



Approved 11-17-05

VISION

WHAT WE SEE FOR OURSELVES

(Under the Lordship of Christ)

We See...the glory of God.

God made famous in the Valley, and glorified through us, His church (Isaiah 48:9-11; Ezekiel 36:22-23, 32; Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

We See...a prevailing church,

according to the words of Jesus: I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). A church that takes on the devil and the forces of evil, knocking down strongholds, setting people free. A church that gives people hope.

We See...an Acts 2 church.

A church that can be aptly and accurately described by Acts 2:42-47:

- Devoted to the basics of: Scripture, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer
- A continuing sense of awe, created by the manifested presence of God
- Wonders and signs—the display of God’s power to set people free from all kinds of bondages
- “Commonism”—the haves willingly sharing with the have-nots
- Alternation between corporate worship and home group community
- Gladness and sincerity
- Favor with the people. A sterling reputation in the Valley
- Daily numerical conversion growth

We See...a church that is fulfilling the Great Commission in the context of the Great Commandments

The Great Commandments and the Great Commission both came from the lips of Jesus, who is the Lord of the church. They are monumental utterances. Hence, they should provide the basis for how we “do church”.

The Great Commandments are, first, to love God with all our being (Matthew 22:37). Since God is God, if we love Him, we will worship Him. C. S. Lewis appropriately observed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise...we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment. Then, according to Jesus, if we love Him, we will obey Him (John 14:15, 21).

The second great commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). We naturally love ourselves and care for ourselves. If we love our neighbor in the same way, we will care for our neighbor in the same way. Such care will manifest itself in good works.

The commandments provide the context in which we live and fulfill our mission.

The Great Commission is to Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded us (Matthew 28:19-20).

Though there are several action words in this directive, there is only one verb: make disciples. (It takes two English words to translate the one Greek verb. If we tried to use one English word, it would have to be something like “disciplize”). The root idea in the word is to learn. In the 1st century culture, the only way to learn something was to attach yourself to someone who knew what you wanted to learn. Obviously, the attachment would be significant. In many cases, it became the dominant, prominent reality. The learner became a follower of his teacher; and in the context of following, he learned.

With that understanding, making disciples of Jesus means making “learning followers” of Jesus. That’s the essence of the mission Jesus gave us. It is THE WHAT.

If we subscribe to the what and “sign on” to do it, then we will want to know THE HOW. How do we go about making disciples? Well, those other actions words (called “participles”) provide the answer.

According to Jesus, we make disciples by:

Going:

Jesus was a “going about” person (Luke 8:1); and if we are going to make disciples, we will have to be going about people. You cannot make disciples by staying to yourself. And as we go, we must be witnessing to the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus (Acts 1:8). As we do that, some will respond and believe, which leads us to the next step in the disciple-making process.

Baptizing:

This signals that a person has decided to follow Jesus. It is the official entry into the fellowship of a local church.

Teaching (to observe all that Jesus commanded):

It is not teaching as an end in itself. It is teaching as the means to an end: obedience to Christ. And not obedience to only one or two precepts, but to all that He commanded us. That’s a lot, meaning that this is a life-long process. It is obvious from this that disciple-making is a process. We must call people to a life-long journey, and we must guide them

along the way. As long as we understand that disciple-making is a process, and as long as we understand and preserve the essence of the process, we could choose various sets of terms.

In the Matthew 28 text, it is going...baptizing...teaching.

One organization (Son Life, just outside Chicago) uses: Win... Build...Equip... Multiply...Send.

One church (Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, CA) says it this way: Magnification...Membership...Maturity...Ministry... Mission.

Whatever terms you use, you are describing a PROCESS—a way of making disciples.

But it is not only a process, it is a set of PURPOSES against which each believer must measure himself and against which the church must measure itself. If a church is fulfilling all the purposes, it will be balanced. If it is balanced, it will be healthy. If it is healthy, it will grow. So, the FOCUS must not be on growth, but on balance and health, with growth as a by-product.

Churches that are intent on helping people live according to the purposes of God are sometimes called “purpose driven”. Fact is, every church is driven by something. Often, it’s a personality, usually the pastor. Sometimes, it is tradition. Sometimes, it is an event, or a program. Sometimes, it is finance.

By contrast, a Purpose Driven church is driven by the purposes that God Himself has established, in the example of His Son, and in the corroborating exhortation in His Word.

Some might question whether we should be “driven”. Is that a good thing? Well, of course, it can be a bad thing if it is obsessive. But it can be a good thing; and, in fact, it is a necessary thing. If there is to be movement, if there is to be progress, there has to be an IMPETUS. What is it? What should it be? The purposes of God, which flow out of the commands of Christ, which were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

In the generalities of our vision, we are moved by the purposes of God. In the particulars (i.e., the details which are unique to us), we want to be moved by the promptings of the Spirit. So, really, we will be purpose-driven and Spirit-led.

The term purpose-driven is biblical in that it reflects the commands of Scripture, and it is very relevant to the culture. People are lacking purpose, and they are looking for definition for their lives.