



## GOD'S VISION FOR OUR CHURCH

Jeff Coleman | 25 April 2021

**Big Question:** What is God's vision for our church?

**Big Idea:** God's vision for our church is growth to maturity and the fulness of Christ through the proper functioning of the spiritual gifts of every member, equipped by biblical truth.

### I. Introduction

#### A. Image:

1. We are a body. We are interconnected to one another just as a body is interconnected. In late 2019, this body was in a hospital bed on life support. The doctor's prognosis was sure death. Only about 20 members, and no children. The strain of keeping the church open was too much. Almost everyone was tired, very tired.
2. But God had life in mind for Caversham Community Church. Hope was kept alive. In answer to prayer, Cornerstone graciously sent our family over here. We focused on inductive Bible study. We studied Philippians and then John. The Copland family came, too, and reignited our music ministry. There weren't many visitors, especially because of Covid-19. The only children for a solid year were our own. Some Sundays our attendance was down to 20. We also had some huge health challenges and job losses. But we kept at it. Through Bible study, resilience, and unity, we began to feel more positive about our future. Then suddenly at the beginning of this year, visitors came. And they have stayed. Last week our attendance hit 58. We were about to die in December 2019. Sixteen gruelling months later, in April 2021, we are showing signs of health and growth. It's exciting.

B. Need: How do we continue our growth so we together reach maturity and the fulness of Messiah?

C. Subject: God's Vision for Our Church

D. Text: Ephesians 4:7-16

E. Outline: (1) God's Vision for a Healthy Church; (2) How We Intend to Fulfil that Vision; and (3) Where You Fit In.

F. Pray.

G. Ephesians at a Glance.

H. Read: Ephesians 4:7-16

### II. Body.

#### A. God's Vision for a Healthy Church (Eph 4:7-16).

1. God's vision for every church is maturity and the fulness of Messiah (v. 13).
  - a) The opposite of this vision is childishness and instability (v. 14).
  - b) Psalm 1 presents an accurate picture: a fruitful tree versus wind-driven chaff.
2. Growth to maturity and fulness happens through our spiritual gifts (vv. 7, 16).



- a) Our gifts are from Jesus (v. 7).
  - b) We each have a unique work of ministry (v. 12).
    - (1) What did you learn from your spiritual gifts inventory?
  - c) The body grows when each part of the body is working properly (v. 16).
    - (1) What would it look like for you to really use your gifts to the full?
3. Each part must be equipped with biblical truth to work properly (vv. 11-13, 15).
- a) The apostles and prophets of the past and the evangelists and shepherd-teachers of the present equip us (vv. 11-12).
  - b) Our inductive Bible study ministry corresponds to the apostles and prophets.
  - c) Our preaching and teaching ministry corresponds to the evangelists and shepherd-teachers.

Biblical truth → Members equipped → Gifts working → Growth to maturity

## **B. How We Intend to Fulfil God's Vision.**

1. Our identity. We are independent, evangelical church with an Open Brethren heritage, linked to CCCNZ.
  - a) We are evangelical because we emphasise:
    - (1) A personal relationship with God.
    - (2) Being born again by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone.
    - (3) Spreading God's message worldwide.
    - (4) The Bible as the final authority on all matters of faith and practise.
  - b) We have an Open Brethren heritage.
    - (1) History.
      - (a) Open Brethren assemblies arose in late 1820s in Ireland and Britain as a reaction to high church Anglicanism.
      - (b) Today, there are an estimated 26,000 assemblies, or churches, worldwide.
      - (c) The term "Open Brethren" distinguishes us from the "Exclusive Brethren."
        - i) The split between the two occurred in 1848.
        - ii) We have absolutely nothing to do with the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church.
      - (d) Buildings associated with the movement are "Gospel Chapel," "Gospel Hall," "Bible Chapel," or "Christian Assembly."
      - (e) For more info, see the Wikipedia article, "Open Brethren."
    - (2) Theology and practice.
      - (a) Justification by faith.
      - (b) Believer's baptism.
      - (c) Priesthood of every believer.
      - (d) Dispensationalism and support for Israel.
      - (e) Eternal security without Calvinism.
      - (f) Gifts of the Holy Spirit.



- i) On the sign gifts (miracles, healings, and speaking in languages) most Brethren assemblies hold a Cessationist position. Cessationism holds that the sign gifts were given to the early church for the specific purpose of authenticating the Apostles and generally ceased with the death of John around the end of the first century.
  - (g) Complimentarian, not egalitarian, male-female roles.
  - (h) Simplicity in worship and symbolism, like the early church.
  - (i) Fellowship, not membership.
  - (j) Centrality of the Lord's supper.
  - (k) Plurality of elders.
  - (l) No ordained clergy.
- (3) The primary thrust of the Open Brethren assemblies is modelling after the early church as viewed through Scripture.
- c) We are linked in to [CCCNZ](#).
  - (1) Christian Community Churches of New Zealand is a *movement* of churches, and the regional campsites and ministries that support them, working together to reach New Zealand for Jesus Christ.
  - (2) See <https://www.cccnz.nz/linked-in-churches/>.
  - (3) The CCCNZ Ministry Summit is approaching: <https://www.cccnz.nz/ministry-summit/>
- 2. Our history.
  - a) We must get Jeff Martin to give a message on the history of our church.
  - b) Pick up a copy of our church history and read it if you haven't already done so.
- 3. Our vision.
  - a) Our vision is maturity and the fulness of Christ (v. 13).

**Biblical truth → Members equipped → Gifts working → Growth to maturity**

- 4. Our strategy.
  - a) Our strategy is biblical truth and spiritual gifts.
  - b) This strategy works out practically through:
    - (1) Daily Bible study.
    - (2) Weekly small groups.
    - (3) Expository Bible preaching on Sundays.
  - c) This strategy applies especially to the next generation.
    - (1) We focus on young families.
    - (2) We urge children into inductive Bible as soon as they can read.
    - (3) We seek to establish youth in the habit of daily Bible study.
  - d) To achieve the vision, we must keep things simple and say no to other things.
    - (1) "Be mean about the vision.
  - e) Whether or not we move buildings or change our church's name, our vision and strategy remains the same.



5. Our structure.
  - a) Our structure exists to further the vision and strategy.
  - b) My desire is we get things done through teams led well by team leaders.
  - c) We want to spread the load and avoid burnout.

### **C. What We Ask from You.**

1. Believe in the Lord Jesus. This is priority number one.
  - a) You have to be a new individual (Eph 2:1-10) before you can be part of the new community (Eph 2:11-22).
2. Commit to our church as a member. Become part of this body.
  - a) Membership is recognised informally. If you come regularly and see yourself as a member, and are seen by others as a member, you are a member.
3. Eagerly maintain the unity of our body through humility, gentleness, patience tolerance, and peace (vv. 2-3). Look out for Satan (v. 27).
4. Get into God's word like you never have before (vv. 11-13).
  - a) Learn and apply the method of inductive Bible study on a daily basis.
  - b) Do this as a family.
5. Use your spiritual gifts to serve (vv. 12, 16).
  - a) For example, improve your skills as a Bible preacher or teacher.
  - b) Let us know if you believe you are under-utilised.
6. Aim for maturity and the fulness of Messiah (v. 13).

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A. Image. A healthy body.
- B. Summary.
  1. Our vision is maturity the fulness of Jesus.
  2. Our strategy is biblical truth and gifts.
- C. Final charge. Together, let's reach maturity and the fulness of Christ through our commitment to biblical truth and using our gifts.