

Essentials
of
Ministry
for

OPEN
DOOR
FELLOWSHIP

“Open Door” ... that’s it, the door is OPEN. Come IN.

We are all about community, experiencing God’s grace and truth in and through relationship. We’ve been risking this way of life for 40 years; some of us have been here all along, many have gathered along the way.

WHO: You, me, us, them, He, WE. Yep, you. No membership, no dress code, no partisan preference, no experience necessary. We’re in all stages of this life with God. We’re all ages, all walks of life. We’re wide open to whoever wanders through these doors. We long to include, not exclude. To give time for healing and discovery. Not rushing you ahead of where you are. If this is where you show up, we already consider you family. Welcome.

WHAT: Love, Trust, Truth, Grace, Relationship, Life Application, Community, Laughter, Safety, Fellowship, Passionate Teaching and Worship...God’s life in us. We are exceedingly intentional about learning and trusting in who God says we are in Him, and discovering His expression of love through us for the benefit of others.

This Open Door is wide open; it’s an invitation to come and rest, regroup, heal and be known. And wide open to go “beyond the door,” moving in and amongst our neighborhood, city, nation, and world in the outpouring of grace and love we richly experience in Jesus.

Purpose

God has given the elders a vision of His purpose for Open Door Fellowship (ODF). This statement is intended to communicate the fundamental elements of this vision and to strengthen leadership's commitment to them.

Proverbs 29:18 MSG

If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.

The elders of Open Door Fellowship church developed a number of ministry convictions based on a vision of God's purpose for ODF. Some of these convictions, quite naturally, were reactions to individual church experiences, both positive and negative. Some convictions are rooted in relationship dynamics that occurred during the formation ODF. Some came as a direct result of "hearing God" as we studied God's word together. These convictions helped further define the elders' vision.

ODF has adhered to these essentials of ministry throughout our history of fellowship. The elders believed then and continue to believe that God has, is and continues to do some very significant work for His kingdom with and through us.

It is a gift, a protection, and a joyous sacrifice to honor, with our lives, that which God has given us to do, which for us, is to see these essentials developed and implemented for the benefit of all whom God leads to ODF.

Please read carefully the essentials which follow. Each essential is fundamental to the vision God has given us, and in the expression of ODF's identity. They are not listed in priority because each item is a vital part of the vision.

We believe the future of ODF depends on our present leadership understanding this vision. Without your involvement, evaluation and commitment to these ministry essentials, we believe the heart of ODF's purpose for us could be lost.

ESSENTIALS OF THE VISION– Part I

1. PRIMACY OF GOD'S WORD
2. CHRISTIAN ESSENTIALS
3. THE FAMILY
4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EACH "ONE"
5. RELATIONSHIPS OF GRACE

1. PRIMACY OF GOD'S WORD

To be valid, the vision must have its foundation in our absolute conviction that the Bible is God's Word. Our vision is based on the essence of our statement of faith and our practices are based on Biblical truth. We thank God that in our early years of Open Door we were taught that doctrine was absolutely essential to build Biblical practice. It has protected us from following "experience" and the waves of popular theological fads.

Psalm 119 Eph 4:14, 15 2 Tim 3:16, 17 1 Pet 1:22, 23

Isa 55:11 Tim 4:6–8 James 1:19–25 2 Pet 1:20, 21

2. CHRISTIAN ESSENTIALS

The vision includes a commitment to the essentials of our faith as Christians. These Christian essentials must not be prioritized, for they are all vital to who we are as believers, but they should be balanced. We are committed to balancing:

- Our Christian practices, such as prayer, esteeming God's Word,

worshipping, witnessing, fellowship, etc.,

- Our Christian truths, like faith, submission, obedience, authority, love and understanding needs.

Lived out, these essentials mean that Open Door is a body that:

- through faith, is Christ centered and Christ dependent. The fruit of that faith will lead Open Door to a worshipful appreciation of our God and Father.

Colossians 1:9-20

- through love, places all relationships above programs and practices and that the fruit of this love will produce a high degree of servantness in the heart of each believer.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

- through obedience, places the Gospel above self interest. The fruit of this obedience will be a great zeal for the lost.

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

- through submission, places a premium on spiritual headship (authority). The fruit of submission is that God's truth can penetrate our hearts. Men learn knowledge without submission, but men cannot learn truth without submission. Christians who are unwilling to honor Biblical authority in God and in God's designated leaders (roles) will never mature spiritually because truth will never penetrate their heart.

1 Peter 5:1-6

- through prayer, expresses its needs and appreciations to God. A fruit of this prayer will be an effective healthy Body.

1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18

- through the Word, is committed to spiritual maturity, a fruit of this Word dependency will be mature individuals committed to ministry, understanding principles and living them out.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17

3. THE FAMILY

The priority of our families is never in competition with the vision God has given us for Open Door Fellowship. Rather, the role of our family and its members are seen as an essential part of this vision. Our family members must know that they are vital in the fulfillment of what God has called us to do. Making essential God honoring family decisions is an expression and vital part of the ministry vision.

Honoring the headship of every individual home is vital to the vision of Open Door Fellowship. As taught in Ephesians, the husband is the head of the wife and his family, and because this is true, he Biblically has the primary responsibility for his wife and children. No church leader must ever allow himself to take that primary role. We, as elders, will not violate a man's headship with his family. We will not minister to a man through his wife and will not minister to a wife without her husband's knowledge and blessing.

As a vital part of our vision, we will never violate the priority of the home. We will never violate another man's role by using our role as a leader to influence a family against him. We must be willing to teach the roles and functions of the family as critical to family health and to the health of the family of Open Door Fellowship. We must teach those within ODF to be Godly men and women who have a Biblical understanding of the importance of the home and all of its parts. We must be careful to never teach that our ministry decisions have to be weighed against what is best for our family. We must teach that what is best for our family is that we are, in fact, committed to ministry as a lifestyle.

Prov 31:10-31 1 Cor 11:9 Col 3:12-21 1 Tim 3:5, 12 Titus 2:4, 5
1 Cor 6-7 Eph 5:21-6:4 1 Tim 5:8 1 Pet 3:1-12

4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EACH "ONE"

It is our God who has declared that we are all priests, all one in Christ. Therefore, our vision underlines the significance God has placed in each person.

- to see in them God's potential for their lives
- to see that each person is encouraged and challenged to the opportunities of God's grace to have its impact on them and through them
- to see that the Christ who is in them will have His life lived out through them
- to see that no one be more honored because of their status in this world or dishonored because of lack of status.

It is most significant to say that people must be allowed to be whom they are, and if changes need to be made, that time and truth and an environment of love be available for those changes to happen. This process must allow for the freedom to fail. Failures are not produced in an environment where people are free to fail. The environment where failure is possible produces a hope in God's grace to do what only God can do - change us.

In order for people to be free to be who they are and free to grow, we must never develop a mold. Individuals can express this freedom in a variety of ways:

- the way they choose to dress
- the way they choose to raise their family
- the way they choose to minister as God has gifted them
- the way they share, sing, or participate in service and or expression of worship.

An individual's spiritual growth is possible because this essential places an emphasis on effective discipleship, nurturing, pastoring, gift identification, etc... We have no room for clergy/laity dogma. This aspect of our vision declares

that God has the freedom to help us become who He wants us to be. It declares that we have a confidence that God has a plan for each individual life and that Open Door Fellowship is a vehicle to seeing His plan realized. In this vision there are no molds, no super saints, no higher truths. Col 2:6-23
We are highly motivated:

- to see God's grace through the work of our Lord Jesus, come alive in people's lives.
- to effectively teach that people have needs and to find God's Biblical response of love to meet those needs.
- to nurture each of God's children to His potential for them.

We must be convinced that Open Door Fellowship belongs to each of us. It is as much yours as mine. The part that any one of us plays is not alone significant. What is significant is that each of us plays a part.

Rom 8:13-17 1 Cor 12:4-6 Gal 6:1-6 Heb 4:14-5:10
Rom 12:3-5 1 Cor 12:23b-26 Eph 4:1-16 James 2:1-9
Rom 14 Gal 3:26-28 Col 3:9-17 1 Pet 2:4-10

5. RELATIONSHIPS OF GRACE

Our understanding of God's grace as part of our vision gives us tremendous hope. It is in God's grace that we find and experience the miracle of His love. It is in this truth we initially learned and then experienced, the awesome reality of the commitment of love to one another. We deeply love each other. Jesus taught us this. Praise Him.

A love that creates a commitment:

- that we sacrificially will work for each other's best.

1 Corinthians 12:21-26

- that we will do all to the glory of God and through us to the benefit of the unsaved and the unchurched.

Matthew 28:18-20

- that our love will be like the love of our Lord Jesus.

John 13:34, 35

We must understand, that commitment (an expression of our love learned through His grace) is a vital, essential part of what has made Open Door what it is. When individuals lack commitment, separation is possible and convenient for a multitude of wrong reasons. When commitment is realized, verified, and honored, we will grow together dependent on each other. Our relationships - built upon principles of love (commitment) will always win over issues of practice, programs, or personalities.

Rom 1:16, 17 Rom 5:1, 2 Rom 9:15, 16 Eph 2:8-10 1 Pet 1:3-5

Rom 3:21-31 Rom 6-8 Gal 5:1-26 Eph 4:7 1 Pet 4:8

1 John 3:11-20

- Read Romans & Galatians with special emphasis on these verses

ESSENTIALS OF VISION – PART II

1. LEADERSHIP
2. WORSHIP
3. FOR, NOT AGAINST
4. VISION– ITS STRUCTURES AND EXPRESSION
5. OUTREACH

1. LEADERSHIP

A foundational truth in the vision of Open Door Fellowship is our commitment to the New Testament dynamic of the plurality of elder leadership. A leadership:

- committed to unity (free, open elder discussion on any issue with only issues of unity presented to the body of Open Door and each elder being careful to not defend his own personal views with any individuals within the body).
- committed to sacrificial shepherding.
- selected on the basis of giftedness, capacity, and character.
- committed to a God honoring protection, not a lording over the people of God.
- understanding servantness.
- involved and functional, (not a board that sets policy, but a group of men who believe they are called of God to be elders for and with the people that God has placed under their care).

Elders of the local church represent men who are called of God to an office. The role of elder is the role of an office. The staff of Open Door Fellowship is not our designated leadership. Elders are our leaders. Staff members may be elders. Any staff leadership is a delegated leadership from the elders.

The pastors in the Body, i.e. home group leaders, children's ministry leaders and pastors on staff, function out of their giftedness. Even though pastors shepherd through their giftedness, the elders are responsible to shepherd the flock of God. The role of pastor, is not synonymous with the role of elder.

The aspect of our vision makes ODF a church led by elders, not a constitution or a charter, the congregation or a hierarchy of committees.

We believe that this essential will not work out in practice unless there is a commitment to principles of headship (authority) servanthood and submission.

Acts 6:1-7 Eph 4:11, 12 1 Pet 2:15
Acts 20:27-36 1 Tim 3:1-7 1 Pet 5:1-4

2. WORSHIP

The worship essential will always be a vital, integral part of our Open Door Fellowship family's expression. Those of us in love with God and with each other, come together weekly to worship. The Lord's Supper will be a weekly expression on purpose, out of, we trust, continual and renewed conviction. We see all the elements of the worship service leading to communion. It is an intentional part of our vision to weekly gather together and share together the emblems that signify Him, His work, His love and sacrifice. These emblems also represent the basis of our relationship with God, as our Father, and with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

We believe that much of the fruit that has come through the ministries of Open Door Fellowship is the direct result of our desire to honor God by worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ in sharing communion together on a weekly basis. We believe this is true because dear to the heart of our God is the sacrifice of His Son, our Lord Jesus for us.

The essence of our worship is:

- to recognize God as our Father to be known, loved and honored in all that we do and say.
- to place the person of Christ, God's Son our Savior and Lord, His word and purposes at the forefront of all we do and say.
- to declare that the Holy Spirit is God and in agreement with Jesus' own words, that our dependency on the Holy Spirit will draw us only to significantly honor Jesus Christ as Lord. The ministry of the Holy Spirit does not draw attention to the Holy Spirit.

Matt 22:37 John 16:8-15 1 Cor 11:23-36
John 4:24 Acts 2:42, 46, 47 1 Pet 5:1-4

3. FOR, NOT AGAINST

This element of our vision declares that we teach truth from a positive conviction. We do not desire to express our convictions at the expense of someone else's conviction. Truth will produce Godly fruit. If Godly fruit is not produced we would have the integrity to change our convictions. Therefore, it is not our desire in teaching truth that we ever put down anyone who holds a position different than our own. That is why there is no "anti" Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, or anyone else, shared from our pulpit. Obviously, our convictions will be in disagreement with others and probably in total opposition to some, yet we have chosen and choose to not be anti-other Christian convictions. We are, however, absolutely anti-cult, anti-secular humanistic and anti-world's system in our convictions. For example:

- we are not charismatic, because our understanding of the New Testament does not require charismatic convictions. Yet, we are careful to not be "anti" charismatic.

- we are not infant baptizers, because our understanding of the New Testament does not require infant baptism. Yet, we are careful to not be "anti" infant baptizers.

However,

- we are anti-abortion, because it is secular humanistic and non-Biblical, for the Bible places a sanctity of life beginning at conception.
- we are anti-cults, because they are heresy and demonic and deny the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Psalm 139 | Rom 12:18 | 1 Cor 3:1-11 | Gal 5:22-24 | 1 John 4:1-11

4. VISION - ITS STRUCTURE AND EXPRESSION

To be transferable a vision must have structures i.e. (ODF, Adult Life Communities, Support Care Ministries, Youth Group, Children's Ministry, etc.) and structures must have expression.

The structures express the vision, but are not the total expression of the vision.

Open Door Fellowship is a structure (living organism) with people, programs, and services to express itself and to meet the needs of those involved.

Programs and services at any one moment are not the total expression of the structure. Nor does the structure, at any one moment, express the essence of its vision. In understanding these principles we will ensure that programs and services do not become an end unto themselves or ever develop into something in contradiction to the vision. We will be careful to not spiritualize our programs.

The structure must always be open ended in its expression. We must never allow for a sense of accomplishment to be realized. The vision will free us from sensing that we have arrived and remind us that we are constantly in the

process of doing what God has called us to.

We believe that the future of Open Door Fellowship is dependent upon our (especially our leadership) understanding our vision. We believe that the vision and the present structures will take us into our tomorrows.

Rom 12:4-8 1 Cor 9:19-23 1 Cor 12 1 Pet 2:4-10

5. OUTREACH

Outreach is a vital essential of who we are, and as such, we believe that outreach should be a natural expression of a healthy Christian and a healthy body of Christians. The Gospel is preached on the streets and through our lives and not in a building. Evangelism requires a constant sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Our future is dependent on our constantly working against being ingrown.

Matt 28:18-20 1 Cor 9:16-27 Col 1:24-29

SUMMARY

It is so important that we all understand that this vision will never be fulfilled. No individual task will ever define it. No accumulated size, be it 5 or 5000 will ever limit it.

We trust that God has and continues to call us into ministry and loving one another, leaving the results to Him.

The essentials have made us who we have been and they will be the foundation for who we will be - every new ministry's, every new sister church's leadership will need a deep understanding and agreement and commitment to these essentials. How, in practice, they are expressed must be left to the individual leaders, who at any one moment in time are responsible to see them implemented.

We believe that the essentials we have shared are the truths God has given us to do. Read them and search them carefully. We trust they are the basis of who we are at Open Door Fellowship.

- Elders of Open Door Fellowship