

Church of my Dreams

Gym membership- if I don't go to the gym, I just do not work out as consistently and if I go by myself, I do not work out as hard. Church is just like that. Church is your spiritual gym. Church keeps you focused on your spiritual health and growth. Church surrounds you with people that model the spiritual life you are trying to build. Church gives you people who can push you to be your best. But let's be honest, many of us have been in a church environment that did not actually do that. In fact, some of us have been in a church environment that hurt us. It would be like your gym opening a donut shop in the lobby. We went to church but came away with a lot of pain, confusion, religion, and maybe feel further from God.

What is church supposed to be like? Core

1. A United Church. Verse 8

Peter says we should be of one mind. In a world that is so divided, we are all longing for a place to unite. The key to unity is not uniformity. The key to unity, in our diversity, is to unite around a person and a cause that transcends cultural, politics, personality, and time. We unite around the person of Christ, the message of Christ, the mission of Christ and the Kingdom of Christ!

I read an article last week that said church attendance in America has dipped below 50% for the first time in US history. The cause is not the pandemic but the church being too political and church people fighting with each other over conspiracy theories. Certainly, your faith should inform your politics and every other area of your life. However, as a church we must stay laser focused on Christ and His mission. If more and more people are leaving the church nationally it is because we lost focus.

John 17:20-21, I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

What is the mission? Matthew 28:19-20

- **Definition Church Mission:** Be with Jesus, Become Like Jesus, and Do what Jesus did...not the other way around

This is the Christian life. This is what is New about the New Testament

2. A Compassionate Church. Verse 8

Peter says we should sympathize with one another, to suffer with someone. To care so deeply for another person that you can feel their pain. Are we compassionate?

Have you ever been around people when news of someone's failure became public and everyone began to say things like, Well, it serves them right or that's what they deserve? I do not know about you, but I am glad I have not always gotten what I deserve.

Being at coach training when Ted Haggard fell.

Pastor Friends who have blown it, I love them. They are my friends. I cannot fix it. But I do not celebrate their pain or kick them when they are down. I know the pressure pastors are under, the constant rejection they experience, which makes them want to give up, to start

drinking, smoking pot, or having sex with someone they shouldn't. Just like you, often they are looking for an escape. In fact, the pandemic has been unusually challenging for pastors.

- **Religion makes a person mean spirited, legalistic, judgmental, prideful, and angry.**
- **The fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy peace, patience... The fruit of the Spirit means, this is what God is like.**

One of the reasons I am compassionate is because I can look back on my own life and see all the times, I have blown it. I can also see how compassionate and merciful God and other people were with me. I can see how God worked through my failure to propel me into my future. Compassion is not enabling. I think we need to be careful not to bail people out because I know in my own life the pain my failure caused motivated me to grow and change. However, we can love people through the process. This is what Jesus did.

Values: We see redemptive potential in every moment. God is not finished with you. God can redeem every failure, every loss, and every pain to propel you into your future.

John 21- Do you love me? They had to talk about it, but Jesus was compassionate. When we learn to be with Jesus we become like Jesus. We grow more compassionate like Jesus.

3. A Loving Church. Verse 8

Peter says to love each other like brothers and sisters. At church, **"It is not enough to be friendly, we need friends."** We need people who will stick with us through thick and thin. One thing that should be true about family is family sticks together. I have told my kids this many times during their lives, friends come and go, but we are family. That should be true of your church family. In fact, that is why we say so often church is family. When Peter was writing, like in many parts of the world today, following Jesus may cost you your biological family. In that case your church family became so important.

In my own life, Definition Church has been my family. Peter is saying love each other that way. It is easy to get offended and leave your church family. This year people lost relationships over politics, race, and masks. Our love has to be stronger than that. The truth is, if we stick together, these moments produce tremendous growth in our lives and when we leave our growth is stunted.

John 13:35, "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

Dr. Bennett- He would challenge me. He was glad to let me know when I was being stupid but he also loved me and stood by me. In fact, in my immaturity there were many times I disrespected Dr. Bennett or even corrected him the way Peter corrected Jesus but he never got offended and never gave up on me and it change my life.

Value: We do what's right because it is what love requires

Because I love you, I am going to stick with you and help you become all that God intends you to be.

4. A Tenderhearted Church. Verse 8

Be tenderhearted. This means to be sensitive to the needs of others. Compassion is an emotional response, here Peter is describing a practical response. How can I help? Charity. If I can do something to end your suffering, I will.

Quote: “The pagan world we, and is, often a pitiless world, cold, callous, and cruel. It is frequently a hard-hearted world. The Roman world provided no hospitals or nursing homes for the sick. It had not asylums for the disabled, the crippled, or the insane. It provided no education for the illiterate multitudes. No retirement homes for the elderly. No rescue missions for the drunk or the drug addict. There were no organizations to help the impoverished widow, the battered wife, or the abused child or the starving unemployed. There were no civil rights for the millions of slaves. No orphanages, no missions, no charities, and no social programs. All of these services are the by-product of Christianity.”

Book: Unimaginable

James 2:14-17, “What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?” Faith without works, is dead. Is your faith alive?

When we can help, let’s help!

- Backpack drive, food drives, medical clinic, Christmas gifts

5. A Humble Church. Verse 8

Remember what we learned last week? **1 Peter 5:5-6**, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and He will lift you up in due time.” Pride is an elevated opinion of my importance. Humility is recognizing that I am nothing without Jesus. Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount, blessed are the poor in spirit. Humility is the first step in our relationship with God. Humility is understanding everything good in me is something God gave me or God produced in me. Therefore, I do not exalt myself.

In 1986, Michael Jordan scored 63 points against the Celtics in a playoff game. It was and still is the most points ever scored by one player in the playoffs. After the game a reporter asked Stacey King, one of Michael’s teammates, what he would remember about that game. He said, “I’ll always remember that was the night Michael and I combined to score 65 points.” King was being funny but for us to walk around proud of who we are or what we have accomplished is to fail to recognize the grace and generosity of God in your life. When I understand that Jesus is the star then my life is about lifting up Jesus.

Humility is recognizing, Jesus is the star. When we recognize Jesus is the star, He made us great, he made us successful, then we do not need to step on others in our desperate climb to the top. Instead, we understand, if I do my part, Jesus will do His part, and I can trust Him. Furthermore, I will help other people succeed because when I do it points them to Jesus.

6. A Gracious Church. Verse 9-11

Peter encourages us to stop fighting. Bless people who hurt you. How many of you remember your mom saying, “two wrongs don’t make a right”. This is not easy to do. Returning a blessing for a curse.

Meeting with Jason- I was so glad He was honest with me, I was so grateful for grace, what the enemy would use to hurt our relationship, God used to strengthen it.

Parents- the most important moments of life come when your child blows it. Showing them grace, helping them to understand how they blew it, allowing them to live with the pain of a bad decision, but loving them through the process.

Value: We do whatever it takes to reach our God given potential. Tough conversations that are redemptive and full of love and grace.

7. A Blessed Church. Verse 12

When we live this way, Peter says God is watching and God will bless us. When we do not live this way, God turns His face away from us.

I would have never imagined 20 years ago God would take this little country church with 35 members and do what He has done. God has dramatically exceeded my expectations and I am convinced that over the next 20 years He is going to do it again.

- In my personal life the same thing is true.
 - o Fifth grade teacher
 - o College dropout
 - o Seminary Drop out
 - o Fired Pastor

Ephesians 3:20, "Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think."