

## **DISCUSSION NOTES:**

Our small group series for the month of June will focus our attention on our Vision and Mission statements. There won't be any videos for this month and each session is formatted for you to work together as a group, either reading the material aloud, or silently, and then discussing the questions as they come up.

**Our Vision** is to create a church in which people feel at home and, inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God, align their lives to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for His return and eternal life.

**Our Mission** is reaching out to all people in order to teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to baptize them with water and the Holy Spirit. Providing soul care and cultivating a warm fellowship in which everyone shall experience the love of God and the joy of serving Him and others.

## **SESSION 1: OUR VISION**

In the King James Version of Proverbs 29:18, we can read, Where there is no vision, the people perish. A vision gives people something to move forward to, something to focus on at all times, but with no vision, people can get stuck in the present with no momentum. If a company doesn't have a vision, what are they working towards? Similarly, when we don't have a common vision to work towards together, we get distracted from our purpose as God's children. What are we working towards?

- 1. Why do you think that we, as humans, need something to focus on? Have you experienced any examples in favor, or not, of this need for focus in your life?
- 2. What is our purpose as God's children?

A vision statement defines **where** you want to be, **what** you could and should be. A vision is the most ideal outcome or ending one can imagine. A vision determines your purpose and drives you towards a future that is perfect. Since nothing in this world can be perfect, the vision is something you will always be working towards. It can never really be completely fulfilled. However, as a church, we believe our vision will be fulfilled at the return of Jesus Christ.

A Christian leads a dynamic life, always looking for those things that need to change and grow. Every phrase of a vision statement identifies a need and brings us to an awareness of where action needs to be taken. Whether it's a vision statement for your job, or your school, or your church, it's your decision whether you want to be a part of the change and help that community grow into its future.

3. Take a moment to draft a simple personal vision statement for the next year of your life. Consider areas of your life where you need/want to grow. Share and discuss with the group.

Now that we understand the importance of a vision statement, let's look at the New Apostolic Church vision and discover what needs it addresses and how we can change to reach our most desired future: Our Vision is a church in which people feel at home and, inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God, align their lives to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for His return and eternal life.

4. Rewrite the Church vision statement in your own words. If it helps, break it down phrase by phrase. Do you feel you are reaching for these ideals in your congregation? Why or why not? Let's break it down into four parts so we can better understand what needs are identified and what goals we are working towards as Christians.
A church in which people feel at home  The church should reflect the unity of God's people. We want it to be a safe space to grow and overcome challenges, just as one feels safe doing these things in their home with their family surrounding them. The church has the opportunity to create a similar space where we are unified as a spiritual family. However, it cannot be about my personal ideas of "feeling at home," with my own opinions and preferences. We will all have to give up some of our opinions or preferences in order to help others feel at home, and to grow in oneness with them.
<ul><li>5. Discuss what it means to share a house with other people – what personal preferences do you have to sacrifice to live together?</li><li>6. What would life look like in a home where everything only fit the preferences of one person?</li></ul>
7. What steps could your congregation take to be a place where more people feel at home?
Be inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God  We can only be truly united and effective when our inspiration is the Holy Spirit and our love for God. If we allow our own desires to be our inspiration, then we ruin our chance for unity and for knowing God's will and His way. Putting aside our own needs and desires allows us to act as one towards the same goal for the same reasons. We can only be truly unified and effective when our motivation is guided by the Holy Spirit, who reveals to us how much God loves us.  8. What does it mean to be unified as God's people?  9. How can you strive to be motivated by the Holy Spirit, rather than your own ideas?

Align their lives to the gospel of Jesus Christ  When we are inspired by the Holy Spirit and our love for God, we want to align our lives to Jesus' gospel. The gospel defines and establishes our relationship with Him. Learning the gospel teaches us about Jesus Christ's sacrifice; it changes how we look at the world, our future, our job, our life. We should see everything differently when we're aligned with the gospel. It shows us what matters most in our lives.	
10. What steps can you take to align your life to the gospel of Jesus? How could we help each other in working towards this?	
Prepare themselves for His return and eternal life  We can't just live for right now, we have to also live for the future.  In order to realize that future, we have to prepare ourselves by living true to the gospel, and transforming ourselves to be who God wants us to be.	
How does the church's vision apply to you?  You are to be part of the future that the vision describes – you have a place in that perfect future if you want it. Thus, the vision must be your polestar and you can strive to be an example of it in your actions by helping people to feel at home in the church and sharing the gospel with those around you.	
11. What are practical and specific things you can do to help your congregation move closer to the vision of the New Apostolic Church?	
Subscribing to the vision is not just agreeing with words on a plaque on one of the walls in your congregation. It's emotional. You need passion to live out the vision. How can you get the vision off the wall and into your heart? How can you make it more than just words in a sentence on a board?	
Find something in the vision that speaks to you; something that makes you say, "I want to be a part of this." Start with one of the four phrases and go from there. If you feel an energy or a passion for even just one word of the vision, hold on to it. Be a part of the change that will lead us to our goal.	
12. What part of the vision speaks most to you?	

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## **SESSION 2: OUR MISSION**

With a vision, one must have a mission to go along with it. The mission is <b>how</b> you reach the vision. A vision statement can be hopeful and inspiring, but you also need a plan or guidelines to reach that vision. In order to journey towards the vision, you need the plan that is provided in a mission statement. Not only is the mission a plan of action, but it also provides answers to the needs that the vision identifies.
1. Discuss how a vision and mission are different.
<ol><li>Write a personal mission statement for the next year of your life. Make sure it will help you reach the personal vision statement you created.</li></ol>
With defined solutions, a mission focuses everyone's effort on unified goals. The mission gives a path to the vision; it is very clearly defined as to what needs to happen to reach the vision. The mission is something that we can work at together.
3. What might happen if our church (or any organization) didn't have a mission statement?
We can look to the New Apostolic Church mission statement to see what plan of action it provides in order for us to reach the vision of the church: Our Mission is reaching out to all people in order to teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to baptize them with water and the Holy Spirit. Providing soul care and cultivating a warm fellowship in which everyone shall experience the love of God and the joy of serving Him and others.
Write each phrase of the mission statement in your own words.
5. Both the New Apostolic Church's vision and mission statements mention the phrase "gospel of Jesus Christ." If we are to align our lives to it and teach all people about it, we must know what "it" is. How would you describe the gospel of Jesus Christ?
Each part of the mission is important to reaching our vision. That is why, in all that we do, our actions need to align to the mission so that we stay focused on the vision. Church isn't about our desires or our preferences; it's about bringing together a community of those that believe in Christ and becoming His disciples.

Christ's disciples were active; they went out and brought His message to people in many lands. The disciples lived out their mission, and we must do the same.	
<ol> <li>What similarities do you see between the Great Commission and our church's mission statement? Reference Matthew 28:18-20.</li> </ol>	
Just as you have a part in the future that the vision paints, you also have a role to play in the mission. How do we reach out to all people with Jesus' gospel? <b>God has given you special gifts that only you can contribute.</b> Use those gifts to live the mission. You may find yourself doing things you're uncomfortable doing or don't think you can do. When you push past those limits, you will find that with God, anything is possible.	
7. What are some fears, challenges, or worries that prevent you from living out the mission of the church?	
8. Look around the room. What gifts have you seen each other use in their family, church, or community? How could these gifts help support the mission?	
To carry out the mission, it needs to extend beyond the walls of the church. Mission requires intentionality in your daily living. People should witness you living out the mission in all areas of your life – serving people in your congregation and community, taking the time to listen to someone when they need a friend, living so that your life is an example to all of how Christ can change and transform. Every moment is an opportunity for the mission to come alive and bring us closer to the vision.	
9. What does it mean to be intentional in our daily living?	
10. Where have you seen examples of people living out the mission?	
11. Pick one phrase that you think you could contribute to and share some ideas about how you might want to do that.	

## **SESSION 3**: LIVING AND LEADING TO OUR MISSION AND VISION

 Mission and vision statements provide focus. Whether in the congregation or in your own life, these statements should always set the target in all that we do.
1. What areas of your life do you feel need focus? What areas of the congregation do you feel need focus?
 In your congregation
When working with other members in the congregation and making decisions on what activities the congregation or a specific group should get involved in, run the ideas through a vision and mission filter. Filtering ideas through the vision and mission means that when you or someone else presents an idea identify how it will help move the group closer to and accomplish the church's mission.
Jesus did the very same during His time on earth. When He began to share with His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem suffer, be killed, and rise from the dead, Peter rebuked Him and told Him that it didn't have to be that way. Peter was suggesting an alternative, but Jesus had a clear vision and mission. He put aside Peter's idea and continued moving towards the goa (Matthew 16:21-23).
2. Look back on the personal mission and vision statements that you wrote. What ideas or activities would help us accomplish them? What would be examples of something that might not fit?
<ol> <li>Now take a moment to stop and read the mission and vision statements of our church. Discuss the same two questions.</li> </ol>
Leaders in the congregations are tasked with making numerous decisions across a wide range of topics, all the while leading to the vision and mission of the church. By filtering all activities and events, they will be able to ensure that everything that we experience as members serves a purpose.
In your life In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul wrote, <i>Therefore, whether you ear</i> or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. The Bible mentions, time and again, people doing what they did to bring glory to God.

We are called to do the very same in everything that we do, no matter what the activity is. How we act, speak, and treat all people we encounter each day should bring glory to God.	
4. Stop and think about the day you had today. Where did you glorify God or strengthen your relationship with Him? What situations could you have handled differently? What would help you approach tomorrow with this goal?	
Small group is a great example of how you can personally live and lead towards the mission and vision.	
5. Read through each sentence of the mission and vision. What parts does small group strive to fulfill?	
It's a place where people can <b>feel at home</b> and <b>align their lives to the gospel</b> . Small groups help us to <b>reach out to all people</b> (by inviting a friend!), <b>provide soul care</b> (pastoral support for one another), <b>cultivate a warm fellowship</b> , and allow people to <b>experience the love of God</b> . Imagine – we are working on six elements of our vision and mission statements just in our small group!	
6. What more can you do in your small group to create the environment described above?	
7. Read through each phrase of the mission/vison again and brainstorm ideas of how you can apply those phrases to your daily life. For example, how can you personally provide soul care to someone?	
Living and leading to the vision and mission is not always easy and takes a lot of intentionality on everyone's part, but we can be confident that it is a sure path to follow that will help us better love our neighbor, care for everyone in our congregation, and bring us closer to Jesus Christ.	
8. As a group, choose a few activities or ministries that someone in your group participates in (i.e. food pantry, Sunday School, singing, etc.) and go through the mission and vision statements to see how those activities fit in. What goals do they help accomplish? How could that be improved?	
9. Think back to the two phrases you picked that really stood out to you in the vision and mission. What could you do to contribute to them?	