

**identity.ebc**



*summary version*

## Churches have identities

An identity is the condition of being oneself and not another. It is the character of what something is. When we identify someone by the sound of their voice or the appearance of their face, or by the pattern of their fingerprints, we are distinguishing their unique attributes so that we can differentiate them from all others. Our identity is what makes us uniquely us.

Not only do people have identities and personalities, but so also do churches. They do not have literal fingerprints, but they do have certain characteristics that make them unique. Whether each individual congregation has an intentional identity statement or not, they will end up with certain characteristics and expressions which distinguish them from other congregations. These characteristics come from various sources such as the leadership of the church, its history and traditions, and/or various ministry programs. These characteristics of the church set forward the identity of the church. In short, there are different ways to “do church” and how a congregation decides to do church will define its personality, identity, and course.

Here are the important questions if the above is true: What is the identity that God has called the church to exhibit? Do we exhibit that identity? Or, is our identity so strong that it diminishes other important characteristics that God would desire in the church? These questions and more should prompt us to think and pray and study hard about the identity of our church.



### 1. Identity crisis

Does every church have a clear understanding of its identity? Absolutely not. Some churches are confused about who they are. They have no clearly stated mission and no strong set of characteristics which create a dominate personality for the church. When this occurs, churches suffer from identity crisis. The church operates, but it does not really know who it is!

Churches in identity crisis manifest the crisis in one of two ways:

#### #1 - Drift –

Churches without an identity have nothing charting their course, so they drift with the flow of the moment. Since they have no defining intention or strategy, the ministry they do and the programs they support have little to no power behind them. People participate in ministry, but they don't really know why. The leaders try to take the church in healthy directions, but they don't really have any basis for making decisions. There is no overall defining reason for being so they drift from one “good” program and emphasis to the next. Here is the horrible outcome of drift - the drifting church does not know who it is and, as a result, is moving toward ineffectiveness. The drifting church does good at the expense of great.

#### #2 - Specialization -

Sometimes churches are in identity crisis, but they don't even know it. They have become specialists in a particular part of the Biblical mandate for the church to the neglect of the others. This can happen when a church is very effective in a particular area of ministry and decides to focus on that area of calling alone. They overdevelop one part of the body and leave the other parts to atrophy. The specialist church who excels in evangelism or program ministry or praise and worship, to the detriment of the other missions that God has commanded is in just another form of identity crisis. A specialist church only knows part of who she is and is blind to her whole self. We are called to more than one or two important tasks – the church has a much greater call than we often think.

We want to suggest something different. It is not a “vision statement” per se. It is not even a vision at all. In fact it is an identity statement culled from God's word that identifies for EBC who we are supposed to be. It is simple, immediately Biblical, and based on sound doctrine. Here is the identity statement we suggest:

Who are we? We are a church fueled by biblical conviction to accomplish Christ's mission.

What we believe begets what we do. Conviction fuels mission. The Bible sets forward the most powerful, life changing, grand realities of all time. As a church, we are called to believe these realities to the point that they become convictions – firmly fixed beliefs in our lives. In addition to these convictions, we must have a clear direction. We must be guided and directed by mission. We must also have specific objectives, tasks, directives, and missions

from the Lord. Having conviction without mission is like being in a car all gassed up with no destination. The convictions tell us what to believe and the mission channels that belief into action. If we do not actually do what God calls us to do, then we have failed. We are a church fueled by Biblical conviction to accomplish Christ's mission!

This is who we are! We believe certain realities and have been given certain mandates from God. We are a church fueled by biblical conviction to accomplish Christ's mission.

So, what are those convictions and missions?

## Our five core convictions

We want to suggest that we can enumerate five core convictions that will summarize and hem in all of our Christian belief. This is not meant to be a precise doctrinal statement, but is meant to be an attempt to pinpoint the core beliefs that will distinguish us from all other endeavors on the Earth and serve as banners under which the whole Christian mission is accomplished.

#1 - God alone deserves the glory in all things (His comprehensive will) (1 Chr 16:29; Is 48:11 ; 1 Cor 6:20; 1 Cor 10:31)

To glorify God represents the chief end of human beings. To glorify God is our ultimate and true purpose in life. It is why we were born it is why we were called into the church of God at all. To give glory to God means to give honor and fame and praise and credit and worship to God in all things. This conviction fuels all we do.

#2 - Jesus Christ is Lord of all (Our place in His will) (2 Cor 4:5; Ro 10:9-10; Phil 2:9-11)

This too must be a core conviction, for it defines our primary relationship to Jesus Christ. He is Lord, and we are his possession. Jesus' standing before all creation is as Lord and King (Ac 10:36; 1 Tim 6:15; Rev 19:6). Our fundamental affiliation to Him is that He is our Lord.

#3 - The Bible is God's Word, authoritative and sufficient in all things (How we know His will) (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3-5)

This conviction marks us through and through as people of the Book. Our church will be directed by and saturated with the Bible. The Bible will be the authority we appeal to in disagreement. It will be the source and object of our instruction. It will be the living Word that we love



**We are a church fueled by Biblical conviction to accomplish Christ's mission!**

and seek to obey. This is very important to understand. It is not by esoteric means that we come to understand God's will. It is by competent interpretation of His Word that we know His will. If our role as the church is to accomplish His will, then His Word is how we know what it is!

#4 - The Gospel is God's only message of salvation for the world (His will for the world) (1 Cor 9:16; 1 Cor 9:23; 1 Cor 15:1; Phil 1:27; 2 Tim 1:10)

The Gospel of grace in Jesus Christ is our foundational proclamation. If we hold this truth as a firmly fixed belief, we will then be able to obey Christ's command to make disciples. We must be thoroughly steeped in the Gospel. The news of Jesus as savior and how every human being must be reconciled to God should permeate all we do as a church. It must be a core conviction. The will of God for the lost person is to believe the Gospel. The will of God for the church is to proclaim the Gospel and to persevere in the Gospel as a firmly fixed reality of their lives.

#5 - By His power alone we can accomplish His will (How we accomplish His will) (Col 1:28-29; 1 Peter 1:24-25; Phil 4:13; Eph 3:20-21; John 15:5; Jn 5:30; Mt 5:3; Heb 11:6)

This conviction holds a right view of men and women in tandem with a right view of how God's will is accomplished through us. This conviction is meant to both empower us and reveal our dire need for God's presence and power in our ministry. We are powerless without the work of God in us. Therefore all that is accomplished for God is accomplished by God through us. All of our work in accomplishing God's mission for the church must be infused with this conviction. We cannot do what must be done, so with faith we trust in the Lord to work in us for His great purposes. Although this is true, we must never forget that we can actually accomplish His will!

We cannot be overconfident, nor can we be under-confident.

## Our Six Missions

We are called to...

### #1 – Pray (Acts 2:42; Ja 5:13-18; 1 Thess 5:17)

Prayer is not the only thing we do, but it is the first thing we do. We will see an ever-increasing number of our people praying and growing in their knowledge of prayer as a means of accomplishing all of God's missions. This is to say that we are not only called to pray, but we are called to grow in our prayer life so that we are increasingly praying in the right way and for the right things. We need to be a praying church!

### #2 - Disciple and train (Mt 28:18-20; Eph 4:11-13; Col 1:28-29; 2 Tim 2:2-3)

We will instruct and train all of our people so that they are able to serve in the work of ministry and multiply themselves with the aim that each will be presented complete in Christ.

### #3 - Practice compassion and evangelize (Is 55:6-7; Mt 11:28; 2 Tim 4:5; Mt 12:7; Lk 15:20; Mt 9:36-38; Ac 2:47)

We will be passionate about God's heart for the lost so that we will always be participating in a compassionate and effective proclamation of the Gospel locally and globally.

### #4 - Gather to worship (Ps 35:18; Heb 10:24-25; Ac 2:42)

We will provide God-honoring worship services in which all of our people regularly participate.

### #5 - Love and care for one another (Jn 13:34-35; Mt 22:37; Ac 2:44-46; Ac 4:32-35; Ja 1:27)

We will love, encourage, and minister to our people in such a way that we offer tangible, God-honoring solutions to their physical and spiritual needs.

### #6 - Give generously of our life and resources (1 Tim 6:17-19; Mt 20:15; Prov 22:9; 2 Cor 9:7-9)

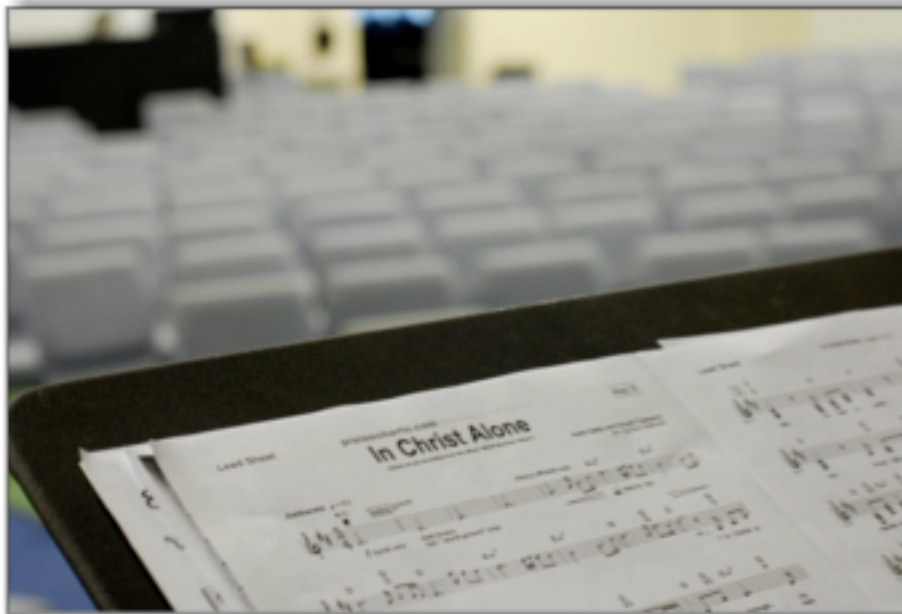
We will see our people living increasingly generous lives because they know that God owns everything, and they have experienced the joy of serving and giving.

## Our Current Strategies

It is not enough to simply define who we are. We must also begin to operate according to our defined identity. If we don't intentionally live out our identity, we will go adrift in the sea of preference and fad. If there are no practical strategies set before us to accomplish these missions, then we will be at risk of merely dreaming about the mission of Christ and not doing it! Clear strategies help

turn vision into reality. Clear strategies help us be doers and not merely hearers of God's Word. These strategies are represented by ministries that we have already been doing as well as by new ministry we will deploy very soon.

On the next page is a ministry/mission matrix that allows us to look at our ministry as a whole and determine how



# Ministry/Mission Matrix

	Disciple and Train	Practice Compassion and Evangelize	Pray	Gather to Worship	Love and Care for One Another	Give Generously of Life and Resources
Equipping Hour						
Emmanuel Institute of Biblical Studies						
Church plant						
Compassion partnerships						
Short-term missions						
Evangelism Training						
1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday Prayer Service						
Prayer teams						
Building construction						
Home groups						
Pastor and Elder care						
Deacon / Deaconess care						
Community life events						
Connection ministry						
Generosity training						
Ushering						
Newcomer ministry						
Greeters						
Men's ministry						
Women's ministry						
Student ministry						
Children's ministry						
Missions Team						
Gathered Worship ministry						
CE Team						
Trustees						
Finance Committee						
Nominations						
Elder Board						
<b>Totals</b>	12	12	11	11	13	9

well we have strategized to accomplish ALL the missions. This matrix lists many of the current ministries that we are doing today as well as the new and priority ministries that will soon come. If you would like to see a description and goals for each of these strategies, then refer to the original identity.ebc document on or near page 17.

### Leadership and Accountability

One final matter – leadership and accountability. If we want to live like we are a church fueled by biblical conviction to accomplish Christ’s mission, then we must provide accountable leadership to that end. We care about the mission enough to hold one another accountable for its fruition.

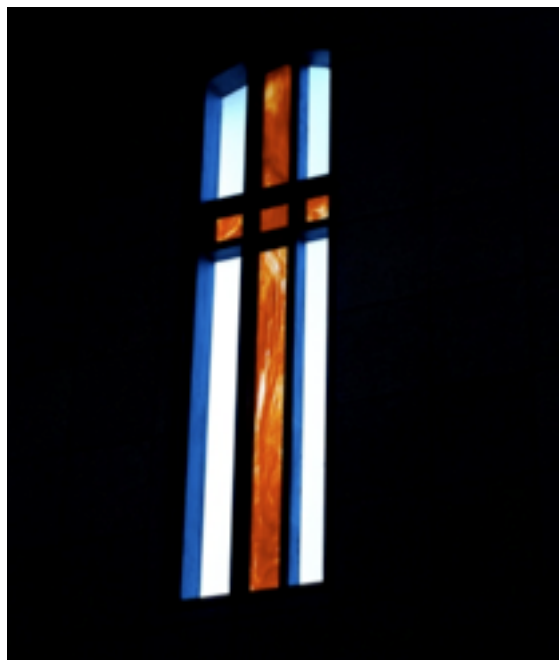
Here is how we suggest we do this. Each elder or small team of elders, in conjunction with other leaders they may choose, is given charge of one of the missions. This small team is responsible to see that all of the strategies for accomplishing the mission happen in the life of the church. They don’t do it on their own, but they utilize the people, teams, and resources within the congregation to accomplish the mission.

The people of EBC will do the work of ministry (see Eph 4:11-13). The elders of EBC will oversee and equip and join in the work of ministry.

Furthermore, on a quarterly basis the elder board will conduct a formal review of this entire ministry plan. This review will assess the success of the various ministry programs.

11And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...

Eph. 4:11-13



This format will allow us to easily assess the health and success of our strategies and ministries throughout the year as to how they are aiding the accomplishment of the mission.

### Seen in our near future

- We will be a church who knows who we are. No drift. No unhealthy specialization. We will be busy, but in all the right areas.
- Individual members of our church will have a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives knowing that they are serving in a worthwhile venture with God.
- We will know that our identity is not manmade, but mandated! We will not be following the vision of a dynamic person or group of persons (save Jesus and the Apostles). We will not be tied to our traditions or to contemporary fads. We will be obeying the mandates of Scripture!
- We will be able to better assess how ministry is going, because our strategies will be clearly communicated, and we know who is accountable, and we see what the big picture is. We will be able to measure and assess ministry like we’ve never done before.
- We will be able to confidently call Christians and the lost to this mission because we know that it is the work of God.

Sound good? Then let’s do it!