

**The Church Defined:
Our Vision
Part 8**

Proverbs 29:18

*Introduce People to Jesus Christ
Equip People with a Faith that Works
Live as People with Purpose
LOVE.LEARN.LIVE.*

Mortgage Free.

Multisite.

Multigenerational.

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

Multicultural.

- Psalm 22:27-28; Revelation 7:9a; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:6-11

One Church, Two Languages.



The Church Defined: Our Vision

Okay we've been worshipping in here for a month – how are you doing so far? We are getting closer all the time to getting back into the Worship Center with new paint, new carpet, and these beautiful new seats. Be sure to test drive them on your way out! So far, we are on schedule, but you never know with a construction project like this; there are often snags. We will keep you posted all along the way!

Today we are concluding this series called "The Church Defined." This transition period that we've been in has created a great opportunity for us to remember what we are really about as the church. We've looked at some of the Bible's metaphors and mandates for the church, and most recently we've been looking at our mission here on this corner. Today we will conclude by looking at our vision – the description of what we are pursuing and what we will look like more and more in the months and years to come.

As I said, 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 out our faith with purpose, living holy lives of love. That statement is the motivation and the measurement for all that we do as a church.

Last week we talked about how living our lives on purpose means 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.

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:

"When there's no vision, the people get out of control, but whoever obeys instruction is happy." (Proverbs 29:18, ceb)

If we don't have a vision for where we are going, we will start wandering in all kinds of directions. We will be undisciplined in our decisions and direction because we don't know why and where we are going. If you aim at nothing you will hit it every time. But with a

clear sense of direction and destination, we will discipline ourselves to do what we need to do and get where we need to go and become who we need to be.

I don't know if you are aware, but last month was my fifteenth anniversary as your pastor; I started my sixteenth year. Way back in late 2009 we were praying about accepting the call to come be your pastor, and as we prayed for West Valley Church and for direction from God, God began to make clear what his vision is for our church. That vision has been confirmed over the years. For the last 15 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 our vision? What will we look like?

Our vision is what we've called the "four M's." But now there are three only M's. The first of the four "M's" is...

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~~

This church is debt free, and our commitment is to remain that way. That's why we aren't able to do everything we intend to do in the Worship Center just yet – there is more to do, but we don't have the money to do it. We will only do as much as we have the money to do, and so far, that has been paint, carpet, and seating.

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

Multisite

We will talk more about this in a minute, but just know that we've got to maximize our space and resources to reach as many people as possible.

The next is...

Multigenerational

This is so important to us! More than just providing ministries for different age groups, this is about respecting and celebrating and valuing each generation and their contributions.

Multicultural

This is a top priority for us if we are going to carry out our mission of introducing people to Jesus, as you will see.

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. Really do take the time to read Acts 11; it's a cool story.

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 in Acts, that is what we will do too, with new church sites.

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. Because of that, more and more people became Christians.

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. Thanks for your patience with us as we aren't able to live-stream while we are in the gym. Soon you will see the new Worship Center. The seats are so comfortable you are going to want to join us and try them out!

We really want to connect with you and that's why we encourage you to let us know who you are 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 80-150 each week. That's how many *views* we have, but we know that behind some of those views are more than one person, and that they are joining us from here in West Valley and beyond – around the state and country and even the world.

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 gathering 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. This is what God said through the prophet Joel:

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! So way back then God was revealing that when the church was born, it would be multigenerational, which by the way means 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; they like those ministries and songs that were a part of their own formation. Isn't that true? It's not good or bad; it's just our tendency. It can be bad when our natural tendency becomes trying 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.

I've said this before, but 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.

I'm really excited for our Lenten service this Wednesday because it will be a multigenerational experience. You are welcome to bring your children, and the youth will be with us too. There are some powerful prayer moments planned for that time together.

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. Many of those in the nursery right now already want change – 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.

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.

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! 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! 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.

That's a big reason why we are sharing these stories with you – those flanking us on the wall over here and those we are sharing with you on video. You'll notice that these stories are coming from several generations! God is at work in every generation.

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

Multicultural.

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 – one church, many tongues.

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 do you define ethnicity? Politics would define it by economics and 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. It’s the story of Peter’s vision of the large blanket descending on which there were all kinds of animals that Jewish law considered clean and unclean. God told Peter he could eat any of them. The next thing he knew, there were some Gentiles who showed up on his doorstep asking him to come share the Gospel and pray for them. They had been told by God to go see Peter because they would hear the Good News from him. These were people who the Jews considered unclean. They were a different ethnic group. They were the first Gentiles to start a church. Please read those chapters!

Then, in the vision of the church in Revelation 7, it says that the church is gathered around God’s throne:

“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 7:9a, niv)

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. The cause of heaven being multicultural is what we do here. Heaven doesn’t suddenly become multicultural; our obedience to God’s call *here* is what causes heaven to be multicultural. Would it be easier to be segregated? Yes. But there is a big difference between easy and right.

A multicultural church means we are reaching out to everyone. We are expected to share the Gospel with all 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? 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 these in West Valley, many of the older generations are monolingual (primarily Spanish), with middle generations to youngsters being bilingual (Spanish and English).

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 who reflect the community the church is in. That's the logic of evangelism.

The politicians have co-opted the word “multicultural” – don't let them define the term for you. Let God's Word define it. Politicians won't save our community or country; only God will. We will get our definitions and directions from God's Word.

Is becoming multicultural uncomfortable? Sometimes. But not just for those of us who are white; it is for our Hispanic brothers and sisters, too. Can I say to those of our church who are Latino: Thank you! Thank you for being part of our worshiping family. We are so blessed by you. We are humbled that you would worship with us. And please: help us become the church God has called West Valley Church to be. Please be patient with us. We are learning and we're not always going to get it right. Forgive us when we don't. Help us get it right. We really do want to get there with you.

Our end vision is to be...

“One Church, Two Languages.”

This will include having a second Sunday morning worship experience, primarily in Spanish language – the opposite of what we are doing now. 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 multicultural, 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 worshippers 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 [this year over 770!], Homework Club, Fall Fest, Breakfast with Santa, Christmas Connection, Backpack to School and our school partnerships, among others). We 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 want to start a Spanish language small group.

Currently our worship services have bilingual lyric slides. Our worship singing is approximately 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 a similar ratio, except reversed.

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 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 racism in our country's sociopolitical landscape – politicians need fear and division for power.) 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? That is the church that Jesus died to create. This is what Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:14-17 (listen):

For he 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. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. (Ephesians 2:14-17, niv)

With that in mind, we are going to affirm that Christ has given his life for us, his church by sharing together in communion.

Communion was instituted by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a sacrament, which proclaims His life, His sufferings, His sacrificial death, and resurrection, and the hope of His coming again. It is a declaration of his death that will continue until he returns.

This is a means of grace in which Christ is present by the Spirit. We need to receive it reverently and gratefully for the work of Christ.

This is a real declaration that can only be made by believers in Jesus and followers of his, because we know and live the truth of it. You do not need to be a member of this church to share at the Table with us.

However if you are *not* a believer, this won't be anything more to you than stale, tasteless bread and warm juice. BUT: it could be that today by doing this with us it means you choose to be a follower of Jesus. That you realize he is God, that he died for you, and that you will leave your old life and the sin of your past and you will devour Jesus. If that is you, start praying now. Start talking to Jesus now and give your life to him, and then you can share with us in just a moment.

Serve, pray as you wait, and we'll take it together.

We come to the table that we may be renewed in life and salvation and be made one by the Spirit.

In unity with the Church, we confess our faith:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. (Say that with me)

So we pray:

Holy God, we gather at this, your table, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, who by your Spirit was anointed to preach good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, set at liberty those who are oppressed. Christ healed the sick, fed the hungry, ate with sinners, and established the new covenant for forgiveness of sins. We live in the hope of His coming again. And so, we gather as the Body of Christ to offer ourselves to you in praise and thanksgiving. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these your gifts. Make them by the power of your Spirit to be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the Body of Christ, redeemed by His blood. By your Spirit make us one in Christ, one with each other, and one in the ministry of Christ to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen. On the night in which Jesus was betrayed, He took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, gave it to His disciples, and said:

"This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19)

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, broken for you, preserve you blameless to everlasting life. Eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and be thankful. Take and eat the bread, the body of Jesus. Likewise, when the supper was over, He took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to His disciples, and said:

"Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me." (Matthew 26:27-29)

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, shed for you, preserve you blameless to everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and be thankful. Take and drink the blood of Jesus.

Prayer

Benediction

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)