since our God is the Creator of all things and Science seeks to explain our creation that Biology and Physics have become two subjects that I have a great interest in.

And we can use science to explain and think about church because the church, the body, is an organic creation. And I will teach and believe that the most important need in the church today is the proper DNA. See, in the Body, DNA is the producing mechanism that carries the building blocks of life. So, the Body of Christ, that is The Church, just like our physical bodies, is then made up of essential components upon which everything else is built.

So when examining the DNA in the Church, we ask where can it be found? Well we typically look to the book of Acts. And I have spent much of the past 10 years doing this. But what I found is that we must look not to Acts, but to The Gospels. I believe we must look to the Gospels and specifically at the chronology that begins with the baptism of Jesus by John to the Ascension for Jesus' foundation of His kingdom. (I have created a synopsis of the time which is a very unique document and one I find very useful when studying the teachings of Jesus.)

As we know, Jesus came to earth; He left behind an organic community that became, very quickly, a dynamic multiplying church. This is the DNA of Christianity that I find in the teachings of Jesus.

Love God, Love Others, and Make Disciples as you do the first two.

Maybe this acrostic will help you remember, using 3 attributes of the Church.

1) **D**ivine Truth (An Encounter)

God intersects with His creation, humanity, and sheds light on who we are and what ultimate reality is. It is the Union of the Human and the divine, Jesus is both divine and human.

2) **N**urturing Relationships (One Anothering)

A building of community based on a love relationship with Jesus Christ.

3) **A**postolic mission

The Church, the Body of Christ, is to be a sent agency, not a sending agency. We should not wait for disciples to come to us, but we should be about going to them.

### **What is Church?**

Getting to the core of what we call Church.

We can find in The Gospels many components to our Lords teachings, but I think it is clear that Christianity centers around an irreducible and ultimately unchangeable core. What I mean by irreducible is that these core components are incapable of being reduced or simplified. And as I said are also unchangeable. So at its core Church is the presence of Jesus among His people. It is called out as a spiritual family. And it is to pursue His, Christ's mission to the ends of the earth.

So our goal is then to multiply this DNA within our disciples and also we are to seek to transform our communities through community transformation which becomes reality by our multiplication of authentic Christian community. We describe this many ways, we call it church, small groups, but whatever we call it,... it must contain the proper DNA.

## Some reflections on the Nature of God

- 1) God is the basis of our Universe. It is He who holds all things together. *In him we live and move and have our being.* Acts 17:28 So, since God is the creator of all that is, it is important for us to understand the nature of our creator. In fact this understanding provides us with the foundation to our faith, what we believe, what we trust in, our theology, our relationships and our mission.
- 2) God has fingerprints. What I mean is that His genetic code is found in our creation and all within the created order. In Geneses we read that God created man and woman, forming the first relational pair on this planet and thus the first community. God said that it was not good for man to be alone, indicating that He placed within us a longing for relationship. We were meant to be in relationship or communion or in a community with Him, others and with the created order.
- 3) God is love.  
And we should take note that love is missional in nature. It flows from the depths of community. By missional I mean that Gods love is giving by nature. We should have hearts that bleed for the lost and do all we can to bring them into a relationship, or into communion, to be part of Community with God. Now picture this. This is really very awesome. The love that God intends to flow from this relationship I speak of; this communion from the community of believers; is the same love that flows from the community of the Trinity within itself. Imagine the delight that each member of the Trinity has as they lovingly engage each other. And remember they are outside of time, they are, have always been and will always be in this loving engagement together. And it is based on this experience that Jesus commands us to love one another. ....See, we are not driven by mission, but are instead captured by love; the same love demonstrated from all eternity by the members of the Trinity. When captured by it, it grips our hearts and then transforms us into holy reflections of God. It is the vision of 2 Cor. 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.
- 4) God is One  
He is within Himself a relational community of three persons. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And the relational aspects of the created order give us many clues to His nature and intended design for creation. All mission and practice flow from the river of relationship that finds its origin in God.

## Some reflections on Gods intention for community.

- 1) It is Gods intention that people see Himself in us. So, made in His image, the Church, The Body, is then meant to be a community. I have argued that the name of a church should in fact be the community or fellowship in (our city). One is what we are the other what we do. So we are actually the community of believers in (Our City). And what we do as a community is fellowship. The New Testament calls this Koinania, a Greek word for fellowship. It was used often to describe the fellowship with God and others.

But a whole new dynamic is created when we embrace the understanding of the church as a community. It is no longer individuals, but rather more normal in its outflow of a healthy Christian life. We are no longer holding church services, but are engaging the core community of believers, (The Community, or Fellowship in \_\_\_\_\_) to be what we are created to do; fellowship, commune, with God, and with other believers. And ultimately it is a vision of what is to one day come!

So if we take Matthew 22:37-39. 28:18-20 and Acts 2:42-47 we can express the DNA of the Church like this, The Great Commandments and the Great Commission, lived out within a culture, that results in a Great Community.

## Some Reflections on Community Transformation

- 1) Transformation becomes a key word for our churches. Since the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis Chapter 3, we have become beings with an internal drive to serve ourselves, rather than God. We are born seeking the creation rather than the creator. We are born seeking to find fulfillment in the things of this world rather than the eternal one. See the taking by God of a self-centered person and transforming them into one of love and forgiveness is a supernatural act. It is the bases upon which a person receives the very DNA of God; which comes through new birth. ....Then, in an instant that really cannot be separated from the rebirthing process, a transplant is made, a radical change of nature transforming a life so that it can impact a community. This is what makes a community of believers attractive to others, it's not what we can do, but the dynamic lives within it. See what we all needed was a heart transplant. The Ezekiel 36: 26,27 effect. God reaches into us and rips out the old heart of stone and replaces it with the heart of Jesus Christ.
- 2) And in John 13:35 Jesus described what this transformed community would look like, how the world would be able to identify it. He said, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." So I will argue and have often that it is an impossibility for human nature to achieve this kind of love on its own. Yes, it is possible to discipline ourselves to do great things even live a clean life, the Pharisees did this, but we cannot make ourselves love like Jesus calls us to. You know, the NT is full of one another passages that I think are there to remind us that the greatest evidence of a transformed life is this God-given ability to "love One another." A great book I read last year is The Dangerous Act of One Anothering, by Wayne Jacobson. Great Book.
- 3) A third thought is that before we do one thing as communities of believers, we should commit to a vision, values, and mission. But the most important thing is that we see and witness daily in our lives, hearts, and minds that are gripped by an eternal love resulting in transformed lives with the ultimate desire being our desire for our loving God, loving one another and making disciples as the community of God. What I'm saying is that because of the nature of DNA, we will reproduce what we already are. We must make sure in "all" of our relationships, at home work and play, that we properly reflect the eternal community that we are a part of.
- 4) It will involve an incarnational lifestyle.

Just as God gave His Son, we are called to incarnate the gospel throughout our community. Think about this. When God gives a present, how does he normally wrap it? I think you would come to the conclusion that He normally wraps His presents in a person. In the gift of His presence among us it came gift wrapped in the person of Jesus. And now God calls on us to be His presence by allowing Him to use our person in our communities to pitch His tent revealing Himself.

And the outcome of this presence should be disciple making. The affect being that His DNA is properly passed on in a relational setting only.

## Some Thoughts on what a relational Community might look like.

- 1) So, everything in The Kingdom is about relationship. Our loving God and our loving others. Relationship then is the vehicle God intends to use to bring about redemption. It then is at the core of community and the very fabric of Christian life. The Body then functions in the context of three relationships; our relationship with God, our relationship with others within the Body, and our relationship with those not yet a part of the Body.
- 2) And second our relationship with God is empowered by His love for us. It is only as His sons and daughters that we are even able to love, accept, and forgive one another. Why, because, we have already received forgiveness, His love and acceptance. Being loved by God, we can then love ourselves, on this building block, we can then love others and develop redemptive

relationships with others based on the love we receive from God, which is lived out in His community.

- 3) A third thought is that a community is essentially a form of family which has a specific way of life. This life is then modeled and taught and takes place in the process of relationship. We can talk about it all we want, but community only exist when it is lived out in the relationships of its members. In our community of belief, everything is about relationships, our relationship with Christ, our relationship with other believers and our relationship with those we seek to reach. So the act of being a community is a relational activity by which we incarnate Christ to those around us. Our thinking through these relationships will be the key to the implementation of our vision to be community and to transform our community.

Some thoughts on what a mission focus might look like within our community.

- 1) Our missional focus should be driven by the incarnate reality of Christ. Christ expresses Himself in the believing community through gifts. (And how does God wrap His gifts?) So in missions, the Body, through gifted people becomes a community. And as those gifted people live out the incarnate and relational nature of God in community, disciples are made. So what happens is spiritual reproduction. The influence of gifted individuals upon a community. Such an awesome and really very simple plan God created to transform our communities. Jesus described this in several parables.

This is so important to remember, that the Body exists for Gods purpose. And that He has given it a very specific assignment, within a very specific culture, within a very specific geography. If we place mission before God it becomes Idolatry and causes only frustration and confusion within the body. So we must ask ourselves three questions about our missional focus. How will we love God, How will we love others, and how will we go about making disciples.

Some thoughts on Multiplication.

- 1) Reproduction is at its core of all life, and begins at the cellular level. For a Christian, this life begins at rebirth, when in an instant we are transformed from darkness to light, imputed with the life of Christ, with the very DNA of God, as we are inhabited by the very Spirit of God. At that point, we become fertile, the potential for spiritual reproduction is set within us. The very genetic code of God becomes part of our molecular structure.

And it is from this genetic code that community develops, as disciples reproduce healthy disciples. Multiplication begins with God, no other way, and is passed on to an individual, who then passes it on, who then passes it on creating community. The most basic being a community that mirrors the Trinity, a community of two or three gathered.

And let me just mention we want to do this the proper way. We seem to always be trying to come up with plans and programs to impact lives. What we need is to concentrate on impacting a life. So we start with impacting a life, and then those we impact one at a time will impact lives. So it is from life impacted, to lives impacted, to lives impacting lives, to generations impacting generations. Everything healthy should reproduce. So my thinking here is that we are not simply building for our immediate future or success, but we are creating a foundation for generations of community here in our city.

A last thought would be that multiplication should be both spontaneous and intentional. An incredible comparison on multiplication was one I saw in a book I read in the mission field by Wolfgang Simpson. He compared the fertility and reproduction of Elephants and rabbits. Okay, Elephants become fertile four time a years, Rabbits are perpetually fertile. Elephants average one baby per pregnancy. Rabbits average seven babies per pregnancy. The gestation period for an elephant is 22 months, for a Rabbit, one month. Elephants are not sexually

mature until the age of 18 years, Rabbits, 4 months. Growth rate in three years... Elephants from 2 to 3. Rabbits....from 2 to 476,000,000.

Some thoughts on Inside Out and upside down ministry.

### Inside Out

#### 1) Kingdom Impacting

The concept of an inside-out kingdom begins with God working through our lives. Ministry flows from the inside out, rather than the outside in. The Power of the Gospel demonstrates this idea.

So when God transforms us individually, He transforms us communally. With changed lives, we can impact those around us. For example, in Mark 2:13-17, Jesus calls a man named Levi, or Matthew as we know him, sitting at a tax collectors booth. Mark tells us that Jesus then dines with the man in his community, with a group of tax collectors and "sinners." What we see is that it is through transformed lives, we lead those around us to Jesus.

#### 2) The Power of a changed life.

If a single disciple has his or her life turned around by the power of the Gospel and trusted Christ, then his changed life spreads from within to other parts of the church.

So by bringing healthy DNA to every disciple we keep the entire church healthy. There is only one DNA for the Body of Christ. It should not be manipulated or altered. But in our history as Christians have become sick, been altered, manipulated at the cellular level, that level we call the 2 or more, church health, the body's health has suffered the same way.

### Upside Down

#### 1) Reaching The Lost

The best way to grow the church is to evangelize the lost. So, it is better to focus on the core rather than the entire church body! We must think like a missionary and plant seeds of the Gospel and see the church will be birthed within our culture. The more seeds we sow, the more potential the church has for multiplication. This approach will seem slower in the beginning, but will be much more fruitful in the long run.

#### 2) Reaching Lost People

With a bottom up as opposed to a top down approach, the structure of the church will develop as its ministry develops. Evangelism is still our method. The goal is to see things grow organically, from micro to macro. So we build the smallest units first.

#### 3) Thinking Globally

We must think globally, not on either /or or first / then but instead have a both/and mentality. Our multiplication should be both organic and multidirectional. In the world we live in today it is possible for any church to have international influence almost immediately.