



30/DAYS  
OF  
VISION

**LOOKING  
FORWARD  
2022**

**E** **I** **I** **I** **EASTWOOD  
BAPTIST**



## Eastwood Family,

**Vision Sunday is September 11.** It will be here before we know it. This is a HUGE day in the life of Eastwood Baptist Church. Vision Sunday will be SO MUCH MORE than just another Sunday morning. It is the beginning of an exciting faith-filled journey.

I believe that on September 11th we will clearly see a God-sized vision for the next several years of ministry life at the Lord's church we call Eastwood Baptist.

Our best guess is that we will continue to have worship services and small groups. We will keep passing the offering plate and paying our utility bills.

But if we are to make a noticeable difference in our lifetime, we will need to name, define, and focus everything we have on the specific kind of dramatic good God gives us to do. (*Mancini*). We need a specific path ahead to accomplish our Great Commission mission of making disciples of Jesus who make other disciples.

***Imagine that the role of vision in our church is like an ax.*** When skillfully used, it makes a path clear. It removes obstacles. It broadens the path for others to follow. It enables greater accomplishment. Most churches struggle with vision. There is no coordinated prayer, fasting, seeking, and scripture reading from the body of believers as a whole. Usually, pastors will attempt to discern and craft a church's vision entirely on their own. They occasionally attempt to pick up the ax of vision, but quickly set it down having not been trained, nor prepared for its effective use. Swinging like crazy, unaware that they wield a dull edge. Too often they become frustrated or confused by too little return on their tireless work.

This 30 days of vision handbook is our whetstone. It will help us as a church sharpen our ax of vision throughout the month of August leading to September 11. It will help us clear out the noise and clutter of everyday life, so we can hear God's voice more clearly. We will sharpen our daily spiritual habits of prayer, fasting, scripture meditation, and reading. Life is too short and ministry is too hard to swing all day with a blunt-edged vision. (*Mancini*).

***We have a lot of questions to answer in the days ahead.***

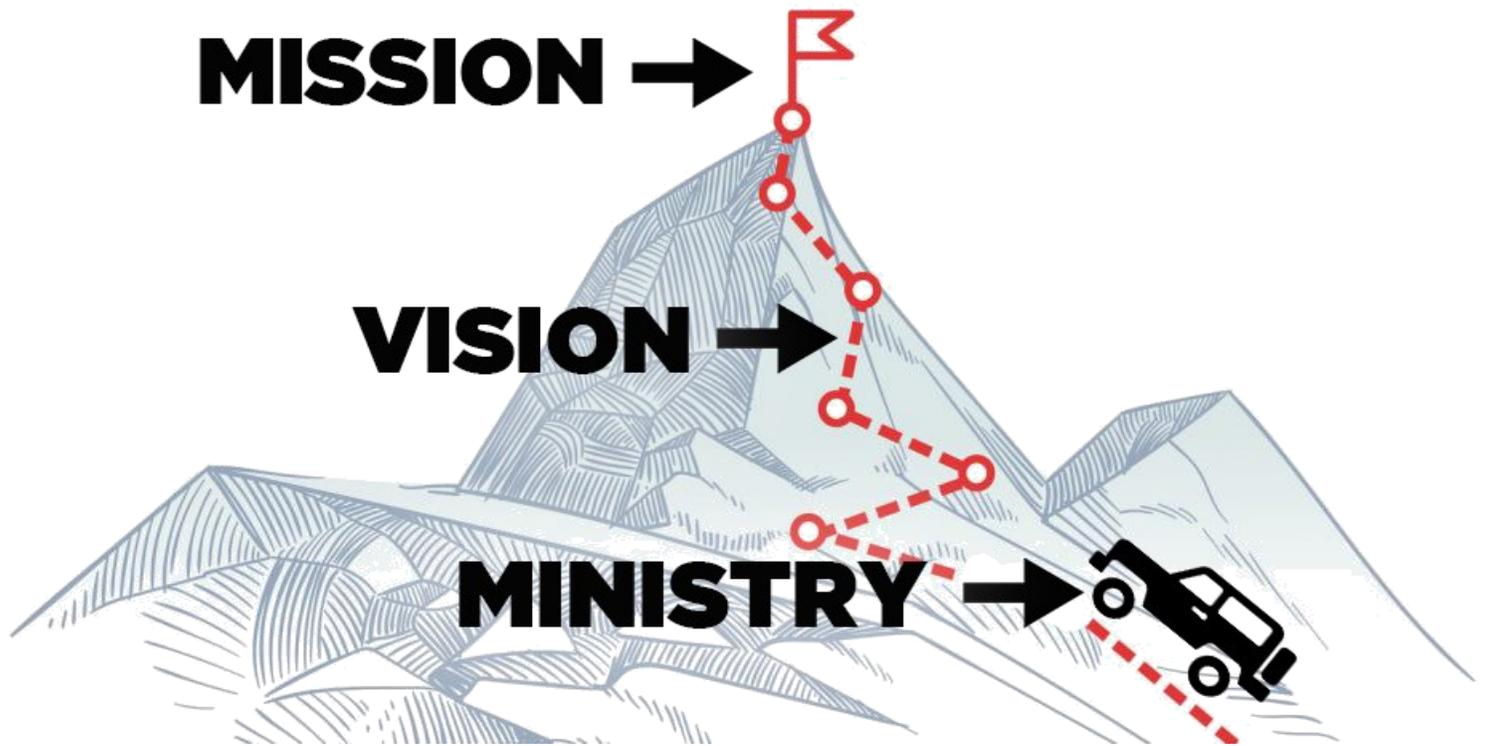
- *Who are we as a church? What does God want us to be?*
- *What does our city know us for? If we didn't exist tomorrow would they miss us?*
- *What is and will be our impact on and contribution to our city in the years to come?*

All these questions are informed by a clearly discerned and communicated vision! Without a vision, forget the way ahead, get lost, stall progress in their journey, and never reach their Great Commission destination. It is sad. It is why so many churches are closing their doors these days. A recent Lifeway study, which analyzed church data from 34 Protestant denominations and groups, found that 4,500 churches closed in 2019, while about 3,000 new congregations were started. We are losing thousands of churches a year. Barna studies show that 4 out of 10 pastors are considering leaving their ministries. All the while, people are lost and separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus all around us.

NOW IS THE TIME TO ASK GOD TO SHOW US HIS WAY AHEAD AND THEN OBEY. I feel God is going to give us a God-sized vision. It is going to take us all. I am ready. Let's go!

*Bradford Kirby*

# WHAT IS VISION?



When thinking of vision, I believe it is helpful to picture a mountain. **At the top of the mountain is MISSION.**

The mission of Eastwood Baptist church is not something we have to discover. Jesus has already given us this 2000 years ago. We find it in Matthew 28:18-20. *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus who make disciples of Jesus. This will be our mission until Jesus returns or we go home to meet Him face to face.

**VISION is the road to the top of the mountain.** The road we take at any given time to get closer to our disciple-making mission mountain is the vision. This road can change depending on the seasons of change in the life of a church. God will bring changes to a church's vision path from time to time to help it better make progress to better accomplish the mission of making disciples. The previous vision road has ended. Without a new vision, the church will not make it any further, become frustrated, and often start descending the mountain altogether.

Sometimes God will call a church to have a more outward evangelistic vision if they have become too focused on themselves and not the lost or the community around them. Maybe God calls a church to spend a season of vision focused on going deeper and maturing in their understanding of God's Word because they are serving, but have lost sight of what they are ultimately serving for.

**MINISTRY is simply the vehicle that takes us down the vision road.** Once we have been reminded of our mission, and have clarified the current vision, we can begin to plan ministry to accomplish them both. Ministry is just the means we use to accomplish our vision. Programs, activities, initiatives, classes, training, missions efforts, services, outreach, small groups, Sunday School, etc .... All are just vehicles to help us move down the road of vision. Once we know our vision, we can plan what sort of ministry vehicle we need.

# SPIRITUAL HABITS

In order to discover God's vision for this season of life at Eastwood Baptist Church, it seems obvious that a good place to start would be by seeking, listening, and asking God for His direction. It is His vision for His church we are seeking, not ours. How do we seek, listen, hear, and understand, God?

God has given us everything we need. He has given us His written Word, His Spirit inside us, and His body all around us in the church. He has also given us instructions on how to discipline ourselves to better hear His voice. There are daily spiritual habits that God commands us to develop, in reliance upon him, to participate in the process of growing our faith. It is going to take real faith to not only discern the leading of the Lord for our church, but real faith to actually walk it out in obedience. Success in this will be found in our spiritual habits.

Heaven and hell hang on habits. Show me a man's habits, and you'll give me a glimpse into his very soul. The habits you develop and sustain today will affect whether you persevere till the end or make a shipwreck of the faith. Simply put, your habits are one of the most important things about you. (*Mathis*). This 30 days of vision is going to be 30 days of developing spiritual habits to grow our faith and better hear the voice of God. During the month of August here are three spiritual habits I want us to develop together as we ask for God to show us His vision for His church.

## PRAYER

There is real power in prayer because we pray to a powerful God. E.M. Bounds stated, *"Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still. God shapes the world by prayer. The more prayer there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces of against evil."*

God's Word has much to say about the importance of prayer. It doesn't get much simpler and more powerful than the exhortation we find in Romans 12:2. *"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, **be constant in prayer.**"* The word *"constant"* that Paul used can be accurately translated as *"devoted"*. To be devoted to something is to plan and intentionally dedicate yourself to a specific goal or task. We ought to be devoted in prayer. Prayer ought to be a constant part of a Christian's life. Like breathing for all humans.

We are not going to hear God's voice and discover His vision without prayer! We **MUST** begin now to devote ourselves to the discipline and spiritual habit of prayer. During the month of August, we are going to provide resources and creative opportunities to be devoted in prayer for the specific purpose of seeking God's vision for Eastwood Baptist Church. **Make plans to participate in all of these.**

### DAILY PRAYER GUIDE (*Monday Through Friday*)

You will find in this packet a guide for daily prayer with specific requests. I want to ask all Eastwood members to dedicate themselves to praying for these requests. There is real power in all of us coming together and coordinating our prayer. We are going to seek and request of our God together.

### INTENTIONAL CREATIVE PRAYER NIGHT - **Friday, August 19, 6:30—7:30 PM.**

This will be an evening to come together as a church and pray over several aspects of the church and our future in a fun, engaging, and creative manner. We will sing scripture, pray for needs, incorporate all biblical prayer postures, and seek God's guidance for the future. Do not miss this awesome evening of prayer.

# PRAYER

## SATURDAY MORNING PRAYER-WALKING

Each Saturday morning leading to Vision Sunday, we will meet at the church at 8 AM for a time of guided prayer-walking. Prayer walking is the practice of praying on location, a type of intercessory prayer. Prayer walking in a sense allows us to “*pray nearer to pray clearer*” for the church. The idea is to use the five senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—to increase our understanding of prayer needs. (*Houdmann*). Each Saturday morning we will prayer walk either the outside, inside of, or around our campus and intercede to God on behalf of our church. Make plans to join.

## SANCTUARY HOURS AVAILABLE FOR PRAYER (*Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday*)

We will open the sanctuary (*worship center*) for daily quiet prayer space free of distractions

**MORNINGS**- 6:00 - 7:00 AM

**EVENINGS** - 6:00 - 7:00 PM

- *This will only be available on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays*

# FASTING

**What is fasting?** It is not about a particular diet. Instead, the purpose of fasting should be to take your eyes off the things of this world to focus completely on God. Christian fasting is a believer’s voluntary abstinence from food (*or other specific enjoyment of life rather than food*) for spiritual purposes. Fasting is a way to demonstrate to God, and ourselves, that we are serious about our relationship with Him. Fasting helps us gain a new perspective and a renewed reliance upon God.

While there is no explicit connection between prayer and fasting in the Bible, as you read the Bible there is a clear pattern and connection between the two disciplines. It is hard to talk about one and not talk about the other.

Curiously it does seem that prayer is emphasized in the church more than fasting. Fasting seems to be one of the most ignored biblical disciplines today. In the Bible, it appears that fasting with prayer had to do with a sense of need and dependence or helplessness in the face of actual or anticipated difficulty. We see fasting used in worshiping the Lord and seeking His guidance, direction, and will. Prayer and fasting are combined in the Old Testament in times of mourning, repentance, and/or deep spiritual need. The more important, dire, or critical the season of life, the more fasting and prayer are emphasized. (*Houdmann*).

**Jesus expects us to fast.** Look at his instruction in Matthew 6:16-18. “*And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*”

## KINDS OF FASTS (*Donald Whitney*)

**NORMAL FAST** = involves abstaining from all food for a specified period of time, but not from water. Matthew 4:2 reports of Jesus, “*After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.*” It says nothing about Him becoming thirsty. Furthermore, Luke 4:2 says that He “*ate nothing during those days,*” but it does not say He drank nothing.

# FASTING

## KINDS OF FASTS (continued...)

**PARTIAL FAST** = not totally going without food, only limiting your food intake for a specific period of time at specific times each day. For ten days Daniel and three other Jewish young men had only “*vegetables to eat and water to drink*” (Daniel 1:12). **EXAMPLE**—fasting from one particular meal a day or from one specific food item for a month.

You can choose other non-food-related things to fast from as well. (*television, sport, hobby, sleep, sex, social media, coffee, etc...*) Again, the reason to fast might be that we sense these activities are exerting too much influence on our hearts or our time and we need to fast from it to regain a more biblical perspective. We will fast together to allow the freedom to become more absorbed in focusing our attention on discovering God’s vision for Eastwood.

## HOW TO IMPLEMENT FASTING INTO OUR DAILY LIVES

**HAVE A PLAN**—START SLOW and SMALL (*Be smart*)

Start with one meal; maybe fast one meal a week for several weeks. Then try two meals, and work your way up to a daylong fast. Perhaps eventually try a two-day juice fast. Try a partial fast or non-food fast. Fast with someone else; possibly your spouse or family.

### **REMEMBER THE SPECIFIC FOCUS**

We are not just fasting for fasting’s sake. There is a purpose. By fasting, you are going to create free time in your day. Will you spend that in the Word? Prayer? Focus your fast on the daily prayer guide and Scripture reading provided in this handbook. Connect your plan to the purpose of the fast—coming vision for Eastwood Baptist church.

### **DON’T DWELL ON THE HUNGER**

I heard a pastor say once, “*When we fast, we are putting our stomach where our heart is to give added intensity and expressiveness to our ache for Jesus.*” Don’t allow your cravings and hunger pains to drive you, use them to motivate you to spend time with God like an alarm clock. Whenever you are hungry or craving food/activity ... go to God in prayer and Scripture.

# SCRIPTURE READING

**Why is daily time spent in God’s Word important?**

**THE BIBLE IS A DISPLAY OF GOD’S GLORY.** “*The ultimate aim of all Bible reading, I argue, is that God’s infinite worth and beauty would be exalted in everlasting, white-hot worship. There is nothing higher in the universe — nothing more valuable, nothing more beautiful — than the worth and beauty of God.*” – **John Piper**

God’s Word helps us know Him, see His glory, and know that showing, and communicating His glory in all the universe is what he created us for.

**TIME IN GOD’S WORD DEEPENS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.** Bible study is about more than piling up biblical knowledge; trying to become an expert or bible scholar. It is not so much about INFORMATION as it is about TRANSFORMATION. It is about knowing Jesus more and being transformed into His image. If we want to know Jesus and have a closer relationship with Him ... we MUST and WILL read the bible. From Genesis to Revelation, God’s word shows us God himself for our knowledge but also for us to enjoy.

# SCRIPTURE READING

**SCRIPTURE IS PROFITABLE & PRACTICAL.** God speaks to us through the Bible and expects a response from us.

Paul instructs, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” When we spend time in God’s Word consistently we will profit. We gain Godly teaching, wisdom, correction from sin, reproof, understanding of God’s Ways, and equipping for the good work He calls us to.

## PRACTICAL TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING AND CREATING A HABIT OF STUDY IN YOUR LIFE

### **RESOLVE TO READ**

You are going to have to work at first and devote yourself to it like a physical workout routine. Resolve to pray and read Scripture before you turn on any screen. (*Unless your Scripture is on your screen*).

We learn from Paul as he instructs Timothy ... *Until I come, **devote yourself** to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. **Practice these things, immerse yourself in them**, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. – 1 Timothy 4:13-16*

### **HAVE A PLAN**

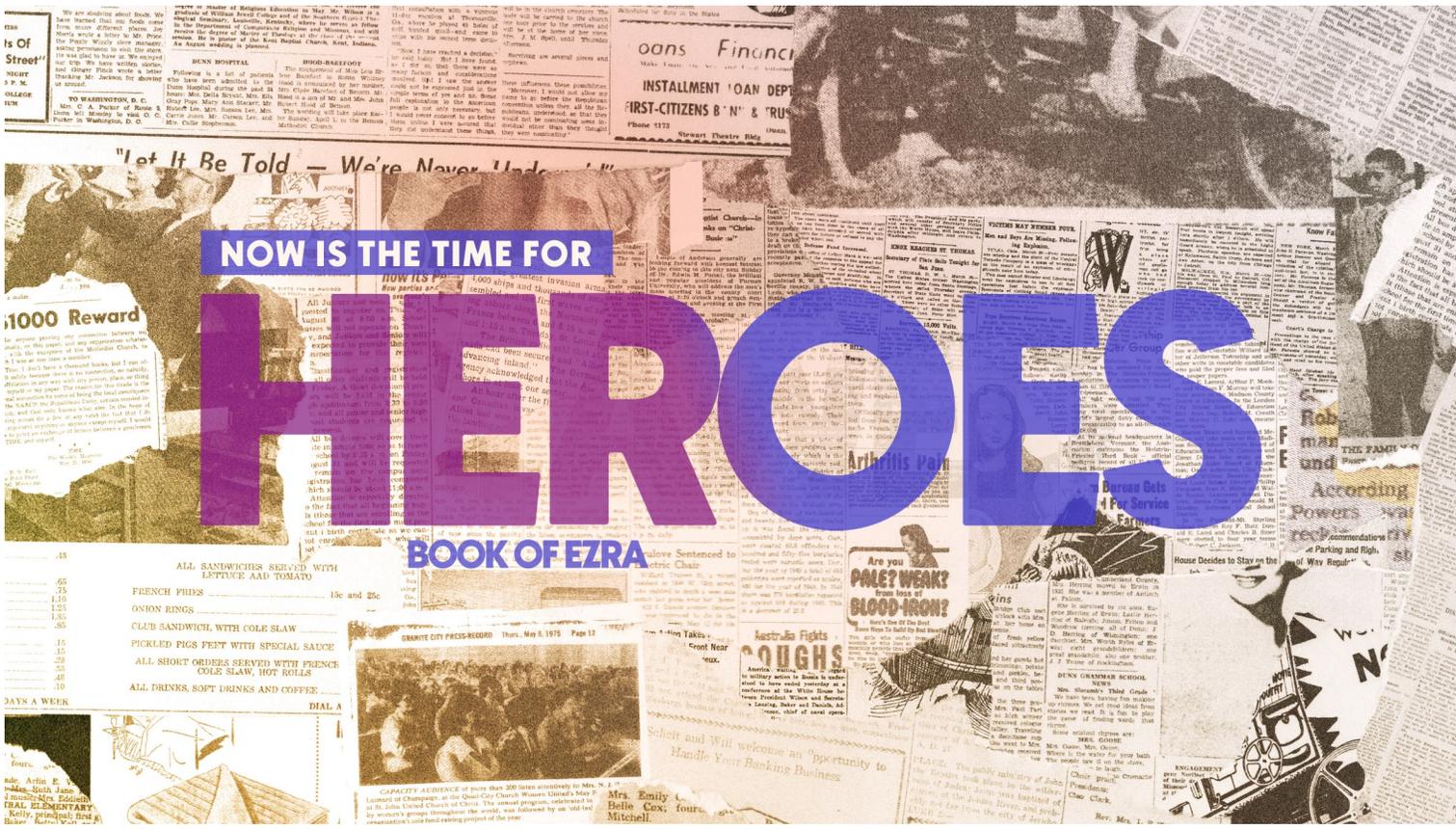
We are never going to get anywhere without a plan or map. I believe the same is true for our time with God’s Word and prayer. Do you know that it only takes 70 hours to read the entire bible from cover to cover? Now, I am not recommending that you do that in one sitting, but if you simply took 11.5 minutes a day, you would be able to read through the Bible in one year.

- **WHEN?** Designate a time each day when you are fully awake and you are free of distractions.
- **WHERE?** Find a quiet place that is free from distractions and is conducive to thought. Set the mood with some soft music or good smells.
- **WHAT?** Use the provided scripture guide in this 30-Day Handbook as a reading plan. There will also be accompanying video encouragements posted to Facebook each day.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY?** Find someone else or a group in the church to pray and read with. Hold each other accountable throughout the entire month.

# JOURNAL

I encourage you to purchase a journal and record your thoughts, feelings, learnings, and insights as we take this Vision journey together. With the eyes of faith, the Christian life is a great adventure, and a journal can be greatly beneficial in ripening our joy along the journey. There is always more going on in us and around us than we can appreciate at the time. Journaling is a way of slowing life down for just a few moments and trying to process at least a sliver of it for the glory of God, our own growth and development, and our enjoyment of the details.

There will be several avenues and opportunities in these 30 days for our congregation to express what they are getting from their time in the Word and prayer as it relates to the coming Vision for Eastwood. Journaling will help you clearly record these thoughts and insights for yourself and others.



## NEW SUNDAY SERMON SERIES BEGINNING AUGUST 11

Will Rogers once said, *"We can't all be heroes because somebody has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by."*

But we can all be heroes, at least from God's point of view, and that's far more important than the applause of the crowd on the curb. Those 50,000 Jewish exiles who returned to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple and their lives were certainly heroes, the kind of heroes whose courage and sacrifice God's people would do well to imitate today.

Their story is told in the Old Testament books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. Ezra was a priest and Haggai and Zechariah were prophets, but together with Zerubbabel the governor of Judah, they encouraged the Jewish remnant, overcame obstacles, and worked together to finish the work God gave them to do. **That's what makes heroes!**

God is challenging us to be heroic in a world that desperately needs everyday anonymous heroes who will sacrifice and serve only to hear their Master say, **"Well done!"**

Will you be among them? \*

Eastwood Baptist Church is set to launch into a new season with a new vision beginning September 11. The month of August leading up to it will be a month of prayer, fasting, focused on God's Word. We are seeking His way ahead. It will take **REAL MEN AND WOMEN OF COURAGE, FAITH, AND OBEDIENCE TO MOVE FORWARD.** Do not miss this important time of vision and this series.

\* Wiersbe, Warren

# DAILY GUIDE

## DAY 1 - Monday, August 1 - *Committed To Community*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Luke 6:12–19, Acts 2:42–47; Ephesians 2:11–22 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

As useful and important as institutions are, we must not forget that they exist only to foster the human connections through which the work of God is ultimately accomplished. In our highly systems-oriented, institutional age we need the discernment to recognize the difference between serving the church, serving the church through an institution, and merely serving an institution.

**PRAYER** - Pray that we would understand that the church is a family. It is infinitely more than just a building, service, or event. Pray that God would create an intimate community of Christ-followers at Eastwood Baptist church. Let us care for one another as family.

## DAY 2 - Tuesday, August 2 - *It Is Jesus' Church*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Luke 6:12–19, Acts 1:12–14; 1 Corinthians 1:10–13 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

To inaugurate the kingdom of God and the reconciliation of all things, Jesus assembled a team of misfits and malcontents. They were not wise or affluent. They were not powerful or influential. To make matters worse, they didn't even share the same values, background, or politics with one another. They had no earthly reason to be together. Yet, they had an unbreakable unity in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We all have different preferences, backgrounds, and ideas.

**PRAYER** - Pray that Eastwood Baptist church would be unified around what matters most...the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pray that we would not let our preferences or getting our own way more become important more important than knowing Jesus and making Him known.

## DAY 3 - Wednesday, August 3 - *We Is Better Than Me*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Daniel 9:4–8; 1 Corinthians 12:14–16 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9 is accurate—God's people were guilty of sin, but there is no evidence that Daniel himself ever participated in their wickedness. So, why is he including himself in their guilt? It's because Daniel recognized a facet of relating to God that we often overlook. While we have a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ," we also have a collective relationship with Him. It's not just "me and God," it's also "us and God."

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would remind us all that God reconciled us as a body, a group, a church, not just as individuals. We were created to be in community and we are better when we are together. Pray that God would help us see the need and benefit of being together. Pray for those who have drifted away from church.

## DAY 4 - Thursday, August 4 - *A Church That Welcomes*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Ephesians 4:1–6; Luke 6:12–19 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Lifeway Research has found that 86 percent of congregations in the US remain racially homogeneous. The more troubling finding from the survey was that most Christians still prefer a racially segregated church. We see in the very small sample of the twelve Jesus called to be closest to Him, we discover a shocking amount of diversity. As has been said, Simon was a Zealot—a Jewish freedom fighter willing to use violence to overthrow Roman occupation—and Matthew was a tax collector—a Jew who betrayed his own people to make money by working for the Romans. And yet, Jesus called both of these men not only to be His disciples, but He called them to embrace each other as brothers.

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would allow Eastwood Baptist church to reach and represent the diversity that we see in our community. We pray that Eastwood would be a church that welcomes our whole community.

## **DAY 5** - Friday, August 5 - *More Than Attending Church*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - **2 Peter 1:3–9; John 4:19–26** (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Just as it is possible to attend school and not be educated, it is entirely possible to be church-ed and not be living in communion with Christ—especially when church is defined institutionally rather than communally. The church has a vital and undeniable role to play in our spiritual formation—one that too many Christians ignore. At the same time, the institutional church cannot be the only source for our development as Christians and it cannot encompass the entirety of our life with God. Attending church does not save anyone. We must have a real relationship with Jesus on Mondays, not just Sundays.

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would help us know that there is so much more to our relationship with Jesus than just attending church. Pray that God would help us live out our faith in Christ every day in all circumstances.

## **Saturday & Sunday** - *Pray & Study on your own.*

Make sure that you spend time in prayer, and study of God's Word over the weekend. Hang in there with your fast. Don't quit. You can do it! When you are hungry, spend time with the Lord.

Do not miss Sunday as we begin our new sermon series ... **"HEROES" from the book of Ezra.**

## **DAY 6** - Monday, August 8 - *Help with Our Weakness*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - **Genesis 32:22–28; Romans 12:3–8** (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Jacob's story epitomizes the life of faith. God's people trust Him, but it's often a struggle because we are flawed, fearful creatures. A church—being an assembly of believers—is simply a community that wrestles with God together. It's where we struggle openly rather than privately, and where questions are asked and sometimes answered. But when no answer is found, the church is also where we find comfort, support, and encouragement.

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would allow our church to be honest with God and one another. Pray that we would value the spiritual discipline of confession. Pray that we would become a church that helps one another with our struggles and weakness.

## **DAY 7** - Tuesday, August 9 - *Praying For Our Enemies*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - **1 Peter 3:8–12; James 3:13–18** (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

I wonder how different our churches would be if we actively prayed for those we perceive to be opposed to us? And that doesn't mean praying for their failure or destruction, but earnestly praying for their blessing and well-being. How might we detoxify our souls from the fear and anger we've absorbed from cable news or social media if our worship gatherings included just a few minutes of sincere prayer like that?

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would help us by the power of the Holy Spirit, change the way we often view our enemies, and that they would see us differently as well. We pray for our enemies, that they would be blessed, have good well-being, and come to a closer relationship with Jesus.

## **DAY 8** - Wednesday, August 10 - *Getting To Know One Another*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - **Luke 22:14–20, Leviticus 11:1–10; Acts 2:42–47** (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

The table and the meal has united the church throughout the ages. Its origin is found in the Passover meal Jesus shared with His followers on the night of His betrayal and arrest. Sharing a meal is a bodily, social, creative, and spiritual act perhaps second only to sex in its power to form bonds.

**PRAYER** - Pray that our congregation would get to know one another outside of church. That we would open our homes to one another for fellowship.

## **DAY 9** - Thursday, August 11 - *Welcome to God's Table*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - **Matthew 9:10–13; Luke 14:7–11** (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Jesus preached that God's kingdom was at hand; it was near and He called everyone to enter into it. He often used parables about banquets and meals to illustrate the kingdom's inclusivity and abundance. But for Jesus, this was more than a message, and the table was more than a sermon illustration. It was the pattern and practice of His life. His eagerness to welcome everyone to His table, even those farthest from God, was how the presence of the kingdom was revealed and how the established hierarchy of the world's lunchroom was being turned upside down, and He has called the church to use His table no differently. Thankful God welcomes us to the table and not climbing a ladder.

**PRAYER** - Pray for those we know around us who do not know the Lord. Pray that God would give you a clear opportunity to share the gospel with them soon.

## **DAY 10** - Friday, August 12 - *Worship In Spirit and Truth*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - **John 4:19–24, Exodus 34:29–35; 2 Corinthians 3:12–18** (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

During Jesus' ministry, Jews and Samaritans vigorously disagreed about which mountain was the proper location for worship, but that true worship required climbing a mountain was never questioned. They all agreed that worship and encountering God was an external event. This assumption is what Jesus challenged in His conversation with the Samaritan women in John 4. Rather than emphasize external elements, like mountains, Jesus said true worship is an inner posture of Spirit and truth. Like the bickering Jews and Samaritans, we fixate upon the mechanics of worship and often disagree strongly over external issues like style of music, decor, schedule, and location. All of these fights, however, assume worship is an event; a mountain we climb to experience God. Sunday AM worship is not the only chance for us to worship. We do that daily in our walk with Christ. Sunday AM is where we come to do worship together.

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would help us understand that our weekly Sunday worship services are not just where we find communion with God, but more so where we express our ongoing fellowship with God. Pray that God would truly let our worship services be a place where we outwardly express the reality of our daily relationship with God together and encourage those for whom it's been a struggle.

## **Saturday & Sunday** - *Pray & Study on your own.*

Make sure that you spend time in prayer, and study of God's Word over the weekend. Hang in there with your fast. Don't quit. You can do it! When you are hungry, spend time with the Lord.

Do not miss Sunday as we continue in our sermon series ... **"HEROES" from the book of Ezra.**

## **DAY 11** - Monday, August 15 - *Worship Is About God*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - **John 2:1–11; Psalm 27:1–4** (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

We live in an age of Christian pragmatism. The influence of business and industry has seeped into the church and convinced many that the church ought to adopt the methods and metrics of the marketplace. Likewise, in many places, the Sunday worship gathering is designed with customer feedback in mind. How many came? Did they like the music? Was the sermon helpful enough? How much did they give? Many church members approach worship with a similar calculation. Did I receive enough from the church to justify giving up my Sunday morning? These calculations betray the reason we worship. We do not gather on Sunday because it will measurably improve our lives, families, or careers. Don't get me wrong, practical considerations have their place, but when it overshadows everything else—even our worship—it's an indication that we've succumbed to pagan values rather than Christian ones.

**PRAYER** - Pray that our Sunday AM worship services would be about praising and magnifying God instead of trying to primarily use God for our own self-help.

## **DAY 12** - Tuesday, August 16 - *Do Not Quit Gathering*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Hebrews 10:23–25; Matthew 18:15–18 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

In our rapidly changing and turbulent society, gathering is needed now more than ever, but it's also more difficult to find as we are more isolated than previous generations because of technology and social divisions. But Jesus also said that when even just two or three gather in His name, "there am I among them" (Matt. 18:20). He doesn't promise to be in front of us on a platform or watching us on a live feed. He promises to be with us, just as we are with each other. And because He is with us, as we meet with even just a few Christian brothers or sisters we can know that the arm we place on a shoulder, or the tear we shed in prayer, or the hand that lifts our burden, will be Christ's own.

**PRAYER** - Pray that we would not give up gathering together for worship and fellowship as a congregation. Pray that we would be an encouragement to one another in this discouraging world.

## **DAY 13** - Wednesday, August 17 - *Church Is Not An Event*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Matthew 18:15–18; Colossians 3:12–17 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Many have come to see the church primarily as an event rather than as a community. It is something they attend rather than something they are. They treat it like a sporting event or a concert. What all of these experiences share in common is the general passivity of the audience. They gather to be entertained, informed, or amused by the performers on the stage or the field. Very little is expected of those gathered other than a financial contribution via ticket or tithe. Cheers or applause is welcomed, but everyone knows the audience is not essential to the gathering. The show could just as easily go on without them. Biblically speaking, church is not an event; it's a family.

**PRAYER** - Pray that we would see our church as a family and not another event on our calendar. Pray that we would be involved using our time, treasure, and talents for the mission and vision God has given us.

## **DAY 14** - Thursday, August 18 - *Relationship Over Rituals*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Mark 2:23–28; Matthew 11:28–30 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

The Great Commission work we have been called to is important, and time is limited. We should work hard, but not at the neglect of needed rest. It is possible to get so busy that it leaves no room for silence. We can run the risk of not slowing down to reflect or meditate—we have things to accomplish. Goodness, in many of our churches there isn't even time for prayer or communion anymore. Rather than lifting our eyes to the horizon, some churches function only to keep our noses to the grindstone. Of course, this is not an either/or issue. We do have important work to accomplish, and the church's mission can sometimes be tiresome and tedious. Our church leaders are there to equip and guide us in this calling both individually and together. But we are not machines, and God has not redeemed us merely to put us to work. That's why we need a regular rhythm of work and rest, of mission and meditation, in order to see ourselves, our work, our church, and our Lord from the right perspective.

**PRAYER** - Pray that our church would take seriously the Great Commission work of making disciples, but also take needed time to grow in the knowledge of the Lord and rest in Him as well.

## **DAY 15** - Friday, August 19 - *Rhythm of Work and Rest*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Psalm 51:1–17; John 4:19–24 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

David understood worship wasn't primarily about music, rituals, or temples. (Ps. 51:16–17). God does not delight in these external performances and symbols, because what He really desires is our hearts. David recognized that if we do not genuinely want God, no amount of singing or sacrifices will make our worship acceptable.

**PRAYER** - Pray that we would remember that our worship is not a program or a formula. God desires for us to worship with our whole hearts. He is not looking for robots going through the motions. He wants us. Ask God to show you where you are just going through the motions out of ritual instead of relationship.

## **Saturday & Sunday** - *Pray & Study on your own.*

Make sure that you spend time in prayer, and study of God's Word over the weekend. Hang in there with your fast. Don't quit. You can do it! When you are hungry, spend time with the Lord.

Do not miss Sunday as we continue in our sermon series ... **"HEROES" from the book of Ezra.**

### **DAY 16** - Monday, August 22 - *Relationship Motivates The Mission*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - **Matthew 16:13–19, 1 Corinthians 3:5–19; Ephesians 2:13–22** (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

What is the most important thing in a church? What binds a Christian community together? What is the irreducible, irreplaceable foundation upon which everything else depends? In 1 Corinthians 3 and Ephesians 2, Paul is unambiguous—Jesus Christ Himself is the irreducible, irreplaceable foundation of the church. What binds our church together is a person, and what motivates us to accomplish the Great Commission is our relationship with Jesus.

**PRAYER** - Pray that we would grow deeper in our relationship with Jesus and that it would motivate us to obey His command to make disciples.

### **DAY 17** - Tuesday, August 23 - *Disunity Kills Mission*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - **1 Corinthians 3:5–19; John 17:14–23** (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Throughout 1 Corinthians 3, Paul develops his metaphor of Christ's people being God's temple that is still under construction, but it's important to recognize that he uses this metaphor while addressing the problem of divisions within the church. He returns to this issue when he writes: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple" (1 Cor. 3:16–17). Paul's argument is as powerful as it is simple. Those who build God's temple faithfully will be rewarded (v. 14), those who build poorly will suffer loss (v. 15), and those who destroy God's temple will be destroyed (vv. 16–17). With this dire warning, Paul is speaking directly to those who are provoking divisions and factions among the Corinthian believers. If church unity is lost, if the temple of God is divided, His mission will not be accomplished.

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would remove division and disunity from His body at Eastwood Baptist. Pray that God would motivate each of us to reconcile and forgive those who have hurt us or in which we have bitterness. Pray that God would unite us around the mission of making disciples of Jesus for His glory.

### **DAY 18** - Wednesday, August 24 - *Challenge Over Comfort*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - **Matthew 13:10–17; Luke 18:31–34** (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Even in our divided culture, there is one thing that Americans still share in common—we all like to be comfortable. Our uncontested desire for comfort, however, has a dark side. Too much comfort is not only harmful, it can be downright dangerous. I wonder if the same dynamic is disrupting the mission of the church? For decades, we have tried to make church gatherings a comfortable setting for both Christians and non-Christians to gather and hear Jesus' message. From the cushioned theater seats with built-in cup holders to the spoon-fed, three-point sermon with fill-in-the-blank pre-written notes—the only challenge most of us face on Sunday morning is actually getting our families to church. Once through the door, however, we can relax and switch on the autopilot. I'm certainly not opposed to clear sermons or a safe Sunday morning environment, but our current cultural obsession with comfort in the church may have unintended side effects that disrupt our mission rather than advance it. If our goal is simply assembling a crowd or increasing the membership of our institution, then comfort should be our highest value. But if our mission is to make disciples of Jesus who obey all that He commanded, then we need to rethink our dedication to comfort.

**PRAYER** - Pray that our Pastors would challenge us with God's Word, even over our own comfort. Pray that we would all have a desire to be challenged and grow. Pray that God would equip us through His Word to accomplish His mission.

## DAY 19 - Thursday, August 25 - *What Is A Disciple? Disciple-maker?*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Matthew 28:16–20; John 17:13–24 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Imagine the church's mission like a pyramid-shaped diagram describing the multiplication of disciples. It shows a single disciple of Jesus at the top connected by lines to three more disciples just below. They in turn each generated three more. The pyramid continues to expand down the page until hundreds of disciples occupy a single generation. The point of the diagram is to show the exponential impact of "*disciples who make disciples.*" But it always provokes in me the same question: What is a disciple?

At the most basic level, the Bible says that Jesus doesn't have two classes of disciple: those who abandon their lives to his service and those who don't. The call to discipleship is the same for all. Jesus says, "*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it*" (Mark 8:34-35). There are not two sorts of disciples—the inner core who really serve Jesus and his gospel, and the rest. To be a disciple is to be a slave of Christ and to confess his name openly before others: "*So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven*" (Matt 10:32-33).

The call to discipleship is thus a call to confess our allegiance to Jesus in the face of a hostile world; to serve him and his mission, whatever the cost. Don't bother attending your dad's funeral, Jesus says to a passing inquiry: "*Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:60).

The Great Commission, in other words, is not just for the first eleven. It's the basic agenda for all disciples. To be a disciple is to be a disciple-maker. (Trellis & The Vine, Marshall; Payne)

**PRAYER** - Continue to pray that we would grow deeper in our relationship with Jesus and that it would motivate us to obey His command to make disciples.

## DAY 20 - Friday, August 26 - *We Are Better Together*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Luke 24:36–43; Acts 2:42–47 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Evil makes no distinction between us and our bodies, and neither can the church's mission to overcome it. Jesus became fully human to redeem every part of us—mind, soul, and body. Any church that claims His name must do the same. Participating in the work of Jesus means accepting, and even embracing, our embodied limitations. It means assembling as physical creatures to care for one another as whole people, and not just as immaterial souls or online avatars. The grandiosity of our mission may tempt us to employ the tools of technology—and to be clear, they do have a role. But we must resist their idolatrous promise of effectiveness at the cost of our embodiedness. Christ's mission for the church does not require us to be everywhere, do everything, and engage everyone. Instead, the mission happens when we are fully present with the broken people right where we are.

**PRAYER** - Pray that we would never trade superficial online technology-based relationships over personal in-person community and connection. Pray that we would remember we are a body, not just a gathering of disconnected individuals.

## Saturday & Sunday - *Pray & Study on your own.*

Make sure that you spend time in prayer, and study of God's Word over the weekend. Hang in there with your fast. Don't quit. You can do it! When you are hungry, spend time with the Lord.

Do not miss Sunday as we continue in our sermon series ... "**HEROES**" from the book of Ezra.

## **DAY 21** - Monday, August 29 - *Making Disciples Where You Are*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - 1 Corinthians 7:17–24; Matthew 28:16–20 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

In order to participate in the church's mission, many Christians assume they are required to dramatically change their circumstances. If the church's mission is to "*make disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples,*" we are falsely misled sometimes to assume this is only a calling for pastors and church leaders. Paul understood that the fullness of the Christian life was available to anyone, anywhere because the fullness of the Christian life is Jesus Christ Himself, not just our work for Him. Our work for Jesus would overflow from our relationship with Him. And, in addition, he understood that God's mission to rule over all things meant manifesting His kingdom, as Jesus' disciple, right where we are. God wants to and can use you to make disciples right where you are.

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would help you realize that your job is more than a way to earn a living or receive a paycheck. Your co-workers are more than co-workers, they are people who need to know Jesus' love. Your classmates are more than classmates. They are people who need to know Jesus' forgiveness. Pray that God would help us see that we can be used to make disciples right where he has us in everyday life.

## **DAY 22** - Tuesday, August 30 - *Servant Leadership & Dying To Self*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Luke 22:24–27, Mark 10:35–45; John 13:1–17 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Jesus washing His disciples' feet was meant to remind us of our calling to be "servant leaders"—while that is true ... there is even more, we learn from Jesus's example. Applying John 13 isn't about Christ-followers accepting menial tasks, but about accepting ridicule and embarrassment, about not being respected in society, and not needing the affirmation of their peers. It's having their ambitions exposed and extinguished. It's abandoning their desire for a bigger audience, larger platform, or more influence. Simply put, John 13 is inviting churches to crucify their own desires so they may be set free to truly love like Jesus. By washing His disciples' feet, Jesus was not just showing us a more effective way to lead others. He was showing us what it really means to die to ourselves.

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would show you areas where pride exists in your life. Pray that God would expose and extinguish selfish ambitions. Are you serving others in the church? In the community? Why or why not? Pray that God would continue to help you die to your selfishness and serve Him and others for God's glory.

## **DAY 23** - Wednesday, August 31 - *Praying For Our Leaders*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Hebrews 13:7–17; 1 Timothy 5:17–20 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

God values the importance of the role of pastors and church leaders. Churches don't talk about it a lot, but God's Word does. On numerous occasions Jesus instructed others to submit themselves to the priests and other officials (*see Luke 17:14*). In other words, Jesus affirmed godly authority, even as He denounced corrupt religious leaders. Likewise, throughout his letters to the churches, the apostle Paul repeatedly calls on believers to honor their leaders. Those who occupy these roles in the church faithfully and in a manner that emulates the character of Christ, he says, should be "*considered worthy of double honor*" (1 Tim. 5:17). These commands confront and unmake our illusion of autonomy and independence. The truth, which both our culture and our sinful pride want us to ignore, is that we desperately need others to lead us closer to Christ. The call to honor church leaders, therefore, isn't about inflating their pride, but diminishing our own.

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would help us love, submit to, and honor our leaders. Pray that God would give them wisdom, leadership, and humility to submit to God in Christ Jesus and lead His people in a manner that honors Him.

## **DAY 24** - Thursday, September 1 - *What Happens Outside The Church*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Ephesians 4:1–16; Colossians 1:15–20, 2 Cor. 5:17-20 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Paul writes, “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). Paul says the gifts that Jesus, the conquering King, has given to the church are leaders, and their purpose is “to equip his people for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). We are all called to be ministers of the gospel. Not just inside a church building. Not merely through nonprofit ministries. Not only on Sundays. We are to follow Christ faithfully in your vocation Monday through Saturday, making disciples as we go.

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would give us a heart to share Christ and love those who we serve with, live around, and interact with on a daily basis. Pray that God would show our church how we might better minister to our communities’ spiritual and physical needs.

## **DAY 25** - Friday, September 2 - *Show Us The Way*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Exodus 5-11, Nehemiah 2 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Churches and church leaders must be able to articulate what God has called them to do. Not being able to do so is to invite disaster. Some people will follow a so-called leader who does not know where he is going, but the result is that they all wind up in the proverbial ditch. Also, a leader cannot develop a plan to implement the ministry without a clear target. As someone has said, “If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time.”

On numerous occasions, leaders in the Bible demonstrated leadership based on clear ministry direction. Moses demonstrated his acute knowledge of God’s direction for the people of his generation when he appeared before Pharaoh and demanded their release (*Exod. 5–11*). Nehemiah demonstrated that he knew precisely where he was going when he presented his vision to King Artaxerxes (*Neh. 2:5*).

The people who are a part of the organization must also know where it is going. People cannot focus on fog. If God’s people are to accomplish great things for him, they must know what it is they are setting out to accomplish. (*Malphurs*)

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would clearly show our church, our leaders, and our pastor His vision for this season of ministry life at Eastwood Baptist church. We want God’s ways, not our own. We want to move ahead, not stagnate. Pray that when we see His vision, we would have the courage to obey.

## **Saturday & Sunday** - *Pray & Study on your own.*

Make sure that you spend time in prayer, and study of God’s Word over the weekend. Hang in there with your fast. Don’t quit. You can do it! When you are hungry, spend time with the Lord.

Do not miss Sunday ... **VISION SUNDAY IS THIS COMING SUNDAY!**

## **DAY 26** - Monday, September 5 - *Unified Around God’s Vision*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Psalm 133:1; Romans 15:5; Eph. 4:3, 13; Col. 3:14 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Scripture places great emphasis on the importance of unity among God’s people. Indeed, God has sprinkled passages on unity throughout the Bible. An institutional vision is one of the critical components of unity in ministry. The vision affects at least two areas of organizational unity. Vision functions as a cohesive factor; it holds the staff and church together. If the vision is nurtured carefully, the result is that each person appreciates and values the other because he or she sees how each, though different, is necessary and contributes in a unique way to the accomplishment of their vision. They realize that they all need each other if anything significant is going to take place. This, in effect, mirrors such passages on the importance of diversity within unity as 1 Corinthians 12:20–22 and Ephesians 4:15–16. (*Malphurs*)

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would clearly show us His vision ahead and that we would be unified around it as a church. We would encourage one another to participate and use our gifts to accomplish the mission and vision.

## DAY 27 - Tuesday, September 6 - *Functions of the Vision*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - 1 Corinthians 12 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Another characteristic of many churches today is that they do not know what they are supposed to be doing. They do not have a biblical vision or remember the biblical mission. Others have strayed, having chosen maintenance over mission. For example, one denominational executive was overheard saying sarcastically, “*The church is organized for the 1950s, and if the 1950s ever come again, we will be ready.*” This is especially true of the church in North America and Europe. If the typical business in the marketplace did not know what it was supposed to be doing (*and some do not*) or strayed, then it would not last long before going out of business. Some shrewd observers of American Christianity feel that for all intents and purposes the church has all but gone out of business.

A question that every church must regularly ask and revisit is the functional question, What are we supposed to be doing? Your vision, as well as the mission, answers this question. What the vision does uniquely for the ministry is to paint a portrait of what God intends for the ministry to accomplish so that all can see it.

The answer to the functional question for the church is the Great Commission. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus commands that the church “make disciples.” This is the mission. The church is to pursue lost people, win them to Christ, and then move those new and the older disciples to spiritual maturity. But what does this look like? Our vision will help us better accomplish this mission and know what our specific programs and functions need to be. (*Malphurs*)

**PRAYER** - Pray that as God communicates His vision for our church, that He would even now begin to help our leaders see what ministries we may need and what changes need to occur to accomplish the vision. Pray that God would compel each of us to be a part of the work. Pray that the people of Eastwood Baptist would be “all in”.

## DAY 28 - Wednesday, September 7 - *Vision Prompts Passion*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Romans 9:3-4; Romans 15:20; (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

Vision and passion work hand in hand. While vision is a seeing word that involves what leaders see in their heads, passion is a feeling word that involves their emotions—what they feel in their hearts. Passionate people are those who feel strongly about something. The “*something*” in this context is the vision. An exciting, compelling vision fuels passion. When a church gets a vision from God and they see what they could be and what he has in mind for the ministry, something marvelous happens—that vision usually results in a virile, infectious sense of passion. Not only do people know and see what they are supposed to be doing, but they can feel it as well. And if enough people catch the vision and experience this passion, it is possible that the ministry can re-create itself to become more effective in mission. An example of a vision-impassioned leader was Paul, who was so inflamed by his vision of preaching the gospel where Christ was unknown (*Rom. 15:20*) that he was willing to be cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of Israel—that they might know Christ (*9:3–4*). (*Malphurs*)

**PRAYER** - Pray that as God communicates His vision for our church, He would also ignite a passion and fervency in our congregation that would fuel our work and service. Pray that God would create excitement even now for what He has planned for our church. Begin praying that God would show you how you can contribute.

## DAY 29 - Thursday, September 8 - *A God-Sized Vision*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - Hebrews 11, (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

A shared vision fosters risk-taking by a congregation. People with a compelling, passionate vision are willing to take risks that they might not otherwise take. When the lead pastor casts the vision, everyone knows what needs to be done—they can see it in their heads. That is not the question. The question is, How will we accomplish it? Consequently, ministry for Christ becomes an exciting venture of faith into the mystery of God’s unknown. You may attempt something for Christ that does not work. However, we don’t quit, we attempt something else and it does work. The vision makes it clear to all the reasons you are doing it. It is for God and the Savior.

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would give us a god-sized vision that can only be accomplished by His power for His glory.

## DAY 30 - Friday, September 9 - *The Costs of Man-Sized Vision*

**SCRIPTURE READING** - 2 Kings 13, Isaiah 54:2, Romans 15:19, 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Ephesians 3:20 (\*Check Facebook for Daily Encouragement)

When it comes to thinking about a god-sized vision for Eastwood Baptist Church, our prayer ought to be for the right kind of fear. Not fear that we will fail or that it is too big, but rather that the vision is too small.

Some of us tremble not with fear that it will cost so much, but with fear that God will be displeased that we did not aim at something greater.

We hear 2 Kings 13, where the prophet Elisha gets angry at Joash the king because he stamped his arrows on the ground only three times. *"You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Syria until you had made an end of it"* (v. 19).

And we hear Isaiah 54:2, the text that inspired William Carey to give 40 years of his life to India and pen the motto: *"Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God."* *"Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes."*

We hear Romans 15:19 where Paul says, *"From Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel."* He was heading for Spain. He burned to preach the gospel where it had not been preached. He would not hear the prophet say, you stamped the arrows only from Jerusalem to Italy! He would spread and spread until he dropped dead. Spread till you're dead! That's the passion of Treasuring Christ Together.

And we hear 2 Thessalonians 3:1, that the word of the Lord will run and be glorified. And we hear Matthew 28:18-20 that all authority belongs to the risen Christ, so go make disciples, and I will be with you. Spread! Spread!

And we hear Ephesians 3:20 say that God is able to do exceedingly beyond all that we ask or think.

Texts like these make some of us tremble not that the price is high but that the vision may be small. We don't want to hear the Lord say, *"If you had struck five or six times, you would have had five times the victory."* (Piper)

**PRAYER** - Pray that God would give us a god-sized vision that can only be accomplished by His power for His glory. We also pray that our motivation would be motivated by an urgency to please God and make His name great among the nations. The costs of doing nothing are too high.

\* Commentary, Scripture, and Outline compiled from Skye Jethani

