

Why We Exist

The Vision of Immanuel Bible Church

Immanuel Bible Church exists to glorify God in all of life by faith working through love.

The vision of IBC is taken from 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Galatians 5:6. In the former the Apostle Paul declares what should be the Godward orientation of our lives: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." In other words, everything in life – including seemingly insignificant things like eating and drinking – is to be done to display the ultimate worth of God. The latter text explains how we do this: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision or uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love." God is exalted by faith because He is recognized as the One who gives us "life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:25). Therefore, we trust in Him alone for all things pertaining to this life and the life to come. But biblical faith works through love. Love is the necessary overflow of faith in God. In adopting this vision statement we want to give expression to the great commandments of love to God and neighbor (cf. Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:27).

This vision statement is only realized by a community of people saved by the grace of God. We want to be a people increasingly stunned by the unmerited favor of God that has "delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14; cf. Ephesians 2:8-10). Indeed, it is all of grace.

The Mission of Immanuel Bible Church

The mission of Immanuel Bible Church is to make whole-hearted followers of Jesus Christ here and abroad. For only disciples of Jesus Christ will glorify God in all of life by faith working through love.

Values That Promote Our Vision and Mission

God: Our highest priority is to know and bring glory to the triune God. He is our first audience and final authority (Romans 11:36).

The Bible: We delight in studying the Bible, God's inerrant Word. We believe that it is the primary source for spiritual truth, the final authority on all matters of faith and life, and has the power to transform our lives (2 Timothy 3:16,17; Hebrews 4:12).

Passionate Prayer: Fruitful ministry requires continual prayer. We are committed to ongoing prayer for God's direction and blessing as we seek to do His will (Luke 10:2; Colossians 4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1).

Robust Worship: We believe congregational worship should reflect the majesty of the God we seek. Whether it's contemporary praise music or rich hymns from church history, we want to sing from the depths of our hearts "how great is our God"(cf. Psalm 47, 98; Colossians 3:16).

Intentional Fellowship: We believe that authentic biblical community, characterized by honest relationships and unconditional love, should be the normal experience for every believer. We understand the necessity of living holy lives, and acknowledge our responsibility to stimulate one another to

love and good deeds (John 15:12; Romans 14:1; Galatians 6:1-2; Hebrews 10:19-25).

Teaching and Reaching: We believe that a passion for truth must include a passion for people. Teaching is not an end in itself. We long to learn so we can better love God and neighbor (1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Corinthians 8:1-3).

Strong Families: We recognize that strong churches come from strong families and seek to strengthen the Kingdom by securing the home. We strive to equip parents and children to have healthy family relationships within a biblical family model. Additionally, we want to help singles and individuals without families find a very real sense of family within our church (Psalm 127; Ephesians 6:4).

Leadership Development: We affirm that leadership in the church is a gift given by the Spirit of God. We will seek to encourage, affirm and train all those who demonstrate leadership gifts to prepare them for larger spheres of ministry influence (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4:11-12).

Our Community: We believe God has called us to go into our neighborhoods, work places, and schools to be effective witnesses for Christ, sharing his message in word and deed. We strive to be salt and light, with an emphasis on service to our local community (Matthew 5:13-16).

Our World: All people matter to God; therefore, they must matter to us. We are devoted to the good news of forgiveness through Jesus Christ, the only message of life for the world. Further, we accept the challenge of taking this message to those who need it regardless of where that may be. It is the congregation's responsibility and delight to share the Gospel with others, and the responsibility of the leadership to train and encourage them (Matthew 13:44-46; 28:18-20; Luke 5:30-32; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Our Future: We recognize that “without vision, the people perish,” and so we will work unceasingly to fulfill our church’s purpose to our greatest capacity, always working toward growth in our impact for the kingdom of God. We will be innovative without compromising truth, and never place our security in style or traditions. We will strive for excellence in all we do (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17).

The Model: What kind of a church is this?

The evangelical landscape is riddled with various “models” for doing church. One church planting group, for example, identifies 21 different models for the local church. Most evangelical models can be classified under three headings:

The Traditional Church

Appeal to the world with church programs and door-to-door evangelism.

Conclude sermons by inviting people to “walk the aisle” or “pray the sinner’s prayer” to invite Jesus into your heart.

This model is rooted in nineteenth century revivalism.

The Seeker Church

Build everything around the idea of appealing to the non-Christian. In other words, make the church “seeker sensitive.” Avoid “churchy” cultural barriers, anything that is overtly religious like pews or crosses or stained glass or biblical language (jargon).

Appeal to “felt needs.” Like a good motivational speaker, tell people that Jesus promises fulfillment, purpose, and better relationships. God, after all, wants you to have “your best life now.”

The Missional Church

Missions isn’t just one activity the church participates in; it defines the church’s essence.

Incarnational ministry is key. Be incarnate in the culture by getting involved with the arts, schools, and social service groups.

Seek to transform the culture by being immersed in the culture (rather than being counter-cultural).

While each of these models can be helpful, they lead with a secondary question: "How can we reach the world with the Gospel?" A vital question, but it's not the primary question. The primary question for the church is, "How do we worship?" Worship is primary because God is primary. He is the ultimate reality in the universe and, therefore, our first step must be Godward. This brings us to our model:

A Godward Church

People come together in a room (worship center, auditorium, sanctuary).

A pastor opens the Bible, explains the meaning of a particular passage and applies it to our contemporary setting.

The assembly sings, prays, shares the bread and the cup and encourages one another in fellowship.

The church is dismissed to live out their faith in their homes, jobs, and communities.

Some people may look at the above model and object that it isn't very market savvy. Perhaps, and yet what happens in this gathering, Lord willing, is in the power of the Holy Spirit. Consciences are pierced. Lives changed. And God is worshipped as the people grow in their hatred of sin and love to God and neighbor. By a miracle of grace ministry happens, God is glorified, and people are helped for eternity.

A Godward church is a worshipping church, and a worshipping church is a supernaturally attractive church. It's distinct like salt and bright like light. The people even begin to mirror the beauty of God as they are transformed by the grace of God. This is the kind of church the world desperately needs. And this is the "model" we want to see grow up in

Bellingham.*

* For the inspiration behind this model please see not only the Bible, but also 9Marks Ministries (www.9marks.org).