

## FOCUS AND VISION

# EKKLESIA

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## INTRODUCTION

- ▶ In February of 1988, Sally and I were sitting in a church service minding our own business, when the **Senior Pastor** and leader of a worldwide ministry made a startling **confession** that changed everything.
- ▶ Not only for us, but for **many people** who were connected to this church, its worldwide ministry, and the many believers who looked to this evangelist for inspiration.
- ▶ What happened not only caused the **fall** of one of the most prominent ministries in the world, but some people quit the ministry, left the faith, which negatively affected several marriages and families.
- ▶ However, while this was one of the worse periods of my life and a lot of others as well, it was nevertheless the **genesis** of this church and why we call it Ekklesia.

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## REVELATION

- ▶ At the time of all of this happening, I was a lowly Bible College student who was preparing for seminary.
- ▶ This also meant, I was studying **Greek**, as it was a prerequisite for graduate studies.
- ▶ The Greek class I was taking was to translate the epistle of 1 John into English.
- ▶ One day the following verses caught my eye.
  - **ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει, καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν.** (1 John 2:10 GNT-TR)
  - **ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστί, καὶ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπάτει, καὶ οὐκ οἶδε ποῦ ὑπάγει, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία ἐτύφλωσε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ.** (1 John 2:11 GNT-TR)

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## REVELATION

- ▶ Here are those *same verses* translated into English by the NIV Bible,
  - *Whoever **loves** his brother lives in the light, and there is **nothing in him** to make him stumble.* (1 John 2:10 NIV) [See 1 Peter 1:22 & 1 John 1:7]
  - *But whoever **hates** his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the **darkness** has blinded him.* (1 John 2:11 NIV)
- ▶ What I saw here was an explicit statement that if we **love** our brother we will never stumble.
- ▶ But those who hate their Christian brothers or sisters, walk around in the **darkness** where unintended consequences and spiritual accidents can happen.

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## REVELATION

- ▶ At the same time, I found in **2 Peter** verses that seem to suggest the same thing.
- ▶ In 1 Peter 1:5-7, it says, if we add **virtue** to our faith, such as goodness, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and culminating in love that we would . . .
  - *not be ineffective and unproductive in [our] **knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ* (2 Peter 1:8 NIV)
  - *[we] will **never fall**,* (2 Peter 1:10 NIV)
  - *[we] will **receive a rich welcome** into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* (2 Peter 1:11 NIV)

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## REVELATION

- ▶ Moreover, as a young Bible College student, I started to see that love or I should say, “self-sacrificing” **agape love** was the **key** to having a solid relationship with God.
- ▶ If you look at the **Great Commission**, it’s not just about making converts it is about **making disciples** who obey the commands that Jesus has given us.
- ▶ And what is his command, “**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**” (John 13:34-35 NIV)
- ▶ So then, what happens to **believers** or **churches** who really obey the Great Commission in its fullness?

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## AGAPE LOVE AND ANSWERED PRAYER

- ▶ See 1 John 3:21-24a . . .
  - *Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and **receive** from him anything we ask, because **we obey** his commands and do what pleases him.*
  - *And this is his **command**: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.*
  - *Those who **obey** his commands **live** (abide) in him, and he in them. {See John 15}*
- ▶ So then, if anyone is really a follower of Christ and obeys Jesus’ commands, then they can expect **answered prayer**, and have an **intimate relationship** with God’s Spirit that keeps them from falling.
- ▶ Not only this, but they become a **witness** of what God can do through those who trust Him.

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## CENTRIPETAL MODEL OF MISSIONS

- ▶ When the children of Israel were at **Mount Sinai**, God gave to Moses their **purpose** as a people. [Exodus 19:3-6 NIV]
  - *“This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on **eagles’ wings** and brought you to myself.’”*
  - *“Now if you **obey** me fully and **keep** my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my **treasured possession**. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a **holy nation**.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”*
- ▶ What we have here is called the **Centripetal Model** of missions where God seeks to create faith in Him by showing himself **faithful** to his covenant community by answering their prayers showing them to be His **treasured possession**.

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## CENTRIPETAL MODEL OF MISSIONS

- ▶ Observe them [Torah] carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to **the nations**, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we **pray** to him? (Deuteronomy 4:6-7 NIV)
- ▶ "As for the **foreigner** who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm – when he comes and **prays** toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name." (2 Chronicles 6:32-33 NIV)

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## CENTRIPETAL MODEL OF MISSIONS

- ▶ However, as many of you all know, **Israel** failed in their mission.
- ▶ Instead of being a faithful and obedient **covenant community** of people who had God's blessing the **nations** came not to seek God but to make war.
- ▶ Nevertheless, where Israel failed **Christ** succeeded. [Matthew 4:23-25 NIV]
  - Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and **healing** every disease and sickness among the people.
  - News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he **healed** them.
  - **Large crowds** from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

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## CENTRIPETAL MODEL OF MISSIONS

- ▶ So what kind of relationship did **Jesus** have with the Father?
  - And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17 NIV)
  - While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5 NIV)
  - For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (2 Peter 1:17 NIV)

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## CENTRIPETAL MODEL OF MISSIONS

- ▶ Then Jesus makes this startling promise. If you **obey my commands**, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. (John 15:10 NIV) {How did Jesus remain in the Father's love?}
- ▶ The early church picked up on this and saw **astonishing manifestations** of God's glory.
  - All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they **shared everything** they had. With **great power** the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and **much grace** was upon them all. (Acts 4:32-33 NIV)
  - **Crowds** gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. (Acts 5:16 NIV)

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## BEING A DISCIPLE

- ▶ This is to my **Father's glory**, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15:8 NIV)
- ▶ If you remain in me and **my words** remain in you, **ask** whatever you wish, and it will be given you. (John 15:7 NIV)
- ▶ SUMMARY:
  - ▶ When Jesus' words live in us and we walk them out, we **abide** in Him and He **abides** in us—producing much fruit.
  - ▶ Then we will have **answered prayer** and this
    - gives God glory, and
    - creates faith in others to believe and put their trust in the Lord.

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## BEING A DISCIPLE

- ▶ This is why we have for **20 years** made the following our **Vision Statement** and the focus behind our church.
  - ▶ To bring Glory to God by showing forth the faithfulness and power He gives to those who carry out the Words of His Son Jesus Christ and in so doing provide evidence for others to believe and put their trust in the living God.
- ▶ Therefore, our **goals** has been.
  - ▶ To become a **biblically functioning community** by structuring church life around the development of small groups (cells) so that meaningful and caring relationships can take place and thus create an atmosphere where God's Word can be practiced.

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## COMMUNION

- ▶ In 1 Corinthians 11, there is a description of a **serious situation** where many in the church were weak, sick, and some had fallen asleep?
- ▶ Even though the operation of **spiritual gifts** was not lacking in this church, significant problems were present such as carnality, worldliness, and immaturity.
- ▶ In fact, the Apostle Paul told this church that their **Celebration Banquets** did more harm than good.
- ▶ So what was the problem? They took **communion** in an unworthy manner!
- ▶ Not meaning that they were being irreverent in how they took communion, but irreverent in how they treated each other as the **"body of the Lord."**

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## COMMUNION

- ▶ When we **forget** our purpose and vision, we in a sense **forget** why Christ died.
- ▶ **Christ** laid down his life, so that we would lay down our lives for each other.
- ▶ So then, when we avoid showing **favoritism** and instead honor one-another, care for one-another, **God's grace** is richly poured out in our lives and in our church and we see **answered prayer**.
- ▶ And when God's mercy and grace is flowing in our church we can't keep from **gospelizing** the Gospel.
- ▶ Therefore, let us **keep the vision alive** for there is no limitation to what God can do through those who trust him.

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