



Pastor Jason Carter - Sept 25, 2022

Vision is why we do what we do
Mission is how we go about doing it

Mission Statement: We are a family committed to seeing lives changed. **We connect people to God and others**, make disciples of Jesus, and empower people to live out the Good News in our world. And, we are each determined to fulfill our unique purpose in God's mission to everyone, everywhere, every day.

1. We Connect People to God

When we say connect to God, we mean relationship. Deepening, strengthening, building history with God, Ginosko, intimacy with God. John 15:4 is a great picture of our personal responsibility in our walk with God:

"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."

Do we fully understand that God actually *delights* in connection and relationship with us?

He is committed connection, union, relationship. He is our life source for everything, and He is committed to us.

The reason we connect people to God is: *Love*

We believe we, as a church, have a biblical responsibility to help you grow in your connection and relationship with God. We want you to have a biblical understanding of God, His nature and character, what He is like. We want you to know who Jesus is and what He has done. We want you to understand who the Holy Spirit is and how He has been given to call us, convict us, draw us and make us more and more like Jesus. We desire for people to grow in faith, maturity and love and practical application.

The reason we connect people to God is **love**.

Matthew 22:36-40 ESV **36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 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. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."**

1 Corinthians 13:13 NIV **"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."**

In order to love well, we must receive love well and remain connected to God Galatians 5:6 ESV “**but only faith working through love** [counts for anything].” The reason we desire people to connect with God is: faith working through love. The reason we share our faith is love. AND, helping others connect to God is faith working through love. What we know about Jesus, we give away.

Our job is not to save people. The Holy Spirit works on the heart of the individual, the Father draws people and they find salvation through the person of Jesus Christ. Our responsibility is to share what we know about Jesus.

How do we live this out, personally?

Examples:

Between Christians:

- Connect people to what God is like, His character and attributes
- Tell a story of God’s faithfulness
- Share a portion of scripture
- Simply ask you questions
- Connect them to someone who has gone through the same circumstance
- Invite them to an event, gathering, or life group

Outside the church:

- Strike up a conversation with someone
- If you sense a need, show care or concern for their situation
- If you see someone who has crutches or a brace, ask how it happened and ask to pray for them

Don’t fake it. Don’t force it. Don’t manipulate or exaggerate. Simply share what you know about Jesus, and trust God will do His part.

There are certain aspects of our *humanity* that cannot be experienced and expressed without *connection to others*.

2. We Connect People to Others

There are certain aspects of our humanity that cannot be experienced and expressed without connection with others. Why? Because were created for it.

According to Stanford Medicine:

“One landmark study showed that lack of social connection is a greater detriment to health than obesity, smoking and high blood pressure. Dr. Lisa Strohmman In a [recent survey](#) of 20,000 Americans, it seems loneliness is becoming an epidemic. Nearly half of the respondents reported feeling alone sometimes or all of the time. Social media plays a large part in that. For people who [spend hours a day on social media platforms](#), the feelings of loneliness and being less than are far more prevalent.”

Strong social connection:

- Leads to a 50% increased chance of longevity

- Strengthens your immune system (research by Steve Cole shows that genes impacted by loneliness also code for immune function and inflammation)
- Helps you recover from disease faster
- may even lengthen your life!
- People who feel more connected to others have lower levels of anxiety and depression. Moreover, studies show they also have higher self-esteem, greater empathy for others, are more trusting and cooperative and, as a consequence, others are more open to trusting and cooperating with them.

Don't settle for less than real community:

- First and foremost, if you're starting to feel lonely, disconnect from social media. Unplug. Take a time out.
- If you can't disconnect entirely from social media, limit your use to less than 30 minutes a day. Keeping it to this time results in a higher level of happiness and much lower sense of loneliness. Plus, keeping it limited drastically improves your mental well-being.
- Create real time and real-life experiences with people. Put down your phone and get outside and into the world with other people and engage.
- Put social media into context. Remember, Instagram is a "best of" reel. It's not real; people put their best version of themselves online, but we are all human and perfectly imperfect.

Acts 2:42-47 ESV 42 "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

Devoted: 'to consistently showing strength which prevails (despite difficulties); to endure (remain firm), staying in a fixed direction.'

They were devoted to the apostle's teaching AND to fellowship: Devote yourself to God's word, fellowship, eating with people/taking communion in remembrance of all Jesus did, and prayer.

43 "And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles."

And Awe came on every soul **first**, before the many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. As people gave their life on behalf of Jesus and others, something happened in them that caused awe. With devotion to God and to others, faith rises, and signs, wonders, miracles and salvations happen.

44 "And all who believed were together and had all things in common."

What did they have in common? Jesus and mission. In it together and living for something greater than themselves

45 "And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need."

Generosity breaks out! The closer we get to people, the more likely we are to help. This is the power of proximity

46 "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts."

Day by day people are *about* Jesus and the kingdom of God in daily living.

47 "...praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

Church, Christians, we have to fight for this. This is counter-cultural. This is the opposite of self-centered. This is the opposite of 'my will, my way'. This will not happen automatically because it costs something. In reality, connection creates stress. People are imperfect and messy. To truly connect, we must have abundant grace for each other, and connection is part of the transformation process.

The greatest "marketing strategy" for the church is loving God, loving people, and being devoted, committed to God and each other...to actually *live* the gospel.

The Paradoxical Commandments. Kevin M. Keith

People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered.

Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives.

Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.

Be honest and frank anyway.

The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds.

Think big anyway.

People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs.

Fight for a few underdogs anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.

Build anyway.

People really need help but may attack you if you do help them.

Help people anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth.

Give the world the best you have anyway.

The greatest "marketing strategy" for the church is loving God, loving people, and *being devoted* to God and each other.

Discussion Questions:

- How do you personally live out this mission, connecting people to God? Connecting people to others?
- Do you have trusted people that can be "in your business", as Pastor Jason said?
- Do you need to cultivate stronger Biblical community? If so, what steps will you take?
- When have you experienced, or seen, transformation happen through connection?