

The Vision of Eastgate Community Church

Pastor Dale Campfield - October 16th, 2011

Today, I want to share with you the vision of the house. The vision of Eastgate Community Church... We are right at about 4 years old right now. We are a young church and have been extremely blessed by God throughout these short years. I thank the Lord for all He has done in and through each of you!

Many of you were here at the beginning. And a lot of you started coming to Eastgate since it started and have really never heard this vision. And those of you that have, you may have forgotten our vision. Sure, you hear us say it all the time, but what does it mean? That's what we're going to look at today.

As we begin, I want to remind you of the spiritual covering we have as a church. We have submitted ourselves to Evangel Fellowship International headquartered in Conway, South Carolina. Evangel Fellowship International is a fellowship of churches and ministers dedicated to developing and promoting unity and strength among its members.

EFI purpose and goals are as follows:

- To promote unity and fellowship among our members.
- To emphasize and encourage New Testament ministry.
- To Ordain and License ministers who are recommended for membership by a member or by a reputable minister.
- To fulfill the Great Commission by engaging in evangelism and the planting of churches worldwide.

I am honored to serve as an Executive Board Member and Regional District Rep for EFI can say with firsthand experience that this is a ministry that has nothing but integrity at heart in every way possible. It is built on a foundation of true relationships with Christ and one another.

Founder, Bishop Houston Miles is my personal pastor that I have submitted myself to. As well, I have submitted myself personally to his son and now acting Chairman of EFI, Phillip Miles. Locally, I have submitted myself to one whom I consider one of the spiritual fathers of the city of Cincinnati, Ford Taylor. As always, I am also submitted to the wisdom, guidance and love of my father Jerral Campfield and father in law Glen Homan; both to whom I honor, love and have a great deal of respect for.

I believe in accountability and believe that we as a church must have this accountability as well. Thus, our submission to EFI.

Let's move on...

I would like to answer three questions this morning concerning our vision. The vision God gave us for Eastgate Community Church.

Question #1: What is our vision?

Our vision is: To Make an Impact for the Kingdom of God in our community, city, state, nation and around the world.

A Kingdom Impact. Which means we do not have any desire to promote who we are, but who God is. Everything we do we do is out of a desire to make a Kingdom Impact. It's about the Kingdom of God. It's about impacting the lives of people so that they can experience the love of God in tangible and understanding ways, leading the unchurched community to a healthy knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Who cares if Eastgate gets the credit for what we do? We don't. It's not about us, but God. The Godhead; Father, Holy Spirit and Son Jesus Christ is the centralized person in all we do, and we desire to enhance His Kingdom here on this earth in every aspect of our society all of the days and nights of our lives.

Question #2: How do we carry out our vision?

How do we do this? We carry this out as we: Love, Grow and Serve...

Let's break it down.

Love...

Love is expressed in our Sunday morning Celebration. We come together to Love God and others. We come together to celebrate what God has done, is doing and continues to do. We celebrate who Christ is by worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.

You are the church; the Body of Christ, who lives in each of us. It is in Him that we move and breathe and have our being. We come together to celebrate Jesus. We come together to love on God and each other.

We have been given the Great Commandment, to love God and others. We are a multi cultural church that can celebrate Jesus regardless of race, sex or political beliefs.

At the same time, we realize that our expressions of love are not bound between the four walls of any building; but that we live and breathe the heart of God's love to everyone we come in contact with.

Without this love, we have nothing. Without this love, our work is in vain. Without God's love being the very foundation of who we are, we are but a noisy family of believers in God with no possible impact to be made whatsoever.

Grow...

Growth is expressed in our small groups, that we call "Connection Groups". The church needs to come together in small groups as they did in the New Testament Church and experience body ministry together. Then we come on Sundays as the whole body to celebrate together what God is doing. The body is the church, and the body has gifts that need to come out. In a setting like Sunday morning it is basically impossible to have true body ministry. The purpose is centered on making Christ's headship visibly manifested in the church through the free, open, mutually participatory, every member functioning of the body.

It feels to me that our church has become way too dependent upon myself as the pastor and Craig as our worship leader. We have narrowed down our times together to the congregation following Craig leading worship to listening to me speak and that's about it. There is more to the body of Christ than this... Thus, it must happen in these small home groups.

Connection Groups, a place where anyone can lead in a song, share encouragement from the Word, expressing themselves through love, etc. We have been given the Great Commission, to go into the world, making disciples of all...that can happen in these small groups as we stir one another in a healthy community environment.

Every member of the Eastgate family is strongly encouraged to be a part of a Connection Group. Some groups meet weekly while others meet bi-weekly. If a group doesn't fit what you are looking for, you are more than welcome to start up a new group that will fit not only your lifestyle but also the passions and interests of those with like desires.

Remember, "We're better together."

Serve...

Serving is expressed as we reach out to our community, our city, our state, our nation and around the world. We must be serving others in each of these areas, starting with our own individual communities! It must become a lifestyle of who we are. It starts in our homes, our workplace, our schools and neighborhoods.

Each of us have been called by God Almighty to serve others. It's not an option. We have multiple serving opportunities provided by the church that the body is encouraged to be a part of. However, each individual member of the Body of Christ is expected to serve others in their everyday lives. Even as we breath, we serve. Even as we speak, we serve. Even as we play, we serve. Even as we exist, we serve.

Eastgate provides opportunities for the body to travel to foreign soil for opportunities to serve also. Trips are taken to the missionary lands that we support on an ongoing basis with financial support, training, work projects, conferences, etc.

Places we send teams to are, but not limited to, Philippines, Russia, Jordan, Romania, Africa, Greece and Israel. This list continues to grow as relationships are established and nurtured through time.

Question #3: What is preventing our vision from coming to pass in greater fullness?

Don't get me wrong, we're doing good, but we could be doing a lot better. I'm not here to knock us down, but to encourage us to keep moving forward.

So, what is preventing our vision from coming to pass in greater fullness?

Let's look at it.

The vision to love... Celebrating Jesus on Sundays.

1. A mindset that the church is a building.

Each of us has past traditions passed on through time with experiences of the church. We have taken on the mindset that church is the building. We say things like... "Are you going to church this Sunday?" "Where do you go to church?" "When are we going to build a church?"

Some people don't come to Eastgate because we don't have our own building. I've heard people comment that when we get a real building, then they'll come. As if we're not a real church because we don't have a building that says the word "church" on it and it doesn't have a steeple!

This could not be any further from the truth.

The church started out as house churches where true body ministry took place. One must understand that at no time in the Bible is the church referred to as a building. The word church in the New Testament is the word, "ekklesia". Found 114 times in the Bible it refers to an assembly of people every time.

You cannot go to something you are! You are the church! The Bible is clear that we should not forsake ourselves in coming together to worship the Lord corporately as a body. As a body, together, we come on Sundays to Celebrate Jesus and receive a word of encouragement from one another.

2. Past church experiences.

We all have past experiences of church that we bring with us in our worship experience. If it doesn't match up, then we are not always comfortable with it. Some don't come because of negative past experiences. "Church" may have been boring, too deep of messages, too shallow of messages, hypocrisy, etc.

Let me share with you 2 goals for every message I preach.

- A- that you will be challenged.
- B- that you'll have fun in the process.

My desire is that the Eastgate Sunday Celebration be filled with different expressions of worship; that members of the body can express themselves in their own way to the Father in worship. That it is a safe place where you can be yourself. You don't have to act a certain way, dress a certain way or have to impress anyone.

You don't have to give in the offering if you don't want to either. Of course, as part of the body you are encouraged to give, but each person should decide in their own hearts without pressure how much they will give.

I don't want our Celebration to be like every other Sunday Service in the world today. I want it to be filled with life, energy and individual expressions of worship without feeling the pressure from others to have to conform to their comfort zone.

Let's be free. Let's be who God has called our body to be. Let's celebrate!

3. We're lazy!

Sometimes we don't come together to celebrate Jesus because we are simply lazy. We stay up late on Saturday and don't have the energy on Sundays. We make sacrifices for everything else, but not the Celebration. We show up on time for ball games, movies and tv shows, but if we show up late to celebrate Jesus, who cares?!

If we truly have a desire to worship corporately with the body, we'll not only show up, but we'll show up on time! When you're not here, you are missed. And I'm not just talking about the physical aspects of being missed... "Where was Bill today, I really missed him?" Though that is true, what I mean is the fact that when you're not here, you are missed spiritually. The body needs you. We need your gifts. We need your talents. We need your personality. We need you to be who you are, because who you are is who we are!

4. We're really not that excited about Jesus Christ.

We have the unspoken mentality, "Yes, I'm a Christian, but celebrating Him is another thing." Here's the thing, the closer you are to God, the more you'll desire to express that love with others in the family. Some people don't come to celebrate because they've got nothing to celebrate about!

Have you ever gone to a family reunion that you dreaded? You dreaded it because you really don't know the family very well and everyone would just be sitting around telling exaggerated stories of the past trying to "one up" each other.

But then the reunions where family long to see each other again. Where tears of laughter cross the cheeks of everyone as they share their celebrations, victories and defeats together. Those are the ones we love. That's what we want at Eastgate.

At Eastgate, you don't have to be loud and demonstrative to prove you love Christ. Our relationship with God is not based upon our emotions. However, our emotions should be affected in some way as a result of our relationship with God. Something inside of you should be pulled to want to celebrate Christ in your own way, in your own personality and in your own skin, along with your fellow family members in the Body of Christ.

And...Remember as well, that love is not only to be celebrated on Sundays! We've got to love God and others 24-7!

Many of you are weak and beat up throughout the week, not able to even get out of bed on Sundays because you're not doing the second part of our vision...

The vision to grow... Being involved in a Connection Group.

What is preventing this from taking place with greater fullness?

1. We want to be spoon fed everything from the Pastor.

We don't want to feed ourselves in the Word, it's easier for the Pastor to just feed us. Why should we feed ourselves if someone else will do it for me? It takes work to plan the meal, prepare the table, put in the right ingredients and make it taste good in the process. I'd rather have someone else do it for me.

How many of you would rather go out to eat than to have to cook for yourself? We all do. It's nice to eat out. But if you eat out every meal, you're going to waste a lot of money, and you're not always going to get the best nutrients that you need. We just eat whatever they serve. We take for granted they didn't "spit" in our food!

Some of us have that same mentality on a Sunday morning. Let the Pastor feed us. Let the TV preacher feed us. Let's go to the next best place and get what's popular. Let's jump on board the latest Christian fad and ride the wave!

No, it's time to start feeding yourself.

Also, we don't want to learn on our own or stretch ourselves to have to use our gifts to edify the body, we want the church staff to do that. The Five Fold ministry is not wrapped up in me. The Five Fold ministry is not relegated to the paid staff. You don't have to be a clergy member to mister the gifts of the Lord! I am concerned that the church is becoming way too dependent upon me as the pastor do to everything for you, and on Craig to lead you in worship, and upon Angela for the youth, Kathy for the children and our staff for counseling, visitation, etc. We are not supposed to be a top down driven church... We are equal. I am no more special than you. You are no more special than me! We are the body of Christ together! Our staff at Eastgate is no more anointed than you are!

Also, keep in mind what is called, "The Monday Test." No matter how good Sunday was, Monday morning still comes to test our worship.

2. We don't want to become vulnerable.

In a large group like Sunday morning, I can hide. I can put on my best jeans and look the part of a "Christian." If I miss a few Sundays, no one is going to care. The small group place is a place where we can be real with each, stretch each other and bring hope and encouragement to each other.

It's not always an easy place to be; especially if you have trust issues in the first place. Learning to trust each other is vital to the Body of Christ in walking in unity together. The life in which we live is a spiritual battle, a war, and having unity amongst us is a necessity. With unity comes vulnerability.

3. We don't want accountability.

I don't have to have the accountability in my life if no one knows about my life. The Pastor can challenge me until the cows come home on a Sunday morning, and I don't have to do a single thing about it. So why would we want to subject ourselves to a small group of people?

Without accountability, we will slide down a slippery slope of decay that will result in the death of our friendships, marriages, relationships, jobs, dreams, etc. A great place to have accountability is through the Connection Group experience.

4. We don't want to make the sacrifice.

It's too easy to let the Sunday celebration take the place for my growth. We don't want to sacrifice another day or night of time. Friends, that is why so many of you are weak among us, you can't stand up, you get tossed back and forth by the winds of trouble and always expecting me as your Pastor to fix you!

I'm sorry, but I cannot fix you. It's going to take a whole lot more than just me preaching a message on Sunday mornings to get you fixed! It's going to take the Body of Christ, walking in and using their individual gifts to get you where you need to be in life to make a true Impact for the Kingdom of God!

The vision to Serve...

What's hindering this?

1. We really don't care.

Yes, I care when people see me, listen to me or watch me, but down deep, we really don't care. Yes, we care because it's politically correct to care; I mean we are Christians aren't we? I'll do something when others are watching, but if I'm alone or if no one will see me, forget about it.

In Africa they have a saying when it comes to littering, "The wind will get it." meaning, I don't care what my community looks like, someone else can pick it up. We sadly have that mentality, the wind will get it. Somebody else will serve, I don't have to. The sad part is, Ghana, Africa is riddled with litter everywhere you look.

So yes, we say amen about serving. We say yes we need to serve. But yet we still don't serve! Why? Because some of us really don't care!

Why? Because of...

2. Pride.

The mindset is, "It's all about me." "What's in it for me?" "How will my life be affected by it?" Church, it's all about Souls!!! And it always will be! We serve them because we are the arms, feet, hands and voice of God! We are to love them by serving them. The Bible says, "How will they know if we do not tell them?" We tell them God's love by showing them His love.

Pride is a for sure killer of Kingdom Impact. Every time.

3. We want the Eastgate staff to organize it first.

Then, when they do, if it works for my time and resources, I'll do it. If not, then I won't. Here's the deal... We shouldn't have to come up with ideas for you to serve. You should be doing it on your own! We shouldn't have to have an Outreach Ministries Director. Each of you should be your own director. Each of you as individuals as well as your small group should be serving always!

Remember, serving is not an Eastgate thing. It's a Body of Christ thing. It's something we do because it's who we are. The fact is, whether we organize an outreach through the leadership or not, you should still be serving. Throw all of the gimmicks and clever ideas aside, and just love on people. I like what Jamal Hashweh in Jordan says, "We play the music until they ask for the words."

4. We are too inward focused.

We are too busy taking care of the needs of each other we miss the needs of the unchurched. We are too busy trying to please each other; we can't see the needs of others. We think, somebody else will do it. The problem is, they are thinking the same thing, and thus it never happens. Everybody thinks the needs will be met by others, when in fact we are the ones who need to meet those needs!

We've got to get our emotions, our eyes, our thoughts and actions off of each other within the Body and begin concentrating on those on the outside who are hurting and in desperate need of someone who will listen to them, be there for them and make sacrifices on their behalf..

Not only are we too inward focused as a Body, we are too inward focused as individuals also. All I can see is my own hurt, my own struggles and pain. I'm so focused on myself that I'll never get my eyes on someone else!

It's so very true; there will always be someone in life who has it worse than you. Look for them. Get your focus off of yourself and look outward.

Conclusion:

Church, I am convinced that our greatest days are yet ahead of us. I am convinced that God has put us together for such a time as this. And, I am equally convinced that this is not going to happen just because we want it to, pray that it will, or have a deep desire for it to happen! It's going to take each of us, every single one of us working together to see our vision come to pass.

It's time to step it up! It's time for us to BE the Body of Christ and begin to allow God to use us to make in impact!

Yes, we've made great strides forward in moving towards our vision. We've been blessed by God in so many wonderful ways. We've made a true Kingdom Impact in so many Powerful ways in our community, city, state, nation and around the world! I'm not complaining one bit. I just know that we can do more.

As long as there are people who are alive, our vision will never be complete.

With God, we can do this.

You watch. You wait. You'll see!