

WHAT IS OUR MISSION

In the 1920s there was a young African American child who was growing up in Cleveland. One day a famous athlete, Charlie Paddock, came to his school to speak to the students. At the time Paddock was considered "the fastest human being alive." He told the children, "Listen! What do you want to be? You name it and then believe that God will help you be it." That little boy decided that he too wanted to be the fastest human being on earth. The boy went to his track coach and told him of his new dream. His coach told him, "It's great to have a dream, but to attain your dream you must build a ladder to it. Here is the ladder to your dreams. The first rung is DETERMINATION! And the second rung is DEDICATION! The third rung is DISCIPLINE! And the fourth rung is ATTITUDE!" The result of all that motivation is that he went on to win four gold medals in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. He won the 100 meter dash and broke the Olympic and world records for the 200 meter. His broad jump record lasted for twenty-four years. His name was Jesse Owens.

Vision and focus are important. Focus leads to results. The light of the sun can help give you a tan but if concentrated can cut through steel. As a church we need to focus if we are going to be what Christ had called us to be.

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers. 43 Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. 44 Now all the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 So they sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need. 46 And every day they devoted themselves [to meeting] together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.

a. Poor Focus Is the Church Focused on Itself

This is what can be called the country club mentality. The country club church focuses on power, prestige and comfort within the church. These churches are typically marked by power struggles, turmoil, frequent changes in the pastorate, and the same old faces always in leadership.

b. Poor Focus Is the Church Focused on its Pastor

This church focuses on a personality. Sometimes this means a positive focus and sometimes it is a negative focus. Whatever the case the focus is wrong because all people at some point will let you down. The church belongs to Jesus and not to any person or group.

c. Poor Focus Is the Church Focused on Numbers

This church focuses on its numbers to determine whether it is doing God's will. As long as the church is growing it is doing what God wants. Numbers can measure success, but we must be careful not to rely on them. In 2 Sam 24 David ordered a military census and got in trouble by God for counting the fighting men because he was relying on military strength to provide security. Churches can do the same thing and rely on the power of our budget or strength of our attendance.

d. Poor Focus Is the Church Focused on YOU

This church focuses so much on your needs and wants that you feel it exists for you. As soon as the worship isn't geared for your preference and the preaching isn't tailored to tickle your ears you leave. We are here to worship God and learn from His word.

There is only one focus the church is supposed to have and that is a Kingdom Focus. What does that look like? Let's look at the early church as a model for what church is supposed to look like:

1. It Grows Through EXALTING – they devoted themselves ... to breaking bread and prayers

Go through the arm motions. The first key focus for us as a church is worship. We see this as an essential investment. It says in verse 46 that "every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple". Worship requires effort and devotion.

There is power in worship. This is true of us individually. When we worship it changes us. We are personally transformed.

2 Chr 20:21 After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever." 22 As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.

When God chose to speak to Israel he did not speak through the leader Jehoshaphat but through his worship leader Jahaziel. Perhaps this is because Jahaziel was more in tune with God's will because he was more involved with praise. Praise brings us into the presence of God. When we are in His presence our outlook and will are brought into alignment with His. I can say that there are many times I have gone into worship tired or confused or upset but during worship my energy and vision was renewed and I left very different.

Ted Malone, whose radio show came on early in the morning, told of the Idaho shepherd who wrote: "Will you, on your broadcast, strike the note 'A'? I'm a shepherder way out here on a ranch, far away from a piano. The only comfort I have is my old violin. It's all out of tune. Would you strike 'A' so that I might get in tune?" Malone honored the request. Later he received a "thank you" note from the distant shepherd saying, "Now I'm in tune." One of the roles of praise and worship is to put us "in tune" with the great shepherd.

There is also power in corporate worship. It not only changes us but it changes our surroundings. In this story the people were afraid and it seemed to have every right to be! However, they were looking at things from their perspective and not God's. Faith is the opposite of fear. Fear deals with the unknown while faith is a calm assurance in what is known. As the people heard from God their minds and hearts were transformed and they marched out to meet the enemy with the singers at the front. This personal transformation led to a corporate transformation.

2Ch 20:24 When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped.

The end result was that the enemy was thrown into confusion and began to turn on itself until every person was dead. This was a vast army with many thousands of soldiers. Yet it says that no one escaped. The last guy must have fallen on his sword.

In the same way when we praise the Lord we bring confusion into the enemies camp. In praise we come against the work of the devil in our lives. Worship is not just something that happens automatically. We choose to make it happen. It is a decision we make. It is not dependent on a style of music or the instruments used though these can enhance or hinder the experience. I have had great times of worship alone in my car on the way to work. It does not take much. I have also had awful times of worship in church though the music is great when my heart is off. Worship happens when we make the decision to lay before the Lord our "sacrifice of praise".

Worship is an investment we make. This is true personally but also as a church. You may be wondering why we purchased all these new lights. Are we trying to turn the church into a concert hall! We are simply trying to enhance the experience of worship. The same way we use amplified musical instruments and a video projector, we are trying to enhance our large group worship experience. The reason we are doing this is to reach others.

This is also why we have just this week put in a new camera system. This is so we can record the services so you can not only hear but see. Our hope is to eventually have our services on the internet so people can watch it live from all around the world. We are doing this so others can hear.

If I can reach more people for Jesus standing on my head and juggling chainsaws then I am going to learn to do it. That is what it means to be all things to all people. I am willing to do whatever it takes to reach this community. What are we as a church willing to do? We want to attract people so that they will accept Christ.

This year we celebrate 50 years as a church, but that isn't the only milestone we celebrate this year. 30 years ago next month they began construction on this building we are now sitting in. Do any of you here remember that day when they had the sod turning for this new building? 30 years is a long time. Let me just illustrate that to you with a picture. This was me 30 years ago next month at my high school graduation. I have changed a little over the years. So has the world around us. I am a lot older and greyer than I was back then, and so is this building.

There are more investments we need to make. Our building is old and tired and this year we will have the opportunity to give towards giving the building an update. This building was not built so that we could be a church of hundreds; it was built so we could be a church of thousands. That does not mean our focus is on numbers. I don't want to see us grow for the sake of growth. Our hope is that as many people would come to Christ as possible.

It is incredible to think of all that has happened in this room over the last 30 years. How many people have come to Christ and been baptized? How many lives have been changed? We want to see that continue. This old building has been powerfully used but the old girl is showing her age. I believe our next 50 years as a church will be even better than the first 50. For that to be true we need to bring this building into the 21st century.

2. It Grows Through EMBRACING – they devoted themselves ... to fellowship

A second key focus that we have as a church is small groups. We have just gone through a preaching series on Community where you heard me say time and time again the importance of being in a small group. We believe that small groups are not optional. They are not something extra but should be considered a normal part of your Christian experience.

The early church not only met as a large group but they also met in homes. It says here that “every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house”. They devoted themselves to fellowship.

That is why we will be asking at the upcoming congregational budget meeting coming up in a few weeks that we move forward with the hiring of a Small Groups Pastor.

3. It Grows Through EQUIPPING – they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching

Our third key focus as a church is the area of equipping. This means growing people up through discipleship and equipping them for ministry. This is why we have our Christian Education program and are developing a discipleship training track. This is a key focus for our church and it should be a key focus for every one of us as individuals. Our challenge is to become like Jesus.

On a wall near the entrance to the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, is a portrait with the following inscription: "James Butler Bonham -- no picture of him exists. This portrait is of his nephew, Major James Bonham, who greatly resembled his uncle. It is placed here by the family that people may know the appearance of the man who died for freedom." No literal portrait of Jesus exists either. But the likeness of the Son can be seen in the lives of his true followers.

Someone pointed out to me not too long ago how people who have been married for a long time get so they look alike. They start having the same kinds of expressions on their faces. They start actually having the same kinds of physical characteristics. I didn't think that was true. Then I started to look, and it really is true. Have you ever considered why that happens? Well, that's because people have abided with one another, and they begin to be like one another. It's the same way abiding with Christ. We become more Christ-like. We begin to take on the characteristics of Christ as we abide in him.

This is why we have started to implement a new intentional discipleship training track. The first course is Membership 101 and a number of people recently went through it. We as a church have all been going through it through this current preaching series.

4. It Grows Through EXTENDING – the Lord added to them

The fourth key focus that we have as a church is in the area of missions. We are a church FROM the nations FOR the nations. Missions means that you find a place of service and plug in. It means finding your own mission field.

We have lots of opportunities to get involve in Missions. One excellent opportunity we have coming up is the Brampton Challenge. It is a cross cultural missions trip without leaving Brampton. People pay thousands of dollars to go on a missions trip – this one will only cost you \$200 – only \$100 for youth and young adults! That is food and everything for a week long missions trip. We have a number of people coming from all over North America for this week long program. Through the week we will be teaching methods of Evangelism and looking at how to share your faith with a Muslim, Hindu and Sikh as well as doing outreaches into the community. Visit the table in the foyer to sign up. We also need people to host the out of town guests we have coming.

This fall in Sept we have another exciting new program that we are going to be offering. Instead of doing Alpha we are going to be running a series called H2O. This video driven series that looks at

what the church is called to be. There are many people in the world today that have been turned off by the church because of religion.

There are lots of other opportunities. We have a team going to Belize soon and need to pray for them. We have an International Dinner coming up in a few weeks to raise support for Richard and his local evangelistic work. Exciting things are happening.

When Jesus started His ministry at thirty years of age, He had three and a half years to raise up people who would change the world after He died. Jesus intentionally walked people through these levels of commitment. On the stage are 4 chairs. These represent each of the 4 priorities we have been talking about today.

Exalt	Come and See	I do you watch
Embrace	Follow Me	I do you help
Equip	Learn and Show	you do I help
Extend	Go and Sow	you do I watch

Jesus walked His disciples through these 4 levels of commitment. These also correspond to the 4 stages of learning. Let me ask you this morning, which chair are you sitting in? Will you consider moving to the next one?

Today is Pentecost. We celebrate the birth of the church when the Holy Spirit came and empowered the disciples. We still need God's empowering today. We are about to welcome some new members into the church. Maybe you are here and you have not become a member. Join us!

Notice that it says that it was the Lord that added to them and not themselves. God brings the increase. Our job is to go and sow and God's job is to make it grow. Maybe you feel in each one of these areas that we have looked at like there is more that you could be doing. I encourage you this morning to get involved. Use this opportunity that the Lord has given you. You do not need to be perfect, just willing and available.

A water bearer in China had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which he carried across his neck. One pot had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his house. The perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. The poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable it was able to accomplish what it had been made to do.

After 2 years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream... "I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house." The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I planted flower seeds on your side of the path. Every day while we walk back, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house."

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots. But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and rewarding. You've just got to take each person for what they are, and look for the good in them.