

Series: The Vision
“What We Are Called to DO”
By Kevin Haah (September 13, 2009)



I. Introduction

Happy 1st Anniversary New City!

We are on a second week of the two-week series on the vision of New City.

Here's our vision statement. Each word of our vision statement is also our core value.

Our vision is to be an inclusive gospel-centered community of lovers of Jesus Christ that connect people to God, grow together, serve the city, and extend God's kingdom.

The first part of the vision statement is about what we are called to *BE*: an inclusive gospel-centered community of lovers of Jesus Christ; and the second part of the vision statement is what we are called to *DO*: connect people to God, grow together, serve the city, and extend God's kingdom!

Last Sunday, we talked about the first part: what we are called to be.

We looked the parable of the prodigal son—where the younger brother represented the relativistic or irreligious grid and the elder brother represented the moralistic or religious grid. The younger brother, a relativistic/irreligious person, essentially believes, “We are accepted by God (if there is a God) and we have to decide what is true for us.” The focus is on grace or God's unconditional acceptance. And the elder brother, a moralistic/religious person, essentially believes, “We must obey God's truth in order to be accepted by God.” The focus is on the truth!

When we say gospel we are “gospel-centered,” it means we are not relativistic or irreligious. It means we are not moralistic or religious.

The gospel says: “I am more sinful and flawed than I know (this contradicts relativists) and I am more loved and accepted by God than I can imagine (this contradicts moralists), at the same time.” Being gospel-centered means the focus is on both truth and grace. John 1:14b says: Jesus came from the Father full of “**grace and truth.**”

We said that being gospel-centered leads us to be an inclusive community because we believe that we are all sinners. Yet, we are loved by God through what Christ has

done on the cross. So, there is no superiority complex or inferiority complex. We don't have any basis to judge others. We do not condemn. Not because we think everything is okay but because we are all messed up. We are messed up in our sins as younger brothers, and we are messed up in our works as an older brother.

Because there is no judgment, we can be inclusive. We can include everyone. We can truly be a come as you are church!

We also said that being gospel-centered makes us lovers of Jesus Christ. When the gospel changes our heart, it leads us to fall in love with Jesus and seek him for his beauty, the pleasure of his presence, and not just for what he can do for us.

Today, I want to talk about what we are called to DO: connect people to God, grow together, serve the city, and extend God's kingdom.

I want to go through each of these things we are called to do.

II. First, we are called to connect people to God.

Let's open up to Mark 1:16-18. This is the story about how the first disciples were called.

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you _____"

- Happy, rich, healthy, peaceful, get you a wife, prosper you, free you from your struggles, get you off drugs, give you a better marriage, give you more discipline, make you more holy, make you a better person.
- No, that's not what he said. Yes, when we follow Jesus,
 - we find the greatest of pleasures in our intimate relationship with him
 - we find that he can heal us, that he can give us peace, that he can prosper us beyond material riches, that he can liberate us from the bondage of sin
 - we find that he can give us more discipline, he can change our hearts, and that he can make us into a better person

But, what Jesus said was, follow me, and I will make you *fishers of men*. What? It's kind of interesting that none of us started a relationship with God because we wanted to be fishers of men. Most of us started (or came back to Christ as an adult) because we needed him, we felt empty and we found that he filled the desires of our hearts. As we become a follower of Jesus, as we become lovers of Jesus Christ, engaging in an intimate relationship with him, we find that he sends us out.

A Christian life is not JUST about finding peace with God, finding his blessings in our lives, experiencing the power of his love, grace, and the gospel in OUR lives. It's not even creating a beautiful community where we love one another, care for one another, or become authentic and real to one another. It is also about going fishing. It's about other people as well. A Christian life is not **just** about our own happiness, but **also** about caring and reaching others for Christ. The Bible always combines the inner and the outer together. When we have an inner blessing and relationship, he calls us to go.

In this passage, Jesus says to follow me (enter into an intimate relationship with him) and I will make you into fishers of men (he gives us a mission that's about others, not just about ourselves).

God is saying, before I met you, when you were being your own savior, it was understandable that you were self-absorbed. Now, that I have saved you and liberated you, you have absolutely no excuse. Go! I am sending you. Live for others! As Paul says in Ephesians 2:10:

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

You were created with a purpose! There are particular things God planned for you to do.

Even your joy, sorrow, gender, gift mix, experience—they are all there so that you can meet the needs of someone that God wants you to meet.

The reigning worldview now is that: you are not here for any purpose. We are just thrown into the world. We are a product of randomness. Jesus says, your life is more than about just eating, drinking, living, and dying. It's more than about success in your career or even in your relationships. It is about fulfilling the mission that God has given you.

Right before Jesus ascended into Heaven, he commanded his disciples and said this (in Matt 28:19)

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.

That's God's final directive to us. It is to make disciple. It is to be fishers of men. The inner love relationship with God is only a part of his intent for us. He wants us to help other people by bringing them into a relationship with God. That is the greatest service we can do for others. It changes eternal destiny of people. Every thing in this world is temporary. But, God and people are eternal and God wants us to help change the eternal destinies of people. That's our mission. That's the vision. We convey that by saying we connect people to God.

III. Second, we are called to grow together.

When we become a Christian, some of us think that's it. It's like a free pass to heaven. We either have one of two attitudes: we are forgiven so we don't have to do anything. We don't have to try to do anything. We think that somehow everything is going to be okay or we will magically change. Or we think that now that we are a Christian, I better shape up. I better live up to the standard. So, we try really hard to live a righteous life by the power of our will; but, we see ourselves failing over and over again. The more we try, the more we seem to fail. Our strenuous moral efforts don't seem to result in long lasting change.

Then, how do we change? How do we grow?

In Galatians, Paul tells us to not to live by the law, meaning by trying really hard to obey the laws, but instead he says: in Galatians 5:16:

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Now, what does it mean to live by the Spirit?

At New City, we talk about four dimensions of living by the Spirit: the foundation, the process, the fuel, and context for growth.

(1) Believing the gospel with all of ourselves (intellectually, emotionally, volitionally, spiritually), not just to become a Christian, but also to grow as a Christian. **The gospel is the foundation for Christian growth.** It is only when we realize the truth of our sins and the power of His grace that our hearts are changed from inside-out and transforms our lives. The gospel is not just about becoming a Christian, it is about growing as a Christian as well. The gospel tells us that we are more screwed up than we know (so we have to examine ourselves deeply—including even our motive for good); and the gospel tells us that God unconditionally loves us and adopted us as his sons and daughters even when we are still in sin. So that means the way we grow is to look at the love of the Father and begin to believe in the new identity he has given us. [Note: Galatians 4:6—we are sons and have the Spirit of sonship]. We don't let anything else control who we are; we continue to hold on to the identity that God gave us by grace.

[Maybe the story about the beggar prince]

(2) Secondly, to live by the Spirit means we do stuff that gets us close to God. Paul says in 5:25: “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” You have to remember that it is not our will and strenuous effort that changes us. It is the Spirit of God. So, some of us think that that means we don't have to do anything. But, there is something we can do. We can put ourselves in a place where God can pick us up and change us. We can keep in step with the Spirit by drawing near to God as Abba (daddy) in an intimate relationship with Him as a loved son or a daughter, walking in His presence every moment of our lives, listening to his promptings, and obeying Him. Spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, worship, Bible study, solitude, confession, and fasting help us develop this intimacy with God. **This is the process for Christian growth.** Through this intimate relationship with God, He transforms us from inside-out. So, Christian transformation is hard work; but the work is not on external changes, it is on getting close to God so that God can change us and prompt us to change.

(3) Thirdly, to live by the Spirit means we are empowered with the Holy Spirit to prevail over the dominion of the powers of darkness. We expect God's supernatural power to be a part of our Christian growth. There are deliverances. There

are supernatural healings. There are prophecies. There are manifestations of the Holy Spirit. There are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are miracles. **This is the fuel for Christian growth.**

You have to understand that deliverance is not the end all to your struggles. You still have to build a foundation of the gospel in your life. You still have to build spiritual practices in your life. People often emphasize one thing over another. There are camps that emphasize spiritual practices. They read authors like Eugene Peterson and value spending time with the Lord, practicing the presence of God in their lives. But, they sometimes ignore the power of the Holy Spirit and relegate them to Chrismatics. Then, there are others who are focused on the gifts and the power of God through the Holy Spirit. They really get into it. Then, there are others who just emphasizes the foundation of the gospel but don't really acknowledge the power of the Holy Spirit or the spiritual practices that are necessary.

The point is that we need the foundation, the process and the fuel in order to grow. We need to be a fully orbed in our approach to Christian discipleship and growth.

(4) **There is one more thing: the context for growth is community.** We do it together. We believe that transformation happens in the context of community. That's why Jesus didn't just call people to follow him, he put them in community together called "church." It is through discipleship and godly relationships that we spur one another to live by the Spirit. This is one of the biggest problems with some of the outreach ministries in skid row—it's transactional. I think the missions are very good. But, churches that come in with food or other things tend to be transactional, not relational. That's one of the reasons God prompted me to plant New City Church. I wanted to see a relational environment for discipleship.

I plan to do sermon series on all of these things. I have been focusing on the foundation: the gospel. However, I plan to do a series on spiritual practices after the next series, The Leap of Doubt.

IV. Let's go on to Serve the City.

In Matthew 22:37, Jesus said,

“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.”

Micah 6:8 says:

8 He has showed you, O man, what is good.

And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

Our mission is to love and serve the people of the city and to benefit the people of the city. People often come to the city to get something out of the city—a job or career or something. But, I believe God is calling us to serve the city.

I think to serve the city also means to fight for social justice. I think we need to think systematically about what is going on. We need to think about how we can improve education here in downtown and thoughtfully engage. We need to think about how we can make our streets safer, and thoughtfully engage. We need to think about how we can help those who are destitute, and thoughtfully engage.

To serve the city also means to integrate our work and faith. How can I use my computer programming to benefit the people of the city? How can I run my business to help benefit the city? How can I be a janitor that benefits the city?

V. Lastly, Extend God’s Kingdom.

We don’t just want to obey the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, we want to be a movement for the execution of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. In order to do that, we have to develop leaders. We want to see people develop and disciple others. We want to see a movement of church planting. We want to see people being sent for mission.

[Share the vision of church multi-siting and planting domestically and internationally]

Note: that this is also our discipleship process.