

## THE CHURCH: WHO? WHAT? WHY? HOW? - Who Is Calvary? Pt. 3

Oct. 8, 2017 – Pastor Randy

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*"Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."*

– Ephesians 4:11-16

I am continuing our series on the church and over the past two weeks I have been discussing who we are as Calvary Church. Our identity is expressed through 5 key elements: Beliefs, Values, Mission, Vision, and Strategy. Here is how each of these relates to one another:

***Our Beliefs about WHAT is true, inform...***

***Our Values about WHAT is important.***

***Our Mission (WHAT we do) is motivated and guided by our beliefs and values.***

***(Our beliefs and values communicate the "WHY" behind the mission)***

***Our Vision of WHAT we will become inspires the mission.***

***Our Strategy communicates HOW we will accomplish our mission.***

Over the past two weeks I have been unpacking our mission statement. Our mission is to reproduce followers (disciples) of Jesus. As we saw last week followers of Jesus are committed to continually learning, living, and sharing the good news of Jesus. For those who weren't here last week, I gave you three words to associate with "learn, live, and share": Know, follow, and go. We learn to know Jesus, live to follow Jesus, and go and share with others. Our vision is what we expect to see happen as we fulfill our mission.

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*As we commit ourselves to our mission we expect and anticipate a future of...*

A maturing and multiplying generationally, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse community of Christ followers where everyone:

1. **Encounters God Dynamically** through worship gatherings that serve as a **catalyst** for spiritual growth and renewal.
2. **Connects Relationally** in a small group **community** that provides encouragement, support, and accountability.
3. **Contributes Faithfully** to the growth of the Church using their resources (time, gifts, finances) and sharing their 'faith story'.

As we learn, live and share we should see a church develop into the picture created by that vision statement. This picture is created for us in the NT passages where the church is pictured as the "body of Christ". Ephesians 4:11-16 is the main text I will use to demonstrate this, but statements from some of Paul's other "body of Christ" passages will add to this picture.

### *I. We want to see our church grow deep (Mature) and wide (Multiply).*

We need to have faith to envision our church maturing and multiplying. In Ephesians 4:11-16 the growth Paul refers to is not numerical growth, but spiritual growth. He speaks of growing in our knowledge of Jesus and growing to become like Jesus. But as we as individuals mature spiritually we will be more effective at reproducing disciples which translates into numerical growth. There are many factors that contribute to the rate of reproduction a church will realize, but the NT clearly pictures the church community as a growing organism where God adds to their number as the church is faithful to go and share the good news.

### *II. We want to see our church reflect the diversity of our community.*

The body is made up of many parts. In Ephesians 4, Paul wrote about the diverse work of "each part". Here he refers to diversity of gifting or ability. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul wrote,

*The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves,*

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*and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part.*

In this passage Paul begins by emphasizing the ethnic diversity and the diversity of social-status within the church. He later goes on to emphasize that this ethnically and socio-economically diverse community is also diverse in their abilities and gifts. His main point of emphasis in 1 Cor. 12 is that each member, regardless of ethnicity, social status, or ability is an equally important part of the whole.

The “body of Christ” metaphor communicates loudly and clearly that the church should reflect the diversity that exists among the people that God has created and sent His Son to redeem at the cost of his life! Last I checked John 3:16 still reads, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son, so that *whoever* believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

One important point about diversity. If there are people of a certain social group, ethnic group, or cultural group that are not present among us, that does not mean the church has failed. The issue is whether or not we are reaching out to all the kinds of people around us. Our responsibility is to care for all kinds of people and to make all kinds of people feel welcome.

### *III. We want to see our church encounter God.*

Jesus is the head of the church. The brain sends signals to every part of the body. The most important connection that each individual part of the body has is its connection to the head. The most important connection each member of the church has is its connection to Jesus. Our vision is to be a church where people have an encounter with God like Isaiah did. That we would see him “high and lifted up” in all his majestic glory and goodness. An encounter with a Holy God that leaves the individual awestruck and amazed, resulting in a life of humility and holiness.

Paul and Peter refer to the church as the temple of God to highlight the reality that God manifests his presence in a special way when His people gather together to worship Him.

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### **IV. We want to see a church where everyone connects relationally.**

In Ephesians 4:16 Paul tells us that Christ “makes the whole body fit together”. There is a connectedness among the individual parts of the body of Christ. This alone is enough to form the theological basis for the church to create small group gatherings where individuals can develop relationships, experiencing true community. True biblical community exists when there is mutual encouragement, support, and accountability as we journey together on the mission of learning, living and sharing the good news of Jesus.

Healthy, loving, relationships are vital if we are to reflect the glory of the God in whose likeness we are made. At the beginning of this message we saw that our beliefs serve as the foundation for every aspect of our identity; our values, mission, vision and strategy. Here is one example of the fact that our doctrine has crucial practical implications. Our belief in the Trinity should influence the way we live our lives. Listen to the words of Tim Chester from his book, *Delighting in the Trinity*.

**From all eternity the Trinity has existed in love. God is not as a solitary individual, but as divine community. God is persons-in-relationship...**

**We are made for relationships in the image of the one-in-three God...In the Trinity the one and the many are perfectly integrated. Unity and diversity are perfectly realised. The unity of God does not compromise the diversity of the persons and the diversity of the persons does not compromise the unity of God. And this is how it should be human society. Humanity is modelled on the triune community. The one and the many should be integrated. God is diverse and we, too, are diverse persons with our own individuality. Yet God is also one and we, too, have communal identities. Human society is neither a unified whole in which the community matters more than individuals, nor loosely connected individuals. Neither a collectivist vision of society, nor an individualist vision reflects our true humanity. Trinitarian Christianity offers a way of being human together that integrates unity and diversity. We are people in community without losing our own personal identities.”**

The primary reason why you and I need to pursue healthy relationships with

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others is because we were created to do so.

*V. We want to see a church where everyone contributes faithfully by sharing their resources and their faith.*

This was in my notes last week, but I neglected to say it: Christianity is only boring to those who do not serve and share. The key clause in this point is “their resources”. God has not called you to be a steward of the resources of the person next to you. God won’t ask you if your neighbor was faithful, if your small group leader was faithful, if your pastor was faithful. He will only want to know if you have been faithful.

Ephesians 4:16 reads,

*He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”*

The ESV renders the phrase, “when each part is working properly”. The focus is not on the fact that we each have gifts, experiences and skills that are special, but the idea is that they are what God has blessed us with and entrusted us with. God has created us with a need to give love, not just receive love. The Creator of the universe has created us in his image – as creative beings. We don’t have to contribute what we don’t have, only what we do have.

Serving the needs of others is extremely rewarding, especially when you get the opportunity to see or hear the difference your effort made in their life. Many of you know exactly what I am speaking about. You have experienced the exhilaration of serving someone, leading someone to Christ, helping them in a time of need. Don’t do it for personal gratification, because it isn’t always gratifying. Serve with your gifts, give of your financial resources, share your faith story. Jesus said, “As you do it to the least of my brothers, you have done it to me!

We all have a desire to make a difference with our lives, to live productively, to feel that our life has significance. Most people live to make money or make a name for themselves, but God has called us to make a difference for the glory of God and the good of others!

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