

Life on Mission – Part 4

Proverbs 29:18

Mortgage Free.

Multisite.

- *John 20:21*

- The church grows.
- The church goes.

Multigenerational.

- *Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18; Psalm 71:17-18*

- The church changes.
- The church ranges.

Multicultural.

- *Psalm 22:27-28; Revelation 7:9b; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:6-11; Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:8; Romans 10:12; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 3:11; Revelation 7:9*

- The church reaches.
- The church breaches.

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Life on Mission: The Ultimate Walk with Christ Our Vision

We are in the middle of snow skiing season, and I'll tell you it's something I enjoy doing; I just wish I could afford to do more of it – I'd definitely go more often if it wasn't so expensive. Because it costs so much, I don't go as often as I'd like to, but it's fun. And, in case you are wondering, I ski the way God intended; on two skis, not one board.

Anyway, one of the things that is fun to do is skiing in powder through the trees. I'm not very good at it, so I have to be careful. I do wear a helmet! But if you want to learn how to ski through trees, let me give you a very, very helpful bit of advice (you might want to write this down): it's very important that you do NOT hit the trees! In *Outside* magazine, writer and skier Tim Etchells gives some advice for the challenge: "Even more so than in deep snow or moguls, what you focus your eyes on becomes critical in the woods. Look at the spaces *between* the trees, the exits where you hope to be traveling. 'Don't stare at what you don't want to hit!'"¹ That's so true; if you allow yourself to look at the trees, as tempting as it might be, you'll hit them every time. You've got to see where you want to go. That's true in life, too: if you want to achieve anything, you've got to set your sights on it!

We are concluding a four-part sermon series today exploring our church's mission and vision – looking at where we want to go. The last three Sundays we've been looking at our mission statement, so let's review it again. In fact, why don't you say it with me. West Valley Church exists to:

- **Introduce People to Jesus Christ,**
- **Equip People with a Faith that Works**
- **Live as People with Purpose.**

To help make it even easier to remember we've reduced it to three words: **love, learn, and live**. We will love people enough to introduce them to Jesus, we will learn together and grow in our faith, and we will live that out. That statement is the motivation and the measurement for all we do as a church.

We talked about how that comes from the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, and to live our lives on purpose means that we will live Spirit-filled, Christlike lives of supreme love for God and equal love for people. So now, that brings us to our vision statement.

Think about vision this way (I go into this in more detail in our Membership Class, so join us on February 25!): if we were an army, imagine that we wanted to take a certain hill. That particular hill would be our mission; mission answers the "what" question: "what" is it

¹ Tim Etchells, "The Trees: Lovely, Dark, and Deep," *Outside* (November 1999), p. 128

we need to be doing? So our mission would be that particular hill. Our vision, then, would be what we will look like when we've taken that hill. Mission is an action statement; vision is a descriptive statement. By its nature, a vision statement needs to evoke images in our minds. Make sense? So today we want to talk about what we are going to look like as we continue to accomplish our mission, which we are doing. If we don't have clear purpose and vision for our lives and our church, we won't be able to move forward in the direction that God has in front of us. Proverbs 29:18 says:

"Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but happy is one who keeps the Law." (Proverbs 29:18, nasb)

If we don't have a vision for where we are going, we will start wandering in all kinds of directions. But with a clear sense of direction and destination, we will discipline our lives to get where we need to go and become who we need to be. We won't hit the trees. Without that clear sense of direction, we become undisciplined.

I don't know if you are aware, but two weeks ago was my fourteenth anniversary as your pastor; I started my fifteenth year. Way back in late 2009 we were praying about accepting the call to come be your pastor. As we prayed for West Valley Church and for direction from God, God began to make clear what his vision is for our church, and it's been confirmed over the years. For the last 14 years this is the direction we've been moving toward as we carry out our mission. Everything we've done has been in alignment with our mission and moving us toward our vision. So what is it that we will we look like?

Our vision is what we used to call the "four M's." But now there are three M's. Here's what the four "M's" are:

Mortgage Free.

As you know, we paid off that million-dollar mortgage almost three years ago now! So we can strike that one off!

Mortgage Free

We will continue to work toward the other three for a long time to come, and they are:

Multisite

Multigenerational

Multicultural

So today we want to layout the vision for the remaining three M's, starting with the first, which is that we will be...

Multisite.

We get the model for this from the early church; we see from the beginning of the birth of the church that being multisite comes naturally as...

The church *grows*.

We need to notice a couple of things about church growth in the first century. The first church was in Jerusalem, and it didn't take long for them to start experiencing persecution, which resulted in a scattering of believers.

You can read about it in Acts 11, starting with the stoning of Stephen. (Acts 11:19-21, niv)

As the Christians scattered and went back to their hometowns, they began to start new church sites in their towns. You can read about it in Acts 11; it's a cool story. The chapter starts out with Peter telling about God's vision for the church to be multicultural (we'll talk about that in a bit). Then it tells about the multisite church in Antioch. And more people became Christians.

The principle is that churches grow and create new church sites. In the New Testament, this all happened through the local church. The local churches planted healthy, doctrinally sound, practically faithfully, Christ-honoring churches. If we are going to stay true to the blueprint that God gave us when he started the Church, that is what we will do too, with new church sites.

That's because as the church grows...

The church *goes*.

When Jesus met with his disciples after he had risen from the dead, he told them, and he tells us:

Peace be with you; as the Father has sent me, I am sending you. (John 20:21, niv)

A growing church is a going church because Jesus sent us to grow and go.

West Valley Church is growing, and we actually have two sites so far. One is at this location, and the other is online. If you are worshiping with us online, I hope you know that we consider you a part of our church. That's why we want so much to connect with you, and we need you to let us know who you are. Maybe you split your time between being here in person and joining our online campus. Either way, we want to connect because we want to make sure we are equipping you with this faith that works.

When God gave us the vision for being multisite, having an online church wasn't even in our imagination; that kind of church didn't really even exist yet. But the pandemic changed the way a lot of things happened, including church. As a result, we now have an online site. A conservative estimate of the number of folks who make up our online church site is between 80-120 each week. That's how many *views* we have, but we know that behind some of those views are more than one person. There are a lot of you who make up our online church, and we are so grateful for those of you who join us. But we want you to know, you are not just spectators; you aren't just watching TV or watching your computer; you are a church. So you need to engage with other believers and grow as disciples. That's why every week we ask you to please let us know who you are. If the totality of your Christian experience is watching a 75-minute video, you are not going to grow much in your faith. You need to interact with other believers in a small group, class, and in mission

– even if it is in a digital setting – so you can encourage each other to grow. So please – reach out to us; scan the QR code or click the information tab on the website, or if you are watching this on YouTube, click on the links and tell us who you are.

You are an important part of West Valley Church, and we want to help you take those next steps in your faith.

In addition to our online church site, we plan to start a Spanish speaking worship site here on this campus – more on that in a bit. We are very excited about that!

The next part of our vision is to be...

Multigenerational.

All the way back in the Old Testament, when God was casting vision for what his church would be like when Jesus died and rose again and when the Holy Spirit was poured out on his people, this is what he said:

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-29, niv)

That covers all generations! If that is going to happen, we are going to experience changes, aren't we? Changes in our own lives and changes in our church. So way back then, God was saying that when the church was born, it would be multigenerational, which means...

The church changes.

The church would be in a constant state of change. As people age, they change, and right behind them is the next generation. Built into the birth of the church was a constant cycle of change. The problem is that just as one generation begins to move into places of authority, they want to freeze the church at that spot because that's where they like it. Isn't that true? So unfortunately, our natural tendency is to try to make the church culture monogenerational. But we are to be multigenerational and accept the changes. God considers his church to be his family. So naturally, there are going to be generations.

There's something very interesting going on in our culture today that has never been a part of the modern world, and it is this: there are now five generations who are in the workplace and in the church at the same time. We've never had that before. So as you can imagine, that makes for a very broad spectrum of interests and needs.

Let's try a little experiment:

Is there anyone here who was born between 1925-1945? You are considered the "Traditionalist" generation. Anyone here today born between 1946-1964? You are considered the "Baby Boomer" generation. How about between 1965-1980? You are called "Generation X." Who here was born between 1981 and 2000? You are the Millennials. Finally, anyone here born between 2001-2020? You are called "Generation Z." We have

five generations of adults *in this room* all contributing to the culture of the church, worshipping, serving, giving, and making decisions. And right now, in our church nurseries, the sixth generation is waiting their turn; They are being called “Gen Alpha.” Many of those in the nursery right now need to be changed – as in their diapers! (Maybe some of us in here do, too?) But with all these generations, all of us need to accept change in the church. The challenge is that each generation likes things different and has different values for how and why they come to church and give and serve. So it is inevitable that there will be friction.

What has been the most obvious area of the church where we see this friction? Worship styles! But if each generation isn’t willing to make changes for the sake of the other generations that follow, the church is in trouble.

God put an exclamation point on this issue of multigenerationality during the very first sermon ever preached in the Church, in the book of Acts. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up to preach and repeated God’s vision for the church that the prophet Joel declared hundreds of years earlier:

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:17-18, niv)

There it is again! From the birth of the church God intended multigenerationality.

Let me ask you: is the Holy Spirit who is in one of our teens different than the Holy Spirit in one of our senior adults? Same Spirit! So we need to honor and celebrate the Holy Spirit’s presence across all five (and soon six) of the generations that call West Valley Church home! Because since the birth of the church it’s been clear that not only are there changes but also...

The church ranges

...across generations.

Our focus needs to be not on ourselves, but on all the other generations and what they need. And every generation needs to prioritize teaching and demonstrating how great God is to the generations younger than they are. Here’s the pattern that God has given us through King David in Psalm 71:

Since my youth, God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power *to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.* (Psalm 71:17-18, niv)

Look at this verse! Our job, generations, is not to just sit there enjoying our preferred worship style and gain more knowledge in a Sunday School class. Our job is to declare the very POWER OF GOD and his MIGHTY ACTS to ALL THE GENERATIONS that follow us!

Friends, that is our vision! To be a church that honors, celebrates, and passes on the power of God himself to every succeeding generation. For those of us who are older, you have a choice: you can focus on feeling upset that we didn't sing the type of music you like, or you can focus your life on demonstrating and declaring the Holy Spirit power of God to the next generations. Because the church is made up of ALL generations.

Finally, let's look at how important it is for West Valley Church to be...

Multicultural.

Let me just first acknowledge what some folks might say about a church being multicultural: some might think that it has something to do with woke philosophy, that it is the church's acquiescence to the anti-racism liberal politics of the day.

Can I be blunt? If that is your feeling about West Valley Church being multicultural, then you probably spend more time on social media or your favorite news outlet than you do in the Bible. If you think that our vision to be multicultural is driven by anything other than the heart of God revealed in the biblical mandate, then I am sad to hear that you have so little trust in God and in your church. I pray that by the time we're done this morning, you will at least know what Scripture says so very clearly, and you will have to reckon with that. God's desire from Genesis to Revelation is very, very clear: he intends for *everyone* to be a part of the church, his family, worshiping and serving together – *every* tribe and nation and tongue – NOT separately.

In 1963, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is 11 o'clock on Sunday morning," and, according to experts, that (statement) remains true today, sixty years later. About eight-in-ten American congregants still attend services at a place where a single racial or ethnic group comprises at least 80 percent of the congregation.²

That statistic would be nothing more than an accurate observation if you didn't contrast it with what Scripture tells us. If we take that statistic and compare it to Scripture, it is no longer an observation; it becomes an indictment.

It has always been God's vision that all the people of the world would be united as his family. The Psalmist expressed God's heart when he wrote:

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations. (Psalm 22:27-28, niv)

Notice how God describes the people of the world: "families of the nations." How do you define culture, or how you define ethnicity? Politics would define it by geopolitical boundaries, sociologists might define it by cultural artifacts or indicators like food styles, familial systems, or even languages.

God describes a culture or an ethnicity as "families of nations." This is what God showed Peter in Acts 10-11, when God made it clear that all races will be together in the Kingdom.

² <http://www.louisianaweekly.com/eleven-oclock-on-sundays-is-still-the-most-segregated-hour-in-america/>

Please read those chapters! In the vision of the church in Revelation 7, it says that the church is gathered around God's throne:

"A great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages..." (Revelation 7:9b, esv)

A group's language comes close to defining an ethnicity, but its culture is deeper than that; it is the values, the ways of relating and connecting together as families and communities that define ethnicity according to the Bible. Language, food, customs, clothing, music – all those things are *expressions that reinforce and celebrate a culture*. That's how the Bible defines culture or ethnicity.

Let me also respond to something else you might be thinking: isn't that description out of Revelation 7 about the *end* of the world? Wouldn't it be easier to just remain segregated here, and then in heaven we will all worship together? But the Bible says some things very clearly: God expects us to be multicultural now, today. Eternity is not the cause of being multicultural; our obedience *here* is. Would it be easier to be segregated? Yes. But there is a big difference between easy and right.

A multicultural church means...

The church *reaches*.

Here's what I mean by this. One of the very clear things that the church – any church and every church – is expected to do is share the Gospel with people. Jesus gave us our great commission in Matthew 28, just before he returned to heaven. That means he was saying, "this is one of the main things I want you to do until I come back." This is what he said:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
(Matthew 28:18-20, niv)

Is there anyone here who thinks the church should NOT have the priority of sharing the Gospel? That's exactly why the very first part of our mission is to "Introduce people to Jesus Christ." That is our mission and our marching orders from Jesus.

So if we are going to do *that* in our community – here on this corner in West Valley – if we are doing that, doesn't it stand to reason that our church will begin to look like the community around us? Or do you think we should only introduce white people to Jesus? Of course not.

So if we are doing evangelism effectively, then it is only logical that our church will start to look like the ethnic makeup of our community.

Well then, what does our community look like? The most recent estimates indicate that West Valley is *at least* 40% Latino culture (Yakima proper is approx. 50%, while Wapato and lower valley communities are 80-90%). Of Latinos in West Valley, many of the older

adults are primarily monolingual (Spanish), with middle adults to youngsters being bilingual (Spanish and English), with varying degrees of proficiency.

Logical evangelism states if we are going to be effective in introducing people to Jesus, our congregation will look like our community.

We all know that Acts is the story of the birth and growth of the church. It's no accident that the very first sermon was preached to multiple ethnicities. That's the story in Acts two with all the disciples preaching in different languages, so that all the people could understand. The birth of the church started with a multicultural worship service! This is what it says:

A crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ... we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"
(Acts 2:6-11, niv)

It was a Holy Spirit translation system!

God was making it very clear that the result of the church's evangelism will be people that reflect the cultures of the community the church is in. That's the logic of evangelism.

All of this might make you uncomfortable, and I understand that. But that doesn't mean it's wrong. Let me make you even more uncomfortable: most sociologists agree that somewhere between 2030-2050 the majority of the US population will be non-white. That's probably not a surprise. We'll probably get there faster with this administration's border policies. I'm not here to discuss those, but the point is, whatever the case, we'll reach the lack of a majority color no later than 2030-2050. And then, by folks marrying folks of other colors, the majority of the US will be non-white. Sociologists call it "The browning of America." For folks my age and older, that may seem like it's happening fast. But for those who are under 18, this has already been true for *years*. However you feel about that, you can't stop it. It is happening and it will happen. If for no other reason, it was biologically inevitable.

I'm only giving you the facts, and the logic of evangelism. I have not made ANY statements that reflect any political agendas. If you think I did, you need to go back and rewatch this or download the manuscript and read it. I am only giving you the logic of evangelism.

But more than that, we have the overwhelming proof of Scripture. In Scripture we see the church reaches and...

the church breaches

...the walls that divide people by culture. Let me take you on a very quick trip across the entire landscape of the Bible. Who did God identify as the person who would be the father of his people? Abraham. Here is the promise God made to Abraham:

And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (Genesis 22:18, niv)

How many nations will be blessed by God? All the nations.

The Apostle Paul called God's promise to Abraham the "trailer for the Gospel." Like if the story of God's salvation were a movie, the trailer for the movie would be that verse. Paul said it was "the Gospel in advance." Listen to what Paul said:

"But when it saw ahead of time that God would make the Gentiles righteous on the basis of faith, scripture preached the gospel in advance to Abraham: *All the Gentiles will be blessed in you.*" (Galatians 3:8, ceb).

The very first proclamation of the Gospel is in Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament – the beginning of God's creation and people, and it is a promise to *all* people, not just the Jews.

Then when you read the story of the church in Acts, all throughout the story it is dealing with the spread of the Gospel to *all* people. Over and over the New Testament addresses this. Here's a quick snapshot of some of these Scriptures:

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, (Romans 10:12, niv)

Who will he bless? ALL.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:13, niv)

Here he is addressing both race and economic conditions, and does so in this next verse, too:

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28, niv)

We are all united in Christ. How?

For (Christ) himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.

His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. (Ephesians 2:14-16, niv)

Has God put to death *your* hostility?

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. (Colossians 3:11, niv)

And then it all concludes in Revelation:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9, niv)

I could give you so many more Scriptures: the command to welcome the stranger and immigrant as a member of your family. The command to love God and love others. The Golden Rule. On and on and on.

And if I remember correctly, Jesus taught us to pray that God's Kingdom would come, and his will would be done, (where?) here on earth as it is in heaven. We need to pray and pursue multiculturality, being a church reaching and breaching walls of cultural separation.

The overwhelming proof of Scripture is that the church should be multicultural. It has been God's intention since he promised Abraham and all the way through to the end in the celestial city of Christ.

Do I need to say more to convince you that being a multicultural church is the heart of God and always has been?

So, in order to allow our Spanish-speaking neighbors to feel welcome, we will become bilingual in our signage and communications. We are already accommodating our English-speaking neighbors; we must also do so for all our neighbors.

Our end vision is to be "one church, two languages." This will include having a second Sunday morning worship experience, primarily in Spanish language. But we don't want to create two churches, so we will plan intentional time between the two services for our people to fellowship together. We will include regular worship services combined together, at least quarterly. We will plan other events for the entire church to enjoy together. Our children and youth ministries will continue as they are; our young people have *already* figured out how to be multi-cultural, as they've been doing so for years.

In order to get to the place of having two services, we will need to welcome enough Spanish speaking congregants in this service to help "launch" that second service. In order to get there, we will continue our current ministries to our community (Upward Soccer, Homework Club, Trunk or Treat, Breakfast with Santa, Christmas Connection, Backpack to School and our school partnerships, among others), and have all communications (print and digital) bilingual. Verbal communication will have either subtext in Spanish or in-ear Spanish interpretations. Sermons are currently being translated live through in-ear devices.

We will soon start a Spanish language small group.

Currently, and as we move forward, our worship services will have bilingual lyric slides. Our worship services are, and will be, approximately 25-30% sung in Spanish. We will continue to encourage our people to worship in their "heart language," simultaneously. You do know that, right? We print the lyrics in English and Spanish, so no matter what the singers on the platform are doing, no one is stopping you from singing in your heart language. In fact, we expect you to. It's not that hard.

Then, once we have a Spanish language worship service, that service will reflect the same ratio, except reversed.

We are currently seeing an increase in Hispanic attendance as a result of our efforts. While we still have not reached the number we'll need to create that second service, we are

encouraged each week! Please pray for our unsaved, unchurched neighbors, for WVC to be welcoming in every way to everyone whom the Lord blesses us with.

Prayer

Can you visualize that picture? That's our God-given vision. We discipline ourselves for it. And we are closer than ever at seeing it happen. We are now mortgage free; as we grow, we will be even more multisite, we celebrate and lean into being multigenerational, and we are becoming more and more multicultural. The world doesn't believe old and young, Anglos and Latinos, whites, and other colors, can worship together, serve each other, and love each other. (That's why there's so much fighting over ageism and racism in our country's sociopolitical landscape.) But imagine what would happen if Yakima could look at West Valley Church and see people of different cultures loving each other the way God intended?

Leslie Newbigin was a renown pastor, missionary, theologian, and leader from the last century, and he once said that the church is a signpost to the kingdom of God. In other words, the world should look at the church and see us as a sign pointing toward the kind of community that is God's kingdom. Let's be that for our community. Who knows...if we can do this, maybe it will open doors for the Gospel to change our city, reduce crime, reduce trafficking of drugs and people...a safer place for people of all cultures. I believe God can and will do it because that is the power of the Gospel! I believe God *wants* to do it through us, and he doesn't need to wait any longer.

Pastor Roger

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:5-6, esv)