

Our Vision for Faith EFC

Introduction: Over the past year or so the leadership of Faith EFC has been praying, talking, and dreaming about the type of church God wants us to become over the next 3 to 5 years. We have a sense that God has been leading and that there are some things that He truly wants us to go for as we move into the future. This week's study is not really a study of a biblical passage, but rather we are going to spend some time interacting over this vision. May we all be spurred on to pursue the vision that God is giving to us as a church.

Note for next week: Next Sunday we will begin a sermon series on the book of 1 Thessalonians. In preparation for this, we would encourage you to read through the book at least once before next Sunday.

In Steve's sermon he talked about what a Sunday morning would look like three to five years from now if by God's grace this vision is fulfilled. Below are some bulleted excerpts from Steve's sermon. Please read them and then interact over the questions on page 3.

A Culture of Welcome and Acceptance – *We desire to welcome and accept fellow believers and non-believers—whatever their situation in life—and, more than just being friendly, actually cultivate true, growing friendships.*

- When guests show up here on a Sunday morning, they experience “extravagant hospitality.”
- We won't merely be friendly; we will actually befriend others who have come to worship.
- It won't always be such a *busy* place in the sense that newcomers get overlooked because we are so intent moving from one activity to the next.
- Nobody will leave Faith E-Free on a Sunday morning without being noticed and welcomed into the life of the church.
- We sense that the people who enter the doors of this building have been entrusted to us – if even for one Sunday – and therefore we have a responsibility to God to welcome them into our midst.
- 200 to 300 of us arrive each Sunday morning with a heart and mind to befriend and welcome people. This desire burns in our souls to the point that we step out of our comfort zones and think less about ourselves and more about others.

A Deepening of Prayer – *We desire for every member to have a rich, growing life of prayer, and for every ministry of the church to begin in petition and end in praise.*

- Always inclined toward God in prayer.
- As we gather for worship, we will prayerfully sing and give and receive the Word. We're not merely observers or evaluators or by-standers. Rather the songs we sing express the cry of

our heart to God. The offering is actually an act of worship, an offering to God. During the sermon we are prayerfully listening for the voice of God.

- There will also be times when people can request and receive prayer – either during the service or before/after the service. A team of pray-ers will be available during the services.
- You leave . . . strengthened by the prayers of people who care about you and who have brought you before God in prayer.
- Lord willing . . . future facilities will include at least one room that is specifically designated for prayer. There will be at least one space in the church that will be peaceful and quiet – a space that is set apart for that specific purpose, a space that invites you into the presence of God in prayer.

A Plan for Spiritual Transformation – *We desire to provide clear and effective structures and processes whereby all members can progress toward Christlike character, expressing their growing love for God and others through willing service to both fellow believers and unbelievers.*

- Instead of a vague sense of “I’m doing pretty well spiritually” or “I don’t know what’s wrong with me,” we will each have a sense of the next steps we need to take in our spiritual transformation.
- The classes we provide on Sunday mornings (and at other times) will be very intentional in this regard. Our classes will reflect a plan for spiritual transformation: they will intentionally help you take the next step in your walk with God.
- One measure of our spiritual transformation will be our willingness (and even eagerness) to serve.
- Our children’s and youth ministries will be fully staffed with people who are passionate about the spiritual transformation of children and youth. . . Our children and youth aren’t merely “the church of the future”; they are part of the church today. Therefore their spiritual transformation is a priority for us as a church.

A Lifestyle of Worship – *We desire that meaningful corporate worship on Sunday mornings be simply an expression of, and stimulus for, a lifestyle of worship in all our hearts and homes.*

- When we arrive for worship on a Sunday morning, it hasn’t been 7 days since we’ve worshipped God. Rather, we’ve been worshipping God as a way of life throughout the week.
- There have been times of private worship that previous week where we’ve poured out our adoration and thanksgiving to God. We’ve left such times satisfied, but even more significantly God has left such times “blessed” (as in “Bless the Lord, O my soul” - Psalm 103:1).
- There have been times of worship within our families or Bible studies where we’ve experienced the dynamic of “teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (Colossians 3:16). And we’ve even had the sense that we’ve offered up all sorts of other spiritual sacrifices to God throughout the week by the way we’ve lived.

- And so when we arrive for worship on Sunday mornings, it hasn't been 7 days since we've worshipped. We've had numerous significant experiences of worshipping God. As a result, our corporate worship here on that Sunday morning will be an expression of this lifestyle. And our corporate worship here on that Sunday morning will stimulate this lifestyle.
- Our leadership here at Faith has concluded that the most strategic thing we can do to pursue this lifestyle of worship is to **hire a worship pastor**.

An Active Compassion for those without Christ – *We desire to cultivate a culture of outreach, whereby all members intentionally develop relationships with unbelievers, inviting them into the life of the church where, with a team approach, each of us plays a role in bringing people to faith in Christ.*

- Every one of us here on a Sunday morning will be able to look across the room and see at least one other person that we've helped come to faith in Christ.
- Out of compassion, we have sought the well-being of our community. We have served our community in very tangible ways; we have prayed to the Lord on its behalf.
- We have befriended people in our neighborhoods, in our classes, in the workplace, etc. We have entered into their lives and they have entered into ours. Since Jesus is at the center of our lives, we've explained who He is and what He means to us.
- We have included our friends in the life of the church: Alpha, music nights, cookouts and barbecues, service projects, and Sunday worship. And we've befriended those whom others have invited and included. And many of our friends have come to faith in Christ.

Questions:

1. What excites you about this vision?
2. In broad strokes, Steve painted a picture of what Sunday mornings might look like if this vision is realized. What other pictures do you get of what things will look like if this vision is realized?
3. Is there anything about this vision that stirs up fear within you? If so, what?
4. Regarding the vision, Steve said that we're not pursuing things that we can pull off in our own strength. In what ways will we need to trust God like never before?
5. Steve said that we are inviting you to give yourself to this Vision – really to give yourself to God like never before. What aspects of this vision are you most excited to give yourself to?