

Scaling new heights for God's glory!

**“...with my God I can scale
a wall.” Psalm 18:29**

Keystone Church Vision

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Preamble

What is the church and who is it for? Getting that right can make this vision a breathtaking reality for Keystone Church rather than another useless piece of paper. The church is us, not the building, not just the staff, elders or other leaders. Because each Christian is a commissioned soldier in God's army to advance Christ's kingdom, the task is not just the church's, it's mine. If the church has challenges, I have challenges. Its problems are my problems. If the church needs to pray, I need to pray. If the church is friendly, it's because I am friendly. If it's caring, it's because I am caring. As fulltime Christians, we're always "on duty," representing Jesus Christ to lost neighbors, family members, classmates, coworkers, or lost people we meet while on vacation. As the church we're available whether it is to build a relationship with a neighbor, encourage or admonish an old friend, be an usher or teach a Sunday school class, introduce ourselves to guests, pray for someone in need, or clean up a spill.

From Scripture, we understand that each of us can—and should—benefit from the church. But it exists first of all for the glory of God, second of all for the advance of His kingdom, third of all in the service of others, and last of all, for me. Which is why we will continue to be especially aggressive with ministries targeting children, teens, and young adults. While we are committed to ministering to every generation, our unswerving commitment to reach the NEXT generation will continue to require special sacrifice of our time, talents, and treasure. Because we're soldiers rather than consumers, we offer comfort more than we seek it, serve others more than seek to be served, give more and ask for less.

Living Biblically

We foresee the people who are Keystone Church reading and learning the Bible to shape our thinking, conduct and speech. In addition to the Word being preached each Sunday we foresee Sunday school classes of all ages beginning to memorize Scripture. We see youth groups, CONNECTION groups, and other groups examining the Word to bring its timeless revelation to light up these times. As people discuss life's challenges together we see them asking each other, "Well, what does God say about this?" And people know. We see people learning to delight in what God says because in their studies of His word they've come to realize how much He's for them. We see fathers regularly calling their busy families together to nourish them on the Word of God. We see harried single mothers determinedly feeding their children on the Word of God where they learn about a fully trustworthy Father. We envision youth growing so weary of the emptiness of entertainment culture that they switch over to listening to the Author of Life and discover there's hope in Him. We foresee men, women and young people who become so infected by the Word of God that they begin to teach others the glorious breadth of God's revealed Word to mankind.

Living as Worshipers

We foresee the songs, teaching, prayers and any other component of corporate worship time, placing not people but the Lord God—especially His message of redemption—at the center of public worship so that private worshipers will do the same. We foresee the people who are Keystone Church becoming first and foremost private worshipers; that most weekdays each would worship whether in prayer, Bible reading, fasting, reading Christian literature, meditating, meeting with Christians for spiritual food, or singing. We foresee these private worshipers eagerly anticipating meeting together publicly each week to worship Him with great joy and enthusiasm.

Prayer

We foresee the people who are Keystone Church defying the devil, the world, and our own sin nature to become people and a church marked by disciplined, devoted, and determined prayer. We commit ourselves to wage war both individually and corporately against prayerlessness, growing in our understanding that despite how comfortable our lives appear to be, we are actually very needy. Praying regularly and frequently, we train ourselves to rely less and less on everything else, and more and more on Him. Whether out of great need for something we cannot provide for ourselves, the desperation brought on by a plentiful but empty life, or the craving for greater intimacy with God, we call on Him by whose power Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. We pray with confidence that if we ask anything according to his will, He hears us and will do it (1 John 5:14-15). And linking the fact that the early church had power with the fact that the early church prayed *together* (Acts 2:42, 4:24-31), we not only pray alone, but *with* others in the church.

Discipleship

Since Jesus said “make *disciples*” and not just converts, we foresee the people who are Keystone Church making sure that people who are new to Christ grow to become fully devoted followers of His. Like good parents, people who lead others to Christ either mentor them in the faith, or see that someone does. They urge the new believer to attend worship services and Sunday School, join a CONNECTION group, and begin serving in an entry-level ministry. Understanding that stagnation is not God’s intention for *any* Christian, each of us is dedicated to becoming a better and better soldier for Jesus Christ. Declaring war on mediocrity, through the power of the Holy Spirit we drink from the Word, pray, serve, and invite shaping by other Christians to become the most effective soldiers we can be. Ideally, the growing Christian experience is that we are mentoring someone and being mentored by someone else.

Evangelism

We foresee a church of people who become captivated by the grace of the gospel through preaching it to themselves regularly. As such, each person and ministry thinks “evangelism opportunity!” when planning a ministry, event or activity. However personal evangelism will continue to be the main way we obey the great commission to spread the good news. Although we understand that God made a few Christians especially good at sharing the gospel, most of the grunt work rests with those of us with meager abilities but a genuine love for Christ, His work, and lost people. We gladly take responsibility for sharing our glorious Savior with those to whom God has linked us as friends, relatives, or associates. To increase our confidence and effectiveness, we take regularly-offered prayer and skills training. (We may occasionally use a public evangelist, but since the actual impact of invitations is questionable, this will not be our church pattern for evangelism.)

Church Growth

Like all healthy things, healthy churches grow in size. But since church size can have more to do with human pride than God’s agenda, we foresee the people who are Keystone Church caring less about how few or how many we are, and more about how faithful we are to the mission. We will not artificially set an attendance number as our growth goal, nor will we declare that once we reach a certain size we will do this or that. Rather, we will seek God’s face and try to faithfully carry out His work each day and leave the counting to Him.

However, since we do *not* simply aspire to see how numerous we can become, and since church planting has proved the most successful way to evangelize American communities, we will plant churches as God directs, as He forms core groups and as He raises up church planters. But we will not in our flesh declare when or where the next church will be.

Service

We foresee each person who is part of Keystone Church learning what his/her spiritual abilities are and using them to help carry out the church's mission. We expect pastors, elders and other leaders to lead the charge but doing the ministry of the church is done by each of us. There is no such thing as a Christian "on the bench" in the local church. In addition, since the local church is the means through which God ordained ministry with its biblically prescribed leadership, accountability, ordinances, diversity of service, and commissioning of missionaries, we urge those who serve in a ministry outside local church to also serve Christ in the local church.

On the other hand, with how well many parachurch ministries serve their communities they are an additional way for Christians to serve Christ and use their gifts. These works are part of the Same Kingdom as the local church, it's just that they often operate in Another Neighborhood. We foresee more and more people from Keystone volunteering with what we'll call SKAN ministries, that is, serving community ministries such as Water Street Rescue Mission, House of His Creation, Bridge of Hope, The Factory, and the Lancaster County Prison. In addition to being of help to these works, we hope that they infect church members with their passion, energy and hope. Whether remodeling an ex-offenders' home, being an instructor on budgeting, etc., serving meals to the homeless, serving as a volunteer "befriender" to mothers coming out of prison, refinishing donated furniture, being a prayer partner or mentor to a homeless woman, or holding activities for preschoolers and kindergarten students, all could offer opportunities to minister, not just to each other, but to our communities.

In addition, we foresee that working with these community ministries may help reduce our prejudices by pairing us with people who are not like us, don't look like us, don't think like us, don't act like us, and don't talk like us, but who are made in God's image. These ministries will help God teach us to learn to love more deeply.

Financial stewardship

Because Jesus proved His love by giving generously to people, we foresee the people who are Keystone Church giving generously to Christ's work in the local church and other ministries as our love grows for Him. Driven not by duty but delight, we give as God leads, fully expecting Him to stretch our faith. As we place more and more of our resources at the Lord's disposal, we fully expect Him to repeatedly prove: "You can't outgive me!"

Leadership Development

Just as Jesus poured Himself into 12 future leaders, we foresee the people who are Keystone Church preparing tomorrow's leaders today. Combing the church for those with gifts and potential, existing leaders will hone the hearts and skills of these men and women so that they can in turn mobilize and motivate others in the church to advance the cause of Jesus Christ.

We believe that the NT restricts church eldership to men (1 Timothy 2:12) since elders are responsible to govern the church by guarding its doctrine and discipline. However other leadership roles such as ministry team leadership which direct ministries rather than govern the church, are open to both men *and* women. We will train capable men and women to serve in roles which are appropriate to their biblical callings.

Adaptive Ministry

We foresee the people who are Keystone Church so committed to the mission that they are willing to make uncomfortable changes which might improve effectiveness. Historically we have practiced this in the area of music, using songs and styles which resonate with most 25-40 year-olds rather than trying to be all things to all people. God's message is sacred and unchanging, but because man's methods sometimes lose their effectiveness over time, no ministry style, structure or strategy will be too sacred to discard or change. We will avoid loving change for its own sake, and despising change because it's uncomfortable.

Relationships

We foresee the people who are Keystone Church acting like the family we are, and placing our love for each other above our love for ourselves: we care, encourage, exhort, practice hospitality, don't lie, show sympathy, sacrifice, forgive, are kind, show compassion. In other words, we do whatever is necessary to promote the love of the fellowship. We refuse to gossip or hold a grudge and will admonish others who do. We work at becoming more and more transparent with each other so that we actually become brothers and sisters to each other rather than strangers. We are considerate of the weaker brother/sister and are slow to charge him/her with legalism. We also recognize that some brothers/sisters are stronger, and in disputable matters are slow to charge him/her with ungodliness.

Helping

We foresee the people that are the church ministering not only to spiritual needs but physical as well. While we realize that people's deepest needs go beyond the physical to "every word that comes from God's mouth," we also realize that to ignore legitimate physical needs is to hear God's sobering question, "What good is your faith?" So we assist those in the church—and some outside the church as directed by church policy—with practical and financial needs. Asking God to neutralize any tendencies to be self absorbed, we help the brother or sister who is moving, recovering from surgery, in financial need, grieving, or frightened, rather than assuming, "Someone else will..." Those helped receive it joyfully, recognizing any aid comes from the hand of God. Not only do we help people through the church's organized ministries, but personally and privately as God prompts us.

Families

And on the sixth day, God created the family. Mindful of worshiping only the Creator rather than the family He created, we foresee the people who are Keystone Church promoting, cherishing, helping, and strengthening nuclear—as well as extended—families. Believing God has given different assignments to men and women in marriage, we train men to be selfless, loving, godly shepherds to their wives and children. We train women to submit to their husbands and help them succeed as family leaders. We train parents to model Jesus Christ before their children, and to gently but firmly train them. We train children to obey their parents. Realizing that adolescence brings frightening and sometimes overwhelming changes, our youth ministry supports parents in their fight to claim their children for God. We promote the responsibilities of adult children to their aging parents, and this call to *all* family members: love one another.