

Ground Rules

Week 2 - Identity

Ice Breaker Questions

What is your favorite thing to do as a family?

What is a unique or strange thing about your family?

What has made your best experience at a church?

What about EVBC has been attractive for you to be here as long as you have?

East Valley Bible Church's Identity

Last time, we looked at the foundation of what any biblical, Christian church should believe. This time, we are going to be specific to East Valley Bible Church. Much like any family, each local church has her strengths, weaknesses and even oddities. I want to invite you to come in, see some of the inner workings of our group, and answer the questions you may have about what makes our group tick. We will do this by doing a deep dive into our history, our heart, and steps taken to plant East Valley Bible Church in Vegas.

1. History

In 1972, a couple by the name of Ron and Wanda Thompson planted a church in Kaysville, UT, 440 miles away from Las Vegas. This church set in motion over the next 4 decades a series of events that led to many churches being planted throughout southern Utah and into southern Nevada.

Fast forward to 2012 and two couples straight out of college followed the direction of God to go to Las Vegas and plant a church. These couples, Daryl and Bethanie Thompson and Matt and Emmerie Moore, had zero experience starting a church, but they were convinced this is what they were supposed to do. Both families joined a church-planting organization called Tentmakers Bible Mission and set to work in Sunrise Manor, Las Vegas, NV.

Despite their inability, God was gracious. The Lord laid it on their hearts from the very beginning, people are more important than a meeting place and reaching people where they are is more important than doing church the way it is comfortable.

To spare you the details, East Valley was planted and took on many different forms in the first 5 years. In 2017, Daryl and Bethanie were called to another ministry. Matt and Emmerie Moore were exhausted and felt ready to be done with East Valley. In this time of desperation, God gave a renewed determination to continue.

East Valley exists because God equipped people decades before, led inexperienced young people to Las Vegas, and remained faithful even when it would've been easy to quit.

2. Tentmakers Bible Mission

Tentmakers was started in 1985 with the purpose of planting churches without the hassle of spending years raising support and deputation. The idea was to raise some support and supplement the missionary's income with a "tent making" job. The organization helps the

missionary on the field by providing administrative help, accountability, leadership and encouragement from experienced church planters as well as guidance and on-the-ground help. Another unique feature of TBM is they allow its missionaries to receive 100% of support designated for their respective project. There are no administrative fees.

Currently, TBM is involved in EVBC. The constitution we use presently is provided by TBM. (This constitution is available upon request.) The leadership board is composed of men approved by TBM. These men are Pastor Craig Janson of River Valley Bible Church in Mesquite, NV; Regional Director of TBM, Dave Neufeld; and Elder at River Valley Bible Church John Larson.

TBM is still actively engaged with EVBC through prayer, communication, accountability, and sharing wisdom to ensure East Valley becomes a healthy, independent, multiplying church for years to come.

TBM also provides the service of processing payments and donations to the missionary families.

Tentmakers' goal is to see East Valley Bible Church become healthy and independent. East Valley's goal is to become healthy and independent. This means all of the support and service TBM currently supplies will eventually be transferred to the responsibility of the people of East Valley. TBM's involvement is only for the purpose of stability. But as a baby bird is pushed out of the nest, EVBC needs to grow and mature to be able to fly without the stability of TBM.

There are 4 requirements TBM has for EVBC to become independent.

1. Incorporated with the state of Nevada.
2. Become self-governing and self-supporting.
3. Establish a process to join the church.
4. Adopt a Constitution and doctrinal statement approved by TBM, including a dissolution clause.

3. Structure

The leadership structure today is composed of 4 men. 3 of whom do not live in Las Vegas. (They all live in Mesquite and were referenced under section 2) The fourth is Matt Moore, who is the planting missionary and pastor. These four men meet and talk about big-picture issues. These include major financial decisions or changes in location, vision, and philosophy. Day-to-day decisions and oversight are provided by Matt Moore and other ministry leaders.

This is the way we are currently operating, but this is not how we want it to stay. A church's long-term health cannot and must not be reliant on people who are financially distant from the church or absent physically as leaders. Acts 14:23 supports this idea. **"When they had appointed elders for them in every church and prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed." (Acts 14:23 CSB)** After Paul and Barnabas created the structure of the local church, they handed it over to the local people to sustain and lead it.

Therefore, self-governing must be local. We want to see men of character, responsibility, commitment and spiritual health to take the reigns as leaders of East Valley Bible Church.

There are 4 qualifiers in the Bible we use to determine leadership structure.

1. A local church is established when it has overseers.

East Valley Bible Church is on a quest to change our structure. How it is currently is not where we want it. All of the leadership at East Valley is determined to pass the responsibility of leadership to a plurality of qualified men. (**Acts 14:23**)

2. One man was never meant to lead the church!

It is common to think of a church being led by one pastor. Many churches function with one man at the helm. This is not healthy for the one, and this is not healthy for the ones led by the one. Pastors in America are quitting at an alarming rate. The pressure of a lone ranger leadership style is too much for a single pastor.

If you aren't convinced, I would encourage you to look for a single place in the New Testament describing a church with one leader as a success. (**Acts 14:23, 15:2-4, Acts 20:17-18, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 5:17, Titus 1:5, James 5:14, 1 Peter 5:1-2**)

3. There are only two groups of leaders prescribed for a local church today.
(Despite the variety of titles.)

The structure of leadership seems really confusing, but there are actually only three groups of leaders in the local church. They are *Apostles*, *Elders*, and *Deacons*. Pastors are **never** used as a title of a church leader.

Apostles are all dead because they were the eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection. Otherwise they would be over 2,000 years old. We don't believe in zombies.

Elders are described as the leaders, rulers and overseers of the local church under the authority of the Bible and Jesus who is the head and redeemer of the church. (**Colossians 1:18**) Elders are appointed by a unanimous decision of the other Elders and approved by the church. East Valley Bible Church is a leadership-led church. Even so, Elders are required to be transparent and accountable to all of East Valley Bible Church. This will include votes when necessary and communication on a variety of topics.

We call our Deacons, Serve Team Leaders. Our Serve Team Leaders are qualified men or women for the purpose of serving the church in a specific and needed way that won't be handled by the rest of the church or the Elders. Serve Team Leaders are appointed by the church and approved by the Elders.

4. The words ordained and lay aren't meant to describe leaders.

Today, ordination is a testing of biblical knowledge based on academics. This results in separation of "professionals" and "ordinary" in ministry.

Biblically, it was based out of prayer and the Spirit's leading. Often it is seen by the laying on of hands, an act of entrusting a person to God's conviction on their life.

This distinction is vitally important. A resume no longer is the qualifier to lead in a church. Instead, leading by God, character, and fit should determine leadership.

One last area that needs to be addressed is East Valley's structure to become self-supporting. Practically, this is referring to financial stability.

East Valley's bills are paid because people like you are giving generously. There is the occasional gift from outside EVBC, but over 90% of the finances come from within. The only exception is the salaries of the missionary families. EVBC supports these families, but the majority of their salaries are still funded by other supporters from around the world and their side jobs.

I want us to explore the heart behind being a self-supporting church. In a word, ownership.

At our camp every summer in Cedar City, UT, we put the kids to work the first week. We call it leadership camp. We know that if the kids who come take ownership of the property, they will love, cherish, protect, and guard it from others attacks. From the small graffiti to the full blown destruction of expensive equipment, we know owners will do what it takes to make the camp work.

A self-supporting church is not investors from a pew determining whether they should pour more stock in or take their stock out depending on the excellence of a sermon. In fact, I would argue money is not the most important factor in determining whether a church is self-supporting. The most important part is ownership. If East Valley Bible Church has owners who love the church and more importantly love the people, the support will ooze out in the form of money, time, use of gifts to contribute to making EVBC excellent. When a majority of our people own EVBC, we will be self-supporting.

Conclusion

East Valley Bible Church is by no means perfect, but we are pursuing health and excellence. Each church has differences and that's okay. There is no perfect church, but there is a right church for you. We want to be transparent about who we are and what we are doing so you can be confident if you belong at East Valley Bible Church. If you walk away convinced you don't belong here, we want to help in finding a church you will be committed to.

Here are a few questions to start the conversation when we meet.

- Do you have any questions about the history of EVBC?
- What is something you learned about EVBC's relationship with TBM?
- What disagreements do you have with any of the 4 qualifiers for church leadership?
- What questions do you have regarding church leadership currently or as we transition to more local leaders?