

COMMISSIONED

THE ART OF LIVING OUT THE
WORDS, WAYS, & MISSION OF JESUS

9.3 Partnering in the Mission of Jesus

The Story of NCC

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Once upon a time... It just feels like I should start this particular podcast that way. We're talking about the story of NCC, and in many ways it's more than half a life ago for me. Lora and I have had the joy and privilege of leading this church for 26 years, started with a core group of 19 people in January of 1996, and I have to say, look at what the Lord has done. Now, I can't share all of our history in a handful of minutes, but let me touch on some core convictions, some key moments and talk about how you can be a part of that story and how we want to be a part of the story that God is writing in and through your life. In our early days, we averaged about 20 people on a good Sunday, including Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We were meeting in a DC public school and there were a couple of key moments in that first year. One was a 4.7 mile prayer walk around Capitol Hill. God has done so many miracles. From that prayer walk, I wasn't praying for property, was praying for people, was praying that God's kingdom would come, God's will would be done, but fun fact, Ebenezers Coffeehouse and the Capital Turnaround are two corners of that prayer circle. I never thought we would own a single piece of property, but God is doing something in and through us to the third and fourth generation, and we discovered the power of prayer. We have a core value; pray like it depends on God and work like it depends on you. I think a second moment was giving our first \$50 check to missions. It was a scary moment because we weren't even self-supporting, but we just stood on a promise - give and it will be given on you.

It's the law of measures. We have since that day given about \$25 million to missions. We built a \$5 million dream center, and you know what? It created a core conviction in us that God's going to bless us in proportion to how we care for the poor in our city and how we give to missions. If

we are doing what is near and dear to the heart of God, then God's got our back. And so it was a key moment. I think one other piece of that puzzle was the school where we met closing down and we were about to become a homeless church when God opened a door in a unique environment, the movie theaters at Union Station. I think that's when this idea of doing church in the middle of the marketplace became part of our DNA. We wanted to be in a place where church and community could cross paths.

And that really then inspired Ebenezer's Coffeehouse. Every penny of profit we give to kingdom causes and we caffeinate a lot of people on Capitol Hill. By the way, holy spirit plus caffeine equals awesome. And then there is the Capital Turnaround where we have built a child development center, as well as in the future a mixed use marketplace. Listen, we are believing God for revival, reformation and renaissance. Let's not create false dichotomies. I believe all truth is God's truth. We create these sacred and secular categories, but the truth is this; God wants to revive His Church, wants reformation in the kingdom and renaissance in culture. We're believing for all of that. One of the things that you'll hear at NCC quite a bit is this, that Paul did not just boycott the Areopagus. He went inside and competed for the truth. I believe that God has called us to write better books, produce better films, draft better legislation, start better schools. And you can fill in the gap with whatever you do.

Well, how do we do that? With the help of the Holy Spirit. We want to be more known for what we're for than what we're against. And I'll say one more thing; the church that stays within its four walls isn't a church at all. And so we want to be on mission. We want to be great at the great commandment, great at the great commission. Couple of core convictions; church ought to be the most creative place on the planet and the church ought to be the most diverse place on the planet. Those two are not unrelated. In fact, they are the keys to each other. We are moving from diversity to unity, to beloved community. So grateful for the multicultural congregation that God has established. And in case you haven't noticed, we reach across the aisle politically.

We reach across the things that divide culture, be they socioeconomic or even ethnic. We want to be a reflection of the kingdom of God, of what's happening in heaven. And every nation tribe, people, language are worshiping around that throne. We want to reflect that right here right now. We want to invite you to be part of the story that God is writing at NCC, lots of opportunities to get involved, plug into a small group, plug into a ministry, maybe even go on one of our mission trips or be part of an outreach opportunity. But I also want to say this; we want to be part of the story that God is writing through you. We want to be in your corner and on your team. The beautiful thing about the kingdom of God is that it is a reflection of all of us. We are the body of Christ.

We have different gifts, different passions, and those get filtered through personality in history. But here's the bottom line; you can't really go to church because you are the church. You are the

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church wherever you go, and so we're not just a church with a handful of campuses. We have thousands of campuses. We are wherever you go. And so thank you for the privilege of being a piece of your puzzle. Want to invite you to be part of this story that God is writing, but we want to be a part of that story that God is writing in and through your life in Jesus name. Amen.