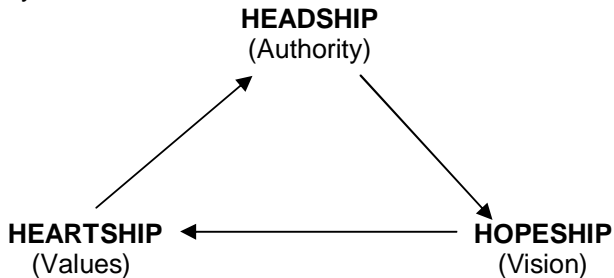

CHAPTER 15 : OUR VISION, VALUES AND VENTURES

*Apostolic mature faith community of people
living out “Passionate Love for God,
unconditional love for one another and
unrelenting love for our communities”*

Introduction

This manual has sought to provide the newcomer to Live The Life Church with some substantial foundations upon which they can base their faith. It has also sought to ensure that in our corporateness we maintain a healthy and strong set of foundations that will enable us to effectively complete the mandate that God has given the church.

The apostolic and prophetic foundations (Eph 2:20) are essential to the individual, the families, the local churches and may we suggest, even into society. Jesus said in Mt 7:24, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” The questions that need to be answered are: What are these foundations in the individual’s life? What are these foundations in the life of the local church? Furthermore, one needs to know how to put these foundations into practice to ensure stability, security and mobility.



B. Headship (Authority)

It is of absolute importance that as believers we understand the authority structures in our lives as well as the church. Although this matter is covered in depth during leadership forums, the following key areas are critical to understand.

B.1 God and His Word

We must be under the authority of God and His word. It is of vital importance that the Scripture are the framework against which every aspect of church life, be it individual or corporate, gets measured: in both wine (life, power and energy of the church) as well as in wineskin (structure, form and pattern). We must have absolute confidence that it weighs positively against the breadth of biblical truth. We have sought to walk this through at every level possible. It is obvious that we read Scripture through certain spectacles. This must however be erased and removed, so that the authentic exegesis of Scripture allows us the true life of God. Often we read Scripture through the spectacles of our personality, our culture and our religious experiences. These will inhibit an authentic and objective understanding of biblical truth. Yet, when we know the truth it will set us free. Our quest is to bring ourselves under God and His word, without any sense of apology and certainly minimising hindrances and interpretation prejudice.

B.2 Local Church Leadership

The Bible is consistently clear that the elders are the highest authority in local church. Act 20 and 1 Peter 5 are possibly the two clearest texts that help us understand and discern the role of the elders in local church life. Their responsibilities include:

- Godly government and administration
- Overseeing and keeping the big picture and the whole picture before the church
- Leading and guiding
- Pastoring and nurturing

The Elders are not democratically elected but rather recognised for what they are doing in the local church and ordained through apostolic ministry. The elders are men who, with their wives, have exuded certain character quality, both in themselves, their families, in the church and in the world. In addition to the quality of their lives, they have a clear understanding of the doctrines of Scripture and have exuded giftings that are helpful and necessary to effect their task successfully.

In some denominations the diaconate is the highest authority. In other streams the deacons are simply there to perform all the lesser desirable chores under the guise of service. An understanding of the biblical mandate for the deacons surely gives them the appropriate profile that they hold. In Acts 6 the early apostles clearly identified and ordained the deacons to office. Their tasks and roles include:

- Serving and supporting the elders.
- Releasing the elders from certain tasks so that the Elders can spend time praying and studying.
- Dealing with the logistics of growth in the local church.
- Seeking to resolve relational tensions.
- Administrating cultural challenges.
- Expanding and exploring their own giftedness.
- Allowing the word of God to prosper.
- In our present day churches, these men and women would include those who lead Life Groups as well as possibly head evangelism teams, music teams, mercy projects and the like.

B.3. Apostolic, Prophetic Teams

For us, one of the sad indictments against the Church is its meandering away from the Scriptural patterns. The Church seems to be more comfortable talking about cardinals, archbishops, superintendents and so forth, than in talking about apostles and prophets. Scripture would not establish them if they were not important to local church life. Apostolic, prophetic teams are essential to bringing the Church into:

Unity.

Maturity.

Stability.

Edification.

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (Eph 4:11-16)

Not only do they provide unity, maturity, stability and edification to the local churches, they also inspire the local churches whom they serve, support and lead, to greater and more corporate participation in making disciples of the nations. Dudley Daniel says that the apostolic teams provide an administration suitable for the kingdom of God, by:

- Raising up apostolic teams.
- Planting churches and bringing churches to maturity.
- Developing churches with apostolic/prophetic cultures.
- Networking with other apostolic and prophetic teams to impact the nations of the world.
- Discipling the nations by planting New Testament churches that in turn will impact these societies.

What a great privilege it is to share in a vision that straddles the globe and seeks to impact every culture and sub-culture to usher in the Lord’s return.

C. Heartship (Values)

As much as the mother provides the heartbeat and atmosphere in the home, so too, every local church has an ethos that is both Christian in its general application, but also relevant to that local church's unique flavour and heartbeat. As we seek to outwork what God has called us to, we want to be:

Radical –Passionate love for Him
Relevant – Unrelenting love for our communities
Real- Living in a culture of truth as a family
Relational- Family and friendship

An honest study of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation shows that God is radical and relational. From His relationship with Adam through His commitment and love to the people of Israel, from Abraham, Moses and Joshua through the prophets, to the incarnate Christ, relationships in the church provide a key to understanding church life. We are certainly not an organisation, a business or an institution. As far as the relational realities go, we are a family who seek to walk out this ethos in a casual, but honest approach in our faith. These values can best be summarised as:

- Friendship before function.
- Character before charismata (the gifts of the Spirit/ anointing).
- Reality before ritual.
- Sons and daughters before servants.
- Worshipers before workers.
- Accountability before visibility.
- Giving before receiving.
- Going before staying.

These, in a precise form, represent our desire to live out New Testament Christian community. It is of crucial import that we find the application of our faith within the bounds of these values. They bring honesty and transparency to our leadership and help us discover the joys and delights of authentic, Christian community.

What we value:

- **A church** built on and living out the love and grace of Jesus Christ. Where all people are accepted and encouraged to grow into “radical” followers of Jesus Christ joining the community of faith here at Life The Life.
- **A church** made up of people of all ages from all walks of life who are known as people who are passionately in love with Jesus and have committed themselves to each other for living out the call of God in each of their lives. Where we are growing together both multi-generationally and multi-culturally.
- **A church** that expresses our passion through exuberant “spirit and truth” worship as a lifestyle, growing study and understanding and living out of the final and authoritative word of God-The Holy Bible.
- **A church** that knows God is the giver of all we have and so we just ‘steward’ our money, possession and lives. Where we are giving back to Him more than just our ten percent of financial income, but also making all that we have available to Him through generous giving.
- **A church** that represents our Creator in a variety of ways. Creativity that is expressed through music, painting, sculpting, dance, drama, poetry and other art forms. Where these forms of art are part of the corporateness of Live The Life and are used to serve the community.
- **A church** that is creative in reaching those who don’t yet know Jesus
- **A church** that lives to turn all people into radical followers of Jesus Christ. Where the “world” can come into our meetings and our homes and feel the unconditional love of Christ radiating through our lives and actions.

- **A church** that is a model to the community in word and action. Where those who are part of the family are examples of Christ in the market place, schools, universities, sports scene, friendships and to everyone they come into contact with.
- **A church** that is not a “once-a-week-Sunday-meeting-activity”, but is constantly meeting in homes and the workplace. Sharing possessions with one another, worshipping together, studying the scriptures together and growing together.
- **A church** that is seeing new believers added to it’s number “daily”
- **A church** that is not only growing and becoming a larger influence in Hermanus, but that is also reproducing ourself by planting other “new testament” churches in surrounding areas of influence and into other nations where doors are opened.
- **A church** that is raising up “new breed” leaders. Leaders who are thinking and acting biblically, but not confined to ‘human’ boundaries or traditions.
- **A church** where those that are a part of it live as “the priesthood of believers”. Where we are experiencing true New Testament Christianity.
- **A church** that is forward moving. A “going and sending” church. A church that is a part of the “Apostolic mandate of God” to extend the Kingdom of God. A church that is a representation of the present Kingdom of God and of the coming Kingdom of Heaven. Where we overcome and push through all ‘boundaries’ that we may come across in our journey together.
- **A church** that is exciting to be a part of. A community that cherishes relationships above function. A community of God who is living out the freedom that Jesus came to bring. A community of faith “living the life”!

D. Hopeship (Vision)

It should certainly not surprise us that every individual believer, every family, every local church, the apostolic, prophetic team to whom we relate and the universal church, are all part of the inheritance that God has given to us. "LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance." (Ps 16:6) It is an awesome privilege to know that we have such a multidimensional inheritance. In many Christian circles this inheritance is seen as something that is purely personal. This is not authentically biblical. Scripture provides an inheritance that extends way beyond the individual and their sense of blessing, well-being and delight. When we understand this truth, it begins to draw us into the joys, delights, privileges and responsibilities of local church and apostolic teams into the nations.

D.1 Apostolic

By apostolic we are referring to the heartbeat of God for us to go and seek the nations of the world and see them touched by the power of the gospel. We see local churches being established and through those local churches, the discipling of the nations. We want to see the nations impacted and influenced. We want to see every ethnic group and every nation experiencing the privilege of the gospel and leaving them with the decision of what they will do with Christ.

D.2 Prophetic

We want to be prophetic both to the Church and the world. To the Church our prophetic commitment is to pull down and uproot everything that does not fall into the orb of God's biblical pattern and power. To the world we want to be prophetic, to restore God's biblical order into every aspect of society. We believe that the gospel is there to impact the political, legislative, educational, economical, social, sporting, commercial and artistic arenas. Like John the Baptist challenging the king, we believe that the prophetic people of God are to challenge the world. Whether in matters of abortion or pornography, illegitimate financial practices or selfish political power, it is the Church's mandate to arise and to stand.

D.3 Evangelistic

It is our commitment to see the gospel go forth. We believe that Jesus is the only way to the Father. There is no possible route of salvation other than through Him. We believe that the Church is the vehicle of God to bring salt and light to a dying world. Using all legitimate avenues at our disposal we want to impact the world with the power of this gospel and walk in the boldness of Scripture to see their lives touched and changed.

D4. Teaching and Training

Our vision is to see men and women come into wholeness. It is our desire furthermore, to take every individual believer, under the guidance and instruction of the Spirit and through the teaching and exposition of the Scriptures, and to move them from spiritual infancy into maturity and adulthood. We want to see every believer move from glory to glory, from freedom to freedom, from imperfection to perfection. That is our mandate as leaders and our passionate commitment. We believe that men and women are sent to us for a season of training and equipping to be raised up and then released into their destiny.

This envisioning arm of every local church is of profound importance. Not only do we want to take people beyond the essential truths found in Heb 6 into the breadth of biblical doctrine and understanding, but we also desire to address relevant and current issues and bring a biblical, ethical apologetic on each. We also believe Scripture continuously works the foundational areas of our lives. As we mature in God, take on greater responsibilities in the world, have an increased profile in the life of the church and extend our relational boundaries, so we need the continuous adjustment of our foundations that Scripture brings. Teaching enables us to outwork those circumstances with ever increasing growth, revelation and understanding.

E. Protecting Your Church (maintaining unity)

Ephesians 4:3 *“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*

Colossians 3:12-14 *“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”*

Hebrews 12:14-15 *“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”*

1) Celebrate the uniqueness of the 'body' you are a part of.

Focus on what you have in common rather than your differences. In the body we learn to say “we” instead of “I”. 1 Cor 12:12 “The body is a unit, though it is made up of different parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body.”

2) Be real in your expectations. Live from the 'real' to the 'ideal' in terms of developing relationships within the church.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says that disillusionment is a good thing with our local church because it destroys our false expectations of perfection.

3) Choose to encourage rather than criticise.

Four things happen when I am critical:

- I will lose fellowship with God
- I will expose my pride and insecurity
- I will set myself to be judged by God ‘..opposes the proud’
- I harm the fellowship of my church

4) Refuse to listen to gossip.

Here's an interesting law: People who can gossip to you will one day gossip about you. Eph 5:7 tells us not to even partner with any person who is a gossip and divisive. Why? Listening to divisiveness makes you just as guilty as the one sharing it. Tell that person to go straight to the Elders.

5) Practice God's methods for reconciliation.

Matt 18:15-20 1) Work it out. 2) Take someone with you. 3) Tell the church

6) Support and honour your leaders.

Heb 13:7,17. God gives leaders the responsibility and authority of maintaining unity in the church. We protect the fellowship when we honour those who serve us by leading.

Accept your responsibility for protecting and maintaining unity within your church. Put everything you've got into it. In doing so you will find God's favor and He will be glorified. God's blessing is upon a church that is unified.

F. Summary and Conclusion

In many ways this is a summary of our vision, values and ventures. We want to conclude by bringing a major focus to our mandate into the nations. In Mt 28 Jesus clearly says, as He takes leave of His disciples, that our primary mandate is to go and make disciples of all nations. Beyond discipling the individual, Christ clearly hands on the baton of taking the gospel to the nations of the world. In Lk 19:10 we are told that the reason the Son of Man came was to seek and save the lost. His primary reason was to sniff out all the broken, bruised, sinful people of the world, that is you and me, and bring us back into a vital reconciled relationship with God, with ourselves, with our fellow man and with nature.

For this reason our mandate to make disciples of the nations should be an increasing one, and certainly not decreasing. In Ac 1:8 Jesus stands on the Mount of Olives and He reiterates this call. He is effectively saying that we must take the gospel from our neighbourhoods to the nations. This needs to be the conviction of every individual believer and of every church. As much as we are involved in our priestly functions, in our homes, our churches and our neighbourhoods, so we need to embrace the priestly function of evangelising the unreached (according to Ro 15). We conclude by giving you a list of texts that shows this high-value is a thread that runs throughout Scripture from Genesis through to Revelation.

(Notes taken from the book 'The Purpose Driven Life' by Rick Warren; 2002, Zondervan Grand Rapids, Michigan)

To become part of what we're doing is not only to bow to the authority structures of Scripture and to the values that we believe are inherent in the biblical code, but also to give yourselves, with growing revelatory passion, to take the gospel into the nations of the world. May God knit you in and make you a vital part of Live The Life Church in this awesome responsibility.

"Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." (Ps 2:8)

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"
" (Isa 6:8)

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Mt 28:19-20)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Ac 1:8)

"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known." (Ro 15:20a)

"And with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation." (Rev 5:9d)

"On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." (Rev 22:2b-c)