

RCF

Covenant Classes

Session 8

Our Vision

I. General Overview

- A. Each local church should have a reason for its existence. It is not enough to just exist; Jesus always has something for us to do. Part of this purpose is obvious in the various commands the Lord gives to the church through the scriptures. (To see the lost saved and disciple those who come to Christ.) Yet, there is a very specific reason God wants Richland Center Fellowship to exist at this point in time. Out of God's purpose for us, our vision is birthed. Hebrews 2:2-3.
- B. We need to consider the vision of RCF from two points of view: 1) The perspective, and 2) The purpose. We should not settle for focusing on just having our lives changed and learning to walk with God in a deeper way. We also need to seek the purpose of changing the community in which we live and work. There is something greater than just us each living better lives for the time we have left on earth. We need to have an impact by seeing the reality of the Kingdom of God being expressed through us corporately everywhere God releases us.
- C. We should be able to answer the questions of why we are here together as a people and what purpose is there for us at this time and in this place. Our vision helps to answer these questions. Everyone who is committed to RCF should seek to find where they fit into the vision. Acts 17:26-28.

II. The Mission Statement of RCF

- A. We begin the process of considering our vision by first looking at what we need to be envisioned about. The mission statement gives us the broad structure in which we can fit the vision of RCF.
- B. The Mission Statement of RCF is based on the mandates Christ left the church before He ascended into Heaven. These two mandates form the mission of RCF.
 - 1. **The Great Command**—Mark 16:15, *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all creation."* (Luke 24:47; Acts 26:17-18).

- a. The Great Command is the evangelism mandate. The purpose of Christ is that His Good News would be made known in the entire world.
 - b. We are the instruments individually and corporately to bring the Good News of the life-saving work of Jesus to all the world. That means we must be willing to commit our lives and resources to taking the Good News to all the world.
2. **The Great Commission**—Matthew 28:18-20, *Then Jesus came to them and 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 the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.”*
- a. It is not enough to convert people to a saving experience. The Lord desires that people be trained in a new way of thinking and understanding God, themselves, and their relationship to the created world. This training process is called, “making disciples.”
 - b. While the commitment to bring the Good News to the lost world is the first step in fulfilling the mandates of Christ, training people in the way of Christ, as illuminated in the Scriptures, is as important. People must come to understand their conversion and then they must understand their new role in the Kingdom of God. Individually and corporately, the Church of Jesus Christ is the instrument to train and re-train people in biblical thinking and living.
- C. Our mission is to carry out these two mandates the Lord has given us. In order to do this, we must have a vision that allows us to stay focused on these mandates and to continually set that vision before us so that we will stay on course.

III. The Vision of Richland Center Fellowship

- A. Our vision is based on the biblical admonition that we would be known for the love we have for one another (John 13:35). This special love comes from God and is expressed back to Him, to His people, and to the lost people of the world, for whom Christ died. Therefore, our vision is a vision of learning to love.
1. **Love God:** Mt. 22:37, Mk, 12:30, Lk, 10:10-27, I Cor. 2:9; 16:22, 1 Jn. 4:20-21, and Revelation 2:4.
- *Passion—A people who love the Lord more than anything else. This means obedience to His commands, holy living, submission to His will and devotion to becoming more like Christ every day. All else flows out of our love for God.
- *Worship—Living our lives as expressions of love to God and as a testimony of our honor and praise to Him. Pouring out our life to Him and giving Him the glory for all that is good so that the name of Jesus will be exalted. Our affections, emotions, time and resources all belong to Him.

*Communion—Gaining an eternal kingdom perspective in order to have God’s view, His heart, and His power to offer petitions, thanksgiving, intercessions, and other types of prayers. This will require us to personally and intimately know the Lord and to be in unity with His Spirit.

2. **Love the Saints:** Jn 13:34; 15:12,17; Col.1:4, 2 Thes.1:3, Heb.10:24, 1 Pet.1:22; 2:1 Pet. 2: 17; 1 Jn.3:11; 4:7; 2 Jn 1:5.

*The Body—Recognizing the great value the Lord puts on the unity and fellowship of the Body of Christ internationally as well as locally. We must be committed to a local body of believers where we recognize authority and seek mutual accountability. We must seek to interconnect with other expressions of the Body of Christ so as to honor the Head, Jesus, and the whole body with its various parts.

*Community—The local body of believers is a vital place of relationship, encouragement, openness, and ministry. By the leading of the Holy Spirit, the community of believers is to reach out to the weak, to serve one another, to open our hearts and homes in hospitality, to minister the Holy Spirit for physical, emotional, and spiritual healing, and to forgive, accept, and love one another. This spiritual community is where the new believer can come and be integrated into an interdependent network of growth, strength, and love.

*Discipleship—Raising up Godly and Spirit-filled children from generation to generation. Training the young and the new believers in the foundations of the scripture and the orthodoxy of the Christian faith. Equipping the saints for service and seeing them released in giftedness and power. This will include modeling and mentoring the life of a true believer.

3. **Love the Lost:** Mt. 5:44; 22:39; Mk.12:31,33; Lk.6:27,35; 2 Cor.5:14.

*Compassion—Embracing the heart of Christ for His lost creation. This will stir us to compassion ministry of prayer, meeting physical needs in the name of the Lord and ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit to break the yoke of oppression and set the prisoner free. This expression of the love of God compels us to offer our resources to the lost in the name of Jesus.

*Evangelism—Reaching out to the lost is a command that we must follow. Proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost whenever and wherever possible. This will include an active effort to reach the lost in culturally relevant and biblically sound ways. The forms of evangelism may vary, but the heart to seek and save the lost must continue to burn deeply. We are committed to church planting and to mission works, cross culturally and internationally.

*Modeling—Living our daily lives as a testimony of the power of Jesus to change us, bringing peace, joy, and righteousness. This will require us to build bridges of relationships with lost people, pouring out our lives for their benefit and desiring the power of Christ to affect them through us. We must also be willing to take a stand for righteousness in society, government, and all public and private institutions.

- B. Everything we do at RCF should be an expression of the vision we have to learn to love. This must be in our thinking and actions all the time if we are to be successful.

IV. What is Needed to Carry Out the Vision?

A. The Perspective

1. It is crucial for us as a people to gain an eternal perspective. Without this, we will never see things the way God sees them, and we will never have a heart for lost people. The reality of the future kingdom of Jesus Christ *must impact us in the present* or we lose enthusiasm for the vision. We must see that what we do here and now has *eternal* consequences.
2. We, as a people, also need to realize our joint purpose. As long as God has us together as a body, we have something to do together for Him. This should help us to look beyond each other's personal flaws for the great welfare of the Kingdom. This helps us see why we do not just jump from one church to another without the clear leading of God. Many times, people go Holy Spirit chasing thinking that something exciting is happening elsewhere while they are missing out on what God is doing right where they are.
3. We want to set as our highest priority in walking out our lives in God and the vision He has given us, that we would always bring glory to Him and that He would be our all in all—1 Cor. 15:28. As part of this priority, we seek to raise up God's Holy Name in our words and actions, individually and together – Ezekiel 35:22-23. The vision of the church is neutralized if, in the process of carrying it out, we fail to be honoring the name of the Lord in our own lives.
4. We want to cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in the church so that we will be presented at the judgment seat of Christ as faithful servants of Jesus. Matthew 11:20-24, 1 Thes. 2:19-20, 2 Cor. 1:14.
5. We want to prepare in heart and life to be the eternal companions of the Son of God. Rom. 8:17, Rev. 3:21; 19:8.
6. In order for the people of God to be what they should be and carry out the vision the Lord has given us, we all need to be in the process of participating and being changed by the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We desire three elements of Christ's changing power to be continually evident in our lives.
 - a. The Character of Christ is the internal change in each believer to function in the love of Christ and allow our lives to be ruled by the principles of Christ instead of those of this world. To gain this new character, the believer must abandon prideful and willful attitudes in favor of a heart of humility and

- service. The result of a changed character is that we would display the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Gal. 5:22.
- b. The Wisdom of Christ There is a wisdom of man that is far below the wisdom of God and will never allow us to fully understand God's ways. However, for those who love the Lord, He gladly shows us the ways of Heaven. This wisdom of Heaven leads us out of the carnal life of the heathen and causes us to walk in a new level of understanding, joy, and peace. It is this wisdom from Heaven that is needed in each believer's life to overcome the tormenting and lustful chaos of the carnal mind. It is also this heavenly wisdom that is needed as the church speaks to governing officials and our society in general. James 13:18.
 - c. The Power of Christ If we as Christians are to have a fruitful life and ministry, we must be empowered by the Holy Spirit as Jesus was—Acts 10:38. We believe that each believer and the church together should evidence the power of God to proclaim the Gospel in a dark world, to see the sick healed, and the people set free from evil influences. This is not a sidelight to the Christian faith; rather, it should be the normal way of life for the Spirit-filled, Spirit-led church. Only by the power of God will the church be able to turn back the forces of darkness and see the Kingdom of God established on earth.
7. In addition to a proper eternal perspective, we also need the right earthly perspective. This has to do with our cooperation with the Holy Spirit to see God's ways become a reality not only for the future eternal life but also for the present temporal life. While we may never see the fullness of Christ's reign on earth until He actually returns, we should still seek the implementation of His ways in all areas of earthly life.
- a. The earthly reality of Christ's purpose begins in the church as the covenant community. As we develop love for one another, mutual caring and accountability, we will be cured of self-centered, independent attitudes that become disruptive and divisive in the church. In order to become this covenant community, we need to be willing to lay our lives down and pick up the cross of Christ. Jn 13:35, Acts 4:32-35.
 - 1. Use our strength and giftings to build up the Body of Christ and see giftings developed and released in other people. 1 Cor. 14:12.
 - 2. Develop holy and serving relationships that transcend a programmed or special event mentality of fellowship.
 - 3. Take our responsibility seriously to be our brother's keeper—keeping each other accountable in areas of righteousness and then meeting a need when we can.
 - 4. We must also be an open community where new believers can readily enter into a community relationship of the saints.

- b. Beyond the local perspective of the church community, we must have a perspective of God's desire to change the entire earth (all nations) to come under His dominion. We cannot forget that the people of this earth are looking for the answers that Jesus provides. We need to be salt and light wherever we go and in whatever we do.
 - 1. Evangelism will be a priority.
 - 2. Influencing governmental leaders and institutions with Christ's righteous ways. In this, even the unbeliever will benefit.
 - 3. Standing opposed to the evil kingdom of darkness and its ways whenever we are confronted with the conflict between light and dark.

B. The Purpose

- 1. In a real sense, the only way that the people of God can accomplish the purpose is for us to have the perspective of the church that Jesus has. We may need to continually check our views and attitudes toward Jesus' church to be certain they are in time with what Christ expects
 - a. The Victorious Church The church is not a defeated and fallen institution as are all other institutions of the earth. The church is an eternal body of saints that will ultimately reign with Jesus in glory forever. Rev. 3:21. We shouldn't think of the church today as a holding tank for those who get saved until Jesus returns. Instead, the Lord speaks of the church as being filled with His power and glory so that it would be the envy of the earth. The victorious church is the very instrument that the Lord uses in this age of conflict to bring His Kingdom into reality and establish light in the midst of darkness. The theology of the victorious church will greatly impact how we live our lives as believers and consequently how we carry out the vision the Lord has given us
 - b. Unity Among the Church We must recognize that as the church becomes more unified, it becomes more powerful. This is true within a local fellowship but also working together with other local or translocal works. In order for this to happen, we may, at times, need to give up some of our personal desires for the greater benefit of the Body of Christ. By no means should we ever compromise the central aspects of the Gospel. Much of the current ecumenical movement that relaxes Biblical requirements for the sake of joining and unity is, in the end, an enemy to the true church. Eph. 4:1-6, Titus 1:5.
 - 1. We encourage the working together of local evangelical leaders and churches for Kingdom purposes.
 - 2. We believe there may be a sharing of vision in a local area or region that will allow churches to labor side by side even if some minor doctrinal differences exist.
 - 3. We look forward to the Lord Jesus establishing His authority not only in a local church, but also in an area or region.
- 2. It is the history of God's people to forget His purpose and focus just on themselves. If we allow this to happen, we become inwardly focused and never receive the

power of God that accompanies the outward work of His faithful servants. See Mark 16:15-18. We should not grow weary in doing good, nor should we be diverted from the great purpose that God has for His people.

V. Present Expressions of our Vision

- A. Sunday Worship—Acts 5:12; Heb. 10:25. The various ways we express the purpose of God as the people of God will vary as the Holy Spirit gives specific leading and direction. Some of the expressions of purpose that RCF encourages to build strong, committed believers and families and to develop into the Army of God include:
1. Celebrating God’s goodness and grace in our lives with our time, energy, devotion, and exaltation.
 2. Gives us a sense of something bigger than ourselves. All believers should be joined to a local body and make public and private worship a priority.
 3. Affords an avenue of teaching, preaching, and encouragement for the saints.
 4. Allows for people to minister to and pray for one another.
 5. Provides training and care for children.
- B. Home Groups—Acts 2:42
1. A more intimate and smaller group of believers acting as a nuclear spiritual family connected with the extended family—RCF.
 2. Godly, in-depth, interpersonal communication.
 3. Intrafellowship communication for RCF.
 4. Teaching, fellowship, pastoral care, prayer, spiritual gifts released.
 5. A place to bring new converts and assimilate them into the RCF body of believers.
 6. Home groups should be a high priority for everyone at RCF.
- C. Prayer Meetings and Special Prayer Times
1. Establishing the church as the “House of Prayer” that the Lord desires. Is. 56:7, John 4:24. Prayer is foundational to the church for knowing the will of God, being empowered by the Holy Spirit, and interceding for the saints.
 2. Builds up the body and comes into agreement with the purposes of God.
 3. All types of prayers are encouraged.
- D. Training and Instruction
1. At various times, training and Biblical instruction take place in order to more fully equip the saints and release them in their gifting.
 2. Some examples of training in discipleship: Starter Study, Commitment Study, Covenant Classes, Women’s Bible Studies, Kingsmen, Awana, Leadership Development Group, Eldership Training, and Young Adults Group.
 3. This is part of the ongoing ministry of education and training at RCF.
- E. Eagle and Inheritance Christian Schools
1. Training young people in the ways of God and academics.

2. Wise, godly instructors who encourage children and young people to be all they are called to be in Christ.
3. The foundation of academics rooted in the Word of God.

F. Children's Ministry

1. Assist parents in the training of their children in the ways of God.
2. Seed the Word of Truth in young hearts so it has a life-long impact.
3. Reach out to children who do not know Christ.

G. Youth Ministry

1. Helping young people identify their own convictions as they transition from children to adulthood.
2. Keeping Jesus first when the lure of the world and the spirit of rebellion are strong.

H. Evangelism

1. Leading people out of darkness into the life-changing power of Christ.
2. Evangelism is part of the lifeblood of RCF.
3. Evangelism is expressed in many forms. Personal evangelism training: The Keys, The Lost & Found Parade Evangelism Group, The Evangelistic Ministry Team, Short-Term Missions, Street Evangelism.

I. Expressive Ministry

1. Worship Team
2. Dance Team
3. Family Life Activities
4. Helping the poor
5. Pro-life
6. Social Engagement
7. Political Engagement

J. Church Planting

1. We believe in raising up local churches in other areas when the Lord gives us release to do so.
2. Church planting will be done by saints who have an established testing of walking with God in a righteous and holy life and are called to be church planters.

K. World Missions Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8

1. We are committed to seeing the Gospel reach every nation, tongue, and tribe.
2. The approach of sending out untested leaders is unacceptable. We want to see people training in God's ways and empowered by His Spirit.
3. Cross-cultural missions are both short-term deaconing efforts as well as long-term church planting efforts.
4. We are especially involved in World Mission through the work of Rich and Debbie Tracy who established the YWAM base in Panama; Todd and Carrie Pruett, Missionaries in Thailand, and various short-term missions teams.