

Ground Rules

Week 3 - Vision

Ice Breaker Questions

What brand has the best logo and tag phrase?

Where do you want to see your family in 5 years?

Why do you think many people are uninterested in church?

What do you expect in a church?

East Valley Bible Church's Vision

This week's reading is centered on East Valley's vision. Mission, purpose, vision, target and value statements are easy to find and sometimes cheap and hollow to recite. The vision of East Valley is the filter through which we do everything else. Our desire is for you to understand our vision and what we are doing to make it a reality.

1. Fulfilling Jesus' Mission

The 4 big questions of life are: *Where did we come from? Why are we here? How do I know good and evil? Where are we going?* The Bible, and more specifically Jesus answers all 4 of these questions. To discuss our vision, we have to attempt to answer the second question briefly here. What is our purpose/mission in life?

As Jesus followers, our mission is found when we understand Jesus' mission. Jesus' mission can be summarized into 3 words in 3 quotes from Jesus. The quotes come from **John 6:38, Luke 19:10, Luke 4:18-19**. The 3 words are surrender, save, and share.

Jesus' mission was to surrender to the Father, to save sinners by dying in their place, and to share the gospel or good news. The good news is Jesus accomplished his mission of dying and resurrecting, and we can be justified by faith in Jesus.

Jesus passes his mission on to his followers. **Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

Jesus' mission was direct: surrender, save, and share. Our mission is much more simple: *surrender* and *share*. Notice the difference in missions. We are not told to die on a cross to save anyone. A sinner can't pay for anyone's sin but their own.

Our mission, should we choose to accept it, is simply to open our mouths and tell others. Every church that is healthy has this exact same mission.

What does this have to do with vision?

If you walked into a mall you would find countless retailers selling shoes. If you looked at their mission statement it would say something like, "To sell the best shoes one can buy." That's nice, but if you are going to a black-tie affair you wouldn't walk into a Finish Line sports shoes

store. And if you wanted to get track shoes, you wouldn't walk into a Journey's casual shoe store. Despite the similarities in mission, there are distinct differences in vision.

The truth is every single one of us is attempting to live out Jesus' mission in a different culture, context, and circumstance. Our mission, to share Jesus, should never change, but how we go about doing this should be as vast as the individual lives we are living. Here are a couple of examples of how this is not only true, but necessary.

Imagine you wanted to share the good news of Jesus with a tribe in the bush of Vanuatu. In order to do so, you would have to learn the language. You would also realize that many of the people cannot read, don't have their language written down, and they don't even have an alphabet. How would you go about accomplishing the mission with these people?

Imagine you wanted to share the good news of Jesus with the homeless people living underneath Las Vegas. You would realize the extreme poverty, addictions, mental sickness, and apathy. Many of them have a good understanding of the Bible and already know they need to be justified by faith. How would you go about accomplishing the mission with these people?

The point is this: East Valley Bible Church wants to engage our culture, context, and circumstance, and accomplish Jesus' mission.

2. Understanding East Valley's Vision

We believe the most effective way for us to bridge the gap between people and the gospel is to be **a church for the unchurched**.

Here is our "Vision Statement"

"Our purpose at East Valley Bible Church is to experience life-transformation that makes us more like Jesus, which in turn, will transform how we engage with others.

Jesus came full of grace and full of truth. This means Jesus showed us our message and how we are to deliver the message. When we choose to lay down our lives as servants of Christ, God works in us to transform our lives and the lives of people around us. Jesus created the church as the primary means by which He shows His grace and truth to the world. The church is not a stagnant organization but a thriving movement.

Devoted followers of Christ trust in Jesus for salvation and follow Him as Lord. To be committed to Jesus is to be committed to a local community living out His purpose. We help one another as we walk in love and truth. We strive for unity with one another for the benefit of all people to the glory of God. We meet people where they are and love them as Jesus would love them. We truly believe His grace can transform lives and therefore we boldly walk into darkness as His light. God's people are not called to be spectators, but participators. We don't measure our church success by our seating capacity, but by our sending capacity. We each have a part in God's greater plan and purpose. God's grace invites the brokenness of this world into His healing presence through the ministry of His people. We are committed to doing this by being a "church for the unchurched."

Here are three of the most commonly asked questions about our vision.

Who is "the church"?

The church is not based on denominational lines, ethnic or racial groups, gender, or any other identity boxes. The church is not a building, a Sunday service or gathering, and it definitely

is not a business or organization. The church is a worldwide group of individuals who trust that Jesus died and rose from the dead to forgive their sin.

The word church in Greek is *ekklesiā* which means “the called out ones”. The church is those who have trusted Jesus as their savior and have been given Jesus’ mission to share the gospel. This happens simultaneously, and the two are inseparable. No group is saved without purpose or has purpose with no salvation.

This large group of “believers” meet all over the world in smaller groups called “local churches” fulfilling Jesus’ mission in their specific context. East Valley is one such group with a vision to accomplish Jesus’ mission by being a church for the unchurched.

What do you mean by “for the unchurched”?

The fastest growing belief system in America are unchurched and dechurched. In our generation people have become unchurched because they are bored, busy, or just found better things to do. People are being dechurched because of painful experiences. The fault can be traced to the church, to the individual, or something completely separate. All of us know people who were a part of a church but are no longer.

The church often responds to the wave of people leaving in one of two ways, hypocrisy or withdrawal. Churches end up being hypocritical because they dance around truth and make the experience their god. By doing so, the church pretends to be something but in reality it is empty nothing. Churches have also responded with withdrawal. In the effort to be holy and set up standards, local churches isolate themselves from the mission Jesus accomplished and told us to carry on. Ivory tower churches are all too common.

Jesus modeled something much more difficult but much more effective. **John 1:14** **“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** Jesus said a lot of really offensive things because he told the truth. Jesus was overly gracious with ugly and rotten people. Jesus lived 100% sold out to truth AND 100% sold out on grace. John, a friend of Jesus, applied Jesus’ characteristics to the church. **“Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth.” (1 John 3:18)**

At East Valley, we are attempting to follow suit by creating an atmosphere of hospitality and an attitude of outreach.

An atmosphere of hospitality means we want anyone, and we mean anyone, to feel cared for and welcome. From their arrival onto our parking lot to the minute they roll off the property, their visit is valuable. That atmosphere extends far beyond what is happening in front of people for an hour and fifteen minutes to what is happening around them for their entire visit.

We are going to say the “no duh” statement out loud. Unchurched people are not generally coming to church. An attitude of outreach cannot be reiterated enough. The most effective way for us to be “for the unchurched” is for us to be all about connecting with the people in our circles Monday to Saturday. People generally disconnect from church because of the people. Do you know the main reason people reconnect to church? Yep, the people.

If I am a part of a church, am I disqualified? Not at all. If you already have a background in church, we want you to participate and lead in this vision. The longer we are in a relationship

with Jesus, the deeper our love for those who are outside the church should grow. You, as a part of the church, are not only qualified, but called by God to respond to this need.

3. Strategic Vision

Having words on paper is only part of the battle. How does an idea come to fruition? Through a strategic approach. Here are the 3 strategies we continue to pursue to be more effective in our vision and mission.

a. Encourage to Know

Overused perhaps in Christian circles is “it’s not a religion, it’s a relationship.” But the phrase is accurate. Jesus told us the two most important laws in the whole world are love God and love others. (**Matthew 22:37-40**) Love is at the heart of a good relationship; hate is at the heart of a bad relationship. Our responsibility is to break down barriers and open doors for everyone at East Valley to know God. This is NOT limited to Bible knowledge. The best relationships are not built off of *facts about* but *time with*. Just ask the teenager who knows everything about Justin Beiber if they have a relationship with him.

Sunday morning gatherings are all about encouraging you to know Jesus. But we want to give tools for you to grow and develop your relationship with him throughout the week and ultimately every single day.

b. Connect to Grow

This is the part where we will use a lot of uncomfortable words: accountability, challenge, tolerance, confession, comfort, humility, serve, wait, devotion, surrender, forgiving. All of these are what the New Testament prescribes the church to be doing together.

We need a relationship with God. We need relationships that contain the words above with other Christians. Please take time to consider your hesitation to connect with other people in church on this kind of level.

We need to live the life of a Jesus follower together.

c. Equip to Go

The common philosophy in church is bigger is better. If left to drift, our tendency would be to believe that lie. Instead, we believe our sending capacity should be more valuable than our seating capacity. To accomplish Jesus’ mission in our context, we cannot sit by and allow **anyone** who attends East Valley Bible Church to merely be a spectator. The heart behind “Equipped to Go” is **pushed to go**. This is uncomfortable for an entry level class to tell you the goal is for you to go, but our conviction is, we will never be successful in our vision unless we divide to multiply and subtract to add.

Delegation and opportunities matched with gifting and passion is the equation for us to give everyone the “push” for you to experience the huge, amazing journey God has for you.

Some of the most amazing stories of missionaries throughout history have been individuals sitting in a small local church being challenged to take a step out and serve God. We think that may be you!

Conclusion

Our vision is bigger than where we are now and greater than what we are doing today. Every single day, we know why we are here. Our vision also reminds us, we cannot do this on our own. We need Jesus, because without Him we can do nothing. We know the Lord is calling you to participate in his mission to share the gospel. Our prayer is He makes it crystal clear if East Valley Bible Church is the place for you to invest into being a church for the unchurched.

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

- What makes the mission of the church difficult?
- What is the distinction between mission and vision?
- What is important in reaching unchurched people?
- What is your vision for accomplishing Jesus' mission in your life?