



Life Group Kit



VISION

2024



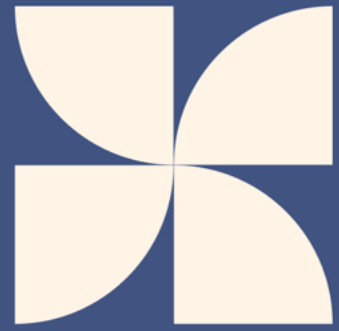
More Than Able



Clayton Church of Christ



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Intro

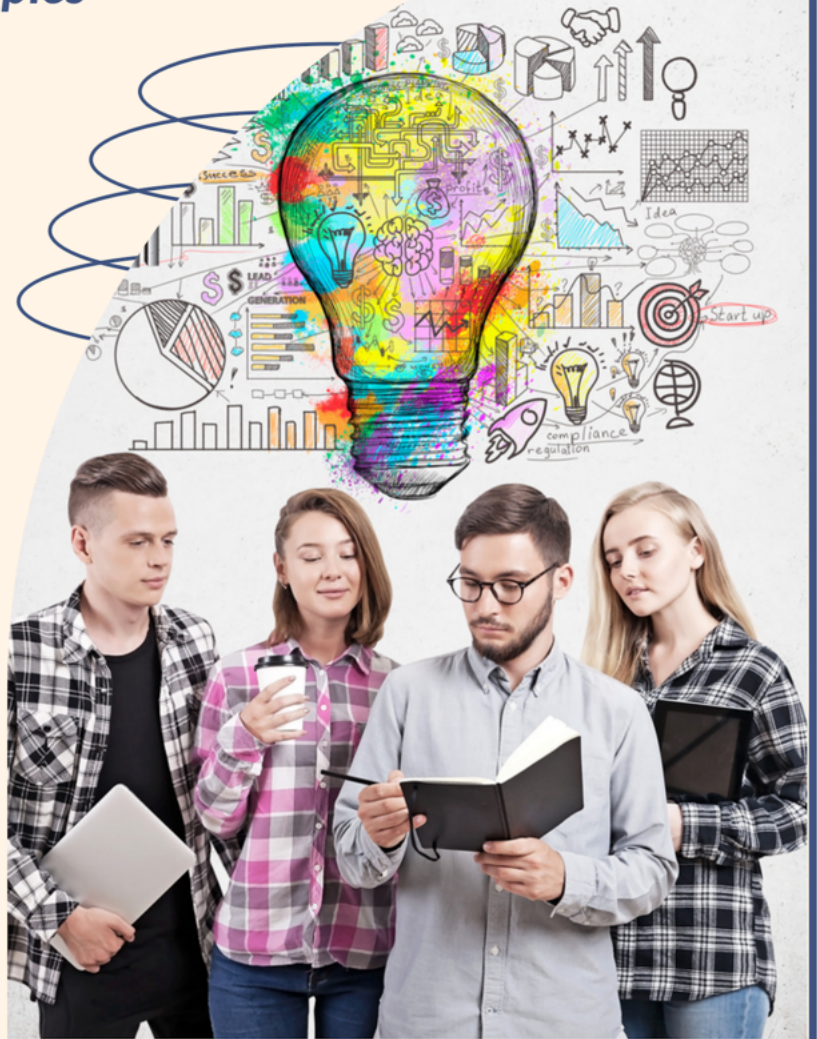
Our Vision & Values

Our vision is to build disciples who represent Jesus to everyone, everywhere, with everything.

As we build these disciples, we believe we will see an...

Enabling Church, enabled by strong governance and the right operational support.

A church that builds adaptability in its governance & operations to enable & empower the fulfilment of the vision.



A church that is above reproach as an organisation, that faithfully stewards its resources & cultivates healthy accountability and empowerment of its people.

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**Christ-Centred Gathered
Church** thriving in groups
gathered around Jesus. A
church thriving in groups
gathered around Jesus. A
church whose head is
Jesus, and whose help is
the Holy Spirit. A church
that reveals Jesus better
together to the world
than alone.

A church that gathers in
life groups and Sunday



celebrations experiencing life
transformation through the
uncompromising truth of God's
Word, their encounters with the
Holy Spirit and the tangible love
of Jesus through one another. A
church that encounters more of
Jesus together than alone.

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Everyday Church, representing Jesus in our everyday moments. A church that believes Christ wants to be in everyone, everywhere and in everything. A church where people are freed from the disease of ME and everyday life becomes opportunities to represent Jesus - where mistakes become opportunities

to model Christ-like humility, promotion to model Christ-like servanthood, work to contribute to society, family to pass the baton of faith to the next generation, hobbies to build relationships with those far from Jesus, money to bless and serve those in need. People who are disciplined in the every day and people who make disciples in the everyday moments.



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As we build these
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Local Church, walking
alongside stakeholders to
transform Clayton. A
church that embraces the
community of Clayton as
our own. We see
ourselves becoming a
people that walks
alongside the community
leaders, seeking to make
the city better together.
A people through whom
acceptance is given,

hope is re-birthed, restoration
discovered and Christ is found. A
people who embrace our unique
calling to be His light in the most
multicultural suburb in one of
the most multicultural nations. A
people where Jesus has broken
down our walls of prejudice so
we can build a diverse,
multicultural and united church
that reflects our community.



Intro

Our Vision & Values

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As we build these
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Global Church, reaching
the unreached people
groups. A church that
welcomes and makes a
home for international
students, to disciple and
sends them back globally
with a commitment and
vision of the Great
Commission.



A church that focuses on global
mission partnerships that
empower a disciple-making
movement globally among the
unreached people groups.

Intro

Our Vision & Values

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As we build these
disciples, we believe we
will see a...

Pioneering Church,
pioneering new frontiers
and spheres. A church
whose focus is on making
disciples that multiply. A
church where leaders
equip and members are
empowered to change
lives by making disciples
of Jesus.

A church that is committed to
multiplying leaders who can birth
vision, with the boldness and
courage to lead out a disciple-
making movement in different
spheres of influence.





Intro

Our Vision & Values



We have Disciple Making Values

We will build disciples through values driven discipleship. These values are easily remembered by the acronym **GRACE**.

G - Groups & Gatherings

Jesus is experienced and revealed more when we are together than alone.

R - Reproducibility

Healthy disciples reproduce disciples.

A - Actively Hearing and Obeying

Through hearing and obeying the living Word of God, we work with God to see change in us and other.

C - Connecting

Jesus connected with God, those near God, and those far from God.

E - Everyday Moments

The Holy Spirit uses everyday moments to shape us to become more like Jesus.



A Reason to Believe

PT I



Week 1



In 1972 Francis Schaeffer, American theologian, philosopher, pastor, wrote a book titled 'Genesis in Space and Time', and in it wrestled with the question of what we must make and understand of Genesis 1-11 for the rest of Scripture to be coherent and true. In other words, what clear truths must we hold from reading Genesis for the rest of the Bible to make sense and be found truthful? If we are to stand firmly on the belief that "God is more than able..." as we read in Ephesians, then we should probably make sure we understand what God is more than able to do and how He is able to do it.

Here are some thoughts partially copied from and inspired by an essay from Guy M. Richard and an interview with D. A. Carson:

"In the beginning, God"

The first four words of the Bible place immediate emphasis upon God. They tell us from the very beginning that before anything else in the universe existed, God already was.



A Reason to Believe Pt I

Nothing brought him into being. Nothing gave him existence. He was around long before anything else was. He was around long before there was even such a thing as time itself. There was no “before God”, and there will be no “after”.

Let's read Psalm 102:25-27

25 Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth
and made the heavens with your hands.

26 They will perish, but you remain forever;
they will wear out like old clothing.

You will change them like a garment
and discard them.

27 But you are always the same;
you will live forever.

And Revelation 1:8

8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end,” says the Lord God. “I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One.”

This is how we are to understand God. Before. After. Always existing. Uncreated. Eternal. Without need. We need to understand who God is and in turn understand who we are. Nothing gave God existence and meaning and ability. But God can give those things to creation. And he did.



A Reason to Believe Pt I

Here are some points taken from and inspired by D A Carson, that he believes we should take from the creation narrative that will form the foundation of most of our other beliefs:

1) God comes first. It is such an elementary point, but it needs to be articulated. Before anything else was, before there was a universe in the beginning: God. He comes first. And that is teased out in other Scriptures to show that God in eternity past was not dependent upon us. It is not that God needed the universe so he wouldn't be lonely. God has everything He needs within Himself, within the Trinity.

2) God speaks. He is a communicating God. The first thing he does is speak and by his powerful word calls the universe into existence. Now that becomes typical of God, revealing himself in word. Right through the whole Bible God is a talking God, and not only that, he also dares to speak in words that human beings can understand. Think about that statement. God communicates with us on a level that we can understand!



A Reason to Believe Pt I

3) God made everything. All of it. That is against pantheism, in which everything in the universe is God. That is against new age spirituality in which we can access versions on God. That is against seeking the “gods within”. And in this understand, we also gain the understanding that there is a distinction between God, who exists before everything in the universe, and the created order, creation. It is against any sort of ontological dualism, that is, a kind of dualism in which there is a good force and a bad force, or one force with a good side and the bad side. It is not Star Wars. There are not equal but opposite sides. There is one winning side, and then those that choose not to be on it.

4) There is one God who is good, and he made everything good. When we think of good and evil, we should not look at it as though there are two sides that are in competition with each other. All is under the domain of God. Even the evil creatures and people that do evil things, all find themselves ultimately under the sovereignty of dominion of God, even if they choose not to accept it.

Even when people reject God, he is still Lord over them.



A Reason to Believe Pt I

And because He is Lord over all, God doesn't need anything from us. There are two reasons why this is true:

1. We cannot give God anything that wasn't already his.
2. Everything that is good originates from God, so we would only be returning things to the Maker.

When Paul finds himself evangelising pagans in Acts 17 in the great city of Athens, one of the things that he stresses is that God is the Creator of all things, that he doesn't need anything. The pagan gods are finite. They have their needs and their fears and their lusts and their joys and their sorrows and their triumphs and so on. So, a lot of pagan religion is just an attempt to make the gods happy. A lot of religion is: You scratch my back, I scratch your back. You offer the right sacrifices to the gods, and you end up with a fat, healthy baby. That is what religion is and what a pagan world looks like. It is arranged in terms of swaps. But if God made everything and needs nothing, how on earth do you trade with him? You don't.

5) Even from the beginning of our existence, the necessity for the doctrine of grace is established in the doctrine of creation. God made everything good.



A Reason to Believe Pt I

That means that human beings are accountable to God. We answer to God alone. And it is only God who can then determine what comes of us. And if we cannot offer anything to God, we are going to come up short in response to and payment of any type of debt or punishment that we might incur (this is of course referring to sin). So this means that it is up to God to help us pay our debts, which is the basis for understanding grace.

6) Human beings are introduced as made in the image of God. That becomes a major theme that runs right through the entire Scripture. God makes human beings in his own image and likeness so that in some ways they are very much like the rest of creation — made by God. And in other ways they are singularly unique and it would be well worth our while to unravel some of the things that are bound up with this notion of the “image of God”.

Christians have a difficult time agreeing exactly what this means and the implications of it, but to use simple well agreed upon truths:

- we are supposed to reflect God. We are his image.



A Reason to Believe Pt I

Yet at the same time we too belong to the created order just like every other part of creation. We are made from the desire and design of God. We are part of the created order and not to be confused with God.

Herman Bavinck referred to the creation doctrine as “the starting point of true religion”. We are not here to nail down the specific “creation narrative” (literal six-day vs figurative vs poetic vs scientific narrative...), but to stand firm on the belief that God is the author of life, the Initiator of all things and the Giver of all good things. This firm belief is the starting point for us to understand a God “Who is able”, and more specifically the Only One who is able. There is no other god or entity or force that has the authority and power to do what only God can do. To finish this section with a quote again from Guy M. Richard, “...every person in the universe is subject to God and dependent upon Him as Creator and Sustainer...we are all derived and dependent creatures. We belong to God, the absolute Owner of everything.”



A Reason to Believe Pt I

Read / Reflect / Discuss

Read Acts 17:28. Discuss what it means to know God as the giver of our life. Not just a distant God, but the very cause of our existence.

Read Hebrews 1:3. Reflect and discuss what it means to believe that the God who “sustains everything” is also intimately concerned with your heart and having a relationship with you.

Discuss how you feel about God having ownership and authority over all people. Discuss the implications of God having the right to deal with us as He wills.

Read Revelation 1:8. Explain how you would unpack this verse, maybe at the level of a child. What does it mean for you? What are the implications? How would this change your understanding of life?

Reflect on whether you are more likely to trust in the statement of “God being more than able” if you understand truths found in the creation doctrine better.



A Reason to Believe

PT II



Week 2



As we continue to think about the theme of 'More than Able', one of the ways in which we begin to appreciate and understand what God is capable of doing is to look back through history and see how God has worked, how faith has changed the world, and how Jesus has shaped society.

Peter Bunton in his article on how Christianity changed the world writes this, "...it is not an idea which brings change, but it is God transforming His people who then reflect who God is to the world."

God is not powerless and motionless, and his presence in his followers continues to shape the world. God is not a hypothetical concept, but active in making changes to everyday life for our world.

Here are some ways in which God has moved and shaped our world.



A Reason to Believe Pt II

Humility

Preacher, author, historian John Dickson has written a book on humility and the origins of this character trait. He and a team from Macquarie University explored how and where humility came from. Much to the surprise of the team, it was discovered that humility as a valued quality in society did not exist prior to the arrival of Jesus on earth. Humility before the gods and rulers was expected, but humility within the ranks for normal society was not expected, nor was it helpful. Dickson writes, "And then suddenly in the first century you get this story of this man who's meant to be the greatest man ever, and he's born, laid in a manger, and he dies on a cross. And suddenly all these notions of power and glory are turned upside down. Suddenly, real greatness consists in this serving, loving, humble path that Jesus exemplified. That's how we got the notion of humility."

Here are some other ways in which Jesus and Christianity have impacted the world as we know it, based on writings from Peter Bunton, John Dickson, and Christopher L Reese.



A Reason to Believe Pt II

The Value of Human Life

Reading Genesis 1:26-27 we see that humans are made in God's image, Matthew 19:4 gives us insight into the value of children, James 1:27 commands that care and love be shown towards those without providers and protection, and John 13:34 tells us that to love others is to obey the commands of Jesus.

People are not just another part of the created order. People are not just another version of animal that happens to have better cognitive ability than others. People have a unique and special place on God's earth, and through Scripture we see God giving dignity and honour to humanity. This has influenced the world as the Christian heart seeks to help the poor, assist the sick, protect those in need has given birth to hospitals, orphanages, charities, and legal expectations on how people are to be treated.

Historian Tom Holland (not Spiderman), who is not a professing Christian, writes that Christianity, "...is the principal reason why . . . we generally assume that every human life is of equal value. In my morals and ethics, I have learned to accept that I am not Greek or Roman at all, but thoroughly and proudly Christian."



A Reason to Believe Pt II

Science & Pursuit of Knowledge

There has been a common misunderstanding that Biblical adherence and scientific adherence battle with each other. While there is some merit and truth to the Church at times squashing new scientific learnings, on the whole Christian beliefs have driven and underpinned many steps in knowing and understanding more about our universe.

Historian and philosopher of science Peter Harrison writes, “Not only were many of the key figures in the rise of science individuals with sincere religious commitments, but the new approaches to nature that they pioneered were underpinned in various ways by religious assumptions.”



A Reason to Believe Pt II

Science & Pursuit of Knowledge

Early pioneers of modern science even understood that the field of science and exploration was a means of worship and bringing glory to God.

Copernicus: “To know the mighty works of God, to comprehend . . . the wonderful workings of His laws, surely all this must be a pleasing and acceptable mode of worship to the Most High.”

Galileo: “The glory and greatness of Almighty God are marvellously discerned in all his works.”

Kepler: “Geometry is unique and eternal, a reflection of the mind of God. That men are able to participate in it is one of the reasons why man is an image of God.”

Newton: “This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an Intelligent Powerful Being.”

Psalm 19:1 speaks of creation being a way in which to glimpse and understand God better:

“The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship.”



A Reason to Believe Pt II

Liberation

It will not take you long to look through history and find that women and children were often marginalised, disenfranchised, and generally ignored when it came to how society was constructed. Along with this, in a more recent history we see slavery, especially with people of colour, as an accepted part of life.

But somewhere along the lines there was a shift in the social dynamics, and the rights of the marginalised became to gain importance. Can Christianity stake sole claim on being the reason why this positive shift happened? No. That would be disingenuous. But to ignore the overwhelming influence that Christianity has had to help bring equality between men and women, between rich and poor, between powerful and powerless, between ethnicities and races would itself be doubly disingenuous.



A Reason to Believe Pt II

Liberation

A simple look at Jesus and how he treated those considered lesser will show the influence and power that Christianity has had in changing how our world operates. Luke 10 sees Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus. Romans 16 sees Phoebe as a church leader. Galatians 3 speaks of the removal of titles of Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female as a means of doling out importance and value and their invitation to grace.

William Wilberforce is well known for being motivated by faith to abolish slavery, and lesser-known John Chrysostom encouraged followers of Jesus to purchase slaves with the purpose of giving education and freedom to them.

William and Catherine Booth, in their founding of The Salvation Army sought to minister to those who were shut out from society.

Christianity is not a dead religion because it does not follow a motionless God. The God of the Bible is moving and active and changing the world through the lives of those who follow Jesus.



A Reason to Believe Pt II

Read / Reflect / Discuss

Read 19:1-6. Do you feel the same sense of confidence that creation speaks of God? Why or why not?

How do you feel about what Peter Bunton wrote about Christianity "...it is not an idea which brings change, but it is God transforming His people who then reflect who God is to the world."

Read Gen. 1:26-27, Matt. 19:4, James 1:27 & John 13:34 and discuss how this should shape how much or little we value human life. Take time to discuss what you feel Christianity does well and needs to improve on to reflect these values.

Reflect on whether you truly believe Christianity is a positive movement and belief system for the whole world. What are your confidences and concerns?

Discuss whether you think your public Christianity shows the power of God at work in your life.

Vision:

More Than Able to Change Our Heart



Week 3



Let's read Ephesians 3:14-21 together.

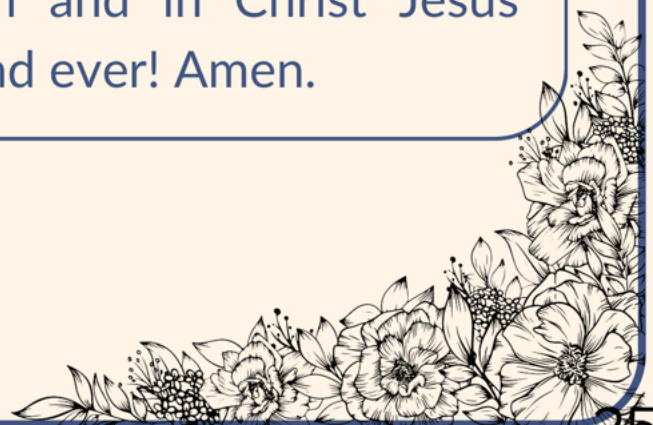
14 When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, 15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. 16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. 17 **Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him.** Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. 18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.

Vision:

More Than Able to Change Our Heart



19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. **Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.** 20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power **at work within us**, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. 21 Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

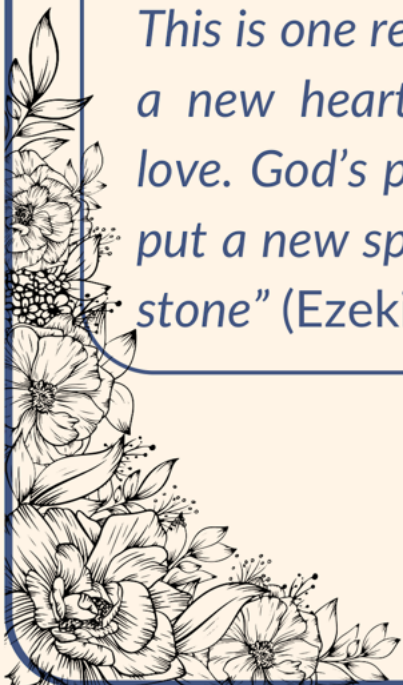


Vision: More Than Able to Change Our Heart

In response to a letter asking if self-help is as useful as religion in changing a person's heart, Ps Billy Graham responded,

"Yes, psychologists and psychiatrists can help us understand ourselves, and give us insight into the reasons we do the things we do... But what is our basic problem? The Bible says we each have a basic, hard-core spiritual problem that we can never solve on our own—and that problem is sin. Don't think of sin as simply doing things that are wrong; sin in the Bible is like a crippling virus, or a toxic chemical in a river. It manifests itself in selfishness and rebellion against God, and no matter how hard we try, we still put ourselves first.

This is one reason why we need God, for only He can give us a new heart, and replace our self-centeredness with His love. God's promise is true: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone" (Ezekiel 36:26)..."



Vision: More Than Able to Change Our Heart

Often, we wrongly assume that we have enough within us to help us overcome hardships and develop all the skills we need to thrive. The problem with this thinking is that we are ignoring the very core need of every person who has ever existed: we need the work of God in us.

Augustine says, “the grace of God is help for doing things more easily.” He teaches that while we can attempt to move in the direction we feel we need to go, whether it be towards relationship repair, understanding our purpose, working through grief, removing idols from your life, we will never get there unless we cooperate with the work that God wants to do in us.

Augustine continues this thought, “God is not building his temple out of you as out of stones which can’t move themselves...That’s not what living stones are like. You are being led, but you too must run; you’re being led, but you must follow; because when you do follow, it will still be true, that without him you can do nothing.”

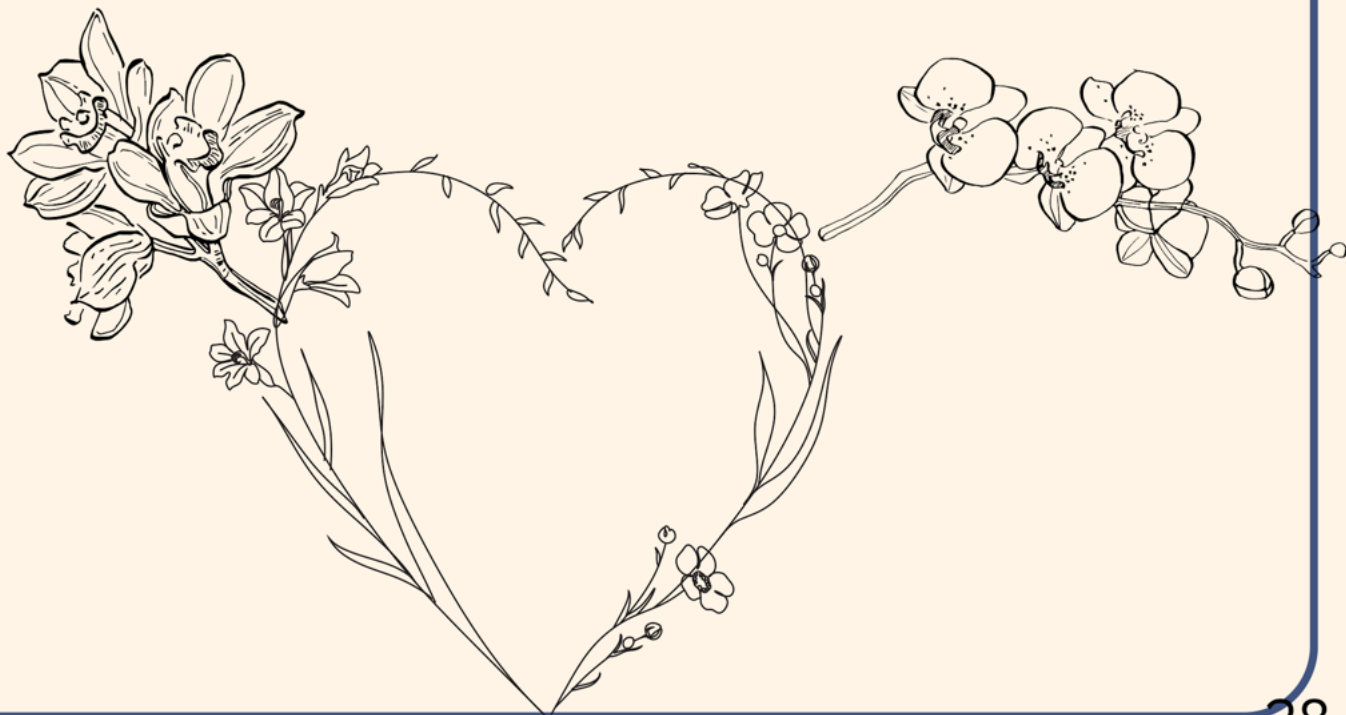


Vision: More Than Able to Change Our Heart

In other words, God is not moving us like chess pieces that have no individual thought or agency. God is working through us and with us, but we cannot just sit idly by, we must walk where He leads, we must go where He calls, we must know His voice and obey His designs.

Our hearts are the epicentre of God's work in creation. Mountains do not have emotions, rain does not care if it falls or not, the stars have no plans of their own. But our hearts, that is the vessel in which God is seeking to transform humanity and through humanity the world.

Without heart change there is no real change.



Vision: More Than Able to Change Our Heart

Read / Reflect / Discuss

Read Ezekiel 36:26. What do you think this means from a practical, real-world perspective? How does it affect your life?

Discuss the difference between working in your own strength versus allowing God to give the grace to make real change.

Share the steps you take to keep your heart open to God's work in you.

Read Ephesians 3:20. What do you think God's work in you is?

Consider using this prayer by Peter Adam as an exercise to open your heart to God's work"

'May this day be my best day of knowing, loving and serving you and living for your glory.'



Vision: More Than Able to Change Our Church



Week 4



As we begin our last week of the Vision Series, let's read through sections of Ephesians 3 one more time.

Ephesians 3:6-13, 20-21

6 And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.

Vision:

More Than Able to Change Our Church



✦ Week 4 ✦

7 By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

8 Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. 9 I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

10 God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Vision:

More Than Able to Change Our Church



✦ Week 4 ✦

12 Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. 13 So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honoured.

...

20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. 21 Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

Vision: More Than Able to Change Our Church

The church is more than just a group of people in a room facing the same direction. It is the gathered body of believers, and as such, it is a vehicle for God to do amazing work.

Timothy Keller once spoke of four things that the church should be:

- 1) It's crucial
- 2) It's countercultural
- 3) It's inexplicably attractive
- 4) It's the company of the forgiven

All of these are true, and all four of those things require the move of God for it to be possible. The Church is a collection of people who God has worked marvels and miracles in, both big and small. But no miracle is bigger than the rescue and redemption of sinners to saints, as God brings us into His family. The Church is a testament to the power of God.



Vision: More Than Able to Change Our Church

Mel Walker writes in an article that the local church is meant to be ever changing as it accommodate new individuals with unique skills, traits, and callings. While there is always the highest calling of the church, building disciples and glorifying God, there is the pioneering aspect of a church as it rises to meet the challenges and opportunities of the community it finds itself in.

A commentator once said, “The purpose of the church is to join people of different backgrounds and talents and provide them training and opportunities for God's work. It accomplishes this both internally, within the body, and externally, in the world.”

This is what we see in Ephesians 3. God displaying his wisdom, his power, his purpose in all its rich variety through the church! The church is not a stagnant movement, but a living organism that reaches into new territories.



Vision: More Than Able to Change Our Church

We need to remember that the Church does not belong to us.

The Church belongs to the One who built it. Matthew 16:18 says, “I will build My church”, and in Psalm 127:1, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it”. Our church needs to be so closely aligned with the heart of God, that when the Holy Spirit prompts, we move. Our church needs to hold tightly to the truth and the plans of God. When we are aligned with God’s plans then the different seasons of the church will not be worrisome or uncomfortable. When our hearts are after God’s heart then the people that God wants to minister to will be the people that we want to minister to. When our plans are submitted into God’s hand, the pioneering Spirit that births churches and movements will birth new things in our community.

May we always kneel before the rightful leader of the Church. Jesus Christ.



Vision: More Than Able to Change Our Church

Read / Reflect / Discuss

Read Ephesians 3:6-11. Discuss what you think this passage means for our church. How does this affect Clayton Church?

Read Ephesians 3:20-21. Share how you think God is glorified in our church. What do we do that brings God glory?

Discuss what you believe an “empowered church” would look like. How would our church be different if all our congregation were experiencing the “grace and mighty power” of God?

Reflect on whether a pioneering and bold church excites you or worries you. What are some of the reasons?

Share some of the ways in which you have experienced the goodness of God through the people in our church. How has our church ministered to you?

Spend some time in prayer, seeking what God’s desire for our church is. Share with the group what you may have felt or heard. Write it down.