

**Daring to Dream Another Dream:
Unity in the Body**

Wednesday with the Word @ Wheat Street

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The Vision for Wheat Street Baptist Church

"We are a church in the heart of city with the city in our heart."

John 14:12-14

12 Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If in my name you ask me or anything, I will do it.

Vision:

We exist to develop mature disciples of Jesus Christ who make a real difference in the world by actively seeking the love, justice, freedom, liberation and peace of God.

(Luke 4:18; Matthew 25:31-46; Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 1:16-20; Mark 6:30-44; Mark 7:1-23; Mark 9:33-37; Mark 10:13-16; Mark 12:41-44; Acts 1:6-11; Acts 2:14-21; Acts 2:43-47; Acts 4:23-37; Philippians 4:4-9)

Mission:

We are in union with God's work of liberation in the world. We reach outside the walls of the church to be the church. We are committed to innovation and change as God's calls us to reach and disciple people by doing ministry that makes a *real* difference 365 days a year. We get people closer to God, their community and God's will for their lives and the church by *keeping it real*.

The Acts of the Holy Spirit: The Birth of the Church & The Centrality of Unity and Generosity

Acts 2:37-42

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” **38** Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” **40** And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” **41** So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. **42** They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

How did they receive the message?

What did they devote themselves to?

God does not want your tithe but rather God wants all of you!

Acts 2:43-47

43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. **44** All who believed were together and had all things in common; **45** they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. **46** Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, **47** praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. *And day by day the Lord added to their number* those who were being saved.

How did they understand ownership?

How did they respond to those in need?

Who gave the increase?

What was the act(s) that led to the increase?

Acts 4:32-37

2 Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. **33** With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. **34** There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. **35** They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. **36** There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"). **37** He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

What is the underlying principles in the act(s) of giving?

How is oneness seen in these passages?

How are the living the biblical principle of selflessness and generosity?

What are the lines of division?

The Source of Division in the Church

Matthew 7:15-20

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **16** You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? **17** In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. **18** A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. **19** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20** Thus you will know them by their fruits.

What is their fruit?

Are we honest about what someone has actually produced?

Do we look critically at a person fruitful, Godly production or do we give them a pass because they talk a good game?

The Fruit of the Spirit vs the Fruit of Division ***Galatians 5:22-23***

22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

The Work of the Wolves

Matthew 10:16-22

16 “See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. **17** Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; **18** and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. **19** When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; **20** for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. **21** Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; **22** and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

1st Corinthians 1:10-17

10 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. **11** For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. **12** What I mean is that each of you says, “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Apollos,” or “I belong to Cephas,” or “I belong to Christ.” **13** Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? **14** I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, **15** so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. **16** (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) **17** For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

Division is not of God!

How do we respond to those (that spirit of division) in the church who cause division?

Have you ever seen someone in this church cause division?

How did you / we respond?

How should you / we respond?

If a key to church growth is generosity and unity how do we ensure we have that so that we might meet the needs of those in the church and in the world?

Six Lessons from Turnaround Churches by Thom Rainer

1. They led the church to become highly intentional about starting new groups.

The fewest groups started by any one of the churches were four in a one-year period.

These churches were serious about new groups, and most of them saw that, at least from a human perspective, as the primary source of turnaround growth.

2. They led the church to a culture of inviting people.

These pastors expressed amazement at how many people started coming to their churches simply because they were invited.

To be clear, this type of invitation was personal, from a member to someone else. It was not some type of major commercial marketing initiative.

Some of the churches had a big event, “invite-a-friend-day,” to kick off this new culture of inviting.

3. They began new member classes.

These classes set the tone for new members. They established the expectations for new members.

After a few months of these classes, many of the pastors began to notice an attitudinal change toward the positive among the members.

4. They began a major community ministry.

Some of the churches “adopted” local schools. Some of the leaders made appointments with key civic leaders to find out how their churches could best help the community.

In all cases, church members got out of the comfort of the church buildings and went into the community to serve others.

5. They began to pray for the lost and unchurched by name.

For many of the churches, this type of praying was a first.

Most of them attested that it seemed awkward at first, but it later became a part of their Great Commission culture.

6. The leaders began to focus less on negative people and circumstances and more on God's possibilities.

The leaders became, in God's power, people of faith instead of people of fear.

This spirit of faith became pervasive in the churches.

Many of the churches saw a negative and unbelieving church culture become a positive and faith-believing culture.