

VALUES

for Simple Church Life

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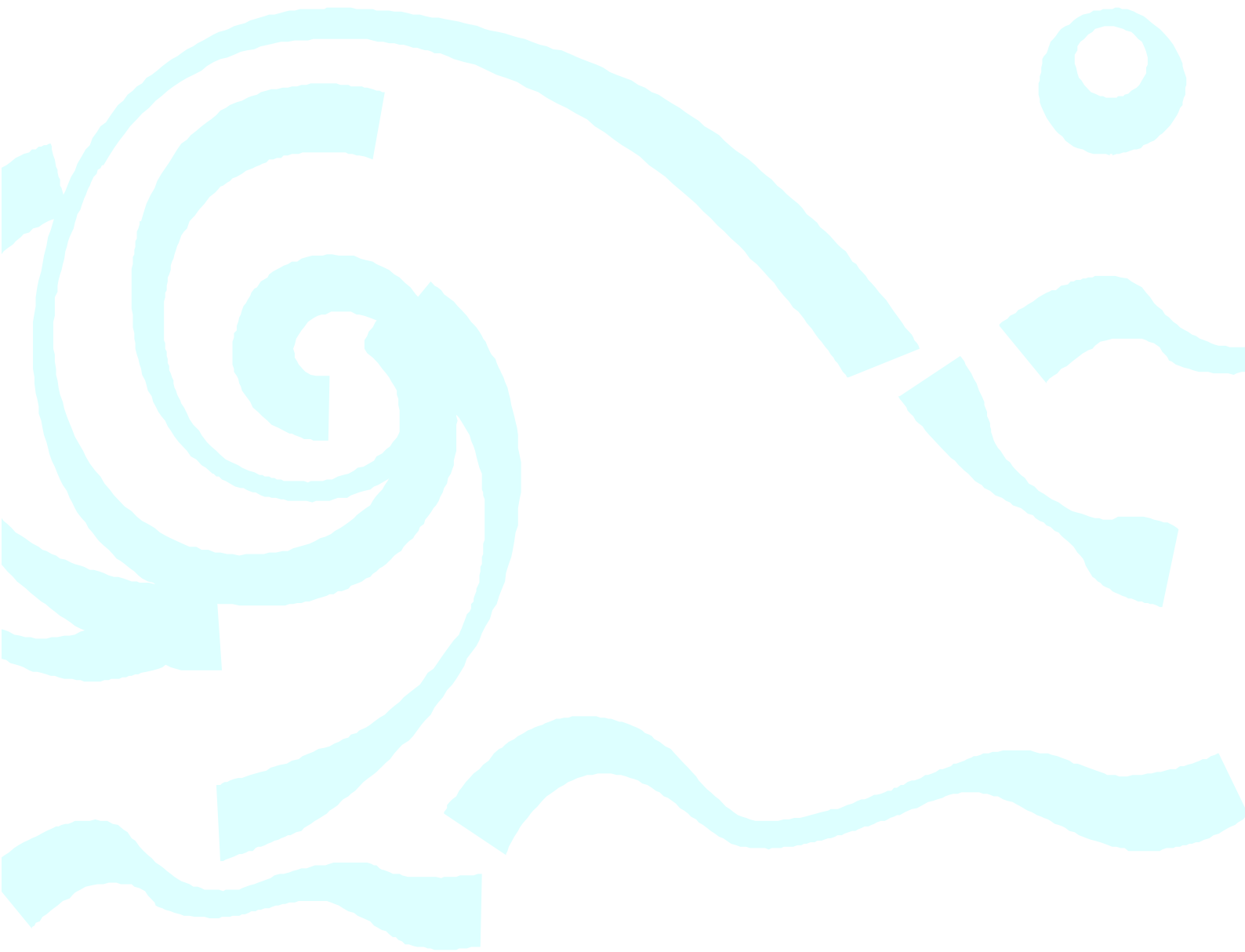
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In these notes you will find a brief outline of our six core teachings on our values for simple churches*. If a spiritual community can grasp these foundational values, we believe that they will be enabled to explore the depths of God's love, life and work together.

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*Also called home churches or “church in the house”.



1. The Kingdom of God & Body of Christ

Reasoning from the Whole to the Part

A. The Kingdom of God is the central message and mandate of Jesus Christ; and hence, should be for His people.

Mark 1:14, 15; Matthew 6:9, 10, 33

- The word **“Kingdom”** is the word most used by Jesus (over 100 times). Of the 40 parables Jesus taught, He devoted 19 to expressly understanding the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God was the first words on the prophet John’s lips (Matthew 3:1, 2). It was the first message on Jesus’ lips (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15). Luke records that Jesus’ agenda was not dictated by people’s demands; instead He aligned Himself to the Kingdom mandate, saying: **“I must preach the Kingdom of God...because for this purpose I have been sent”** (Luke 4:43). When Jesus commissioned the twelve disciples, He said: **“preach, saying, ‘The Kingdom of heaven is at hand’”** (Matthew 10:7). The same is true when He sent out the seventy (Luke 10:9).
- Jesus taught us to pray His Kingdom come (Matthew 6:10) and to make His Kingdom our primary pursuit: **“seek first the Kingdom of God”** (Matthew 6:33). The end of this age hinges on it: **“And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come”** (Matthew 24:14).

B. The implication of the Kingdom of God is the vision of one (capital B) Body of Christ, the corporate Christ.

Ephesians 1:9-23; 4:1-16; John 17:20, 21; Matthew 16:18

- Paul explained that God’s will is **“in the dispensation of the fullness of the times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him”** (Ephesians 1:9, 10). An essential part of what God gathers **“together in one...in Christ”** is expressed in the word **“church”** – the “called out ones,” the cabinet of the King. As part of the gathering **“together in one of all things,”** the church is God’s blue-print for this Divine alignment as we, the Kingdom Enforcers, represent and usher in God’s Divine intention. In fact, in words so sober and awesome that they almost have to be whispered, the church is to contain the fullness of Him who fills all in all (vv. 22, 23).
- Paul calls for the **“unity of the Spirit”** (Ephesians 4:1ff) and explains there **“is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”** (vv. 4-6). The goal is the corporate Christ: **“until we all come to the unity of the faith...a perfect man...the fullness of Christ”** (v. 13). This is the fulfilment of Jesus’ prayer: **“I pray...that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me”** (John 17:20,21).

C. The early church in a local city was a fellowship of simple churches aligned to the apostolic vision they were privileged to be apart of.

1 Corinthians 16:19; 1:2; 4:15, 16

- The **smallest unit** of the local church is a **home church**; a family of believers fathered by elders that finds its life through a home: “...greet the **church that is in their house**” (Romans 16:5; also see 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2). This is **church in the home**.
- The **broadest unit** of the local church is the **city church**; the fellowship of home churches in a specific city relating to the apostolic vision: “**the church of the Thessalonians**” (1 Thessalonians 1:1; also see 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Here Paul was writing to the numerous home churches in the city of Thessalonica that were within his apostolic responsibility, referring to their corporate community as “**church**”. This is **church of the city**.
- That this is the broadest unit of the local church is seen in Paul’s letter to the Galatians: “**To the churches of Galatia**” (Galatians 1:2). The plural “**churches**” is used here, as this letter was written to the churches in the province of Galatia, consisting of at least four city churches: in Antioch, in Iconium, in Lystra and in Derbe...four local, city churches each consisting of numerous home churches. Paul does not refer to the whole group as “**church**” but as “**churches**”. The boundary of the church is the city.
- The home churches then align themselves with apostolic vision and team. Paul urged the Corinthian believers aligned to his apostolic vision to embrace the church in the city (1 Corinthians 1:10-17) but reminded them that he was their spiritual father: “**Therefore I urge you, imitate me**” (1 Corinthians 4:15, 16). This is not an **exclusive** relationship, but it is a **primary** relationship. For essential vision, equipping and, when necessary, correction, apostolic alignment serves as God’s check-and-balance in the equation (1 Timothy 5:17-22). [Refer to Value 4 below].

Thus the church has three legs: (1) the home church, (2) the city church and (3) apostolic alignment.

- Paul taught us to reason from the whole to the part in using his analogy of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). The arm, for example, is important and valuable in itself but it only finds its full meaning and purpose in light of the whole body. An arm without a body makes very little sense. Again, think of the first week of creation (Genesis 1:1-31). After every day, God declared that it was good. Each part of the week was good. But when He viewed the entire week, He declared it was very good. The whole week was very good. **The part is good, but the whole is very good**. Thus we must reason from Christ’s **whole** Body to the specific **part** we play in His Body.

2. The Brotherhood of All Believers (gender neutral)

A Community of Equals

A. God's very nature is community (family).

Genesis 1:26; 2:18

- God is essentially a Father and a Son enjoying fellowship in the Spirit; a family...the community (common-unity) of the Trinity (Three-in-unity). **Thus church, in its essence, ought to be a community of fathers and sons (mothers and daughters) enjoying fellowship in the Spirit.**
- As God revealed Himself through the community of the Godhead; **He continues to reveal Himself through the community of His people.** The “church” is to be the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15); as individuals we have a single measure of God's fullness; in community we have a dynamically greater measure of the “fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22, 23).

B. Biblical community is built on fatherhood and family.

Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 6:4-7

- When God created a natural nation (the Hebrew people), He founded them on the value of family (community). When God birthed a spiritual nation (the church), it was on the same basis of family (community). Although the New Testament is written in Greek language, it is written with a **Hebrew mindset**. Thus, Biblically leaders are not CEO's or managers; they are **fathers**...church is not a business or an organization; it is a **family** (1 Timothy 5:1, 2). Thus it is organic not institutional.
- **We always reason leadership from the defining point of fatherhood and church from the defining point of family.** We aim to build from “relationship to structure” (our structures facilitate our relationships not the other way round) and work on the premise of “friendship before function”.

C. The New Testament community was first and foremost a brotherhood.

Matthew 23:8; 1 Corinthians 1:10, 26

- When Jesus taught on leadership, He based His teaching on this premise: “**you are all brothers**” (Matthew 23:8 NIV). The epistles to the churches were not addressed to the leaders but to the community, specifically, the “**brothers**” (NIV)*. This is particularly remarkable considering the many difficult issues the epistles tackled.

*Philippians is the only exception. It is the only epistle that includes in its address the “**bishops and deacons**,” but even here, it is first addressed “**to all the saints**” (Philippians 1:1).

- **The community, the brotherhood of all believers, is responsible to make decisions on issues of importance, even on matters such as discipline and the restoration of wayward members of the community** (see for example, the way Paul addresses the brothers in the delinquent church in Corinth through many heated issues: 1 Corinthians 1:10; 3:1; 4:6; 6:5; 7:24; 8:12; 10:1; 11:2; 12:1; 14:6; 15:1). What we would usually refer to as “leadership issues” is Biblically “brotherhood issues”. When we relegate many of these issues exclusively to the leadership’s domain, we violate the spirit and value of true community.
- This does not mean the community should vote, nor should the community seek complete consensus before decisions can be made. No. What it does mean is that leadership of the community should involve the “**brothers**” in these issues as they all discern the mind and will of God together. Discipline is a good example. Should discipline be required for a wayward brother, only the sting of the community’s disapproval will urge him to repentance. An exclusive leadership decision often results in suspicion, misunderstandings and division.
- The value of the brotherhood of all believers again stresses the importance of community based on family. Involving the “**brothers**” is only possible when the community is smaller and a genuine sense of family exists.

D. The New Testament calls us to live out intimate responsibilities – the 30 “one another” exhortations – possible only in community (family).

- The New Testament contains 30 direct exhortations to be responsible to one another, the vast majority of them can only be lived in family (community) life: for example, “**exhort one another daily**” (Hebrews 3:13), “**consider one another**” (Hebrews 10:24), “**members of one another**” (Romans 12:5), “**be kindly affectionate to one another...giving preference to one another**” (Romans 12:10), “**rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another**” (Romans 12:15, 16).
- In our day and age, it is going to take a radical people to lay aside our fierce individualism and independence, and learn to put our roots deeply into the soil of spiritual community (Psalm 92:13-15); we need to learn to “ **dwell together**” rather than just meet together (Psalm 133:1-3); knowing that there is a treasure in Christ we will never experience until our hearts are “**knit together**” in the Spirit (Colossians 2:1-3).

3. The Priesthood of All Believers

Every Believer is a Minister

A. God has always desired a nation of priests.

Exodus 19:5, 6; 20:18-21 c. 5:1-3; 6:2-4

- God delivered His people from Egypt not primarily to give them the Promised Land, but to **reveal Himself** to them and **establish a nation of priests** (Exodus 3:18; 5:1; 5:3; 7:16; 8:1, 8, 20, 25-28; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 24-26; 12:31). Yes, the Promised Land was a cherry-on-the-top blessing; but God had always made it clear that He was our **“Great Reward”** (Genesis 15:1).
- God expressed His desire for a **“kingdom of priests...a holy nation”** and then revealed Himself in glory; but the people rejected His first-hand invitation to intimacy, and instead settled for a second-hand relationship; saying, “Moses...you get it from God, and we’ll get it from you!” **“So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near...where God was”**. This is sadly the response of too many even today.

B. In Christ, God has fulfilled His desire for a nation of priests.

Revelation 5:8-10; 1 Peter 2:4, 5, 9

- In Christ we have a **“mediator between God and [man]”** (1 Timothy 2:5) and thus the invitation to a first-hand intimate relationship with God is once again extended. In Christ we are **“kings and priests to our God”** (**“kingdom of priests”** – marginal note). **Every** believer is a **“king”** – called to rule and reign (Romans 5:17) – and a **“priest”** – called to minister to God and on His behalf. **Every believer is a minister**, called to minister (2 Timothy 1:9), gifted to minister (1 Peter 4:10), anointed to minister (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22) and responsible to minister (Ephesians 4:16).

C. Through the Old Testament priesthood and David’s Tabernacle we understand our responsibility as New Testament priests.

Exodus 28:1; Psalm 141:2; Acts 15:15-17

- Most assume that the purpose of a priest is to minister to people. However, God desired a priesthood to minister to Him: **“Now take Aaron...that he may minister to Me as priest”**. **God desires a priesthood who ministers to Him; a people who know how to host and entertain the Presence of God.**
- David understood that the Old Testament sacrificial system was just a shadow pointing to the substance in Christ to come (Psalm 141:2). **The apostolic writers then confirmed this: our lifestyle of consecration** (Romans 12:1) **and praise** (Hebrews 13:15; Ephesians 5:19) **are our New Testament offerings of worship.**

- God certainly required the priesthood to minister to people; they were even responsible for health care and the treatment of the sick. **Ministry to God releases ministry for God.** Anointed ministry to people flows from intimate ministry to God. When we learn to host His Presence as the priesthood, He then uses us to minister to others and our world (Acts 13:2).

D. Meeting together is an overflow of community where Jesus promises to be present Himself as we gather in His Name.

Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 3:12, 13; 10:19-25

- Jesus promised that He would be in our midst when we meet in His Name; when He is the focal point, He is Present to minister to us through one another. **To be a believer is to have Christ within; to be a church is to have Christ in our midst!**
- To meet together regularly in His Name is the cherry-on-the-top for a community who love each other and love being together. Sporadic meeting is not healthy or Biblical! The early church gathered in two settings; the home church **meeting** being the primary setting, complimented by corporate **celebrations**.

Corporate church gatherings	Home church meetings
Celebrations...	Meetings...
“temple”	“house to house” (Acts 2:46)
“publicly”	“house to house” (Acts 20:20)
...for gift ministry	...for body ministry
Musical Worship	Breaking Bread
Teaching	Mentoring/Discipling
Impact Evangelism	Relational Evangelism
Vision Thrust	Vision Reality

- The New Testament gives us simple, yet clear instructions for meeting in His Name.

(1) **We meet to minister to Him** (Hebrews 10:19-23).

In other words, our meetings should have more worship than waffle, listening than leading, inspired silence than intellectual discussion. The purpose of meeting in His Name is not primarily a Bible Study or a teaching class with a programmed schedule; **rather we recognize Him present, we focus on Him and then we (each person) follow His leading.** In His Presence manifest in our midst, spontaneous expressions of worship flow from grateful hearts (Ephesians 5:18, 19; Colossians 3:16).

(2) **We meet to minister to one another** (Hebrews 10:24).

In other words, **we are to meet with others in mind.** We come to give! We come to serve! The contribution of each person – led by the Lord – determines the agenda of the meeting. This does not mean that every person must have their say, but that every person can, if led by the Lord to do so (1 Corinthians 14:26). **We do not need to all prepare a message; but we must all prepare our hearts.** The leadership of a home church may feel it necessary to teach from time to time (1 Timothy 3:2; Acts 20:20), but this should never replace as the norm, the power of Jesus present, ministering through the spontaneous, Spirit-led contribution of every believer.

4. Apostolic Authority & Eldership Rule

Parent-hearted, Servant Leadership

A. Jesus entrusted His *exousia* authority to apostles and their teams to spearhead the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:18-20

- The **first delegation** of the risen Christ's "**authority**" (Greek: *exousia*, "delegated Kingdom government") was to the **apostles** (v. 16). While every believer has a crucial role to play in the Great Commission, apostles are functionally senior in fulfilling this direct mandate (1 Corinthians 12:12-28).
- The Bible never speaks of a prophet or pastors' *exousia* authority only of an apostle's *exousia* authority (2 Corinthians 13:10). Other gift ministries were sent in the *exousia* authority of an apostle and were to be received by the churches in the strength of this *exousia* authority (Philippians 2:19-30). We use the term "apostolic team" to refer to the Biblical functioning of a team of Ephesians 4:11 equipping gifts in apostolic authority together.
- An apostle (and his apostolic team) is entrusted with a "**sphere**" – "a measure of rule" – and they carry the full weight of Christ's *exousia* authority to advance the Kingdom – to plant and parent churches with a commitment to see the corporate Christ established – within this stewardship (2 Corinthians 10:12-17). Apostles and their teams of equipping gifts are "equippers" who seek to **build on Christ** and **release the church into ministry**, rather than build on themselves and do all the ministry (Ephesians 4:11, 12). **The focus of apostolic authority is the planting of home churches to establish the city church.**

B. In planting churches, thus fulfilling our global mandate, apostles appoint elders to parent-govern the churches established.

Acts 14:21-23; 1 Timothy 5:17-20

- An apostolic team plants a new work and then looks to set in spiritual parents in the new community by appointing elders (Greek: *presbuteros*, "mature believer"); **the second delegation of Christ's authority**. Thus apostles (and their teams) appoint elders (Titus 1:5).
- The elders (parents) are entrusted to "**rule**" (Greek: *proistemi*, "to stand before, hence, to lead") over a spiritual community (family), a home church (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15 and Philemon 1:2). In this sense the elders have "complete responsibility" in this stewardship. Home church is not a Cell Group or a Bible Study Group: it is "**church**," **a self-functioning community of brothers**; a living expression of the Body of Christ.

- The elders remain submitted to the apostolic team (and vision) who appointed them. In this sense the apostolic team has “overall responsibility” as they serve the fellowship of home churches under their apostolic jurisdiction. Although this is an invited not imposed relationship, **the home church is not an independent entity existing in exclusion from the apostolic life and vision that gave it birth.**
- The elders are to be “among” the people, literally, referring to a close, fixed proximity of relationship (1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28). The elders are to tend to the people; not be a board who votes on programmes the people attend. Being an elder is not a calling or a gifting, it is a role of responsibility based on public recognition of one’s mature parent-leadership – heart – and proven character – integrity (1 Timothy 3:1-7). The gifting of each elder determines **how** they lead their home church and **what** role/influence they may have within the local city church. **Thus every believer has this Christ-within potential to parent-lead and should nurture and develop this noble desire** (1 Timothy 3:1; Colossians 1:27).
- The elders in a locality serve together as an “**eldership**” that serve the corporate life of the home churches, depending on their sphere of influence, in support of the apostolic vision (1 Timothy 4:14). **The focus of eldership rule is the oversight of home churches as part of the city church.**

C. Biblical leadership is parent-hearted servanthood.

Matthew 20:25, 26; 1 Corinthians 4:15, 16; Mark 10:45; John 13:1-5

- Biblical leadership is founded on parenthood. Paul’s leadership, his encouragement, instruction and correction, was always based on his father-heart to the churches (1 Thessalonians 2:7-11). Thus, **true leadership is all about revealing the Father.**
- **Biblical leadership derives its strength from a relational basis of integrity (servanthood) rather than a structural basis of position (control).** Parent-leadership appeals to the internal conscience of others through integral relationship rather than imposing external conformity through hierarchical pressure.

		<u>Biblical Leadership</u>	<u>Worldly Leadership</u>
Heart	>	Fatherhood	Rulership
Influence	>	Relational	Structural
Power	>	Integrity	Position
Action	>	Servanthood	Control

- Parent-leaders do not use people to fulfil their vision; they give of themselves to serve people in their God-given destiny. They seek to produce disciples of Jesus, not clones of themselves. Thus parent-leadership is grounded in servanthood. **To lead is to serve.**
- Leaders are first servants of the Lord before they serve the people (2 Timothy 2:24). Thus **parent-leaders are responsible to, not for, the people they lead.** “**Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ...For each one shall bear his own load**” (Galatians 6:2, 5).

5. Fathers & Sons (gender neutral)

Sending & Releasing the Sons of the Kingdom

A. We enjoy “church” when we experience “fatherhood” and “brotherhood” in covenant community.

1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8, 11, 19, 20; 1 John 3:16

- Church is not an organization we remain on the roster of by virtue of dues paid. Church is not a weekly meeting that we clock the card into. **Church is a covenant family of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters** (1 Timothy 5:1, 2). When we honour spiritual fatherhood (Hebrews 13:17) and treasure spiritual brotherhood (Romans 12:3-10), we become the church Jesus builds: in love, alive and at work.

B. Hebrew thinking – the way God thinks – viewed maturity as a process of growing from childhood, through sonship to fatherhood.

1 John 2:12-14

- In Hebrew thinking, a child was taught obedience to the Law of God (Childhood). At thirteen, a child was adopted by his parents, entering an apprenticeship under the tutorship of his father (Sonship). Through this mentoring, the son’s character was proven and would, in time, be entrusted with the family inheritance (Fatherhood). The early church embraced the same process in terms of spiritual growth: a new believer needs to learn the grace and forgiveness of God and obedience to His will (“**children**”), growing up required learning to abide in God’s Word, overcoming sin, self and the enemy (“**young men**”). Thus, with proven character, one is entrusted with the privilege of fathering others (“**fathers**”).
- Even Jesus submitted Himself to this growth process of childhood, sonship and fatherhood for our sake (Luke 2:51, 52); becoming a faithful “**Son over His own house**” (Hebrews 3:1-6; 5:8, 9). In His baptism, Father God spoke the Hebrew “father’s blessing” over Jesus, His proven Son: “**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**” (Matthew 3:16, 17). Jesus was a “**Child...born**” who became a “**Son...given**,” released as an “**Everlasting Father**” (Isaiah 9:6). The great need today is for a “child born” into the faith to become a “son given;” **for it is from faithful sons that fruitful fathers emerge.**
- Through commitment to fathers and brothers in community we experience the reality of God’s love; we learn to accept and to be accepted, to serve and to be served, to honour and to be honoured; **our motives are tested and our character is proven.**

C.The potential to parent-lead is nurtured and released through sonship.

Philippians 2:19-22

- The Bible reveals many father-son relationships: Moses & Joshua; Ruth & Naomi; Samuel & David; Elijah & Elisha; and of course, the backbone of the New Testament: Jesus fathered Peter, Peter fathered Barnabas, Barnabas fathered Paul, Paul fathered Timothy, and then urged Timothy to father **“faithful men”** who could father **“others also”** (2 Timothy 2:2).
- As Timothy faithfully served Paul and submitted to his fatherhood (2 Timothy 3:10-17; 1 Corinthians 4:15, 16; 11:1), we need to learn to become a faithful “son in the house,” selflessly serving spiritual fathers, making ourselves accountable to their counsel and admonition, ***imitating them as they imitate Christ***. In time, we will be secure and mature to thus, father others also; modelling Christ as we have learnt to model our lives after Christ.

D.The early church thrived as a “Here & There” people and home church life was a launch pad for Kingdom exploits.

Acts 1:8; Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

- When Jesus promised to pour out His Spirit thus birthing the early church, He envisioned a “Here and There” people: **“you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”**. The phraseology Jesus used here does not imply a ***consecutive*** approach; He did not mean that they were to first target Jerusalem exclusively and then when, once that was achieved, they were to focus on Samaria. Rather Jesus’ words imply a ***simultaneous*** approach. The early church was to target Jerusalem – their “Here” – while simultaneously reaching out to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth – their “There”. This DNA in their hearts through the indwelling Spirit was the catalyst for their explosive power.
- Home church is not an end in itself; it is the “safe place” of covenant community in which we learn to **“know God”**, become **“strong”** and carry out Kingdom **“exploits”**(Daniel 11:32). It is the place (family) from which secure fathers release and serve faithful sons into their destiny purpose, and thus we carry God’s life from our homes to the nations. Jesus desires to sow **“sons of the Kingdom”** into every **“field”** of the world: family & marriage, business & financing; education & work; arts & sport; media & entertainment; politics & environment and science & technology (Matthew 13:37, 38).

The question is: Where do **“sons”** come from? **“Sons”** don’t come from Bible schools or training courses; **“sons”** come from families! (Yes, training is obviously important...but it is to compliment the incubator of the church family).

This course is one of several tools and resources available.

For other resources please contact us...

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