

## **WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?**

*Acts 2:42-47 – “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*

- The word translated “devoted” literally reads, “continually devoted”; the idea behind this word is to *persist* in what you are doing.
- The word translated “fellowship” is *koinonia*, the highest form of fellowship possible. The idea is *community*.

Purpose. It’s the buzzword of the first decade of the new millennium. Everyone is talking about purpose. The best selling, non-fiction book of all time by an American author is Rick Warren’s, *The Purpose Driven Life*. Companies spend thousands of dollars each year inventing “purpose statements.” And it’s not all bad!

I’m a fan of knowing what you do and why you do it. I am also a believer in not doing anything just because “that’s the way you do it,” or “we’ve always done it that way.” One of my more recent favorite books is entitled, *Death By Meeting*. It is written by a business consultant named Patrick Lancioni. In this book, Lancioni argues that the most exciting part of any organization should be the meetings where key people talk about key issues. Instead of killing momentum, meetings should bring life and vitality to organizations.

So then, it only stands to reason that as we regroup, reform, and restart Franklin Community Church that we ask ourselves, “What are we doing here?” What is FCC all about? Last week, we looked at FCC’s values. This evening, I want to focus on our mission and vision.

## What Are We Doing Here?

So, what are we doing here?

Why are we meeting at Christ Community Church? The answer is simple; *because they are allowing us to.* Scott Roley, the Senior Pastor, and other staff members at CCC have been friends of mine for a long time. On one of my visits to Franklin, as we were discussing the possibility of restarting FCC, I came and talked with Pastor Roley. He was of great encouragement, and he is the one who suggested that we use their facilities. Obviously, this arrangement is not ideal—and I am hoping to find a better place for us—but for now, we are here because of the graciousness of the Elders at Christ Community Church. In fact, if you would like to write a note of thanks to this church. Do so, and send it to the attention of either Scott Roley, Jack Watkins, or Tori Wheeler.

Why are we in the city of Franklin? Because in God's sovereignty, this is where He has placed us. On one hand, Franklin seems like a very religious city that has no need for another church. On the other hand, however, Franklin (and all of Middle Tennessee) is in desperate need of revival. Franklin has been cursed with tremendous wealth; and a lot of its wealth comes from people who have "succeeded" in the "Christian entertainment" industry. Please understand, there is nothing wrong with being wealthy, but the Bible does issue serious warnings to those who do have material success. The Apostle Paul, exhorted Timothy, "Tell those rich in this world's wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and

gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage—to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they'll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life.”<sup>1</sup>

Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, warned, “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income...The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep...Naked a man comes from his mother’s womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand...As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind?”<sup>2</sup>

My favorite words on this subject are those of Jesus when He said to His disciples, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”<sup>3</sup>

God has called us to minister in a city, not unlike the church in Revelation located in the city of Laodicea. To which God said, “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”<sup>4</sup> And do you remember what God said to this church? He said, “I know you inside and out, and find little to My liking. You’re cold, you’re not hot—far better to be either cold or hot! You’re stale. You’re stagnant. You make me want to vomit.”<sup>5</sup>

Having lived in this city for many years, and then move away for a while, only to return; I have a new perspective. I love this city. Franklin is home. But I have prayed

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (*The Message*).

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes 5:10-17 (*New International Version*).

<sup>3</sup> Luke 12:15 (*New International Version*).

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 3:17 (*New International Version*).

<sup>5</sup> Revelation 3:16 (*The Message*).

for God to open my eyes, and what I see is a city that is the best man can do. I see a city that is outwardly blessed. But look closely in the eyes of the people you meet and you will see a loneliness and a longing for something that is genuine, real, and authentic. There is a longing to know God and to live in true community with others.

In the 400's A.D., St. Augustus, a Bishop in North Africa, summarized these feelings when he wrote in his *Confessions*, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee."

## **Our Vision**

This is where our church comes in. **What are we doing here?** The vision of FCC is to ***enable Middle Tennesseans to experience authentic relationships with God and each other by establishing an Acts 2 biblical community in Franklin, Tennessee.*** As our world becomes smaller, people become more "stand-off-ish." (Misty and I have moved into an "apart-ment" not a "together-ment.") God has made us to be social creatures. God Himself is a social Being who desires relationships—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We know we need each other, and we know we need God; but our desire to remain anonymous, and to be in control, keeps us from finding real fulfillment, and genuine significance in this life. My passion is to help others encounter a real experience with God and to learn the beauty of living in Christian community with other believers.

In order for us to bring this vision into reality, each one of us has to believe it, own it, and live it. We don't have to do so perfectly; but your heart, and my heart, must

beat to experience authentic relationships with God and each other. Our prayer should be the same as the Psalmist who wrote, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living water.”<sup>6</sup> You and I have an incredible opportunity that very few people have. We have the opportunity to infuse a church with the DNA that longs for God and lives for each other.

## **Our Mission**

But how do we go about doing that? How do we enable Middle Tennesseans to experience authentic relationships with God and each other? How do we establish an Acts 2 biblical community in Franklin, Tennessee?

The key to accomplishing God’s vision for our church is in fulfilling the Great Commission – “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”<sup>7</sup> – and in obeying the Great Commandment – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”<sup>8</sup>

Based on these two statements given to us by Jesus Himself (and in Acts 2:42-47), we believe we will accomplish our vision (*enabling Middle Tennesseans to*

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<sup>6</sup> Psalm 42:1-2 (*New International Version*).

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 28:18-20 (*New International Version*).

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 22:37-40 (*New International Version*).

*experience authentic relationship with God and each other*) by balancing five key functions.

**1. Worship** (*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”* and, *“They devoted themselves to...breaking of bread and to prayer.”*)

The way we show our love to God as a church is through worshipping Him in large group settings (*celebration*), in small group settings (*community*), and in our regular, personal quiet times (*consecration*).

**2. Discipleship** (*“Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”* and, *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.”*)

Discipleship is the life long process of becoming like Christ. The process of discipleship starts with a profession of faith (justification); continues through growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (sanctification); and will be completed when we are with Jesus in heaven (glorification). Justification frees us from the *penalty* of sin. Sanctification frees us from the *power* of sin. Glorification frees us from the very *presence* of sin.

At FCC, you will be encouraged to be in a discipleship group(s) (C.L.A.S.S. and Curriculum).

3. **Evangelism** (*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations”* and, *“The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*)

Evangelism is sharing the good news of the Kingdom of God that is available to all who believe in Jesus Christ. Evangelism is not a program. Rather, it is the lifestyle of a true follower of Jesus Christ and involves both words and actions. Literally, the phrase, “Therefore go,” reads, “While you are going.” Jesus assumed that as we lived our lives we would naturally tell others about the love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God.

At FCC you will be encouraged to build relationships with people who do not know Jesus, or who have fallen away from the church, with the goal being to help that person take the next step in their journey toward faith in Jesus Christ.

4. **Ministry** (*“Love your neighbor as yourself”* and, *“All the believers were together and had everything in common...they gave to anyone as he had need.”*)

At FCC, every member is a minister and every saint is a servant. A believer’s life is to be characterized by servanthood, serving both those in the church and outside the church. At FCC, you will be encouraged to be involved in at least one ministry of the church (*servant group*).

5. **Fellowship** (*“Baptizing them”* and, *“They devoted themselves to...fellowship.”*)

Simply bringing people to Christ is not enough. We must incorporate them into the life of the church. The first step is baptism. It is through baptism that we say, “You are one with us.” It is through baptism that we are identified with Christ and with the body of Christ—the church.

## CONCLUSION

What are we doing here? We are here to *encourage Middle Tennesseans to experience authentic relationships with God and each other by building an Acts 2, biblical community in Franklin, Tennessee.*

How do we hope to accomplish that? By participating in community life by joining a community group (fellowship). By participating in the celebration life of the church by attending the weekly Celebration Gatherings (worship). By participating in C.L.A.S.S.es 101-401 (101 – *Discovering Church Membership*; 201 – *Discovering Spiritual Maturity*; 301 – *Discovering My Ministry*; 401 – *Discovering My Life Mission*; discipleship). By participating in curriculum groups (discipleship). By participating in servant groups (ministry). By participating in individual worship by establishing a regular, personal quiet time.

What are we doing here? ***The vision of Franklin Community Church is to encourage Middle Tennesseans to experience authentic relationships with God and each other by building an Acts 2, biblical community.***

The real question, however, is, ***What are you doing here?***

Porcupines know there is safety in numbers. They know they need each other, especially on cold, dark, lonely nights. Knowing their need for community, they huddle close together. But when they get to close, their quills prick each other. So they separate. After awhile, they remember how much they need each other and so they get close...and again they stick each other. And on and on the process goes. They know they need to be close, but the closer they get to each other, the more they are in danger of hurting each other.

In some ways, we treat God that way. We know we need Him, but the closer we get, something happens – it gets too personal, we get scared, and so we back away from Him until the next cold, dark, lonely night.

We most definitely treat each other that way. We know we need each other, but we also know the closer we get to one another, the more likely we are going to be hurt by one another; and so we keep our distance. Always longing to be close—to God and others—and always afraid to get too close—to God and others.

St. Augustine said, “Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee.”

Are you ready to experience authentic relationships with God and with each other?